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பெட்டிகளிலிருந்து, முழு அளவிலான தனிப்பட்ட பொருள்கள் வரை. ★ கார், மற்றும்
20 அடி, 40 அடி முழு வர்த்தக சரக்குகளுக்கு விசேட கட்டணம். ★ மின்சார உற்பத்தி
யந்திரம், யந்திர வகைகள், உபகரணங்கள். ★ சலவையந்திரம், குளிர் சாதனப் பெட்டி
போன்ற வீட்டுப்பாவனை மின்சார உபகரணங்களுக்கு வரிவிலக்கு.

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right to say it."

Voltaire

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Appeal to President and UNP Leader to Reach 'Joint Consensus'

Some 23 groups representing various religions, communities and professions have sent an urgent appeal to President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, asking them to unite and work together to achieve a settlement to the national crisis. Their open letter says:

Recently, we celebrated 50 years of our independence. No one can deny that all these years, since 1948, have been marred by bitter political rivalry (electoral, to be precise), of the two main political parties - the UNP and the SLFP their allies. The principal issue of this incessant rivalry is none other than the national ethnic question and consequent power sharing between the centre and the districts, the provinces and the regions.

People are well aware that this senseless and harmful rivalry has not been on matters of principles, or on matters related to serving the people and the country. On the contrary, each party had opposed when out of power what it has proposed when in power. This has impeded the implementation of any reasonable solution to this issue in 1956, 1958, the 1960s, 1972, 1977, 1983 and 1987" up to now. This has only led to the worsening of the situation, resulting in greater suffering and widespread violence, and to an on-going civil war that has lasted for over 15 years.

We will not hesitate to state here that the two main parties that have governed this country since independence have miserably failed to come to an agreement on this burning national issue. This failure, while being the principal cause of this continuing war since 1983, costing over 50,000 precious lives on both sides, has also uprooted from their homesteads over a million people and made them refugees in Sri Lanka and exiles abroad.

Furthermore, the depletion of our financial resources - to the tune of over one third of our national economy; the ever increasing indebtedness of our country; the destruction

caused to the environment; creating distrust and animosity among communities and promoting the cult of violence and the violation of human rights must be seen as direct consequences of this failure on the part of our political leaders to arrive at a consensus to resolve the crisis. What is even more serious is that war situation is today assuming such frightful proportions that it may soon lead to a mass recruitment of school leavers into the security forces to continue to fight this deadly war. People are aware that this war is not being fought on their behalf.

It is indeed a crying shame to find Sri Lanka listed among those countries where violence and crime have assumed unmanageable proportions. These reflections of the international community are further confirmed when we realise how age-old spiritual and social values that guided our lives have been thrown overboard and how violence is being resorted to in resolving social conflicts.

It is of utmost importance that this national question be resolved with wisdom, justice and the wide consensus of our political leadership since people's inalienable rights and sense of security are at stake and these need to be guaranteed with justice to all. We cannot hope to achieve peace without justice, because peace is the fruit of justice.

Any attempt to solve the national problem through the electoral process will be to load people with an additional burden. Besides, it will only serve to divide our people even further. Our history provides numerous examples that the electoral process has not been the most appropriate means to solve problems of this nature qualitatively. Our firm conviction is that serious consultation between the two main parties is vital if this national crisis is to arrive at a reasonable and acceptable solution. In the event of a consensus being reached, no one should grudge the parties to the dialogue from sharing the credit

for their efforts.

While this requires an approach of mutual respect, understanding, dialogue and consensus seeking among the leadership of the two main parties, the whole process can serve as a striking example of conflict resolution and have a significant impact on all other political groups.

We firmly believe that our cultures and religions can inspire a more just and humane solution to the present crisis. There are methods of wise conflict resolution based on the search for the common good (and not of party electoral victory). The international society gives us ample examples of such approaches. We wish to state categorically that any attempt to restore peace through armed confrontation is not only against the teachings of the religions, but also not the most constructive way to resolve the national crisis.

We, therefore, earnestly urge President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe and their two political parties and alliances:

- To come to an agreement on sharing responsibility and credit for resolving the national crisis;
- To take it out of the arena of party electoral politics;
- And we firmly urge YOU to place before the country and the world YOUR joint minimum consensus for a peaceful solution, with justice to all, of this burning problem.

The letter has been signed by: Inter-Religious Peace Foundation - Ven Walpola Wimalagnana Thero; Centre for Society and Religion - Rev. Fr. Oswald B. Firth OMI; National SEDEC - Rev Fr. J.B Devarajah; Tamil Youth- Cultural Organization - K. Kanakarajah; Maligawatte Hindu Social Service Society; National Peace Council - Tyrrol Ferdinands; Federation of Tamil Associations; Dharmavedi Institute - Rajah Dharmapala; Grama Probdha Foundation; Mothers and Daughters of Sri Lanka - (Coalition of 32 Organisations); Matara Human Resources Development Centre - M.H.M Shums; Hindu Confederation of Vavuniya - P. Sivaloganathan; Fisheries Solidarity Committee - J.J Perera; Fisheries Solidarity Committee, Mampuri; Women's Education and Research Centre - Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran; South Asian Muslim Academy - Laffir Madani; Social and

LTTE Mine Blast Kills Second Jaffna Mayor

D B S Jeyaraj

Ponnuthurai Sivapalan, te recently appointed Tamil United Liberation Front Mayor of the Jaffna Municipality is the latest victim of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The carnage at the Nallur Kalyana Mandapam (Wedding Hall) now housing the Municipal Council also caused the deaths of Jaffna Brigade Commander Susantha Mendis posthumously promoted as Major-General, his principal Staff Officer

Capt. Ramanayake, Senior Supt. of Police Chandra Perera, ASP Sarath Fernando, ASP Chandramohan, Headquarters Inspector Mohanadhas, Police Constable Gerard, Addl. Municipal Commissioner Pathmanathan, Municipal Engineer Eeswaran, Asst Municipal Engineer Pathmarajah, and a woman, Municipal architect Mallika Rajaratnam. Another injured eight of whom three are in critical condition have been hospitalised.

The instrument of death was in the form of a sophisticated Claymore device mine lodged between the roof and ceiling. The usually arc shaped Claymores are basically anti-personnel mines used to target foot and mobile patrols. A few have also been suspended on trees by the LTTE in the jungles. But placing one up above a room of seated occupants and heaping death downwards is another first for the LTTE in this dirty war.

The discovery of another bombing device that apparently did not explode provides knowledge of what the lethal weapon was likely to have been. Investigations are on to ascertain the exact nature of the death device. Soon

after the blast it was announced that the bombs were placed several months previously when the building was being renovated and lying dormant until being activated 11 September. Since then military spokesmen have said that the device had been placed a day before it was activated. Did that mean that the LTTE had given advance information about the conference being held on that fateful day and who the participants were? There is strong suspicion that had "inside connivance".

The reported detention of two night watchers Mangaleswaran and Thevasingham suggest that suspicion centres around the fact that the bombs were very recently placed during nightfall. It is suspected that the bomb was activated by a powerful remote control mechanism from outside though some say an electronic timer also could have been used.

The topmost soldier in the North Major-General Lionel Balagalle has described the incident as a 'setback'. In one single incident the Mayor, Town Commandant and SSP have been eliminated. So too have a number of other top police and municipal officials. The meeting with the Army and Police was known to municipal officials only at 9.30 am in the morning. The earlier schedule was to hold the Municipal Council meeting at 11 am in the same room.

If that meeting had occurred as planned then the explosive attack would have caused the deaths of the Mayor and the Council in its entirety. Although investigations are yet to be completed all preliminary indications are that the perpetrators who originally targeted the Municipal Council may have decided to go-ahead with their plan in spite of the changed agenda because the opportunity to kill the Brigadier, Senior police officials along with the Mayor too was an attractive target from the LTTE point of view.

The attack from a Tiger perspective has succeeded in exposing the fragile security situation in Jaffna.

Economic Training Institute, Kandy - Rev Fr. Nandana Manatunga; Movement for Justice, Peace and Reconciliation - Andrew Samaratunge; Human Rights Organisation - Padmini Rajadurai; Sama Sevaya - Samson Jayasinghe; Rural Development Foundation - A.R.A.Rameez; Movement for the Defence of Democratic Rights - S.G Punchihewa; Movement for Inter Racial Justice & Equality - Sunanda Deshapriya.

The killing of Municipal officials in particular is likely to send shivers down the spines of most public servants in Jaffna. The tenuous structures of civil administration struggling to assert themselves in Jaffna will now regress into oblivion. The security apparatus too will naturally adopt a more sterner hard-line approach and increase security measures. The slow process of transferring military control to civilian authorities will now be put on hold. More importantly the psyche of the Jaffna people would reluctantly reconcile itself to the harsh reality that there is no return to normalcy at least not now.

When local authority elections in Jaffna were held in January this year it was stated that it was the Jaffna municipal elections that was of paramount importance. For more reasons than one it was the metropolitan poll that proved to be the most fair and free of the seventeen local authority elections. It was also the most prestigious being the northern capital. Also the best possible chance to usher in a normal civilian administration albeit with some constraints was also possible only there.

All the Tamil parties contested Jaffna and nominated the best possible candidates for the Jaffna mayoral stakes. The EPDP had their Jaffna organizer Jegan and the EPRLF their Jaffna organizer Robert. The PLOTE had its deputy leader Manickathan and the TELO the Secretary-General Sivajilingam. The TULF had a woman Sarojini Yogeswaran widow of popular Jaffna ex-Parliamentarian Yogeswaran as its candidate. The TULF got into the hustings late because of some legal difficulties. Its campaign was conspicuous by its low-profile, non-presence nature. Yet the TULF won Jaffna and Sarojini Yogeswaran created history as the first elected mayoress of Jaffna.

The LTTE too attempted a direct disruption of polls only in Jaffna city. In the early hours of the morning on election day the LTTE launched a mini-offensive on Gunagar in Jaffna municipality. It also indulged in some mortar shelling. This resulted in the voting times in Jaffna city being delayed by several hours. A feeling of panic too set in. The voter turn out in Jaffna town was nearly half of the actual number of voters present.

In another remarkable exhibition

of courage the people of Jaffna had literally voted with their feet. In the process they dispelled the sustained propaganda barrage by the Colombo Tamil media that the elections would turn out to be a fiasco. The people in their own way demonstrated that they wanted to take the first small step in the gigantic journey back to proper representative democracy and civilian rule.

The PA and President Kumaratunga made maximum use of this performance to blare forth that it was a great victory for the government. The PA government sought to convert a creditable assertion by the people into a partisan political triumph over the LTTE. Again the prize showcase of this victory was Jaffna City. All the world especially the western media loves a spirited underdog, particularly a woman in the patriarch dominated context of South Asia. So

Sarojini Yogeswaran was lionized to a very great extent. Even the visiting US representative to the UN, Richardson, wanted a photo opportunity meeting with Yogeswaran who could not oblige him because she had injured herself at that time in a fall.

The Kumaratunga administration after seeking maximum propaganda mileage out of the Jaffna local authority situation did not take any meaningful steps to constructively promote the situation. At a time when the northern local authorities in general and Jaffna municipality in particular should have been given 'privileged' treatment to function efficiently and creditably all sorts of bureaucratic constraints were placed. All those 'bleeding hearts' from the South who went to Jaffna at election time to ensure and observe that their northern brethren were returning to the folds of democracy just lost interest after that. No pressure was exerted on the government to take extra measures and galvanise the northern bodies into action.

Sarojini Yogeswaran met President Kumaratunga herself but there was no immediate follow up action. Shortly before her death Yogeswaran in an interview to a Tamil newspaper sounded bitter and disappointed. There was an acute sense of feeling betrayed in that interview. More importantly the people of Jaffna too were sharing these feelings. They had taken a bold brave step in defying the

LTTE diktat in opting to live in Army controlled Jaffna earlier. They had also boldly defied the Tigers in voting in comparatively large numbers at the local authority polls. But now there was no meaningfully reciprocal activity by the government. There was neither transition to civilian rule nor concrete development efforts. The government seemed concerned only in scoring narrow propaganda points and not evincing any real care or concern about their plight.

The local authorities won by the EPDP, PLOTE and TELO too were not functioning. Trotting out various reasons, some of them valid, these parties did not constructively engage in running the Councils. Some never convened while others had only a few taking oaths. But the TULF took that leap of faith and trusting the Kumaratunga government attempted to work the two authorities under their control, the Jaffna MC and the Valigamam North Pradeshiya Sabha in spite of the constraints. It was a very commendable and courageous step for the TULF as it lacked the firepower and financial power of the other Tamil parties. The TULF was extremely vulnerable. Sarojini Yogeswaran in particular refused armed bodyguards on a matter of principle.

The TULF once again became politically targeted. Its close association with Kumaratunga's efforts to usher in a devolution package was a plus point in its favour once. But with the Constitutional reform process reaching an impasse and the consequences of the war troubling the Tamils on a widespread scale the TULF was the subject of criticism. The 'moderate' and 'democratic' nature of the party made itself very vulnerable. Tamil elements who would not dare criticise Tamil groups or the Tigers publicly pulled no punches when it came to the TULF. Tamil political parties too kept on criticising the TULF. In a bid to demonstrate that it was not TULF support that helped the government to prolong the emergency the party started voting against emergency extension in Parliament. Thus it proved that it was not responsible for the sustained emergency. Still the criticism continues.

There is a Tamil proverb that only fruit bearing trees are stoned. Likewise there is the English saying that on one kicks a dead dog. The TULF

may be down but it certainly is not out. The 1994 Parliamentary elections as well as the two local authority results of 1998 have demonstrated that if free and fair elections are held the Tamil electorate will vote for the TULF in a big way. Of course it is difficult to predict a situation where the LTTE enters the democratic mainstream but even then the TULF is likely to do reasonably well.

This is fully realised by other Tamil parties and hence their vicious tirades against the TULF. The LTTE also knows that the intra-Tamil political threat to it is from the TULF and not the other Tamil parties. In addition there is the 'defencelessness' of the TULF in terms of armed protection. This makes the TULF doubly vulnerable to the LTTE. At the same time the divisions within the TULF also must be taken into account. There is one faction that co-operates closely in the government's Constitutional reform exercise. Another powerful faction is closely aligned to the LTTE way of thinking. While a third grouping is somewhere in between these positions.

The TULF component that is seen as being sympathetic to the LTTE has been against TULF participation in the Jaffna local authority polls. In fact when a foreign journalist informed an important member of this faction that Sarojini Yogeswaran had been killed that 'worthy' broke out into a smile. The opinion expressed was that he was against the participation of elections and that his position was now justified. In this scenario it is clear that continuous participation by the TULF in the so-called local authority process in Jaffna can only bring about more and more violent repercussions.

Sarojini Yogeswaran thought that the 'boys' would not harm her as she was alone and unprotected. She also wistfully referred to Velupillai Prabhakaran alias 'Thamby' who was befriended by her husband Yogeswaran and had enjoyed her hospitality in her home in the bygone days. This association however did not prevent the LTTE killing her husband along with Amirthalingam in 1989. That too after entering the home on the pretext of negotiations and after eating her biscuits and drinking her tea. Her unarmed helplessness also did not stand in the way of the LTTE gunning down her mercilessly.

Sarojini Yogeswaran after becoming Mayor was very careful in not giving cause for offence to the LTTE. She always emphasised the necessity for negotiations with the LTTE. Likewise her successor Sivapalan also was arguing publicly in favour of recommencing talks with the "boys". Still that did not insulate them or insure them from LTTE retribution. Most members of the TULF have taken extra care not to antagonise the LTTE publicly even by word of mouth. Even when their colleagues are killed by the LTTE they only express 'anguish and outrage' but never condemn the LTTE directly. The TULF also keeps on calling for negotiations with the LTTE. TULF president Sivasithamparam even stated that the LTTE could become the sole representative of the Tamils if the Tigers opted for negotiations.

Even now TULF personalities are stating publicly that nothing can destroy the TULF and that they would continue to run the Municipal Council. Senior Vice-President Anandasa-ngari has even said that if a suitable candidate cannot be found he himself would become Mayor. While these assertions which are clearly in defiance of the LTTE are being articulated on the one hand the TULF also displays a marked reluctance to condemn the LTTE directly or challenge it for the killing of Sivapalan. The curious dichotomy in the TULF is that it seeks to appease and mollify the LTTE by refusing to condemn the Tigers while arousing their wrath by indulging in defiant exercises such as trying to run the Municipal Council.

But what the TULF and for that matter a considerable section of Tamil opinion fails to realise is that the LTTE is not playing a game of ludo. It is bent on a deadly serious campaign to achieve a separate State under its leadership for the Tamils. It will regard all Tamils who do not subscribe to its agenda as being against it. Of these anyone displaying a contrary assertion are termed traitors to be destroyed at suitable times. In that process it will think nothing of killing TULF personalities although it was that party which fostered Tamil nationalism to the point of obtaining an electoral

ma-ndate for Tamil Eelam. It is not only a case of being like 'revolutionary France' during the reign of terror when Pierre Vergniaud remarked at his trial that the revolution like Saturn might devour each of her children, one by one. In the TULF case it is more like Parashuraman (in the Mahabharatha) killing his mother at the behest of his father.

