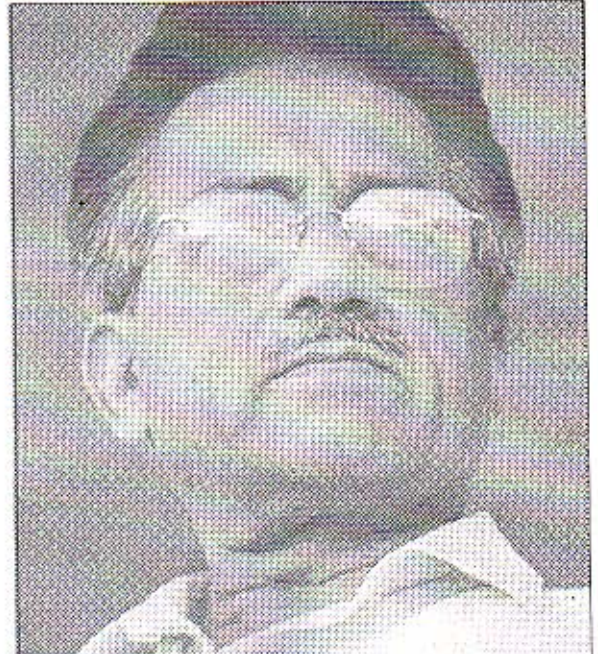


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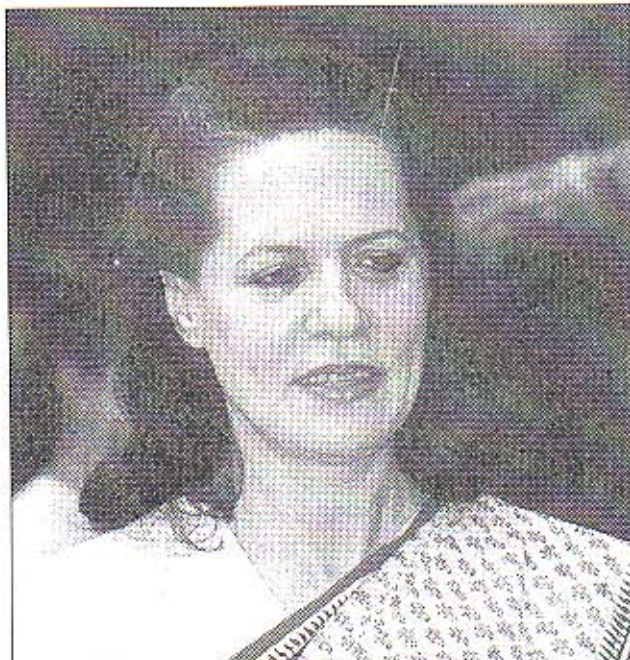
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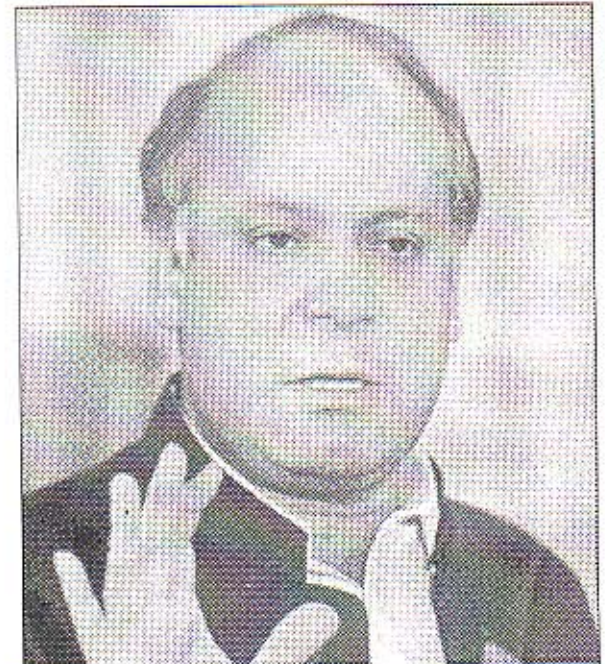
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Gen P Musharraf, the new military ruler in Pakistan



Mrs Sonia Gandhi - Failed in bid for power



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of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it."*

-Voltaire

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The Coup in Pakistan

The contrast could not have been any sharper between recent events that occurred in the two major countries of the sub-continent.

Demonstrating that democracy and democratic institutions have taken deep root in India, the country successfully concluded its third general election in three years to elect a new government. In Pakistan for the third time in its traumatic and turbulent history since independence, the armed forces struck again subjecting the country to a military dictatorship. Pakistan has spent at least 25 years of its freedom under military dictatorships, martial law and emergency. It has had only an occasional and passing flirtation with democracy with the military always either openly in the foreground or in the background pulling the strings.