The LTTE in spite of all its boasts has only a destructive capacity. All constructive aspects of its structure are also geared towards destruction, death and despair. The continuous LTTE leadership of the Tamils can only lead the community towards a dismal future. The need of the hour is for a meaningful and credible alternative to emerge. It is clear that at the present time it is the TULF despite its handicaps and shortcomings that can provide such leadership. The party's worthwhile participation in the devolution exercise shows that it is mindful of its responsibilities.

Therefore it is for the TULF to decide what exactly it wants to do at this juncture. If it wants to defy the LTTE then it must get its act together and do so openly, unanimo-usly and unambiguously. The silent majority within the Tamil community will slowly begin to back the TULF after a while. But it will take some time. But if the TULF continues to send out mixed signals and hesitate to even condemn the LTTE for killing its members then it cannot expect people to repose confidence in it.

The TULF will be fully justified if it asks the LTTE openly as to why Sarojini Yogeswaran and Ponnuthurai Sivapalan were killed. It can legitimately question the Tigers as to what right that outfit has to kill two Mayors who were trying to serve the people in a limited way under difficult circumstances. If the TULF embarks upon this course it can hope to win a mass following in due course that would act fearlessly. But if it just continues in the present manner not only will it never become truly significant but stand discredited and lose its present position too. Also mollycoddling the Tigers does not guarantee immunity from the LTTE not even for the Batticaloa contingent.

If it is the TULF position that LTTE is the sole representative of the Tamil people and that its heinous crimes should not be challenged then it has no business to continue in politics. Clinging on to elec-ted office in such a

(continued on next page)

(continued from page 6)

situation can only be construed as crass opportunism. This column is not unmindful of the past tribulations suffered by the TULF and is sympathetic to its enviable predicament. But it is the responsibility of the TULF that encouraged a generation of Tamil youths to fight for the Eelam cause to help resolve the crisis created. In today's context only the TULF can do something meaningful however weak it may be.

At the same time the current political conditions too have to be taken cognizance of. The conduct of the government as well as the security situation in Jaffna indicates clearly that local government there can only be a facade. If the government had deployed substantial numbers of soldiers in Jaffna and pumped in a lot of money with the aim of making a showcase of Jaffna there may be some justification in the TULF tagging along. As it is the government has even pulled out soldiers to man the Wannifront. The LTTE level of infiltration suggests that the security forces may not be able to afford the luxury of civil administration in Jaffna for some time.

As such there is no need for the TULF to continue with the optical illusion of running a municipal administration. It is futile for the TULF to indulge in rhetoric and appoint a new mayor. Unless current conditions improve that person too is going to be another human sacrifice. Such a sacrifice is particularly meaningless in a situation where the mayor or the municipality will not be able to do anything meaningful or solid. Instead the Jaffna municipality would do well to emulate its counterpart the Valigamam North Pradeshiya Council and suspend its functions indefinitely with the proviso that the situation would be reconsidered after an overall political settlement.

Following such a course need not be termed cowardice but merely a page out of the LTTE book of tactics. After all no Tamils called the Tigers cowards when they engineered the mass exodus from Jaffna. Vadamaratchy and Thenmaratchy were ceded to the army without a fight on the basis that it was a 'strategic withdrawal'. The TULF too would do well to abandon its suicidal attempt to keep running the Jaffna municipal council as a cosmetic exercise sans

NEWS REVIEW

Overview

The extension of the state of Emergency to cover the entire island, effective for a period of one month from 4 August, marked the beginning of a new phase in the on-going political offensive launched by the PA and aggressively countered by the main Sinhala opposition party, the UNP. The motion was passed with a majority of 32 votes in Parliament, with 116 MP's, including those from the CWC and the EPDP voting for it. 84 MP's from the UNP, TULF, PLOTE and SLFP voted against. Science and Technology Minister, Batty Weerakoon and MP's, Asoka Weerasinghe Silva and Vasudeva Nanayakkara of the LSSP were absent at the time the vote was taken.

The Provincial Council elections which had been scheduled for 28 August were indefinitely postponed as a consequence of the extension of the Emergency. Political commentators observed that the move was not so much in response to any major changes in the security situation as a political ploy to delay elections. This could be seen as a tacit admission of electoral weakness by the PA, which has been driven by dissent from within the SLFP, as well as from within the ranks of the PA itself. There had been divisions over choice of candi-

any real power.

This also does not mean that the TULF should abdicate its political role. It should once again take the initiative to pressurise the PA and UNP to arrive at an understanding and promulgate the proposed Constitutional changes. The development that would cause a sea change in Tamil opinion is a bipartisan consensus between the major Sinhala parties on maximum devolution. It is that development that would truly isolate the LTTE politically and begin a reappraisal of Tamil political thought. Going ahead with feeble attempts to keep the meaningless municipal council of Jaffna running can only be another sop to Cerberus. ●

dates as well as over the larger question of whether to hold the Provincial Council elections or not. Many PA politicians had gone on record as stating that they would 'win' the PC polls in whatever way they could, and this in turn had triggered off alarm bells among all the groups working for a free and fair election.

The UNP, the JVP and several other groups are contesting the postponement of Provincial Council elections in the Courts.

The UNP continued to maintain its policy of remaining silent on any critical national issue until events literally overtook the party and forced it to respond. Although UNP leader Wickremasinghe had issued a challenge to the PA to hold Presidential elections by November, in fact when the issue was open for negotiations, it remained unresponsive. The divisions within the UNP over the Wjeyapala Mendis issue as well as the now overt power struggle between the camps that support Wickremasinghe and those that support former Premadasa confidante, Sirisena Cooray have created a situation which seem to constrain the UNP from responding in any substantive and cohesive way to existing political challenges.

Once the PC elections were postponed, the UNP transformed its campaign meetings into protest meetings against the postponement of elections. This led to an exacerbation of the 'dirty' war between the UNP and the PA, in terms of scurrilous and defamatory posters and leaflets and even statements in Parliament made by one against the other and vice versa. The WP continues to complain that it is at the receiving end of harassment from state forces and opposition forces alike. In August, the JVP office in New town, Polonnaruwa was shot at by a gang travelling in a vehicle without number plates and severely damaged.

The UNP has also made several complaints of harassment and assault of its members, including in Colombo

during the preparations for the UNP's first public rally in recent times at Hyde Park in Colombo on 14 August.

The physical violence which has been so much in evidence in the Sri Lankan political culture of recent times seemed to have now extended itself to verbal and psychological violence as well. There was widespread public outrage at a speech made from a UNP campaign platform in Matara in which obscene and derogatory language against homosexuals was used as part of an attack against the government. This has led to a heightened debate on the ethical use of language in public fora.

A motion of No-confidence on the Minister of Posts, Telecommunications and Media, Mangala Samaraweera was defeated in Parliament on 5 August. The motion was based on the Opposition's contention that the payment of Rs. 277,854.41 by Sri Lanka Telecom Chief Executive Officer, Hideki Kamitsuma out of his personal account to settle expenses incurred by the Minister constituted an act of bribery by the Japanese company, NWF, which bought major shares in Sri Lanka Telecom.

Hopes of a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict remained faint, with the militaristic tendencies within the government continuing to declare that the war could be 'won' and should be won prior to any overtures to the LTTE. The process of Constitutional reform remained deadlocked at the level of the Parliamentary Select Committee. It was in this context that the statement made by President Kumaratunga on 3 August, during an exclusive interview with the Press Trust of India (PTI) that the government was prepared to begin talks with the LTTE, with third party mediation, provided the LTTE dropped their demand for a separate state, became headline news. The President did not clarify what country or organisation should play the mediatory role.

Although various organisations including some of the Tamil political parties have proposed some form of outside mediation to resolve the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, Foreign Minister Kadigamer and various other government officials have, in the past, spoken out against such a move. Thus, the President's statement seemed to signal a shift in state perspective on this matter; it was also

significant because any hints of a mediated solution to the conflict have been so muted in the past months, as the military strategy has gained ascendancy. Responding to this report, Minister Thondaman went on record as saying that there should be no pre-conditions laid down for talks with the LTTE.

In the meanwhile, Operation Jaya Sikurui continued in the Vanni, with little real progress being made. 16 months after the launch of this offensive to gain control of the road linking Jaffna peninsula to the south, both the Sri Lankan security forces and the LTTE are reported to have lost over 2,000 combatants, with many more wounded. Finance Ministry officials revealed that military expenditure had exceeded budgetary allocations by 18%, and that a further sum of 8 billion rupees had become necessary. This will bring the total military expenditure for this year up to 52 billion rupees. The excess would be covered by the Defence Levy, which is 4.5% at present.

There were certain critical changes in defence personnel during August. On 3 August the President announced the setting up of a Joint Offices Command to be headed by Army Commander Rohan Daluwatta. The Joint Operations Headquarters would continue to function from Vavuniya, under the guidance of Major General Srilal Weerasooriya. On 30 August, the retirement of IGP Rajagum was announced. Lakshman Kodituwakku is the new IGP, and in the wake of this appointment, there were several other key changes within the Police Department as well. Media personnel were informed on 5 August that reporting on transfers of personnel within the security forces would constitute an offence from this point on.

Throughout August, reports of the arrest of LTTE cadre in the south of the island, as well as reports of caches of arms and explosives in Kandy and Colombo led to tighter security measures and increased surveillance of the Tamil community. Large numbers of arrests were carried out, and the newly formed Terrorist Investigation Department seemed to have its hands full.

The capital Colombo and its suburbs were also caught in the grip of increasing incidents of 'gang warfare' in which there were shootings and at-

tacks on gang members by rival gangs. The brutal murder of a young Tamil businessman, Sellamutu on 13 August in Colombo was one such incident. This situation has contributed to an increase in tension within the civilian population and within the Police. The involvement of army deserters in such activities is also a matter of concern.

Sri Lankan lawyers. R K W Goo-nesekera and Deepika Udagama attended their first session of the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities as Member and Alternate Member of the Sub-Commission. At this session of the Sub-Commission. Norwegian, Ashbjorn Eide made a statement in which he was very critical of the LTTE and its failure to move towards a process of negotiation.

The War: in the North

There were sporadic incidents in which LTTE cadre infiltrating the 'cleared areas' attacked sentry points and road patrols. 3 children aged 6, 7 and 12 were killed in Kachchai, Jaffna, when a grenade was flung at them as they were talking to a group of soldiers. The military moved into the Vadamarahchi East area during August, and established a post at Nagarkovil. This had been 'uncleared' area until then.

In the Vanni

The LTTE launched a major attack on the western Forward Defence Lines near Mankulam on 2 August. At least 37 members of the LTTE and 15 soldiers were reported killed in fierce fighting during the initial phase. Clashes continued around the southern and south-eastern areas of the FDL's throughout August. There was also fighting in the Jaffna District, in and around Kilinochchi. A camp used as the headquarters of the LTTE Sea-Tiger unit at Chundikulam in Kilinochchi District was completely destroyed by the Army in early August. There was also fierce fighting between the LTTE and the military at Kumbukkulam, 8 kilometres from Kilinochchi, in the second week of August; over 26 soldiers were killed in the clash.

PLOTE lost two members in separate shooting incidents in Vavuniya in August 1998. The LTTE is thought to be responsible. One of the PLOTE

members was shot dead while at his home in Thekkanthottam outside Vavuniya town. Following this incident, PLOTE called on all civilians residing in these areas to vacate their homes within 24 hours. This led to many protests and led to an extension of the deadline.

In the East

The military continued to maintain an uneasy presence in areas west of the lagoon in Batticaloa, with skirmishes being reported between security forces and LTTE cadre. The LTTE also carried out some attacks on civilians, including an attack on two members of PLOTE near Eravur. One of the PLOTE members was killed as a result.

On 17 August, a bomb set in a motor bicycle which was parked near a private bank and a Police checkpoint in the heart of Batticaloa town exploded, injuring 17 civilians and 4 Police officers. The explosion damaged many other vehicles in the parking area, and caused panic in the town.

There were also reports of skirmishes between the army and the LTTE in areas along the borders of the Pollonnaruwa and Batticaloa Districts. Civilians in these areas are particularly vulnerable during this month, since this is the time when they are harvesting their paddy fields.

The PRINCESS KASH

On 14 August, the Sri Lankan Air Force bombed the PRINCESS KASH, a ship moored close to the coastline off Mullaitivu on the east coast of Sri Lanka, following surveillance missions that showed a number of small boats going between the ship and the shore. Reports later said that the ship had been 'abducted' by the LTTE and its 21 member crew taken hostage. Of these, 17, including the Captain, were Indian nationals; 4 were Sri Lanka, 3 Sinhalese and 1 Muslim. The LTTE, which informed the ICRC of the abduction, said the ship had strayed into Tamil territorial waters.

Following mediation by the ICRC, the LTTE released the 17 Indians on 18 August. They were brought to Colombo and almost immediately put on a flight to Chennai. There was little opportunity for Sri Lankan investigators to really satisfy themselves that the Captain was not guilty of com-

plicity with the LTTE in the 'abduction' as had been earlier alleged. Indian government officials maintained that the Defence Ministry could not furnish them with adequate proof to substantiate this accusation, and said they would conduct their own investigations on this incident when the crew members were in India. The 4 Sri Lankans continued in LTTE custody, with the ICRC visiting them and bringing letters to their families.

Following this incident, it transpired that the real name of the ship was Mv. SOFA, and it was registered in Belize. It had been one of 3 ships chartered by 3 businessmen in Colombo to transport a load of goods to Point Pedro in Jaffna. Although the cargo was originally reported to be 240 tonnes of cement and food, subsequent investigations revealed that there had also been a large number of restricted goods on board; cars, motorcycles, scooters and even 3 tractors, as well as motor spare parts. The ship had been in the port at Colombo for over 8 weeks, being loaded. Speculation was that the LTTE had been able to unload a substantial part of this shipment in Mullaitivu. The businessmen involved were detained for questioning. This incident has created even more difficulties for those within the state and outside it who are concerned about maintaining regular shipments of essential items to the northern peninsula.

The bombing of the ship and the subsequent discussions of the incident in the Sri Lankan press, were causes of some diplomatic tensions between India and Sri Lanka. President Kumaratunga conveyed to Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee the justification for the destruction of Mv. PRINCESS KASH.

Civilian life in the North and East

There continued to be a series of protests against delays in sending adequate food, drugs and other essential items to the north, especially to the Jaffna peninsula. A departmental inquiry commenced within the CWE as to how allocations of 14,509 metric tonnes of rice, sugar, dhal and powdered milk valued at Rs. 310 million had not reached Jaffna. These allocations were approved by the Commissioner General of Essential Services within the period of April to December 1997. The supply of elec-

tricity to the northern peninsula stood to improve greatly following the commissioning of new transformers in September. Work on this project was almost complete by the end of August.

Unemployment continued to rise in Jaffna, with security considerations creating a range of problems or young persons seeking employment within the peninsula. In this connection, in the first week of August, the Unemployed Graduates Association of Jaffna submitted a Memo with six demands to the authorities, and announced that it would launch a fast campaign to gain acceptance of these demands.

In August, figures released by the Ministry of Rehabilitation said that the state spends Rs.126 per man per month on dry rations for 126,000 displaced families living in 342 Welfare Centres in 12 Districts in the North and East. The ongoing confrontations in the Vanni are also generating a fresh wave of displaced persons, moving from the Vanni to the northern peninsula. Reports from Jaffna in August said that over 24,000 civilians had arrived in the peninsula, fleeing the fighting in the Vanni.

The breakdown was given as:

58,000	Jaffna
8,900	Kilinochchi
13,000	Mullaitivu
16,000	Mannar
5,500	Vavuniya
9,800	Puttalam

Each family of 5 persons is entitled to dry rations worth Rs. 1,260.00 per month, and relief agencies have pointed out that this is grossly inadequate. There is also no proper estimate of the numbers who are not able to avail themselves the opportunity to draw on the provision of dry rations allocated by the government.

Reports regarding the increase of malnutrition in the Vanni areas continued to come in, including an incident in which it was stated that two women from a group of persons displaced from Jaffna had died in a settlement in the Kilinochchi District due to malnutrition. Cutbacks in the issue of dry rations has also had an extremely negative impact on these families, with reports of children being forced to abandon schooling in order to beg for their families' suste-

nance. In the meanwhile, there were reports from Mannar that the LTTE had abducted and killed 8 businessmen, charging them with transporting goods for the military.

A Hartal (peaceful protest) was observed in Vavuniya on 16 August, demanding the removal of restrictions on the purchase of fuel which had been introduced by the armed forces on the grounds that fuel supplies to the LTTE were going through Vavuniya to the Vanni. The 'hartal' action, sponsored by PLOTE, brought life in Vavuniya to almost a standstill, with buses and even private vehicles staying off the roads. The protesters observed that imposing this type of restriction on the distribution of fuel would only lead to scarcity and subsequent increase in prices; only unscrupulous traders and black marketers would benefit from such a move. The present permit system allows each owner of a motorcycle to buy 15 litres of fuel per month, and each household is permitted only 2 bottles of kerosene oil per week.

Explosions of transformers continued in the north and east, with citizens of Nintavur and Sammanthurai being left in darkness with the blasting of 3 transformers in the area on 10 August, while another transformer was blown up in Chettikulam, Vavuniya on 8 August. On 1 August, 2 more transformers were blown up in Kalmunai.

In the East, civilians continued to be concerned about several incidents of shooting by undignified gunmen in the Batticaloa area. On 7 August, a labourer in the Anti-Malaria Campaign, Rajaratnam and his wife Nageswari were both shot dead at their home in Satturukondan.

Chemmany Mass Grave

Throughout August, media and public interest in the mass grave said to be located in Chemmani, Jaffna remained high. Rajapakse, one of the accused in the Krishanthi Kumarasamy, had made the allegation about this site during the final phase of the trial. The National Human Rights Commission reportedly sought the advice of forensic experts from abroad for carrying out the excavation and investigation. This step has been praised by human rights groups who have previously expressed their dissatisfaction with the manner of con-

ducting forensic examination of mass graves in the south.

However, even by the end of August, there was no news of the investigation actually taking place. The delay led to concern regarding the timing of the exhumations, since the onset of the monsoon by the end of September would preclude any re-opening of the graves until next year. There was also a concern regarding the procedure for the opening of the graves, and requests that the process should be carried out in the presence of independent observers as well as judicial officers. Such a request has been made by the Federation of NGO's in Jaffna, as stated by its President, Professor V K Ganeshalingam. NGO's also appealed for extra security for the grave-site, to protect the area from trespassers, while TULF leader Sivasithamparam called on the Chairman of the Human Rights Commission to visit Chemmani in order to ascertain the actual facts about the alleged grave-site.

In the meanwhile, a report that Rajapakse, the convict who first reported the grave-site, had been assaulted while in prison also sent off alarm bells within the Human Rights Community, and Amnesty International sent a letter to the government asking for guarantees of his safety.

A report of the discovery of a skeleton in a well on the premises of Punnalai Kattuwan Maha Vidyalaya in Jaffna has led to further allegations of unidentified grave sites throughout the peninsula. The school was occupied by the army, and the skeleton has been identified as that of Mr Ramasingham by his wife, on the basis of a ring and chain found with the skeletal remains.

LTTE Active in South

In early August, Police arrested a suspected LTTE activist in the hill country. According to preliminary investigations, it was thought that he had been sent with several others to the plantation areas to carry out a series of attacks on key sites including major reservoirs and power stations.

Police also reported information that 16 members of the Lute's suicide squad had arrived in Colombo from Vakara, Porativu, Kokkadicholai and Kalawanchikudi areas in Batticaloa. A large quantity of explosives has also been transported to Colombo by

these persons, to create violence in Colombo and the suburbs. Several persons were taken into custody in August in connection with the bombing of transformers in the eastern Province and elsewhere. They were said to have been arrested while planning to carry out another similar attack in Kadawatha, on the Colombo-Kandy road.

Several members of the 'Pistol Gang' of the LTTE were also suspected to have slipped into Colombo to strike VVIP targets, according to senior Defence officials. Their presence came to light following the arrest of a man and a woman said to belong to this gang, who were arrested at a house at W A Silva Mawatha in Wellawatte on 1 August. The shooting of an army Captain on a busy Colombo road in the afternoon of 25 August was attributed to this gang. The Captain was later revealed to be the ADC to Major General Neil Dias, who was thought to be the actual target of this shooting.

A raid carried out by a combined police-army team in Kandy on 15 August resulted in the arrest of 2 LTTE suspects and a large haul of RDX explosives from a house at Aludeniya in Udunuwara, Kandy. The investigators unearthed at least 12 boxes of high-powered explosives weighing 9 kilogrammes each from a secret compartment concealed by a grinding stone in the kitchen of the house. Police investigators stated that the explosives had been brought to Kandy from the Eastern Province, for the purpose of attacking VIP's visiting Kandy. Both the arrested men consumed cyanide on arrest; one of them died immediately, and the other was taken to the hospital. The Burgher lady who had sub-let rooms in her house to the two men as well as her two children, aged 10 and 14, and two other Sinhala persons - a man and a woman - who were frequent visitors at her home were all taken into custody in the process of this investigation.

On 16 August, the train bound for Kandy from Badulla was derailed due to an explosion on the railway tracks at Rozella, about 2 miles away from the Hatton Railway Station. Investigations revealed that the blast had been caused by a mine which had been detonated through a remote control device. Police officials engaged

in unravelling the blast arrested 24 youths from the area on suspicion. Three of them were released on bail by the Hatton Magistrate on 18 August; the 21 others were released without bail. These 21 were discharged by the Magistrate on 28 August.

Anti-Harassment Committee

The Anti-Harassment Committee comprising 3 Cabinet Ministers and 5 MP's which was set up in July 1998 to enquire into instances of arrests and harassment of the public decided at a meeting in early August to set up a separate unit in the Police Department to assist it in its activities. This unit which would be headed by a DIG would be mandated not only to conduct investigations but also to liaise between detainees and their families. Senior State Counsel of the Attorney General's Department S K Gamlath will function as the Legal Advisor of this unit.

The Committee is headed by Minister Lakshman Jayakody; Ministers G L Peiris and Batty Weerakoon as well as MP's Sambanthan (TULF), Zuhair (SLMC) and Devananda (EPDP) are members; the IGP, the Army Commander, and representatives of the Air Force, Navy and the Attorney General's Department also participate in the Committee.

The Committee has decided that all arrests made under Emergency Regulations (ER) and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) be reported to the Attorney General through the DIG (Crimes). The decision was made on a suggestion made by Attorney General Sarath N Silva. Mr Silva was arguing that unlike those persons arrested under normal law with the stipulation that they be produced before a Magistrate within 24 hours, special care should be taken to minimise the hardships faced by those taken into custody under ER's and the PTA. Committee Head Minister, Jayakody went on record as saying that the duty of the Committee was to ensure that no unlawful arrest is made, and that the main purpose of this Committee was to clear complaints quickly. MP Zuhair pointed out that many innocent civilians, especially Tamils, are subject to indiscriminate harassment in the process of security measures carried out against the LTTE; MP Sambanthan agreed that this was a serious issue.

Tamil Women in Prison

Following a visit by Woman's Minister, Hema Ratnayake, to the Women's Section of the Remand Prison in Colombo, several newspapers focused on the plight of Tamil women in this prison. The fact that the Minister had neglected to speak to the Tamil women during her visit was also highlighted.

Allegations of discrimination against the Tamil women prisoners by other prisoners and by Prisons officials constitute the most serious claim put forward by some of the journalists who accompanied the Minister on her visit to the prison. Tamil women prisoners went on record complaining that they were the last to receive any allocations - food, tea, soap, water; they also complained about the over-crowding and that sleeping arrangements were inadequate.

Disappearances

The new Commission of Inquiry into Disappearances which is chaired by Ms Manouri Muttetuwegama began its sittings in August in Mihintale in Anuradhapura district and in Badulla divisional Secretariat in Badulla district.

The mandate is to look into the cases which were not covered by the previous Commissions.

The case against those accused of abducting and 'disappearing' 32 schoolboys in Embilipitiya in 1989 continued to be heard by Ratnapura High Court Judge, Nanayakkara. Defence submission in respect of 1st, 2nd, 4th and 6th accused were made during the court hearings in the month.

The Police Department in the meanwhile announced that over 100 Police officers whose names had transpired before the Commissions into Disappearances, and into the allegations of a 'torture camp' at Batalanda were being sent on compulsory leave. These include DIG Meril Gunaratna, SSP's H G Wickremasinghe and Mahanyake and S P Dharmaratna.

Media Freedom

TNL News Director Ms Ishini Wickremasinghe Perera resigned from her post on 3 August, alleging interference, and said that she feared for her safety due to threats she had received since she announced her de-

cision to leave. Three other members of staff at TNL, including Editor in charge of News, Saddhamangala Suriyabandara have alleged that they too have been locked out of their offices and prevented from working.

The President has ordered an immediate inquiry into the allegation made by well-known TV producer, Parakrama Niriella that he and another colleague were assaulted while working in Hanguranketha on 9 August. Mr Niriella has said that it was PA supporters who carried out this assault.

Several Tamil journalists were arrested during August, and detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. S Srigajan, a long-time resident of Colombo and a Sub-Editor of the VEERAKESARI was taken into custody from the premises of the newspaper offices in August. Following his arrest, P Manikkavasagar, the Vavuniya correspondent for VEERAKESARI and several other news agencies was also arrested. It later transpired that this was a case of mistaken identity. The person wanted for questioning was in fact another P Manikkavasagar, working in the technical section of the VEERAKESARI press, who was later arrested as well. Mr Manikkavasagar from Vavuniya was released 3 weeks after his arrest with no charges being brought against him. Mr Srigajan has filed a fundamental rights application challenging the legality of his arrest and detention.

On 28 August, Mr Mathusoothanan, a journalist at SARANIHAR, the Tamil fortnightly, was abducted by persons in civil clothes in an unmarked vehicle from Galle Road, Colombo 4 in broad daylight. He was later discovered to be held at the Peliyagoda Police Station, under arrest by the CID. He has now been served with a Detention Order.

Editors of both the SUNDAY TIMES and the SUNDAY LEADER complained of visits from the CID to their newspaper offices. The investigators were seeking information about the sources from which the newspapers had obtained a copy of a letter asking for the withdrawal of the names of Ministers Jeyaraj Fernando-pulle and G L Peiris from members of the Parliamentary Select Committee appointed to look into allegations

(continued on next page)

(continued from page 11)

against the work of the Bribery Commission.

The Free Media Movement has also decided to challenge the postponement of elections in Court, on the basis that it violates the democratic rights of Sri Lankan citizens.

Media Minister Samaraweera instituted action against the Editor of the SUNDAY LEADER for defamation, claiming Rs. 600 million as compensation.

The Defence Ministry has refused to approve the script of an English film to be produced by the North-East Governor and well-known film actor Gamini Fonseka. The film, entitled Judgment, has been determined to be a wrong portrayal of the Independence struggle in Sri Lanka and challenges the country's territorial integrity and government policy on peace.

Children's Rights

A report prepared by UNICEF and released in August revealed that over 100,000 Sri Lankan children are employed as domestic servants, while over 22,000 live on the streets. 150,000 children were among those displaced by the war in the north and east, and

over 50,000 children had been killed as a direct consequence of the war.

The Presidential Task Force on Child Reforms has come up with a draft Bill, the National Child Protection Authority Act, which was tabled in Parliament on 20 August. The Act is expected to introduce certain new aspects to the Penal Code, for example criminalising the use of children for begging and the production and distribution of child pornography. Human rights observers have commented that the text of the draft Bill included certain sections preventing public scrutiny or inquiry into the

activities of the Authority, which they deem to be a negative feature of the proposed draft legislation.

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Attempt to Silence Convicted Soldier

Amnesty International has expressed fears for the safety of Somaratne Rajapakse who was admitted to the Welikada prison hospital following an attack on him by prison guards on 23 August 1998. One of the attackers subsequently visited him in the hospital and allegedly threatened him not to talk about the incident "or you won't be able to leave the prison alive". Somaratne Rajapakse sustained injuries to his mouth, below his left eye and to his chest.

Many believe that the assault on Rajapakse is part of an attempt to silence him from talking about the existence of a mass grave in Chemmani in Jaffna.

In July Somaratne Rajapakse and five other members of the security forces were sentenced to death after being found guilty of the rape, abduction and murder of a young woman, Krishanthy Kumarasamy, together with her mother, brother and neighbour. Their bodies had been discovered at Chemmani, Jaffna district,

northern Sri Lanka, two years earlier. During the trial Somaratne Rajapakse revealed to the court that 300 to 400 other bodies were also buried at this site.

Following these revelations both the Criminal Investigation Department and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka took sworn statements from him and his fellow convicts. The Sri Lankan authorities were called upon by Amnesty International to authorise a parallel investigation by both organisations into the mass graves, with the assistance of international forensic experts. Amnesty International has also appealed for the commutation of the death sentences.

It understood that Rajapakse in his statement to the Human Rights Commission is alleging that Welikada prison guards tried to force him to file a statement to say he is mentally unstable. He has said that he tried to swallow the statement which the guards were forcing him to sign so that he can use it as proof, but the

guards had assaulted him. He told the HRC that the prison guards tried to get him to sign the statement saying he was mentally unbalanced at the time when he alleged that some 400 Tamil civilians were buried in a mass grave at Chammani in Jaffna.

Some human rights organisations are concerned that even after the incident the prisoner has been given no extra security and is still in the custody of the same Welikada jailors. "There have been no extra security measures after the alleged assault," HRC member Javid Yusuf said.

Mr. Yusuf said the HRC was not involved in taking the prisoner to Jaffna, to identify the mass grave site and it did not know what progress had been made.

Meanwhile, UN Human Rights Commissioner, Mary Robinson the former president of Ireland has agreed to give all possible assistance to probe the mass grave site at Chemmani. "We wrote to her and the UN body is willing to give its expertise. The Sri Lankan ambassador in Geneva is finalising the details," Mr. Yusuf said.

The UN has an expert forensic team, which has excavated and recorded evidence of other mass graves in Bosnia and Rwanda.

CHEMMANY MASS GRAVE CRM Stresses Need for Scientific Investigation

The Civil Rights Movement (CRM) of Sri Lanka has called upon the government to conduct the investigation into the alleged presence of a mass grave at Chemmany in northern Jaffna "in accordance with modern scientific methods, with the help if need be of UN or other international expertise in addition to our own scientists."

A recent statement by the Secretary of CRM, Suriya Wickremasinghe states as follows:

It is essential that steps be taken to test the veracity of the reported statement by two of the accused in the Krishanthy Kumarasamy murder case that several hundred human bodies were buried by members of the armed forces at Chemmany near where the remains of Krishanthy and her family were found. This allegation has to be considered in the context of reports that several hundred persons

have "disappeared" in the North subsequent to the armed forces taking control of the Jaffna peninsula in mid 1996, many of whom remain unaccounted for.

The manner in which any preliminary physical investigation is made at the site, as well as any follow-up excavation that may be found necessary, is of particular concern to the Civil Rights Movement. CRM reiterates here the concerns it raised in 1994 in relation to the excavations in the South at Suriyakanda and elsewhere.

The excavation of a mass burial site, where many bodies may be packed into one place, poses technical problems much greater than the exhumation of individual graves. An enormous amount of information can be revealed about how people died, who they were, and how they came to be there, provided the excavation is done with the necessary skill,

avoiding the danger of irreversible destruction of vital evidence in the process.

So seriously does the international community take this question that the United Nations has published a Manual on the Effective prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions. This publication includes a section which is a model protocol for the disinterment and analysis of skeletal remains.

This UN Model Protocol, which CRM has reproduced in its Briefing Paper No 2 of 1994, describes the finding and excavating of the grave site as the "archaeological phase" of the investigation. At this stage the training of an archaeologist plays a crucial role. Advice as to how to locate a grave site is given (eg. surface contours and variation in local vegetation, signs of topsoil being disturbed and mixed with subsoil, use of a metal probe to locate the less compact soil which is characteristic of a grave fill etc). A numbering system should be devised and the site mapped. Any remains found should first be

"Tamils Should Return Home" - High Commissioner

The British High Commissioner in Sri Lanka has urged Tamils living overseas to return home and help restore peace to the strife-torn island.

British High Commissioner (ambassador) David Tatham said Tamils abroad should supplement the efforts of the international community to rebuild the town of Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka.

Tatham told local community leaders during a visit to Jaffna recently that they should ask the Tamil diaspora to help "not in destroying this island, but in rebuilding it."

"What I would urge you to do is to appeal to the Tamil diaspora, to your relations and your friends living abroad, to help not in destroying this island, but in rebuilding it," an embassy statement quoted Tatham as telling Jaffna's Mayor and other community leaders. (The Mayor Mr P Sivapalan has since been killed along with many others in bomb attack believed to be by the LTTE on 11 September).

"I think you should be asking (Tamil) people living in England, in Canada, in Australia, wherever, to

send money to help restore the library, to help restore life in this city.

"If they have property here they should repair it. They should come back, they should try and restore the life to Jaffna," Tatham said. Britain, Germany and the European Union are involved in aid projects in the Jaffna peninsula.

The British diplomat calling for a political settlement to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict said, "War was wished on the government in 1995 - it was not the desire of the government and I believe that the government wishes to see a political solution..." Tatham said.

He said the assassination of Jaffna mayor Sarojini Yogeswaran in May this year was a blow to democracy in the region and "deplored all over the world."

The British High Commission statement made no reference to the LTTE, which maintains its international secretariat in London.

"There is no monopoly of suffering in this country - every community has suffered in this country," Tatham added. "Some may have suf-

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"pedestaled", that is to say excavated by digging all around so that they are fully exposed without being disturbed. The UN Protocol specifically warns that:

"A burial recovery should be handled with the same exacting care given to a crime-scene search. Efforts should be co-ordinated between the principal investigator and the consulting physical anthropologist or archaeologist. Human remains are frequently exhumed by law enforcement officers or cemetery workers unskilled in the techniques of forensic anthropology. Valuable information may be lost in this manner and false information is sometimes generated. Disinterment by untrained persons should be prohibited. The consulting anthropologist should be present to conduct or supervise the disinterment".

There have been great strides in this field of forensic anthropology in recent years. Mass burial sites have

been excavated with the help of international expert teams in Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kurdistan Iraq, the former Yugoslavia and Ethiopia. The United Nations and international NGO's are prepared to provide personnel, both to assist in the disinterment process itself and also to train local staff to do the work in future. Subsequent to the experience of Suriyakanda, there have been workshops held in Sri Lanka with foreign forensic anthropologists and our own scientists have now had some opportunity of seeing what basic procedures should be followed.