On October 13, in India the democratically re-elected Prime Minister of India Atal Behari Vajpayee was sworn-in by the democratically elected President at a ceremony in New Delhi in the presence of a large and distinguished gathering. Though they belonged to rival political parties, gracing the occasion by their presence were former Prime Ministers V P Singh, I K Gujral, Chandra Shekar and P V Narasimha Rao and the shadow Prime Minister Sonia Gandhi.

It was only on the previous day, October 13, in Pakistan the military sized power and the Army Chief Staff Pervez Musharraf assumed total control over the country ousting the democratically elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and putting him and many of his political associates behind bars. The new military ruler of Pakistan has suspended the Constitution and dissolved the Senate and the National Assembly. He has appointed himself as the Chief Executive who will run the affairs of the country with his six-member military dominated National Security Council.

How little public resentment there has been against the military coup is indicative of the state of democracy in that country. That the army chief could take over the full control of the country's institutions and dismiss the elected government without fear of any backlash from the people reflects the true state and nature of Pakistani polity today.

The tragedy of Pakistan is the failure of its political elite to develop a democratic culture. Over the years most of its civilian institutions and constitutional structures have been undermined and subverted.

One is always opposed to the imposition of a military rule, but it is hard to defend regimes of the likes of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. Both their regimes, and more so in the latter's case, have been accused of rampant corruption and misrule, subversion of democracy and the federal structure of government and concentration of power in the hands of family and friends. Instead of contributing to the building of democratic institutions, both created and nurtured the necessary conditions for the military to retain its pivotal position in Pakistan's power equation. During their 12 year civilian rule, neither sought to demonstrate to the average Pakistani that democracy is immeasurably superior to military dictatorship. That is why very few people protested at the summary dismissal three years ago of Benazir Bhutto in a palace coup orchestrated by her own hand-picked President. That is also why no body is shedding tears now for the ousted Sharif regime.

Pakistan's pre-occupation with Kashmir and its pursuit of policies of competition and confrontation with India have resulted in the spending of unaffordable billions of dollars on its grandiose nuclear and missile programmes leading to the crippling of the nation's economy.

The state of Pakistan founded on the ideology of nationalism of the Islamic kind has become a cursed state and a cradle of violence. Islamic fundamentalism of all kinds has become a pervasive feature in Pakistani society following its intervention in Afghanistan and support for the Taliban. The Shias and the Sunnies massacre each other in their dozens almost everyday. Pakistan today has become one of most ungovernable states in the world, and in the words the famous writer V S Naipul, "....the state, which at the beginning had been to some like God, had become a criminal enterprise."

War of Words over Peace-Making

Should there be independent foreign facilitation or mediation for the resolution of the civil war in Sri Lanka? Or should there be UN sponsored intervention as in the recent cases of Kosovo and East Timor? Should the Government and the LTTE resume talks?

These questions have to come to focus in recent weeks particularly following Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadigamar ruled out any mediation efforts or interventionist moves by the UN or any foreign body or persons at a recent news conference in New York. Following media spotlight on his statement, the Minister said that he did not entirely rule out facilitation at some stage. The Daily News quoting the Foreign Minister said, "We take the view that this is an internal matter, a problem that is local to Sri Lanka itself. It does not involve two states and therefore it is not a fit or proper matter" for mediation. He added, "When the time is ripe, we will certainly welcome some kind of facilitation. We draw a distinction between mediation and facilitation."

The rejection of foreign mediation by the Foreign Minister was promptly denounced by the LTTE. In a statement issued on 30 September the LTTE emphasised that international third party mediation was crucial and necessary for a negotiated political settlement of the Tamil national question. Mr. Kadigamar's statement reflected the narrow, intransigent and uncompromising attitude of the Sri Lanka government which had been seeking a repressive military solution to the ethnic conflict by committing wide-scale human rights violations against the Tamil people, the LTTE said.

"The people of Tamil Eelam hold the view that the international community has a significant role to play in this intractable conflict. The leadership of the LTTE has also openly declared the necessity of third party mediation for a negotiated political settlement. We are in favour of international mediation because direct talks between the parties in conflict have failed due to mutual distrust and hostility," the LTTE statement added.

UNP Stand

Meanwhile, Ranil Wickremasinghe, the leader of the opposition United National Party (UNP), intervened in the debate by stating that he supported calls by other parties for foreign mediation and talks with the LTTE to solve the country's ethnic conflict. Addressing a Foreign Investors Forum held in Colombo, the leader of the UNP, which ruled the country for 17 long years until 1994 during which the ethnic conflict escalated, told the conference, "Bringing in a third party does not violate the sovereignty of the country and there is nothing wrong in it." He also said that if his party was returned to power, his government would be willing to hold direct talks with the Tamil Tigers.