CRM urges that careful investigation of the allegations made by the accused in the Krishanthi Kumaraswamy case be instituted and that any examination of the alleged site of burials be conducted in accordance with modern scientific methods, with the help if need be of UN or other international expertise in addition to our own scientists. ●

ferred more than others but no community wishes the war to continue."

Britain last year brokered an agreement between the ruling People's Alliance coalition and the opposition United National Party to consult each other on a solution to the conflict. "We can do a certain amount, but the efforts for peace must come from both sides, just as the effort for rehabilitation and reconstruction must come from all sides," Tatham said.

"Of course we want to see negotiations resumed. We want to see a political settlement because I think we all feel that this is a problem which cannot be solved by war."

"I hope that we can use the resources of the Tamil community abroad - and there are some very successful and very rich people there - to supplement the funds and the efforts of the international community and the voluntary organisations in restoring peace and prosperity to your city," Tatham said.

Britain is providing aid to restore electricity in Jaffna, while several European nations are also giving money for reconstruction.

Even President's Phone is Tapped!

All officers attached to the Special Telephone Exchange maintained at Cambridge Place, Colombo by the National Intelligence Bureau for the purpose of tapping Telephone conversations of important people, have been transferred with immediate effect on the basis of listening to telephone conversations of the President as well.

The officer in charge of this clandestine operation, which has been going on from the days of the former regime, is a Police Inspector named Senaratne, who was trained in such operations in Israel and is said to be the most qualified in Sri Lanka. The habit of listening to conversations of reputed people and sending a daily report to the President, was started during the former regime. This operation was maintained by DIG Punya De Silva.

For some reason or the other, the President was able to learn of these people recording her own conversa-

tions. She has immediately removed all officials in charge of this operation and appointed a new task force to handle it. It is also said that the sudden transfer of DIG Punya De Silva was probably due to this reason. However, it is not clear why these conversations were listened to and to whom copies were given to.

The new machines bought from Alcatel in France by this Operation housed at Cambridge Place, Colombo, has the capacity to tap 10,000 phones where as the old set up could only tap 1,000 telephones of the Greater Colombo area. They also have the capacity to tap out station telephones and cellular phone conversations, other than Dialog GSM.

To be Deported from Australia to France

A Tamil man with French citizenship faces deportation from Australia after a court recently ruled against his claim that the French authorities were unable or unwilling to protect him from persecution by the Tamil Tigers in France.

A full bench of the Federal Court reversed a single judge's decision last year to overturn the Refugee Review Tribunal's refusal to grant Nagaratnam Prathapan refugee status in Australia. Justices James Burchett, Antony Whitlam and Kevin Lindgren were unanimous in their finding.

Justice Lindgren, who wrote the court's judgment, said Mr Prathapan was granted refugee status in France after fleeing Sri Lanka in 1983 and became a French citizen in 1992. He married in India in 1993, and late the following year brought his wife to Australia, where a son was born.

Mr Prathapan claimed he had been accused in France of working against the Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). He said that shortly before coming to Australia he was accosted by four young Tamils outside the Madeleine metro station in Paris and sprayed in the face with a burning chemical. Mr Prathapan said he did not complain to French police because he feared reprisals from the LTTE.

The Refugee Review Tribunal found that France was a country which effectively enforced its laws and security arrangements, and was

not satisfied there was a real chance Mr Prathapan would be so seriously harmed in France by the LTTE that it would amount to persecution.

Captain, Lieutenant Remanded Over Death of Youth

A captain and a lieutenant attached to Sinnakade Army Camp in Jaffna, arrested in connection with the death of a youth from Gurnagar were remanded till September 18 by M. Thirunavakkarasu, Additional Magistrate, Jaffna reports from North indicated.

The youth, Gnanasingham Anton Gunasekaran (26) proprietor of a video shop at Mount Carmel Street, Gurnagar had been arrested by security forces from his home on the night of September 9 and two days later his body was handed over to Jaffna Teaching Hospital by the Army, reports said.

Additional Magistrate Thirunavakkarasu directed Police to exhume the body of deceased and submit it for a forensic report. He ordered that the two army officials attached to Sin-

nakade camp be detained till the next date of hearing on September 18.

The father of deceased Gnanamutthu Gnanasinham (56) in his evidence told court that his son had been arrested by some army officers who came in an unnumbered vehicle on the night of September 9.

When he later inquired about the whereabouts of his son from the Gurnagar army camp he was told that they didn't know anything about the arrest.

Subsequently he had complained to the ICRC and Human Rights Commission authorities in Jaffna by which time some army officers had come and searched his house, the reports said.

On September 12, policemen attached to Kopay station had informed him that the corpse of his son was in the Jaffna Teaching Hospital and that the deceased had committed suicide by jumping out of a building while in the custody of security forces in Jaffna, he said.

An examination of the corpse had revealed that there were pin prick injuries on the body of the deceased and the burial took place on September 13. He further told court that he suspected foul play.

Victim of Torture

Amnesty International has learned that Thambirajah Kamalathan, aged 19, who was tortured for several days following his arrest by police on 15 July 1998, appeared before the Colombo magistrate's court on 6 August and was remanded into judicial custody at Colombo Remand Prison the same day. Relatives were able to visit him there on 10 and 11 August.

According to the latest information Thambirajah Kamalathan experienced pain all over his body and had difficulty walking for several days following his transfer to the Terrorist Investigation Department of the police headquarters in Colombo on 21 July. Here he was visited by delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who provided him with treatment. He has also been administered painkillers by prison guards. He has not to date been visited by the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka.

No investigation into reports of

his torture at Pettah police station after his arrest is known to have been initiated.

Amnesty International states that Kamalathan is no longer believed to be at risk of torture although the organization will continue to closely monitor his situation.

In an earlier statement dated 6 August Amnesty International expressed serious concerns for Kamalathan who was subjected to torture for several days following his arrest by police on 15 July 1998 in the capital, Colombo.

Two witnesses saw Kamalathan being assaulted with a rod at Pettah police station. Chili powder was reportedly rubbed into his eyes and his genitals were squeezed. After two or three days he had difficulty walking. One of his legs was apparently swollen below the knee. He was transferred to the custody of the Terrorist Investigation Department on 21 July

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FINDING A WAY OUT OF A STALEMATED WAR

Jehan Perera

The killing of the new Mayor of Jaffna, Ponniah Sivapalan, and the Jaffna town commander, Brigadier Susantha Mendis and several other senior civil and security forces personnel, should not have come as a surprise or as a shock. Too little has changed in the manner in which the war is being fought and too many of people like Mayor Sivapalan and Brigadier Mendis have died in the past few years for a more placid expectation of the war to be a reality. Many more persons on both sides of the divide are likely to die in a similar manner in the future as well unless, of course, the conflicting parties change their attitudes and strategies to resolve the conflict, without continuing on their present mutually destructive course.

This is where the Northern Ireland example can be inspirational. Not so long ago, it seemed that there was no way out of the violent conflict in Northern Ireland. The Protestant majority wanted to remain within the United Kingdom. The Catholic minority wanted to join with Ireland. The British wanted to defeat and disarm the guerillas on both sides, especially the IRA, and so they had sent their army in. But to no avail. That is, until both the British and the IRA were pre-

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and is reported to be held at the 6th Floor, police headquarters in Colombo. His relatives were not been allowed to visit him there.

Kamalathanan was one of 192 Sri Lankan asylum seekers whose boat was intercepted by the Senegalese navy on 24 February off the coast of Senegal. Soon afterwards they were all returned to Sri Lanka, where they were arrested and held in detention for several weeks. After he was released on bail on 17 March, Kamalathanan returned to his home in Jaffna. He arrived in Colombo on 13 July with permission from the Ministry of Defence to attend a court hearing scheduled for 31 July.

pared to openly admit that they could not solve the problem and achieve their aspirations through warfare.

On the British side, there was a public acknowledgment that the army could only limit but not suppress IRA guerilla action. In turn, the IRA admitted that while they could fight on for another decade if need be, at the end of the decade they would be nowhere near pushing the British army out of Northern Ireland. In the meantime the people on whose behalf they were fighting would be the losers.

Unfortunately, we in Sri Lanka have still to come to this stage of realisation. For sure, the government has, on many occasions said that a political solution is necessary to end the conflict. But it seems that in their heart of hearts, many government leaders continue to believe that a military victory is possible. And so, on and off we hear stories that the LTTE is on their last legs. These stories may firm up the determination of the government decision-makers to hang tough, to wait another six months, for the tide to turn decisively in the army's favour. So far, it never has.

The constant feature of the 15 year war, is that the LTTE is around and remains able to hit targets especially in the north-east.

As for the LTTE, they have never conceded that they might not be able to achieve Tamil Eelam by force of arms. On the contrary, they keep alive the myth of the ultimate invincibility of themselves and of their leadership, to keep on going the way they are despite the major losses they have sustained. The LTTE war machine may continue to fight and die yet another day, but the people pay the price.

Perversity

The killing of military officers can be seen in the context of warfare between the armed forces of the state and the LTTE. The killing of civilian administrators may also be seen in this light by the LTTE and its sup-

porters. But the perversity inherent in certain LTTE actions cannot be glossed over, especially where it concerns the impact on civilian welfare. There is a ruthless logic that the LTTE employs - the people's welfare is secondary to the LTTE's primary goal of achieving "self-determination" for the Tamil people under LTTE leadership. The fact that bombing the municipality building and killing municipal officials will make the delivery of municipal services to the people more difficult seems to be a matter of little consequence to them.

As part of the LTTE's single minded belief that it alone, of all the Tamil parties, is on the right track, they have systematically been trying to eliminate any semblance of opposition to their programme within Tamil society. But the fact is that the war between the LTTE and the government has led to the greatest devastation of Tamil society ever in the history of this country. Tens of thousands have lost their lives, several hundreds of thousands are internally displaced or in refugee camps, and another large number amounting to over a quarter of the Tamil population now live overseas.

But apart from targeting their Tamil rivals the LTTE have also been quite adept at destroying the basic economic infrastructure that undergirds the economic life of the Tamil people. There are many examples that can be given from the north-east. About three months ago, Mannar island on which Mannar town is located, received electricity from the national grid for the first time ever. The fact that it took so long for a basic necessity such as electricity to come to the administrative capital of the Mannar district is, of course, yet another factor that can be seen as a cause of the ethnic conflict - the unequal development of Sri Lanka to the detriment of the people of the north-east.

Nonetheless, receiving electricity from the national grid, instead of from old diesel generators that frequently failed, is considered by the people as something of a blessing in the midst of the general adversity of the war. But within days, the LTTE knocked down some of the pylons that brought the electricity to Mannar town. These were soon repaired by the government agencies responsible for ma-

intaining the supply, only to be blown up again by the LTTE. Finally, leading citizens of Mannar had to take their lives into their hands and appeal to the LTTE to leave their basic infrastructure alone.

Similarity

But as the saying goes, it takes two to tango. The LTTE is not alone in its cavalier disregard of the interests of the civilian population. The government is guilty of similar callousness. There have been reports in the Tamil press and from international NGOs about the crisis situation in parts of the Wanni that are in the general area of the Jayasikuru military operation. Basically, there has been drastic cut back in government-supplied food rations to the internally displaced population in those areas.

The government has attributed the cut back in food rations to the budgetary difficulties it is facing. In the past the government has been praised for sending food to LTTE-controlled areas, and has been cited as a rare example of such benevolence. But there seems to be a strong likelihood that governmental frustration at the slow progress of the Jayasikuru military offensive has also contributed to the policy decision to reduce the food rations. It seems that military requirements have induced the government to go ahead with using food as a weapon of war to compel people to leave their home areas and move into government-controlled "cleared areas".

Today, in the Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu districts there is a virtual shut down of government administration and the food distribution network. For instance, out of approximately 70,000 internally displaced families in the Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu districts, food rations have been stopped to all but a third of this number from June this year. Government servants have to implement this decision by denying food rations to needy families. While they have protested to the government, they have also been forced to close down their offices as they face threats from sections of the needy people.

This uprising of "the people" is a phenomenon that can develop in interesting ways. As the area is under LTTE control, it is highly unlikely that the people who are protesting are

doing so independently of the LTTE. There is every likelihood that the LTTE is encouraging the protests. But when large numbers of people get together, and mobilise in their own interests, they soon begin to develop a dynamic and an integrity of their own. Very often leaders appoint their personal friends and trusted confidantes to positions of authority only to find them acting with unexpected autonomy. It will be interesting to see how the LTTE deals with the leaders of the protests in the future.

It has been pointed out that the bomb blast in the Jaffna municipality building occurred in the wake of President Kumaratunga's hardline speech rejecting unconditional talks with the LTTE. Once again the cycle of escalation seems to have fed on itself. As the more responsible party by definition, if not actuality, it is for the government to commence the de-escalation process.

As a starter, the government should give priority in its resource allo-

cation to assisting the internally displaced people who are the most helpless and victimised section of the Sri Lankan population. In addition, if budgetary constraints do indeed pose a few problems, the government should not hesitate to obtain the food it requires from international donor agencies which have expressed their readiness to provide the necessary rations.

It is crucially important in creating an environment conducive to peace talks that the government clearly asserts its humanitarian commitments that override any possible military requirements, such as using food as another instrument in the overall strategy of the war. Priority given to the welfare of the people will provide convincing evidence of governmental good faith in seeking a negotiated political solution. That is what the Tamil people are waiting so desperately for, and not even the LTTE will be able to ignore. ●

Amnesty Protests Against LTTE Abductions

Amnesty International has expressed fears for the safety of the lives of five members of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) who are alleged to have been abducted and held by the LTTE. The five are A Rasaratnam, E Nayavel, Thirugnanam Sambandan, Kasinathan Naguleswaran and Rajendran Sudarsan.

AI in a statement dated 11 September states, "None of the above-named men, all members of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) living in areas controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in northern Sri Lanka, have been seen since being recently taken prisoner by LTTE members. There are fears that they are being tortured during interrogation by the LTTE about SEP activists. Their detention has led to further fears for the safety of other local members of the SEP.

"A Rasaratnam and E Nayavel were taken prisoner on 31 August 1998 from their homes at Kanchisvapuram, Killinochchi district, by members of the intelligence wing of the LTTE. Relatives who later went to enquire

at the LTTE office at Naichikuda were told that they had been transferred to Visumadu.

"Two other members of the SEP, Thirugnanam Sambandan and Kasinathan Naguleswaran, were similarly taken away in late July from their homes at Thirunapuram, also in Killinochchi district. A fifth member, Rajendran Sudarsan, was taken prisoner on 2 August.

"Complaints have been lodged with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). According to the relatives, to date the LTTE has not responded to the ICRC's representations on their behalf.

"BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The Socialist Equality Party (SEP), formerly known as the Revolutionary Communist League, is a left-wing revolutionary political party made up of members from all the ethnic communities in Sri Lanka.

"In the early 1990s, soon after it gained control over large parts of the north and east of the country, the

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The Case for Revisiting the Indo-Lanka Accord

Dr. S. Narapalasingam

The historic significance of the July 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord is that it identified that the solution the long-standing ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka was through a sharing of state-power and this was to be achieved by devolution of powers to the provinces. Though the devolution scheme instituted under the Thirteenth Amendment (1987) to the 1978 constitution and the Provincial Councils Act (1987) suffered from many deficiencies, its failure was more due to the lack of commitment by the then government to implement it fully on one side and on the other the LTTE's stance - initially having accepted the Indo-Lanka Accord, later not only to reject it but also to lock itself into a military confrontation with the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF).

The Indo-Lanka Accord and the scheme of devolution it envisaged by it was endorsed when the UNP was in power and therefore it can be assumed that it is committed to devolution of powers as a basis for a political solution to the ethnic problem. The present President of the country, then in opposition, also supported the Accord.

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LTTE was responsible for the killing of thousands of members of other armed Tamil groups. These included armed cadres as well as sympathizers of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF). Many other members of these groups were taken prisoner and remain unaccounted for to date.

"Although the ICRC is able to visit a small number of prisoners held by the

LTTE, including members of the security forces and Sinhalese fishermen, it has not been able to gain access to Tamil prisoners held by the LTTE, on political grounds."

But her government has now promoted proposals on the basis of the recognition that, if the conflict is to be resolved, the powers devolved under the Thirteenth Amendment need improvement by the grant greater degree of autonomy, particularly to the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The UNP, while not being prepared to accept and support the government's proposals, has put forward counter-proposals. During his visit to India, the UNP leader declared that the Provincial Council Act did not go far enough to address Tamil concerns, and that his party would go beyond by "building on what has been accepted in the Thirteenth Amendment and the Indo-Lanka Accord". What is essential to note is that, in spite of the absence of a joint approach, both the government and the opposition UNP are committed to devolution of powers as a means of conflict resolution as envisaged in the Indo-Lanka Accord as also is the fact that all the Tamil political parties and groups except the LTTE.

However, the position adopted by forces that purport to represent "Sinhala-Buddhist interests" as represented by the Sinhala Commission on the one side and those forces which purport to represent "Tamil interests" as represented by the LTTE on the other side are united in their opposition to the devolution proposals of either the government or the UNP for diametrically opposite reasons. The Sinhala Commission and those associated with it want a centralised unitary state-structure that would guarantee ethnic majoritarian domination. The LTTE and those associated with it seek "liberation" through separatism. These are forces in conflict, but they feed on each other for their existence and continuance.