Mr Wickremasinghe said, "The UNP (United National Party) is of the view that long-lasting peace requires a political solution involving all parties concerned including the LTTE," adding "We are under no illusion that peace will come overnight and military operations will most likely continue until there is a meeting of minds," he said. "But de-escalation of military activity on both sides is possible and therefore the process must start immediately." He favoured an interim administration being set up in the north and east while the peace dialogues were being conducted.

The UNP leader's comments have been commented upon as being an attempt to woo Tamil votes in the elections which are predicted to take place in the near future. It is speculated that the Presidential election, at which Wickremasinghe will contest as the UNP's candidate against the incumbent Chandrika Kumaratunga, will take place before the parliamentary election. In the last general and presidential elections, Chandrika who contested under a platform of peace promising to bring an end to the war received most of the Tamils votes. However, the war that resumed in April 1995 following the breakdown of negotiations with the LTTE has continued unabated resulting in the loss of confidence by many Tamils in the government. It is this vote-bank

that the UNP leader is seeking to tap according to political observers.

President's Letter

President Kumaratunga has responded to the UNP leader's comments on the subject of mediation and talks with the LTTE with an open letter dated 12 October calling on him to make a "clear and concrete" decision as to the precise set of proposals that should be discussed with the LTTE in finding a solution to the ethnic conflict.

The letter recalled the number of times the President and government Ministers had tried to get the UNP leader to discuss and progress the proposals, and the way in which he delayed the whole process by delaying tactics. It pointed out that the UNP leader did not co-operate in progressing the proposals, or submit its own counter proposals either following the Liam Fox Agreement on a bipartisan approach, or during the parliamentary Select Committee proceedings.

The President's letter said, "During this last meeting with you, I spoke very honestly and frankly regarding the following:

- That I and my Government had sought the people's mandate to do several things and had solved or were well on our way to solving the majority of the problems we had set out to address, except for a finding a lasting solution to the ethnic problem.
- That the war was not started by us but by the UNP, who, in our estimation, therefore have a sacred duty to participate in finding a solution.
- I also told you that I have no desire or intention to claim for myself or my Government entire credit for solving the ethnic problem, and that my Government is ready and willing to share the credit with the opposition.
- I also went as far as to say that you, being a young leader with ambitions to hold the highest office of this country, should see all the more reason to seize this opportunity to participate in a meaningful dialogue, and thereby gain your share of credit for restoring the much needed, and much longed for peace and harmony to our nation.

Detailing the delaying and evasive tactics adopted by the UNP in the Parliamentary Select Committee which discussed the proposals, the President's letter said, "I restate these facts to tell you that it is more than evident to me and, conceivably, to a large section of

the people that your conduct to date in respect of this most crucial issue has been cynical, to say the least, and that your party's unwavering commitment to indecisiveness makes a savage mockery of the daily sacrifice made by the brave and loyal youth of this country.

"I come now to the issue immediately at hand. Early in 1997, Mr. Liam Fox, a Deputy Minister in the last Conservative Government of the UK and an associate of yours, proposed insistently to me that I should join you in signing an agreement for bipartisan action, aimed at the resolution of the ethnic issue. Mr. Fox was in a great hurry to have this agreement signed during, coincidentally, the course of the 1997 Local Government elections in Sri Lanka.

"While pressing me for my agreement to his proposal, Mr. Fox informed me through Foreign Minister Hon. Lakshman Kadirgamar he had already obtained yours. I was pleasantly surprised to learn of your agreement, as until this time you had refused all constructive bipartisan action. However, since ours has been a clear and consistent policy of consensual politics, I immediately agreed and became a signatory to the Liam Fox Agreement.

Thereafter you did nothing with the Liam Fox Agreement until long after the elections were over. I then requested Mr. Kadirgamar to arrange a meeting with you to discuss the agreement, well over a month after it was signed.

"We finally met early in May 1997, when I asked for your thoughts on how next to proceed.

"For my part, I proposed the establishment of a committee of two or three people from each of the PA and the UNP. This committee was to consider how to carry forward the "bipartisan approach" of the Liam Fox Agreement, and to try to reach an agreement between our two parties which we could subsequently present to other relevant groups and to the country. You agreed to this. You said that, immediately upon your return from an impending visit to Hong Kong, you would give a list of names to Mr. Kadirgamar, whom you undertook to contact. You expected to return around 15th May 1997, and I agreed to exchange names with you by that date... Two and a half years later, we are still awaiting your list of names!