The scheme of devolution as envisaged by either the government or the opposition cannot accommodate the extremist positions of the Sinhala Commission and the LTTE.

Sinhala Commission

The Sinhala Commission denies that there any "Tamil grievances". Even after 50 years of independence during which the two main Sinhalese-dominated political parties have governed the country, the Sinhala Commission asserts that there are many "Sinhalese grievances" that remain unaddressed. From the recommendations seen in its final report, it would seem that the members of the Commission believe it is by institutionalising the supremacy of Sinhala--Buddhists can their grievances be redressed more effectively. The fact that the northern and eastern provinces have been populated largely by Tamils and Muslims for centuries is also one of their grievances.

Their present motive is clearly to sabotage any attempts by the political parties to settle the ethnic conflict by devolving more powers to the Tamil regions. In this regard, the change from the recommendation contained in their interim report viz. the acceptance of the Thirteenth Amendment under which the system of Provincial councils was established to that in the final report which calls for the repeal of this Amendment is significant. This has placed the main opposition party; the UNP which did not express any dissenting views on the interim report in an awkward position. The UNP leader publicly stated soon after the release of the interim report that there was no serious difference between the UNP and the Sinhala Commission on the devolution question, as both had accepted the Thirteenth Amendment.

Recommendation 5 in the Sinhala Commission report calls "upon the Government to formally abrogate the Indo-Lanka Accord" as it "was signed under duress and threats." Recommendation 6 calls "upon the Government to repeal the 13th Amendment to the Constitution and the Provincial Councils Act and to rescind forthwith the temporary merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces all of which were steps taken in order to implement the Indo-Lanka Accord."

What the so-called learned and priestly members of the Commission seek is a return to a unitary centralised state structure that permitted the enactment of laws which deprived nearly two-million Tamil plantation workers of citizenship and disfran-

chised them and imposed Sinhala as the only official language. There is no recognition of the concepts of multi-ethnicity or pluralism. They want the main political parties in the island not to have any alliance with any political parties representing the minorities, especially the Ceylon Workers Congress which represents the plantation workers. In essence, what they are demanding is the dismantling of any ameliorative measures that have been taken by successive governments since the ethnic conflict escalated with the intention of managing it if not solving it.

One would have thought that the blood-letting in a fifteen-year armed conflict that has turned the small island into the foremost contemporary killing field in Asia (and some would say in the world) would have persuaded them to adopt positions of conciliation and compromise in keeping with their often proclaimed commitment to compassion and ahimsa so as to bring an end to the ongoing carnage and destruction. But that has not happened.

Recommendation 17 of the Sinhala Commission is more revealing of the sectarian and communalist disposition of its members: "Establish a Permanent Sinhala Human Rights Commission to keep a watch and review of all developments affecting the Sinhala people in particular and the nation in general and to take suitable steps in regard to any action tending to adversely affect the Sinhala people and the nation and also to further and advance the cause of the Sinhala people and the nation. Such a Human Rights Commission consisting of three persons may be appointed by the President of the National Joint Committee as persona designata and this could be approved by the National Joint Committee."

Like Buddhism which the Buddha proclaimed as a precept of universal application for all people, the concept of human rights as proclaimed by all the instruments of the United Nations Charter are of universal application for all peoples. But not to those of the Sinhala Commission. To them there is a special brand of Buddhism labelled "Sinhala-Buddhism". To them there is to be a special brand of human rights, and so they recommend a "Permanent Sinhala Human Rights Commission" to keep a watch and "take suitable steps in regard to any action tending

to adversely affect the Sinhala people and the nation and also to advance cause of the Sinhala people and the nation." If anyone wanted to commit damnation of the universality of both Buddhism and human rights, no one could have done better than the members of the Sinhala Commission, the self-proclaimed protectors of the "Sinhala-Buddhists" in Sri Lanka. Displaying its unmitigated arrogance of and unconcealed chauvinism, the Sinhala Commission says that the three members who would constitute "Permanent Sinhala Human Rights Commission" would be appointed by the "National Joint Committee" which constituted the Sinhala Commission!

LTTE and Tamils

The island-wide 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom has been described as a watershed in Sri Lankan politics and particularly Tamil politics. Never before have the Tamils of the island been subjected such uncontrolled violence resulting in unprecedented death and destruction of their property. The violence unleashed was pre-planned, organised and orchestrated by elements within the ruling party. The forces of law and order which were meant to protect the victims joined in the violence in many instances and in many places. By the imperative of safety and security, there was the inevitable movement of most of the Tamils then living in the rest of the island to the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Tamils began fleeing to India in their thousands to neighbouring India and other foreign lands in west by which the "Tamil problem" became internationalised. The government of the day not only failed to protect the victims of the violence, but failed even to sympathise with them. Some of the Ministers even went to the extent of explaining the violence as reflecting "the justifiable anger of the Sinhalese" for the killing of 23 soldiers in Jaffna by the LTTE.

President J R Jayawardene by introducing the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution (which mandated obedience to the then Constitution and made it a criminal offence to advocate "separatism", even by peaceful means) and requiring all Members of Parliament to take an oath of allegiance in accordance with the amendment which made it impossible for the then leading Tamil parliamentary party, the

TULF, to continue to function in parliament. The responsibility, therefore, for the emergence of the central role of Tamil non-parliamentary Tamil militancy represented by a plethora of groups most of which were not committed to the democratic process, but to armed rebellion must be placed on the shoulders of those who legislated for the exclusion of the Tamil political parties committed to the democratic and parliamentary process. The period since 1984 has witnessed a progressive marginalisation of the democratic forces and the emergence of the LTTE as the dominant politico-military organisation within the Tamil community. Today the democratic stream in Tamil politics has virtually dried up as the LTTE's strangle-hold grip on the Tamils has become almost total.

The exodus of Tamil refugees into India, and the resulting reactions in Tamil Nadu led to the increasing involvement of the Indian central government in the island's conflict and its efforts to promote a negotiated settlement. The attempt by government forces to seek a military suppression led to more displacement and exodus of refugees. This process of seeking a military solution by the government only served to drive the Tamil youth to join the militant movements, particularly to the LTTE which had developed a separatist agenda of a Tamil Eelam state as the only way to "liberate the Tamil people" from "Sinhala domination".

The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord was the result of many discussions between New Delhi and Colombo and between New Delhi and Tamil political parties, particularly the TULF, and it represented an attempt by India to reach a political settlement to the conflict in Sri Lanka which while maintaining the territorial integrity of the island as single nation-state would satisfy the Tamils of their legitimate rights as equal citizens. Through the settlement contained in the Accord India sought to stem the clamour for the creation of a separate state of Eelam as projected by the LTTE.

The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, the arrival of the IPKF and its presence in the North-East, and the then proposed establishment of Provincial Councils invested with devolved executive and legislative powers posed a threat to LTTE's political project of Eelam. At the same time President

Premadasa who assumed power in Colombo was also opposed to the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord for different reasons.

The talks between the Premadasa UNP government and the LTTE which commenced in April 1989 and lasted till June 1990 did not represent an exercise between two parties eager for a settlement, but a device resorted to by two parties for two, but opposite reasons to get rid of the IPKF and Indian involvement. Once the IPKF left at the end of March 1990, within a matter of few weeks the LTTE resumed its armed hostilities against government forces thus commencing what commentators have characterised as "Eelam War 2" which continued until January 1995 when a "cessation of hostilities" was entered into between the LTTE and the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga who came to power promising to end the ethnic war by negotiating with the LTTE. But the negotiations between the parties and the cessation of hostilities came to an abrupt and violent end when the LTTE resumed hostilities with the attack on the Sri Lankan navy in the Trincomalee harbour and in the process sinking two of its gunboats. Since then the war has continued with incalculable tragic loss of life, destruction of property and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

The LTTE depends solely on the military strategy for "liberating" the Tamils. The danger that lies ahead for the Tamil community in Sri Lanka comes precisely from this singular approach. Those who are likely to incur losses in the event of the failure of this venture will not be the expatriates many of whom support the LTTE in its war effort but the Tamils living in Sri Lanka. Experiences elsewhere with internal armed rebellions against states indicate where these have produced some degree of success it was due largely to the mature qualities such as political leadership, diplomacy and a willingness to compromise seen in the guerrilla leaders, combined with external support of foreign powers.

No Sri Lankan government will under any circumstances voluntarily agree to the partition the country. India's own interest will compel it to take whatever action necessary to prevent the creation of a separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka. Even a semi-autonomous

region under the principle of one country two different political systems with one based on multi-party democracy and the other on single party (authoritarian) rule will not be supported by India and other friendly countries. There is no powerful country that is hostile to Sri Lanka or unsympathetic to its government's determination to preserve the territorial integrity of the island and its democratic political system.

The opposition of the Western powers with regard to ethnically-based secession of existing states is clear from the stand the United States and the European Union in particular have taken with regard to the demand of the Albanians from the Kosovo region to secede from the federation of Yugoslavia, in spite of the fact that Kosovo is inhabited by almost 90 per cent ethnic Albanians. Europeans and Americans fear that allowing the Albanians to secede from Serbia would set a dangerous precedent in the region.

Some commentators believe that Western governments view the recent onslaught by Yugoslav forces against Kosovo Liberation Army as a necessary measure to coax the Kosovo rebels to negotiate for greater autonomy within the federation giving up their intransigent demand for separation. Hence NATO has not intervened militarily to stop the fighting, despite the earlier warning given to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic that if he continued his oppressive war NATO forces would step in to protect the Kosovans. They have allowed the present situation to occur, where a negotiated settlement will now be more on President Milosevic's terms than on those of Kosovan rebel leaders.

Prospects

What is clear is that there is no basis for a peaceful solution to the island's conflict on the basis of the extreme positions adopted by the forces represented by the Sinhala Commission and those represented by the LTTE.

The base from which any settlement has to be developed is already there pursuant to the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord in the form of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution and the Provincial Councils Act. It is also relevant here to draw attention to its preamble, in which both governments are com-

mitted to "preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and its character as a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious plural society in which all citizens can live in equality, safety and harmony, and prosper and fulfil their aspirations." Thus, both the extreme concepts of independent "Tamil Eelam" and the whole of Sri Lanka to be "the State where the power of Sinhala-Buddhists is supreme" are discounted in terms of the Accord. Even though many would have had reservations about India's involvement in the affairs of the island, all moderate Sri Lankans - Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims - who want to see an end to the ongoing war should be able to accept the framework of the Accord.

India's commitment to retain the terms of the Accord can also be seen from the Indian Government's counter draft to the Indo-Sri Lanka Friendship Treaty proposed by Sri Lanka in 1990. Article 1 in India's draft requires the parties to reaffirm their determination to implement in its totality the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord and the annexures thereto.

Instead of the government and the UNP engaging in an interminable debate about their proposals and counter-proposals, they could purposefully use the framework of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord as a base and discuss any changes or improvements to it that would be broadly acceptable to the majority of the people committed to a political settlement through negotiations.

If the political leaderships in the south succumb to the pressures of extremists as in the past, the same mistakes committed over the past five decades will be repeated and the people will be condemned to live in misery in the foreseeable future. Certainly, a country incapable of solving its current pressing problems cannot hope to face the new economic and social challenges and seize new opportunities that are emerging as a result of globalisation, disappearances of national frontiers and constraints, liberalisation of trade, modernisation of the means of transport and communications and increased dependence on private capital for investment in industries and economic infrastructure.

Nations can prosper in the new competitive world only if the collec-

(continued on next page)

The Northern Ireland Agreement A Model for Divided Societies

Thomas G. Fraser, University of Ulster

The political Agreement reached in Northern Ireland on 10 April 1998 is seen as marking a new departure in the political and constitutional history of Northern Ireland, and of the island of Ireland. The Agreement was reached between the two sovereign governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. More importantly, it was reached amongst most of the political parties in Northern Ireland, parties of widely different ideologies, representing two traditions which had been locked in bitter dispute for at least a century.

It was also agreed to by three political parties representing armed groups which had been engaged in violence for thirty years. By the time the Agreement came into effect, the Northern Ireland situation had claimed 3,247 lives and cost billions of pounds to the British exchequer. Northern Ireland had been western Europe's most intractable ethnic dispute since the Second World War. The purpose of this lecture is to identify the nature of the Northern Ireland problem, to examine previous attempts

(continued from page 20)

tive efforts of their citizens are directed towards overcoming the factors that inhibit development in its broadest sense. The political conditions for this to happen in Sri Lanka are yet to emerge. Those concerned more with the past than with the future cannot make any positive contribution to create these conditions. Members of the Sinhala Commission and like-minded elites can afford the luxury of wasting time and effort in agitating over some historical injustices done by the British colonial rulers but this will not help the vast majority of the people of Sri Lanka to escape from the poverty trap that is threatening to have a firm hold on them.

In a recent interview given by President Chandrika Kumaratunga to the Press Trust of India, she had said "that the government had never closed the doors on a negotiated settlement to

at resolving the conflict and why they failed, and to explain the forces which generated the present peace process. Finally, it will analyse the Agreement, identifying the key elements which are currently forming the basis for political and constitutional compromise. To what extent can this provide a model for other divided societies?

Northern Ireland Problem

There are at least three Northern Ireland problems, which are interlocked. Any solution has to address all three.

1. The Irish-British problem

Ireland's problem has been that it has been both too close and too far from Britain. It was far enough away to retain its own identity. That difference of identity was sharpened in the 16th century when the three elements of Britain, England, Scotland and Wales, became Protestant, while Ireland remained Catholic. But Ireland was too close to Britain, only, twenty miles at the nearest point, to escape the attentions of its larger neighbour.

Over the centuries, the British saw Ireland as essential to their security.

the ethnic problem". The LTTE must recognise that its military pursuit of its ideal of "Tamil Eelam" has already resulted in tragic consequences for the Tamil people. All realistic assessments indicate that the dream of Eelam has turned into a nightmare for the Tamil people themselves many of whom have already departed, and are still departing to foreign lands unable to withstand the horrors of this continuing war. If the LTTE is truly interested in the welfare of the Tamil people still remaining within the island, then its leadership should seek ways and means of returning to the negotiating table and seek a political settlement just as the Sinn Fein-IRA has done in Northern Ireland. In this event, the Tamils can hope to regain the moral support of foreign governments in obtaining their legitimate rights within the political framework as envisaged in the Indo-Lanka Accord. ●

In 1801, during the wars with France, this was recognised by the formal Union of the two countries, which became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. This Union ultimately failed. In the 19th century Irish nationalists asserted a distinctive Irish identity and argued that the Union had failed Ireland economically. The Great Famine of 1845-1849 in which one million died and one million emigrated seemed to confirm this. In 1919 the War of Independence began, which ended in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, and independence in 1922.

2. The Nationalist-Unionist problem

But Irish Nationalism was not straightforward. As it developed, Irish Nationalism had certain defining elements:

a. Economics. Nationalist economists argued that an Irish parliament in Dublin would promote Irish interests, unlike the Union parliament in London.

b. Culture. Nationalists wished to safeguard and promote a distinctively Irish culture against the dominant British culture. This included such elements as literature, Irish sports, and, above all, the Irish language. Culture was increasingly defined in Irish or Gaelic terms. They drew their inspiration from the myths and legends of the Irish past.

c. Territory. Since Ireland was geographically an island, Nationalists believed it was entitled to national self-determination.

d. Religion. The prime generating force behind Irish Nationalism was religion. Some Protestants were Nationalists, but overwhelmingly Nationalists saw Catholicism as marking them out as distinctively Irish.

Ulster unionism

In the early 17th century, large parts of Ulster were settled by Protestant settlers from Scotland and England. The purpose of this Plantation of Ulster was to establish a community which would identify with British interests in Ireland. Native Irish were dispossessed of their land and a bitter conflict broke out. Crucial events took place in the period 1688-1690. In the conflict over the British throne Irish Catholics supported the Catholic James II, while Protestants rallied to William III Prince of Orange. During the 105-day siege of Londonderry in 1688-1689, Protestants defended

the city against an Irish Catholic Army.

On 12 July 1690, William III defeated James II at the decisive Battle of the Boyne. These events confirmed a Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland for the next hundred years and are still vital to understanding the current situation. In the 19th century, Ulster industrialised, unlike the rest of Ireland. Ulster Protestants formed the Ulster Unionist movement which refused to identify with Irish Nationalism, seeing their future as linked with Britain. Why?

a. Economy. Ulster's industries were linked with British markets and resources.

b. Culture. Protestants identified with British culture, especially the English language. Their inspiration came from the Siege of Londonderry and the Battle of the Boyne, events which Nationalists saw as leading to their subjugation. Protestants commemorated these events, especially through the formation of the Orange Order, an exclusively Protestant order whose name honoured the memory of King William III, Prince of Orange.

c. Territory. For Unionists the national territory was not Ireland but the British Isles.

d. Religion. Protestants formed 25% of the Irish population. An Irish parliament in Dublin would inevitably lead to Catholic domination.

3. The third dimension to the Northern Irish problem which needs to be noted is a continuing tension between constitutional politics and violence, what in Ireland is called 'physical force'. These have been difficult to reconcile.

The solutions

Partition

In 1920, the British government passed the Government of Ireland Act. This envisaged setting up a parliament in Dublin for 26 overwhelmingly Catholic and Nationalist counties. The six predominantly Protestant and Unionist counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Londonderry, Fermanagh and Tyrone were to remain part of the United Kingdom, with a devolved parliament and government in Belfast. This was to be called Northern Ireland.

In addition, there was to be a Council of Ireland to foster future Irish unity and discuss matters of concern to

both parts of Ireland. The Government of Ireland Act is the basis of the present structure of Ireland, especially Northern Ireland.

What were the defects in the partition solution?

a. The fundamental problem was, and remains, that the six counties of Northern Ireland were far from exclusively Protestant and Unionist. Two counties, Fermanagh and Tyrone, had Catholic majorities of 55%. The second largest city, Londonderry, had a Catholic majority of 66%. Overall, the Catholic/Nationalist population of Northern Ireland was 34%; it has since grown to 42%. The Catholic community was too small to challenge for effective power, but too large to be assimilated into Protestant structures of Northern Ireland. The Catholic minority looked to the day when Ireland would be re-united and remained overwhelmingly Nationalist in belief. The Agreement is the most recent attempt to deal with this dilemma, which is at the core of the Northern Ireland problem.

b. The system of government left Catholics excluded from political power. Although sovereign authority remained with the British parliament in London, to which Northern Ireland sent members, effective power was exercised by the local parliament in Belfast. This was set up the 'Westminster model' but this rests on the principal that political power changes with the wishes of the electorate. In Northern Ireland this was never the case, since Unionists were always in the majority. Not only did Nationalists never form the government, but permanent Unionist would meant that patterns of discrimination built up which favoured the Protestant community and left the Catholic minority even more alienated and marginalised.

c. This was compounded by economic decline. Economic difficulties meant that the Protestant majority was less inclined to make gestures to the Catholic minority which might win support for Northern Ireland.

1968-1972: The collapse of the 1920 settlement

In the years 1968-1972, Nationalist frustrations in Northern Ireland finally boiled over. In 1968 Civil Rights protests demanded the removal of the most obvious Catholic grievances. In 1970 there was serious rioting between Catholics and Protestants, with a

number of deaths. This had the following results:

a. The British army and used in a peacekeeping role, which meant that effective responsibility was passing from the devolved government in Belfast to the government in London.

b. At the end of 1969 the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) was formed, initially to defend Catholic areas from Protestant attack. By the summer of 1970, the IRA had engaged in hostilities to end partition, beginning attacks on both the British army and the locally-recruited police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). By 1972, the IRA had become a formidable force. Its political wing was Provisional Sinn Fein.

c. Under the pressure of these events, the Ulster Unionist Party fell apart. By 1972, there was the Ulster Unionist Party, led by the Northern Ireland Prime Minister Brian Faulkner but this was badly split. A rival party, the Democratic Unionist Party, was formed by a Protestant clergyman, the Reverend Ian Paisley. Two armed groups were formed on the Protestant side, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), which carried out attacks against the IRA and the Catholic community. The fragmentation of the Unionist community was to prove a major difficulty in finding a settlement, and still does.

d. A new constitutional Nationalist party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, was formed. Opposed to violence, it had to compete with Sinn Fein for Catholic votes, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Hence, it was also difficult to find a common voice on the Nationalist side.

New solutions

In 1972, faced with a deteriorating security situation, the British government abolished the government and parliament in Belfast. Its strategy was to find a constitutional structure which would meet the wish of the Protestant majority to remain part of the United Kingdom, while giving Catholics some say in government and acknowledging their sense of being Irish.

The Sunningdale Agreement, 1973-1974

The major attempt by the British and Irish governments to create a new structure was the Sunningdale Agreement, reached with Brian Faulkner's

Unionists and the SDLP in December 1973. It proposed to set up a new devolved Assembly, with an Executive in which the Unionists and SDLP would share power. The Agreement included a Council of Ireland. The Executive worked for five months until it was overthrown by a major strike, organised by Protestant workers and supported by the UDA and UVF. Why did the settlement fail?

a. The negotiations did not include the Democratic Unionists, the UDA and UVF. Brian Faulkner's Unionist Party also split on the Agreement. The political base for the Agreement in the Protestant community proved too small. Faulkner could never deliver sufficient Unionists - the other parties to the Agreement failed to understand this.

b. Protestants who might have supported sharing power with the SDLP would not agree to a Council of Ireland. Faced with the IRA campaign, they felt they were being pushed into a united Ireland - this was the basis of the May 1974 strike.

Stalemate and the political rise of Sinn Fein

Politics stagnated until 1981 when IRA prisoners began a Hunger Strike. Bobby Sands and nine other prisoners died. During the Hunger Strike, Sands won the constituency of Fermanagh-South Tyrone to parliament in London. In November 1981, Sinn Fein articulated a new strategy of the armalite and the ballot box. In 1983, the Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams won the West Belfast seat in parliament. At the same time, the IRA campaign continued. In October 1984, it came closely to killing Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in a bomb attack.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement, 1985

In an attempt to move the political situation forward, the British and Irish governments entered into negotiations. Amongst other objectives they hoped to sustain the SDLP in the face of the advance of Sinn Fein, and to shock the Unionists into the need to negotiate.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement left Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, but set up structures which would give the government of the Republic a consultative role in Northern Ireland's affairs. But the overall effect was to embitter Unionists, especially as they had been deliberately excluded from the negotiations. The

result was to delay real negotiations on Northern Ireland's future.

Political progress

In 1991-1992, the British government began a new political initiative, marked by two policy statements. The first, in 1989, was that the IRA could not be defeated by political means alone. The second, in 1991, was that future discussions would focus upon three relationships, those within Northern Ireland, those between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, and those between the British and Irish governments. This structure was ultimately embodied in the Agreement.

Within Northern Ireland, two strands were developing. The first was an escalation of violence. The strategy of the UDA and UVF was to attack Nationalist targets to convince the Catholic population that there was too high a price to pay for the IRA campaign. In an incompetent attempt to attack the UDA leadership the IRA killed ten innocent people in Belfast in October 1993; in retaliation the UDA killed seven people near Londonderry.

Despite such violence, political moves were being made. In December 1993, the British and Irish governments issued the Downing Street Declaration. This tried to send signals to both paramilitaries. To Nationalists it conceded that it was 'for the people of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise the right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish'. Unionists were reassured that such self-determination 'must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland'.

Breakthrough

These moves were reinforced in discussions between the leader of the SDLP, John Hume, and the Sinn Fein President, Gerry Adams. On 31 August 1994, the IRA announced a complete ceasefire, to be followed on 13 October by the UDA and UVF.

The Northern Ireland

These ceasefires were partly an admission that no side was winning the armed struggle. In response in February 1995 the British and Irish governments issued the Framework

Documents. These sustained Northern Ireland's position in the United Kingdom but with strong all-Ireland bodies at governmental and civil service level intended to win Nationalist support. Unionists were slow to grasp that Documents reinforced their position.

In fact progress proved uneven. The British government and the Unionists tried to insist on the decommissioning of IRA arms prior to substantive negotiations. In February 1996 the IRA ended its ceasefire with a large bomb in London. In May 1997 a new British government with a strong majority was able to move ahead. In July the IRA ceasefire was restored and substantive negotiations were able to take place. These involved all the main political parties, though not the democratic Unionist Party or the smaller United Kingdom Unionist Party which between them represented 40% of the Protestant electorate.

The Agreement

The negotiations had an independent chairman, the American Senator George Mitchell. Those taking part included the British and Irish government, the Ulster Unionist Party, the SDLP, Sinn Fein, the moderate Alliance Party and the Women's Coalition. Two parties associated with the UVF and the UDA also took part, the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party. The Agreement brokered by Mitchell was concluded on 10 April, only after direct involvement by the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and his Irish counterpart, Bertie Ahern. In many respects it reflected the earlier Framework Documents, though there were noticeable moves in the Unionist direction, especially in acknowledging that while a substantial section of the people of Northern Ireland share the legitimate wish of the people of the island of Ireland for a united Ireland, the present wish of the people of Northern Ireland, freely exercised and legitimate, is to maintain the union and, accordingly, that Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom reflects and relies upon that wish; and that it would be wrong to make any change in the status of Northern Ireland save with the consent of a majority of its people.'

Two points need to be noted here. Firstly, in accepting this nationalists,

especially Sinn Fein, were making a historic compromise with partition. Secondly, the basis of the Union was now firmly placed on the consent of the people - this was seen both as a guarantee to Unionists and a reassurance to Nationalists that Britain had no other interest in Northern Ireland. It enabled Sinn Fein to see the Agreement as a transitional phase to a United Ireland. To facilitate both political traditions certain constitutional changes were to be made. On the British side, the 1920 Government of Ireland which embodied British jurisdiction and had partitioned Ireland was to be repealed.

Instead, it was 'declared that Northern Ireland in its entirety remain part of the United Kingdom and shall not cease to be so without the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland voting in a poll.' For its part, the Republic of Ireland agreed to repeal Articles 2 and 3 of its 1937 Constitution which claimed jurisdiction over the whole island. It recognised 'that a United Ireland shall be brought about only by peaceful means with the consent of the people, democratically expressed, in both ju-

risdictions in the island.'

The Agreement set out new principles for the Internal government of Northern Ireland through a 108-member Assembly, elected by proportional representation. Governmental responsibilities would be allocated according to party strength in the Assembly and mechanisms were set in place to ensure that key decisions would have all-party support. Key decisions would require either a 'a majority of those members present and voting, including a majority of the unionist and nationalist designations present and voting; or a weighted majority (60%) of members present and voting, including at least 40% of each of the nationalist and unionist designations present and voting'.

The assembly was to have legislative and executive powers, though parliament at Westminster also retained the power to legislate for Northern Ireland. The Executive was to be headed by a First Minister and a Deputy First Minister, elected on a cross-community basis. They would preside over an Executive Committee allocated to parties on the basis of the number of seats they held in the

Assembly. Those elected to office had to be pledged to democratic, non-violent means.

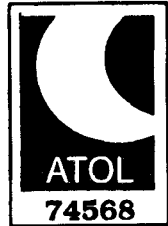
These complex mechanisms were necessary to assure Nationalists that there would be no return to the Unionist-dominated parliamentary system which had existed between 1921 and 1972. Nationalists would not have agreed otherwise. Nationalists had their Irish identity and aspirations acknowledged through the operation of a North/South Ministerial Council, drawn from the assembly and the government in Dublin. Its decisions were to be by agreement, an essential condition for Unionist consent. It was to deal with matters of potential all-Ireland interest such as aspects of agriculture, transport, tourism, and educational qualifications. Finally, there was to be a British-Irish Council, representing the British and Irish governments, the Northern Ireland Assembly, together with the devolved parliaments in Scotland and Wales. This, too would deal with such issues as transport links, cultural issues and the environment.

Further key elements dealt with human rights and equality. In particu-



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lar, the British government pledged itself to 'take resolute action to promote the (Irish) language'. Other aspects were more contentious, especially for unionists. The section on the decommissioning of arms required all parties to reaffirm their commitment to the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations, and 'to use any influence they have, to achieve the decommissioning of all paramilitary arms within two years.' It was a crucial point of the IRA that they should not be seen to be surrendering to the British authorities. On the controversial issue of policing, the agreement set out arrangements for an Independent Commission 'to make recommendations for future policing arrangements.'

This clearly involved the future of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which was 93% Protestant. Undoubtedly the most contentious element was the section on prisoner releases, vital if Sinn Fein, the Progressive Unionists and the Ulster Democratic Party were to endorse the proposals. This set out a schedule for advancing the release dates for prisoners belonging to paramilitary organisations observing a ceasefire, and certainly within two years. Finally it was explicitly set out that the various elements in the Agreement were 'interlocking and interdependent' - political parties would not have the luxury of choosing which parts they accepted and which they did not.

It was a complex Agreement in which it could be argued that Nationalists had made the greater compromises. But the SDLP and the great majority of Sinn Fein endorsed it, as did the Alliance Party and the Women's Coalition. The outright rejection of the Democratic Unionists and the United Kingdom Unionists was predictable, but less so was that of other sections of Unionism. The Progressive Unionists and the Ulster Democratic Party gave full support, implying the backing of the UVF and UDA.

But while the Ulster Unionist Party leader, David Trimble secured the backing of his party's ruling council, there was a dangerous erosion of support. Even before the negotiations were concluded, key members of his negotiating team had been unable to follow him into acceptance. Interestingly, their main objections were to the provisions on prisoner release and

arms decommissioning, rather than the constitutional arrangements. This posed a serious threat to the agreement's acceptance by the Protestant electorate.

On the Nationalist side it was immediately clear that supporters of the SDLP and Sinn Fein would vote overwhelmingly for the Agreement. But polls conducted by the British government indicated a large measure of unease amongst Unionists and supporters of Trimble privately indicated their concern over the possible outcome. In the end, it took a substantial personal commitment by British Prime Minister Tony Blair to reassure Unionists over prisoner releases and arms decommissioning. When the referendum was held in Northern Ireland on 2 May, the Agreement was endorsed by 71.2% of the electorate. The result seems to show that the Unionist section of the electorate had backed the Agreement, albeit by a narrow margin.

The elections to the Assembly, held on 25 June, broadly confirmed this picture. Of the parties supporting the agreement, the Ulster Unionists won 28 seats, the SDLP 24, Sinn Fein 18, Alliance 6, The Progressive Unionists 2, and the Women's Coalition 2. For the opponents, The Democratic Unionists won 20, the United Kingdom Unionists 5, and Independent Unionists 3. Potentially, the new First Minister designate, David

Trimble, was in the difficult position of commanding a Unionist group of 30 against a combined Unionist opposition group of 28. This clearly reflected continuing unease in the Protestant community over the Agreement.

Even so, the referendum was the most significant electoral result in Northern Ireland's history. Nationalists had voted to work within a partitionist structure, while Unionists had endorsed an arrangement to share power and operate joint bodies with the Irish Republic. A majority of Unionists had come to terms with the reality that the only effective Union was one which politicians in London could uphold and one which made Nationalists feel included. Opposition certainly remained amongst a substantial section of the Unionist population, but most Unionist politicians seemed willing to accept the verdict of the referendum.

Less predictable was the reaction of extreme sections of the IRA which opposed a settlement giving less than a united Ireland. It was this group, calling itself the Real IRA, which exploded a major bomb in the small town on Omagh on 15 August, killing 28 people. The widespread reaction against this action in all sections of the community forced even this group to suspend its operations. There is now no significant armed group which has not ceased its campaign. ●

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Commonwealth History, *The New Hibernia Review*, *LSE Quarterly*, etc.

Current work: *Ireland since 1922*, (Routledge, 1999); 'We'll follow the drum' the Irish Parading Tradition, (Macmillan, 1999); with C. D. Murray, *America and the World since 1945*, (Macmillan).

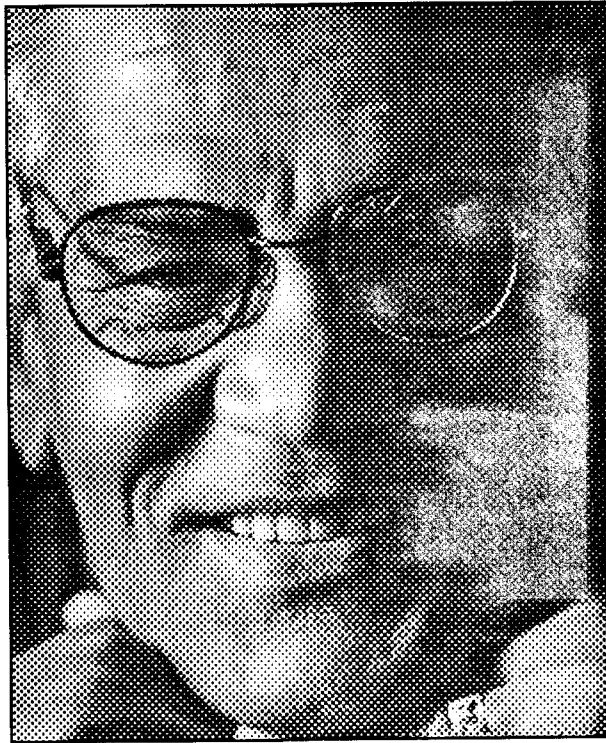
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Compounding the Problems by Going Islamic

Ramesh Gopalakrishnan

In the last of Salman Rushdie's sub-continental novel quartet, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the protagonist Moor wonders why the entire middle class of the subcontinent ultimately has to resort to an extreme version of the religion that is no religion at all! One after another, this choice has been taken by countries big and small in the region. Pakistan has had a head start in this race, followed by Burma, Sri Lanka and Bangla Desh, and possibly India. Pakistan, of course, leads the pack as evidenced by Mohammed Ali Jinnah's attempt to ensure a country for Muslims. His launch has taken 50 long years to be fulfilled, seeing along the way, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Zia Ul Haq and now Nawaz Shariff.

Shariff made the dramatic proposal recently, before taking off to London, that Islam will be the country's supreme law. Though he made some noises about the religious freedom of the non-Muslim minorities not being affected, it is clear that the proposed 15th constitutional amendment will establish the predominance of Quran and the Sinnah, constituting sayings and practices of the Prophet Mohammed in Pakistani society. The bill went through the parliament where Shariff commands a majority only with muted protests from the opposition parties. And Shariff took off to London after having a phone conversation with beleaguered US president Bill Clinton - the result: Pakistan will sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) well before India gives it a full thought. This way, Shariff has made it known that he would overcome the domestic crisis by invoking Islamic law and the foreign exchange and balance of payments crisis by ensuring that the US would lift the sanctions after the Chagai nuclear blasts.