"As I stated at the start of this letter, I reiterate that I wholeheartedly and unreservedly welcome your offer to participate in talks. However, permit me, Sir, to express my very grave

doubts about your ultimate intentions in raising this issue at this time, and therefore your genuine commitment to a true solution.

"However, if we are to take seriously your new found interest in moving the peace process forward, I must state that both I and the people of this country require guarantees of your sincerity. It would be impossible to move forward meaningfully the process you now propose, without explicit guarantees from the UNP. These guarantees should include the following:

1. The UNP's specific proposals for a solution to the ethnic problem, or,
2. The UNP's specific views on the entire set of proposals already presented by this government,
3. A full and honest explanation to the people of this country of the content and purpose of the several discussions your representative the Hon. Dr. J. Jayawardena MP has had with LTTE leaders in the Wannai, in his many secret meetings with them over the last two years. This point is particularly relevant, because your procrastination often bears an uncanny resemblance to the prevarications of the LTTE. On the one hand, the UNP tells my Government, "First talk with the LTTE, then to us", while the LTTE says, "First talk to the UNP, then to us....."
4. A specific date by which the UNP intends to start discussions and a time frame in which to reach final conclusions."

The UNP Response

Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremasinghe has responded to the President with his letter dated 18 October complaining about the "intemperate tone and the degenerate nature of your letter, which seeks to accuse me of behaviour ranging from indecision to cynicism and personal vindictiveness; and the UNP of conduct ranging from chicanery to mass murder!" The full text of Mr Wickremasinghe's letter is as follows:

"I am pleased to gather from your letter to me of October 12, 1999, that you had read my address to the Fund Manager's conference, and that it moved you to renewed efforts to discuss with the LTTE the possibility of a political solution to the ethnic strife in our country.

"As you are aware, The Exchange of Letters to which you refer, sets out a procedure for consultations on this

matter. My party and I endorsed that initiative to design a bipartisan mechanism through which the LTTE could be consulted. I look forward to receiving even at this late stage, in accordance with that procedure, your formal confirmation that the Government is now prepared to initiate discussions with the LTTE, and is, in that context, consulting me as the Leader of the United National Party. We stand ready to respond speedily and constructively, so that we could together proceed, on an urgent basis, to move this important process forward.

"The UNP, and I personally, have carefully examined all the proposals you have made in the past, and, as you are aware, we have forwarded the 'Proposals of the United National Party' to the Select Committee on the Constitution chaired by the Hon. G. L. Peiris. The search for a viable solution has, for us too, the highest priority. We want, as well, to secure for such a solution, a broad consensus among groups with diverse views on the matter. We would be able to give our whole-hearted support to proposals, which would achieve that purpose. Correspondingly, we would not be in a position to support proposals that appear, on our estimation, either to be impractical, or to carry within them the seeds of future conflict and prolonged misery.

"I cannot conclude without expressing my astonishment at the intemperate tone and the degenerate nature of your letter, which seeks to accuse me of behaviour ranging from indecision to cynicism and personal vindictiveness; and the UNP of conduct ranging from chicanery to mass murder! I summarily reject such extravagant and wholly baseless accusations, as also your self-serving declarations of commitment to constitutional solutions, and attempts to blame the UNP for the failure of your government's policies, and even for the ethnic conflict itself. This kind of invective is difficult to reconcile with your claim to be following a consistent policy of consensual politics, and attempting to build confidence among individuals and groups in our country.

Despite the unwarranted attacks you have made on the UNP, and on me personally, I reiterate our determination to work towards bringing this conflict to an end at the earliest possible time, and laying the foundation for a peace and harmony, which remains our common goal."

LTTE Ready for Talks

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) appear to have agreed to enter into negotiations with the government to bring an end to the protracted north-east conflict after being persuaded by three prominent Catholic Bishops who met some LTTE leaders recently in Mullaitivu.

Jaffna Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Saundaranayagam, Mannar Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph and Eastern Province Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Kingsley Swamipillai met LTTE leaders Karikalan, Thamilchelvam and their assistants recently.

The visit of the Bishops to Mullaitivu followed the two incidents in which a total of 76 people were killed. The first incident was at Puthukudiyiruppu in the Mullaitivu district in which 22 Tamil civilians were killed in an air raid carried out by the Air Force. The second incident was Gona-gala in eastern Sri Lanka in which 54 Sinhala civilians were brutally hacked to death by the LTTE.

The Bishops, while condemning both the armed forces and the LTTE for killing innocent civilians, called on the LTTE to return to the negotiating table, which according to them the Tigers had accepted. The Jaffna Bishop told the press that the purpose of their visit to Mullaitivu was merely pastoral.