True, Pakistan is mired in deep financial and political crisis after the Chagai blasts which were celebrated all over the country with the people distributing sweets. Soon after the

Colombo summit last month where the Vajpayee-Shariff talks failed to take off, Shariff had to contend with another major political crisis, with the US resorting to missile strikes in Afghanistan and Sudan in retaliation to the terrorist strikes at US embassies at Tanzania and Kenya. Pakistan announced first that one of the missiles fell on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, killing several persons. Soon, Shariff held a telephonic talk with Clinton and concluded that the missile strikes were inside Afghanistan! This infuriated the Sunni Ulema in the country. And the Islamic law move is to win back their support, or so thinks Shariff. In fact, Shariff is acting like Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the father of his political rival. Thanks to Bhutto, Pakistani people saw a strict prohibition regime, even as the glitterati of the society drank to their heart's content. He declared Friday as the national holiday and banned gambling dens, all in the fair name of Islam, during the last days of his regime. Zia Ul Haq, of course, made it a point to ensure that the social infrastructure of the madrasas would be used for the benefit of militancy in Afghanistan and Kashmir. And Shariff, of course, has a new ally in president Rafiq Tاراar, who is being identified with the ultra-conservatives.

Well, even Saudi Arabia, which shares Pakistan's Sunni Islam, could not guarantee to lift the country's economy out of the morass it had sunk in the wake of the Chagai nuclear blasts. In fact, the economy was in doldrums even before the blasts, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) deferring loans and credits during the last months of the previous Benazir Bhutto regime. Mian Nawaz Shariff often makes it a point to insist that he had inherited a flawed economic scenario. The Indian nuclear blasts at Pokhran had drawn their inevitable retort from Pakistan despite Shariff's occasional prevarication in May last and the country's economy has been severely strained in the af-

termath of the US sanctions. Similar to the uncertainty surrounding the impact of the economic sanctions. No one is clear as to what would be the tenor of the implementation of the Islamic law! After aid, economic and political packages, it is the turn of religion to lend itself to packaging. According to close associates of Mr Tarar, the Islamic law package would ensure more powers for the Qazi courts to settle civil disputes, revival of the institution of Salat or prayer committees, and introduction of interest-free banking for the entrepreneurs.

It may be recalled that the Nawaz Shariff regime first clashed with the country's judiciary on the issue of appointment of judges. The judiciary had thwarted his attempt to set up special courts to ensure speedy trials of important cases. Till now, the Qazi courts had only recommendatory powers, but now, under the Islamic law, the Qazi courts can well function as a particular variety of the special courts and hand down punishment to the convicted lot. Salat committees, which had been set up during the Zia regime, will now be revived and they would function as informal watchdogs effecting a surveillance on the people's behaviour on key contemporary issues. Such official courts and committees are unheard of even in Sri Lanka, which is passing through a difficult period under dictatorship and civil and ethnic strikes. The interest-free banking is a new concept formulated via Islamic economics. The truth, however, is that many such banks were already functioning in Pakistan.

Benazir Bhutto and Tehrike Insaaf chief and former cricketer Imran Khan have expressed distrust over Shariff's moves. The former prime minister visualised a situation wherein sectarian strife would be more not less. Imran Khan, however, does not trust Shariff at all. Shariff would not be able to impose Shariat, the Islamic law. However, the real opposition to the move came from human and civil rights organisations and women's groups who are certain that the Islamic law would ultimately undermine the federal structure of the constitution.

Shariff and Pakistan have taken the maximum-risk gamble at the cost of whatever liberalism which is left in Pakistani civil society. His Islamicisa-

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Anxious to Contact

We are most anxious to contact Mr. Sivasubramaniam Ravikumar whose photo appears alongside. He was resident in Anaipanthy and did his A Levels in Jaffna Hindu College in 1989. He may be resident in Canada at present. Could he or anyone of his friends please contact his brother whose details appear below and relieve us of our anxiety.

**S. Surenkumar, 33 Tabor Court,
Cheam High Street, Sutton, Surrey
SM3 8RT. Tel: 0181 770 1534.**



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tion is a clever political move, aimed at placing the country on par with the Sunni-majority countries like Saudi Arabia. Pakistan's encouragement of Taliban in Afghanistan and the militant group's spectacular success with the help of the Pakistani army have stunned a lot of countries including even the US. The tragedy of Taliban's victory lies in the fact that it has done away with eleven Iranian diplomats detained at Mazar-e-Sharif which was overrun by its soldiers last month. And the Pakistani army establishment does not conceal its glee that Afghan militants and other Jihad warriors like Osama Bin Laden are itching for a similar confrontation in Kashmir, something which has shocked the Indian establishment. The Kashmiri militants and Mujahideen from other countries have already managed to drive underground the Kashmiri Sufi variety of Islam, which has flourished in harmony for centuries with Kashmiri-Punjabi Saivism and Ladakhi Buddhism. Kashmir today witnesses a hardcore type of Islam in total contrast to its Sufi past. If this is the meaning of Islamicisation, then Pakistan better watch out.

Thus, Islam is taken far away from its revelations and made to become power-play and this power-play is unfortunately called politics. In the political variety of Islamicisation, a kind of crude sectarianism comes into play, wherein various sects compete for power, regardless of whatever Islam says or means. Pakistan has witnessed a Shia-Sunni conflict over the last few decades, with their counterparts in Iran and Saudi Arabia playing financially supportive roles. Also, the conflict in Sind, between the lo-

icals and the Mohajirs, who had settled there after having travelled from India during the Partition period has gone on unabated with killings in Karachi becoming routine. The Sunnis themselves are subdivided into several sects who are known to compete with each other for power and pelf. The corruption and competition among these sects came into full play when Zia Ul Haq decided to subtract zakat (Islamic tax) directly from bank accounts to help the madrasas. The control over the zakat funds dominated Pakistani politics even after Zia's death for a while. All this apart, there are a few communities like Ahmediyas whom the Islamic law declares as non-Muslims. These communities and other minorities including the Christians are likely to go through a period of darkness if the Islamic law is packaged and implemented in the next few years.

The extreme crudeness of the Indian response to the US missile attacks stood out when the BJP-led government and its apologists in the media sought to draw pleasure over the US' bombing of alleged terrorist bases in Sudan and Afghanistan. Driven by immediate needs of having to demonstrate that Kashmir has been terrorised by such outfits based in Pakistan and possibly in the Afghan-Pakistan border, the Indian leaders forgot the fact that the US had acted alone, arbitrarily as ever, hitting at ordinary people. The Indian establishment quickly wanted to use the situation to drive home its agenda of targeting militant bases located across the line of control in the Kashmir valley, regardless of the possibility of a full-scale war. It needed a Nelson

Mandela, speaking at the NAM summit at Durban, to call for an early solution to the Kashmir imbroglio. And Indian leaders including Atal Bihari Vajpayee were livid with rage. After all, who would have thought that South Africa, against whose apartheid regime India would have sponsored countless resolutions in NAM summits, would get liberated to turn around speak about Kashmir! The wheel has come a full circle in the last decade and a half. And it needed Vajpayee's persuasive skills to extract some kind of token apology from the South African deputy foreign minister about Mandela's reference to Kashmir. Vajpayee and Shariff are meeting at Chicago on September 23 and the latter would be one up on his Indian counterpart having agreed to sign the CTBT. ●

Posters Warn 'Army Collaborators'

Posters warning persons with purported connections with the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) have appeared in several parts of army-controlled northern Jaffna since September 11, according to reports from the town. They said that this is the first time that posters have come up with the specific names of people who are accused of having connections with the army. The hand written sheets of paper with lists of persons were put up in Nallur, Irupalai, Kopay and Kalviankaadu. Small crowds gathered to inspect the names that were on the posters.

A resident of Kalviankaadu is reported to have said that the names of several people in his neighbourhood had been mentioned in a poster that was pasted in his area a few days earlier.

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Hindu parents seek UK educated professional partner for Ph.D. daughter, 28, working in London. Send details, horoscope. M 1043 c/o Tamil Times.

Doctor's son, 34, Electronic/Computing engineering B.Sc., (Hons) Edinburgh University, British/New Zealand citizen, prefers educated girl Christian/Hindu. M 1044 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu doctor aunt living in UK, seeks professional groom with permanent residence, for attractive niece, 26, Financial Accountant in Colombo. Send horoscope, details. M 1045 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek suitable bride in UK for their son, 31, Ph.D. in Computer Science UK. Send horoscope, details. M 1046 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek educated groom in good employment for Dentist daughter, 26, working in London. Send horoscope, details M 1047 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna parents seek doctor bride for son, 31, excellent employment in Information Technology Company. Horoscope to P.O. Box 7141, Northridge, CA 91326, USA.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek doctor groom for doctor daughter, 24, working in London. Please send photograph, horoscope and details. all correspondence in confidence and returned. P.O. Box 11666, London SW19 7ZE.

Jaffna Hindu Uncle seeks qualified bridegroom in good job for niece, Sri Lankan citizen, 30 years, B.Com., graduate Jaffna University employed in Colombo. Send horoscope, family particulars. M 1051 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu Uncle seeks professionally qualified tall

Hindu bridegroom for niece, 25 years, British citizen, B.Sc., Honours London University in good job, no mars affliction. Send horoscope, family particulars. M 1052 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

Easwaradasan (Dasan) son of Mr. & Mrs. S. Rajendra of Thirunelvale, Jaffna and Yaaline daughter of the late Mr. Kanagaratnam and Mrs. S. Kanagaratnam of Vaddukodai, Jaffna on 6th July 1998 at Richmond Pillayar Temple, Toronto, Canada.

Pahalavan son of late Mr. Ambikai Pakan and Mrs. Ambikai Pakan of 5 Abbey Wood Road, Abbey Wood, London SE2 9ED and Lalitha daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Arunasalam of 10 Covis Building, Uda Eriyagama, Kandy, Sri Lanka at 44/3 Aishwarya Apts., 1st Street, Kamaraj Avenue, Adyar, Chennai 20, South India on 15th July 1998.

Satheesh son of Mr. & Mrs. S. Kathiravelu of 3645 Crabtree Crescent, Mississauga, Ontario L4T 1S7, Canada and Christine Sushila daughter of Mr. & Mrs. B.A. Samuel of 3833 Teeswater Road, Mississauga, Ontario L4T 3S7, Canada at Le Treport Banquet Hall, Mississauga on 28th August 1998.

Surendran son of Mr. & Mrs. S. Chellappah of 45 Marram Close, Stanway, Colchester, Essex and Shamala daughter of Mr. & Mrs. V. Jegasothy of Francistown, Botswana on 22nd August 1998 at Thurrock Civic Hall, Grays, Essex.

Sivadasan son of Mr. & Mrs. S. Rajendra of Thirunelvale, Jaffna and Shanthi daughter of Mr. & Mrs. V. Sitsabesan of 11 Hamers Avenue, Colombo 6 at London Sri Murugan Temple, Manor Park, London E12 6AF on 23rd August 1998.

Prakash son of Dr. & Mrs. Selvaratnam of 66 Somerset Road, Chiswick, London W4

5DN and Vithyakala daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rajaratnam of 92 Wyldway, Wembley, Middx., on 27th August 1998 at Greenford Town Hall, Ruislip Road, Middx.

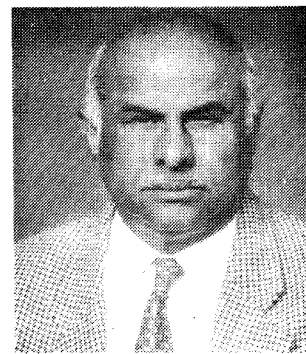
Kiritharan son of Mr. & Mrs. S. Paranjothy of 409 Ewell Road, Tolworth, Surrey and Shiamene daughter of Mr. & Mrs. T. Sangaralingem of 23 Chestnut Drive, Pinner, Middx., on 28th August 1998 at Greenford Town Hall, Ruislip, Road, Middx.

Chitra daughter of Captain & Mrs. K. Chandran of 14 Whitehall Gardens, London W4 3LT and Lawrence son of Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Selby on 5th September 1998 at The Savoy, Strand, London WC2.

Velautha Cumarar son of Mr. & Dr. N. Arunasalam of 'Vaikundam', Wood Close, Prestwood Drive, Stourton, Stourbridge, West Midlands and Victoria Angela daughter of Mr. & Mrs. J.W. Burden of 10 Belmont, St. Georges Avenue, Weybridge, Surrey on 6th September 1998 at Bridegroom's residence.

Pratheepan son of Mr. & Mrs. Thanabalasingam of 21 M. Govt. Flats, Bambalapitiya, Colombo 4 and Bamini daughter of Mr. & Mrs. C. Vanniyasingam, 46 Fernando Road, Colombo 6 at Miami Beach Hotel, Wellawatte, Colombo 6 on 12th September.

OBITUARIES



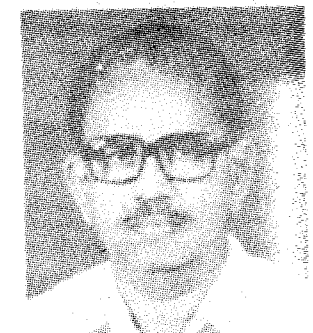
Arumugam Thamar Sinnathurai Ratnasingham, Founder and Chief Co-ordinator, Wimbledon Shree Ghanapathy Temple; Chairman, Highgate Murugan Temple Trust and Chairman, Federation of Hindu (Saiva) Temples, UK; beloved husband of Karuneswary; loving father of Mrs. Geetha Maheswaran, Dr. (Mrs.) Latha Parvathaneni and

Ranjith; father-in-law of Dr. S. Maheshwaran and Mr. T. Parvathaneni; grandfather of Sai Ganesh; brother of the late Mrs. Savunthary Ambalavarnar, Kandasamy, Sinnathamby, Velautham, Navaratnam, Mrs. Rajalakshmy Karunanatham, Sabaratnam, Kanagalingam, Mangaleswari and Mrs. Phuvaneswary Hyland; brother-in-law of Ambalavarnar, Mrs. Mallika Kandasamy, Mrs. Vallikkodi Sinnathamby, Mrs. Indrani Velautham, Mrs. Navaratnam, Karunanatham, Mrs. Bhuvaneswary Sabaratnam, Mrs. Kanagalingam, Hyland, Sarvanandam, Sathanandam and Satchithanandam passed away on Sunday 16th August 1998, under tragic circumstances in a car accident in South India. The body lay in state in Lola Jones Hall, Tooting on 26th August for members of the public to pay their respects and tributes and was cremated at the Lambeth Crematorium shortly after.

The members of the family wish to thank all devotees, friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted them in many ways during their period of great sorrow. - 178 Queens Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 7HJ. TEL: 0181 946 1140.

Appreciation appears on page 32

IN MEMORIAM



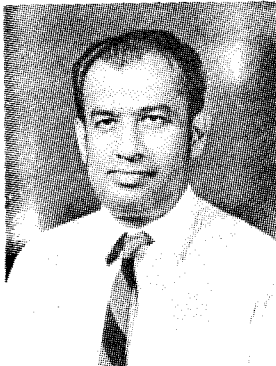
In loving memory of Deva Rajan N., FSI., Licensed Surveyor, Leveller & Valuer of 25 Arasady Road, Kantharomadham, Yarlpanam.

Fondly remembered on the seventh anniversary of his passing away on 11.9.91 by

Continued on page 31

Continued from page 30

his beloved wife Padma; children Sujithan, Siva Kumaran, Rajam, Jeyaraman, Rengan and Raj Iswari; sons-in-law Theventhiran and Nirthanakumar; daughters-in-law Jeyadevi, Suhanya, Thangalogini and Helen; grandchildren Jamuna, Karthika, Bharathan, Uththami, Luxmanan, Sri Ram, Vaitharani, Vithuran, Devarajan, Poorani, Pavithran, and Dhurka; sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, relations and friends. Flat 4, 24 Mansfield Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 3AZ.

25th Death Anniversary

Mr. Sellathurai Somasundaram (of Kondavil) former District Director, Territorial Civil Engineering Organisation, Polonnaruwa

Born: 30th August 1926.

Died: 3rd September 1973

Fondly remembered by wife Pushparanee and children Raviraj, Prabhalini Gnanasakaran, Sunilraj, Vimalraj, Shiralini Kajendra and Udhayaraj. - 59 Sheaveshill Avenue, Colindale, London NW9 6HR.

In Everloving Memory of

Our Beloved Daddy

T.J. Rajaratnam

(Retired High Court Judge)



Called to rest - 15.9.81

No Length of time can

Take away

Our thoughts of you

From day to day

Whatever else we fail

To do

We never fail to think of you.

Will always love and

Remember you.

Lovingly remembered and sadly missed by your wife Arul; children Rohini, Renuka, Rajiv; sons-in-law Vijayan, Sriharan; grand-children Vasi, Ravi, Prathi, Jayanthi and Ajit.

First Death Anniversary

Lovingly remembered and very much missed on the first anniversary of the passing away of



Born: 22.08.1950.

Died: 04.09.1997.

Thevanayaki Mahilrajah
(Nayaki)

Former teacher of Chundikul Girls' College, Jafna.

A year has gone by since day you left us. But the precious memories linger on and shall be with us for ever.