Bishop Swamipillai is reported have said from his Trincomalee residence that the Tigers had agreed to come to the negotiating table following the request made to them to sort out the outstanding issues. But the Bishop said the LTTE lacked confidence in the government for them to come forward to settle the issue. Bishop Swamipillai condemned the armed forces for carrying out air raids carelessly. He confirmed that the recent air raid carried out by the air force was targeted at civilians who were innocent. He said although it was a case of mistaken identification, it could not be justified that it was due to a war situation. He said the air force should have avoided the civilian target, knowing well that in a market area, civilians are bound to be present.

In a similar way Bishop Swamipillai also condemned the LTTE for subsequently carrying out a massacre of innocent Sinhalese civilians. "I told the Tigers whom we met that it must be stopped at once. I told them that such retaliatory

attacks would only escalate the existing hostile environment between them and the armed forces. We told them that we cannot go on fighting causing immense loss of civilian lives. They listened to us carefully and agreed to come to the negotiating table," the Bishop said.

The Trincomalee Bishop is further reported to have said that the Bishops had urged the LTTE to work towards establishing peace with the PA government and added they offered themselves to

function as channels of peace. "We said that we could help them to convey any message to the government if they wanted. We offered our services even in the negotiating process," he said. He said the confidence earlier prevailing on both sides had broken down and it was up to both the LTTE and the government to build it up gradually.

Bishop Swamipillai also called upon the government to consider increasing transport facilities to and from Jaffna to enable civilians to visit their kith and kin who are scattered elsewhere. He added that the government should send more food items to the north considering the plight of the Tamil civilians.

Tamil Tigers Possess Hi-tech Weaponry

The Tamil Tigers are believed to have started using highly-sophisticated weapons in the Wannu battle front against government forces, according to reports published in the Colombo print media.

Quoting defence sources, they said that on 1 October the Tigers had used a 'guided system anti-tank missile' which hit a parked Main Battle Tank (MBT) completely destroying it within the Paranthan fortified defence perimeter in northern Sri Lanka. These kinds of anti-tank missiles could only have been guided possibly by laser, wire and radar, they said.

It is yet to be confirmed by the military officials, who are making extensive studies on the alleged weapon to determine, whether it is a radar or laser or wire guided missile. A team headed by a Lieutenant Colonel, who is also the Commanding Officer of the Armoured Corps Regiment, is involved in extensive investigation and expected to give its report early.

It has also given rise to various questions not only among the military top brass but also in government circles as to how, when and from where the Tigers managed to obtain these new weapons. The assumption is that the LTTE might have bought these 'guided missile systems' in the black market at cut-prices from one or more of the former eastern bloc countries and transported them in LTTE-owned and operated ships which are known to be many.

"It is the second generation of the guided weaponry and is outmoded in in-

ternational warfare. It can be launched from some 2-3 km to attack MBTs. It can also be operated with the help of solar power", the defence sources added.

Initially it was suspected by the military that the MBT could have been destroyed by planting an improvised explosive device on or near it by an infiltrator. Later this view was rejected as implausible and now it has been unofficially confirmed that the destruction of the MBT was not by an improvised explosive device planted by an infiltrator but by a guided system anti-tank missile fired away from the Paranthan defence perimeter.

While entertaining fears about the implications on the battlefield if in fact the Tigers had in their possession this hi-tech weapon system, some army officers are seeking to downplay the whole issue. A senior officer from the Elephant Pass military base is reported to have said "One MBT was hit by a Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) and caught fire. It was saved in time by the troops with minor damage. Only the wire harness of the MBT got burnt. That's all."

The introduction of the 'guided system anti-tank missiles' has confirmed firstly that the LTTE has successfully obtained new weapons in an endeavour to counter the thrust by the security forces in the Wannu battle front, and secondly that they are still capable of bringing in new shipments of weapons through international waters to their bases in Mullaitivu despite the increasing naval routine patrols.

Peace Beggars and War Lords

Izeth Hussain

Our peace activists who have been lobbying for a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflict have recently come to be dubbed "peace beggars" by the war mongers who insist on a military solution. For reasons that will become apparent in the course of this article, it seems appropriate to use the term "war-lords" for our war-mongers.

It was reported after a recent recruitment drive for the army that one of our senior army officers had complained that the activities of our "peace beggars" were having deterrent effect on recruitment, and were also having an adverse impact on the military campaign is doomed to be ineffective and no more than a waste of resources, an adverse impact on recruitment and on morale has to be expected. But the argument is based on an absurd and inexcusable misconception, as will be shown later.

We firstly focus on the significance

of the term "peace beggars", which seems a curious coinage. In Sri Lanka as in practically every other country facing what looks like interminable military conflict, there are people who agitate for peace. Why call them beggars?

According to one theory the rationale for that term derives from the fact that our peace activists are backed by foreign NGOs. They are the recipients of funds and favours from those NGOs, whose purposes they are said to be serving. All they want are the money and the perks available through foreign munificence, and therefore they are no better than beggars of the NGOs.

Almost certainly that explanation is a wrong one, reflection merely a hatred of the Sri Lankans who are supposed to be special beneficiaries of the NGOs.

Very probably that army officer was merely using the term "beggar" as an euphemistic substitute for an un-

printable word, a common practice in the old days when Ceylon English was widely prevalent.

But the really interesting question is why the term "beggar" has come to be used as a term of opprobrium at all. Evidently the Sri Lankans who want a military solution to the ethnic conflict, and cannot bear the idea of a peaceful solution, think "peace beggars" a marvellous coinage worthy of being given wide currency. It expresses all the hatred and contempt that they feel for the peace activists. However the term "peace beggars" implies beyond any doubt that beggars themselves are hateful and contemptible.

The enthusiastic reception given to the term "peace beggars" suggests that something nasty is happening to our traditional value-system. We all know that beggars can come to be involved with criminal elements and take to thieving, pimping, drug-trafficking, and so on. But in that case they cease to be beggars and become criminal elements themselves, and social opprobrium is directed at them in term of our moral norms. Such opprobrium has never been directed against beggars as such in terms of the value-system based on the four great world religions prac-

The following is a message sent out on 27.9.99
from "wakeupsinhalese@hotmail.com"

PEACE BEGGARS CLUB

Those who are interested in helping the Government to achieve "PEACE" in Sri Lanka are kindly invited to join the "PEACE BEGGAR'S CLUB"

The following eminent people hold office in the club.

Patron - Chandrika Kumaratunga (President of S.L.) President; Mangala Samaraweera (Greatest Mafia detective in the world); Vice Presidents- Dilan Perera (Deputy Minister of Justice) - Some accuse him of having obtained a scholarship from Asia Foundation, forging the Signature of Mr. D.M. Jayaratne (Minister); Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne (President of Sarvodaya) - He paid many "PO-OJA'S" to Premadasa, but he kicked him around; Aka ' Poosariya' - Dr. Tissa Vitharana-well known MRI specialist. He should undergo special therapy under a super neuro- surgeon to get his "BRAIN TRAUMA"

cleared; Dr. Jehan Perera-Well known NGO specialist. He is super smart because he gets well paid by LTTE and NGO's to promote Eelam under peace camouflage; Betty Weerakoon-Minister; Rev. Vajira-the well known Buddhist Priest trying to destroy the religion.

There are many more in this list but there is no space to include all. The primary objective of this club is to promote peace in Sri-Lanka, by resorting to various peace marches or demonstrations, satyagrahas, peace meditations and peace talks. To go on begging to UN and other countries for money. To go on begging around the world in the name of ' Peace'.

Mr. Samaraweera and Mr. Dilan Perera are promoting peace in a slightly different way. It is well known as "APEY HANDA" They intend to organise small rallies in every big town or city and inform the public that peace

could only be achieved by implementation of devolution package. There strategy is to brain wash the Sinhalese, before the next general election. When the Sinhalese accurately understand this "TREACHERY" Appey Handa will become "APEY GANDA"

Dr. Tissa Vitharana, Dr. Jehan Perera, Rev. Vajira, Rev. Samida are masterminding this program. Unfortunately, this too will become a "NATURAL DEATH" just like the previous programs. I am sure that there are many Sinhalese "DON-KEYS" who are prepared to join the Peace Beggars Club, because they are ardent followers of Chandrika.

Only assurance I could give, about attaining peace if the devolution package is implemented is five year's of peace followed by perpetual war after dividing the country into 'EIGHT PIECES'. So, those who oppose the Peace Beggars Club, please contact the ministers and other politicians and lodge your vehement protest.

A SINHALESE PATRIOT

tised in this island.

According to those value-systems beggars are for the most part the unfortunate victims of economic circumstances beyond their control, and they even have their usefulness as apart of a divine economy as they enable us to acquire merit through the exercise of charity. These ideas have received their furthest development, it seems to those columnist, under Islam.

Under the capitalism of the West the poor were certainly held in contempt, at least for some time, though the practice of Christian charity continued.

In terms of Puritan ethic, which supposedly inspired capitalism, the poor were themselves to blame for their poverty because they had failed to show that they were of the elect by working hard and accumulating riches. But such ideas vanished long ago. The poor became no just the objects of charity but of state-sponsored welfare schemes. And later there arose the revolutionary idea of the empowerment of the poor.

So the contempt shown for the poor by our war-mongers is totally inconsistent with our traditional value-systems, and it is also inconsistent with the value systems of the modern capitalism, of liberalism, of democracy, of communism, of anarchism, and all the varieties of socialism.