Fondly remembered by your darling son Peter, loving husband Roy, parents, sisters, brothers, family and friends. - 73 Longbridge Way, Lewisham, London SE13 6PW. Tel: 0181 463 0905.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Oct. 1 Ekathasi; Feast of Solemnity-St. Theresa of the Child Jesus.

Oct. 2 Feast of Guardian Angels.

Oct. 3 Sani Pirathosam; Puraddasi Sani (3); South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Women's Front meets. Tel: 0181 542 3285.

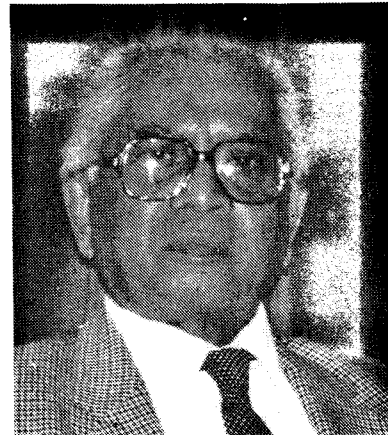
Oct. 5 Full Moon.

Oct. 6 Feast of St. Bruno.

Oct. 7 Feast of the Holy Rosary; Madhu Feast.

Oct. 8 Sankatakara Chathurthi; Kaarthigai; Feast of St. Dennis.

Oct. 10 Puraddasi Sani (4);

IN MEMORIAM**Annaiyum Pithavum Munnari Deivam.**

Dear appa, you would say 'Make obeisance only to a Deity. To man - grant him respect and give him love. Make exceptions of your Mother - who gave you life and love, and your Father - who made you what you are. They are your first known Deities. All other gods - you know them only afterwards'. Appa, your physical presence may not be here with us anymore, but the legacy you left behind is, and will always be there guiding us through this life - forever remembered with love and pride, especially on this fourth anniversary of your passing away on the 24th September 1994.

MR. PONNUDURAI NARENDRA NATHAN, most dearly beloved and adoring husband of Gnanambal; dearest loving and proud Appa to your children, Dr. Thrinayani Jegathambal, Dr. Mrs. Sowmya Wijayambal, Mrs. Sobhana Mccnambal, Dr. Mrs. Priyadarsani Brahathambal, Adhithya Thrilochanan, Mrs. Vasutharini Girijambal, Agasthya Ponnambalam and Ambika Dhakshayani; father-in-law of Dr. P. Arulampalam, S. Raveendran, T. Ilangovan, R. Srikanthan and Dr. Mrs. Mecra Narendranathan; darling dearest Thaththa to your grandchildren, Abhirami Janani Raveendran, Amarnath Thirumadhavan Raveendran, Nirmala Arulampalam, Janaki Saruhasini Srikanthan, Janarthanan Ragavan Ilangovan and Dhivyaa Saraswathy Ilangovan. A man of great courage, integrity, humour, wit and wisdom, whose kindness and generosity knew no bounds, you are greatly missed forever but never forgotten, and are always in our thoughts. God Bless. - 53 Crossways, South Croydon, Surrey, CR2 8JQ.

SLTWG Drop In. Tel: 0181 542 3285.

Oct. 13 Feast of St. Edward.

Oct. 14 Feast of St. Callistus.

Oct. 15 Krishna Ekathasi.

Oct. 17 Sani Pirathosam; Puraddasi Sani (5) and last.

Oct. 19 Deepavali; Kethara Gowri Viratham; Amavasai.

Oct. 21 Skanda Sasti Viratham starts.

Oct. 23 Iypasi Velli (1).

Oct. 24 Chathurthi; SLTWG Drop In. Tel: 0181 542 3285.

Oct. 26 Soora Samharam.

Oct. 27 Thirukkalyanam.

Oct. 30 Iypasi Velli (2).

Oct. 31 Ekathasi.

At Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171 381 3086/4608.

Oct. 2 7.30pm Rabindra Sangeet - Tagore songs by Pijush Kanti Sarkar from India.

Oct. 3 7.30pm Bharatanatyam by Darshi Sahadevan and Esha Dasgupta pupils of Guru Prakash Yadagudde.

Oct. 4 7.30pm Karnatic Vocal by Maharajapuram Ramachandran, son of the legendary Shantanam, whom he has been accompanying.

Mr. A.T.S Ratnasingham - An Appreciation

Mr. Ratnasingham was a kind, generous and religious community leader, who tirelessly championed and worked for the underprivileged and selflessly dedicated his whole life to the Tamil community and contributed immensely to propagate the Hindu religion and maintained close links with our motherland with the determination to maintain our own identity.

He was born on 27th November 1933 in Alvai, Point Pedro, into a family of 11 brothers and sisters. His father Mr. Sinnadurai was a wealthy businessman. Mr. Ratnasingham was affectionately called 'Mootha Annan', by his brothers and sisters, but he was not just an older brother, but assumed the responsibility of a father in a remarkable manner and was looked upon as such. He was educated at Hartley College, Point Pedro, where his all round excellence earned him the post of Head Prefect of the college, a position of privilege and prestige given only to a very few. He entered the then University of Ceylon in 1955 and obtained a degree in Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, after which he was appointed a Demonstrator. Thereafter he was appointed a Lecturer in Katubedde University.

He married Karuneswary in 1963 and Mr. and Mrs. Ratnasingham arrived in the UK in 1964. When he arrived, he lost no time in setting up his own business as a Property Developer, undertaking building contracts. The business flourished, which gave him the time and space and more importantly the resources for religious and community work. Poojas including those for all night Sivarathiri were held at 104 Dora Road, Wimbledon, the residence of the Ratnasinghams. Regular Friday poojas were held at Garratt Lane, in one of the properties of Mr. Ratnasingham, which was made available free of charge.

True to his name, literally translated, he was not just a lion but made of gems, he was a gem of a person. His contribution towards spirituality was beyond the means and bounds of one's imagination. He was very pragmatic and wished others to lead a religious life and with that end in view founded the Shree Ghanapathy Temple in Wimbledon in 1979. Despite much opposition from the residents, he took the challenge by not only buying up the properties in the adjoining surroundings, but also won the hearts and minds of others who realised that the United Kingdom is a multicultural community, one which helps different communities to live in harmony and unity thereby enriching each other's culture. He was a courageous person who could not be put off and he left no stone unturned to achieve an objective. When anyone asked him, he would say 'Lord Ghanapathy is there, He would know about it'. He closely associated with the other Hindu temples in the UK and took an abiding interest in the Highgate Murugan Tem-

ple, of which he was a permanent Trustee since inception and at the time of his death was Chairman of the Board of Trustees. His remarkable achievements just before his death were the organisation of the Maha Kumbabisegam for the Highgate Murugan Temple, holding the First Conference of the Hindu (Saiva) Temples (UK) in London and last but not least, taking Lord Ghanapathy in a Chariot along the streets around the Temple in Wimbledon.

He had a long-standing association with many organisations and charities. He has always given guidance and helped in many ways to the Saiva Munnetta Sangam (UK), a Hindu Religious Association established to propagate Hinduism and the Hindu way of life. In recognition of his services to this organisation, he was honoured by them on 22nd August 1987, to coincide with its 10th Anniversary Celebrations, conferring on him the Title 'Sivanerri Chelvar'. He was the Founder Member and one of the prime movers in establishing the International Tamil Foundation and generously allowed the free use of his property at Garratt Lane, Tooting for many years. Its members wish to salute him for his magnanimity and generosity. One charity which was very close to his heart was The Tamil Orphans Trust. He had closely worked with them for the last 11 years and was the Chief Guest for their first function organised to raise funds. On that occasion, he publicly declared that he would make a personal donation to match the total proceeds. His temple was used as a centre for the collection of clothes to be sent to the orphans, the victims of the war in the North and East of Sri Lanka. These orphans have been orphaned for the second time by the demise of their benefactor.

Mr. Ratnasingham was one of the greatest philanthropists the Tamil community had in UK in recent times. It could be said that there is not a single charity or association in the UK of the Tamils, which had not received his help.

Let me end with a quotation from Shakespeare which aptly fitted his life. 'His life towards the Tamil Community was so gentle and the elements so mixed in him that nature might stand and say to all the world "this was the man".'

We extend our deepest sympathies to his beloved wife and to his three children who have been left behind by him and to all those who are near and dear to him.

C. Sithamparapillai.

Sri Lankan Poet Invited to Washington

Sri Lankan poet Thuraiappa Kanagarajah, presently of Stanley Road, Lidcomb, NSW 2147, Australia has been invited by the International Society of Poets to Washington to read his poem 'Pray for Peace' at their Eighth Annual Convention and Symposium on 4th September 1998 and is to be formally inducted as an 'International

Poet of Merit' and presented an Award Medallion.

Rajkumar Bharathi in London

Rajkumar Bharathi's surprise appearance at Croydon Tamil Community Centre on 22nd June was an event which gave an opportunity to the Tamil residents of Croydon to enjoy the soulful verses of Subramanya Bharathi direct from his great-grand son. Also the event marked the Community Centre's inauguration of regular activities. The credit was to Sangeetha Vidwan Mathini and husband Sriskandaraja, at whose invitation Bharathi visited London. The recital consisting entirely of Bharathi songs, rendered soulfully and in varying meters was a rare treat to the assembled audience. Another surprise was the presence of Violin maestro Pichiappa of Radio Ceylon fame, and father of Flute Gnanavaradan, who is familiar to London audiences.

The Croydon Borough has a substantial Tamil population and is proud of a leading Tamil school for children under eleven but so far the older children, their parents and grand parents have had no appropriate forum for themselves. The opening of a new Community Centre adds a fresh outlet for Croydon Tamils. Incidentally, Mathini Sriskandaraja, in announcing the presence of Rajkumar Bharathi, mentioned that the occasion symbolised the re-emergence of Kalabhavanam, Croydon's prestigious fine arts centre, a forum with which she was, like many other leading musicians, closely associated. Her hope may become a reality if other faithfuls too desire.

- Sangeetha.

Our Congratulations

Dr. S.K. Maheswaran has been appointed Chairman of the Department of Veterinary Pathobiology, University of Minnesota, USA. Dr. Maheswaran graduated from the University of Ceylon with honours and distinction in Veterinary Science in 1960 and on a Fulbright Scholarship awarded in 1962 did his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota. Thereafter, in 1971 he joined the same university as an Assistant Professor and excelled in research and teaching. He is an old boy of Jaffna Central College and the son of the late Mr. & Mrs. S. Kandaswamy of Kanderamadam, Jaffna and a nephew of the late Mr. T. Rudra.

Vatsala Rajendram of Hillmorton Road London N7 has been awarded a Ph.D., in Biotechnology of the University of London from Imperial College and the convocation took place recently. She is the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. C. Thirunavukkarasu of Chettin Street, Nallur, Jaffna and presently of Enfield UK.

The Late Kandiah Kanagarajah An Appreciation

The demise of 'Milkwhite Kanagarajah' as he is popularly known on 22nd July 1998 has created a void in Jaffna. His impact on the life of the people over the last half a century has been so great that it would be very difficult for the beneficiaries to forget him. Kanagarajah, one of the many children of the late Kandiah, inherited from his father the vibrant industry of soap making, which he expanded over the years so as to compete effectively with many a multinational company engaged in the production and distribution of soap in Sri Lanka. There was a time when long-established companies made an all-out effort to liquidate this infant industry - swallow it under their ownership to sustain their monopolistic hold - but Kanagarajah - the visionary industrialist - was too clever for them. He diversified the industry using local natural raw material. The Neem soap with a medical flavour using local mahogany products and milkwhite washing powder became very popular through the length and breadth of Sri Lanka. Kanagarajah became a pioneer industrialist of the north to be emulated by our youth.

Apart from being an industrialist, there are two other areas viz environment and religious education, in which Kanagarajah's impact had gone very deep in society. Years before many of our people had thought of preserving the environment, he promoted the planting of palmyrah seedlings and Neem plants in many areas of the country. Schools and community centres in the Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Anuradhapura, Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts were given a free supply of palmyrah seedlings to be planted along school boundary lines. Palmyrah palms - the Katpaha Virudcham of the north - are of great economic importance for generations to come. So are the flourishing Neem trees. His vision promoted economic growth and preserved the environment for long years to come and the community at large has nothing but praise for his services.

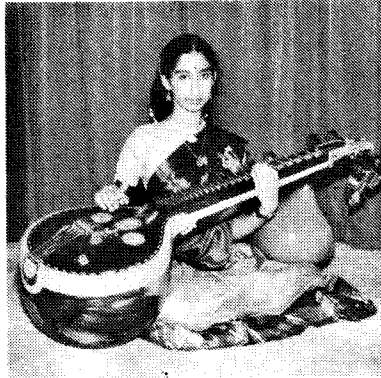
To preserve and promote religious knowledge he engaged the services of knowledgeable persons to edit, re-edit, translate and publish valuable religious material in the form of handbooks, handouts and bulletins and all these were made into packages for free distribution far and wide locally and even to foreign lands where our people have migrated in large numbers. Valuable contributions of authors like Thiruvalluvar and Arumuga Navalar were brought to the notice of our people. One cannot forget his free distribution of the Tamil alphabets printed on palmyrah leaf for the initiation of the young during Navarathiri.

Milkwhite Kanagarajah is no more but his dedicated service which generations to come will see in the form of religious publications, palmyrah palms and neem trees

will ever remind us of this noble soul.

V. Sivasupramaniam, Seychelles.

Janaki's Veena Arange-tram



The Veena Arange-tram of a student, who after years of study and training under a dedicated guru is at last ready to ascend the stage for an extended solo performance is always an exciting occasion. On 30th May 1998, Smt Sivasakthi Sivanesan presented her student Janaki daughter of Dr. & Mrs. Gnananandha at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. I have known Janaki, almost since birth, and am aware of her untiring endeavour, dedication and devotion to master the art of playing the Veena, following the inspiration given by her two sisters who had their tutelage under the same guru and are still playing the veena with great expertise, that brought her to the stage that day. The enormous support and guidance that she had from her teacher and parents contributed very much to her success. There was a wealth of evidence for the results following this demanding discipline, as reflected in the musically rich repertoire.

The programme commenced with a soothing varnam in raga Charukesi composed by violin Maestro Sri Lalgudi G. Jayaraman. Sri Maharajapuram Santhanam was brought to life with my favourite 'Sri Maha Ganapathe' in raga Nattai. This scintillating piece in praise of Lord Ganesha composed by Sri Mayuram Viswanatha Sastri was played by Janaki with clarity and professionalism. The effortless flow of Tyagaraja's Pancharatna keerthana 'Sadinchane' in Arabhi understandably raised a loud applause from the audience. The hallmark of the day's performance by Janaki was Smt Sivasakthi's composition in raga Simhendramadhya-mam - 'Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi' that absorbed the audience with pin drop silence. This was true reflection of this young and upcoming artiste's talent and precision in the art of playing this wonderful and celestial instrument. Following this, there was a joyful mood among the accompanying artistes on the stage as well as among the audience to listen with enthusiasm and interest to the Ragamalika 'Baro Krishnaya', Annamachariyar's 'Bhavayami' in Yamam Kalyani, Rajaji's 'Kurai Onrumillai' originally sung by Smt

M.S. Subhulakshmi.

The programme raised to the peak of the day when her sisters Yasodhara and Devaki joined her in the finale, Sri Lalgudi G. Jayaraman's Tillana in Mohanakalyani. This remains the 'Jewel in the Crown' of the day. The family obviously had every reason to be proud of Janaki. The serene Thiruppugal 'Thullumatha Vertkai Kanayale' engulfed the hall with a sign of great satisfaction having witnessed a Kacheri of brilliant scale.

The complete appreciation of the Arange-tram was delivered by the Chief Guest - musician, musicologist and indologist - none other than the well known expert Dr. John Marr.

The occasion was enriched by the expert accompanists Sri M. Balachander on Mridangam & Sri R. Prakash on Ghatam. The interaction between both of them was very enjoyable, especially during the Thanivarthanam round. Janaki's sister Yaso provided Tanpura and Devaki compered the programme.

The Bhavan and especially Smt Sivasakthi Sivanesan deserve warm kudos for preparing and launching a star musical artiste.

Dr. P. Ambikapathy.

Jaffna Hindu OBA (UK) Annual General Meeting & Cultural Evening

Jaffna Hindu College Old Boys Association UK celebrated its 10th anniversary with a grand Cultural Evening programme on 4th July 1998 at Richard Challanor School Hall, New Malden.

The programme commenced with a melodious Veena recital by disciples of Smt Saraswathy Packiarajah. A mesmerising Flute recital by a student of Sri P.Gnanavarathan and a captivating Bharatha Natiyam performance by a student of Smt Vijayambihai Indrakumar delighted the audience, while the finale, an unusual combination of carnatic and film songs under the direction of Sri P. Navendran, was commended for its quality.

The Annual General Meeting preceded the Cultural Evening programme and the Executive Committee's appeal to set up 200 scholarships by the year 2000 for the benefit of underprivileged students back home was well received by the members. Fifteen of them have already been established and the OBA has, in the recent past, remitted over £6,000 for various urgent needs of the College.

Two distinguished old boys from Sri Lanka, Mr. S. Sritharan, son of legendary warden late Mr. K.S. Subramaniam and Mr. W.S. Kiruparatnam, an executive committee member of Colombo OBA Trust, graced the occasion by their presence.

Suntha Uthayanan, Secretary.

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