On the other hand, that contempt for the poor is perfectly consistent with the value-system of fascism.

Our war-mongers seem to be alien as extra-terrestrials. Are they properly human? They certainly are, but equally certainly they are extremely odd. How odd can be gauged by asking the question who exactly are the "peace beggars". They of course include more, very much more, than the few Sri Lankans who are working for NGOs.

Far and away the most prominent of our "peace beggars" are the clergy, notably the Buddhist and Christian clergy. Recently three Tamil Catholic Bishops met senior LTTE men and reported that the LTTE is ready for negotiations. Earlier two venerable Theras of the Buddhist clergy went North and returned with the same report. Earlier still a group of eminent Buddhist and Christian clergymen made more than one visit to the North in the effort to promote peace. Also, no less a member of the clergy than the Mahanayake Thera of the Asgiriya Chapter said that the war must be brought to an end and peace restored, even with the assistance of a third party. So, he and all those eminent clergymen are "peace beg-

gars".

Peace activism in Sri Lanka has for many years had a strongly ecumenical character, with Christian clergymen like the notorious "peace beggars" Rev.

Yohan Devananda working at grass-roots level together with the clergy and others of other religions. The "peace beggars" in the business community are now represented by the notorious Lalith Kotelawala. Then there is the notorious Dr. Ariyaratne of Sarvodaya with his contacts among a vast number of villages. We must remember that, apart from a very few exceptions, all our political parties including the PA coalition parties, the UNP, the Tamil moderate parties, and even ostensibly the LTTE, are in favour of a peaceful rather than a military solution of our ethnic problem. They are all "peace beggars". Far and away our most notorious "peace beggar" is President Kumarathunga, who Arthur Clarke says will hammer the Nobel Peace Prize in 207.

Really our war-mongers are behaving like totally ignorant extra-terrestrials in believing that our peace activists are not much more than a bunch of unscrupulous crooks who are serving foreign interests through the NGOs. They must recognize, and learn to respect, one lot of "peace beggars" in particular.

We refer to members of the Apey Handa, an organisation representing the parents and relatives of those who have fallen in military action against the LTTE. They held a photographic exhibition showing the horrors of war in Matara, supposedly the hotbed of Ruhuna Sinhala extremism. That was followed by an impressive demonstration for peace with at least 2,000 participants.

Reportedly that was much more than the numbers for demonstrations by the Sinhala Veera Vidhana and the National Movement against Terrorism.

It is widely believed, and widely alleged, that those two moments which want to push the war to its gory conclusion, no matter at what cost, have yet to produce even one volunteer to fight in it.

Galbraith observed in one of his books that those who are doing the fighting in the wars ravaging the Third world are for the most part the excluded, that is those whom inadequate economic development leaves behind and whom would be destitute if they did not enlist to fight. This is true of the troops fighting both on the Government and on the LTTE side, with some

exceptions of course. It appears that the "peace beggars" and the soldiers are on one side, while the war-mongers are on the other. The latter exhort the others to fight while they themselves disdain to do so in a lordly manner. They might appropriately be dubbed the "war-lords".

We come now to the point that the activities of the "peace beggars" are deterring recruitment of the armed forces and lowering fighting morale. This is a serious charge, but unfortunately it is based on gross misconceptions.

The first point to be clarified is that our peace activists have not adopted a pacific position. That is to say, they have not been advocating non-violence and opposition to any military action after the manner of pacifists like Gandhi, Tolstoy, or the Quakers. Dr. Ariyaratne's Sarvodaya supporters recently engaged in an exercise to bring peace through mediation.

It is most improbable that more than a very few of them would advocate a pacifist position as such.

Our peace activists have really been supporting the Government's two-pronged strategy, which is to tame the LTTE military so as to make it amenable to a negotiated settlement. Military action has been an essential, an integral, part of the strategy and there has been no pacifist objection to it. That has not precluded the peace activists, just like the rest of the general public, being critical about ill-advised military action. It is irrational to think that that can deter recruitment or lower fighting morale. It appears that in recent months the war-lords have acquired a new militancy. Perhaps they have been encouraged by the Government's shocking procrastination over taking action on the devolution package, which has raised suspicions that it has really opted for a military solution. It is apparent that u to now mass support for a peaceful solution has continued.

But this can conceivably change if confusion about the Government's intentions continues.

The implications of the arrogantly abusive term "peace beggars" are really most interesting. It seems quite clear that our chauvinist war-lords are showing hatred and contempt not only towards the minorities, but also towards their very own fellow - Sinhalese. Should we draw the conclusion that a hierarchical drive which cannot bear the prospect of fair and equal treatment for the minorities will inevitably lead to the denial of such treatment for members of the majority as well? ●

September 1999 saw the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka retreat to barbarism once more, with the killing of civilians from the Tamil and Sinhala communities, in the Vanni and in Amparari Districts, causing grave concern not only within the island but outside. While Sinhala chauvinist groups seized the opportunity to clamour for a continuation of the war and dire punishments for those who advocate a peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict, peace initiatives remained paralysed. The sudden deaths of two senior statesmen - Mr. A.C.S. Hameed of the UNP and Mr. Neville Kanakarathna of the PA - who had been committed to evolving a peace process that would enable an inclusive and national perspective on the issue seemed to signal at least a temporary halt to the discussions between the two main Sinhala political groups about a possible resolution of the conflict. Coming so soon on the heels of the death of Tamil moderate, Neelan Tiruchelvam, the vacuum created by the unexpected exit of these two figures from the scene served as a tragic reminder of the fragility of the prevailing situation.

No matter how much the larger peace process seemed to be at a stalemate, in the more mundane practical matters of life, the negotiations between the LTTE and the Ministry of Defence continued. In the most recent instance, the agreement was on a four-day ceasefire in order to enable the Ministry of Health to carry out an islandwide polio immunization programme. Accordingly, on September 10th and 11th, and on October 15th and 16th, the fighting forces on both sides would lay down their arms and facilitate the smooth conduct of the immunization programme.

The adoption of September 14 as the International Day for Peace and the year 2000 as the year for Peace Culture by the Sri Lankan government saw the declaration of Trincomalee as a City for the Culture of Peace. This campaign, which is being coordinated by UNESCO, has perhaps also been picked up by the government as a part of its lobbying for the election of Sri Lankan Ambassador in Paris, Dr. Senake Bandaranayake, as the next Director-General of UNESCO. The day was also declared 'International Peace Day' by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and was to be celebrated by all schools.

NEWS REVIEW

In the national political arena, rumours regarding impending national elections did not die down, and both the government and the Opposition seemed to gear its actions towards this end. The UNP continued with its campaign of discrediting the government, adding the issue of the appointment of the Chief Justice to its list of agitational topics. The SLMC and the CWC also began positioning themselves as the minority political formations that make the difference in coalition-based politics in a country like Sri Lanka.

Within the PA too there were various rumblings of discontent. Ministers Jeyaraj Fernandopulle and Mahinda Rajapakse seemed set on collision courses with the President. Fernandopulle has been publicly critical of the President's Media Advisor Sanath Gunatillaka, while Rajapakse has ignored the President's directive about not traveling abroad without her express authorisation. Ratnapura District MP Vasudeva Nanayakkara was expelled from the LSSP on a decision made by its Central Committee on September 4, Nanayakkara has challenged his expulsion and is asking for the party to obtain the views of the general membership in this regard. In his arguments, he cites the fact that no such disciplinary action was taken against LSSP member and Chief Minister of Sabaragamuwa Province Athauda Seneviratne when he violated party rules and decisions.

The Equal Opportunities Bill which had been touted by the Ministry of Justice as the panacea for the ills of ethnic disharmony in the country met with such resistance that the Minister was forced to withdraw the draft which had been tabled in Parliament. Although the Bill was first perceived as a piece of legislation that would ensure equality of access and treatment in certain critical areas such as employment, there was little done to create an awareness of the necessity of such legislation. Thus, the Sinhala chauvinist groups were able to demonise the Bill as something that would take away the privileges presently enjoyed by the Sinhala Buddhist community. The campaign against the Bill was visible within the ranks of the PA, while in the outside arena, the National Movement against

Terrorism and other groups mobilised a wide campaign against the Bill. This debacle once again sent a clear signal to the minority communities that the PA is unable, and perhaps even unwilling, to take a stand on minority rights issues.

Speculation regarding the appointment of a Chief Justice had preoccupied legal circles since August. Confirming many of these rumours, on September 15, the President appointed Attorney general Sarath Silva as the 13th Chief Justice of Sri Lanka. Mr. Silva joined the Attorney General's Department in 1968 as an Advocate, and became Deputy Solicitor General in 1979. Serving on the Court of Appeal since 1987, Mr. Silva became President of the Court of Appeal in 1994, and a judge of the Supreme Court Judge in 1995. Controversy has been building up regarding his appointment since there are at present several investigations proceeding against Mr. Silva, charging him with moral turpitude and unethical behaviour.

In September, the Ministry of Education announced a programme of educational reforms that were aimed at promoting ethnic harmony and inculcating professional and technical skills needed in the new millennium among students. Among the proposals are plans to teach Tamil to Sinhala students and Sinhala to Tamil students from Year 1 upwards from January 1st, 2000. The government has allocated Rs.800 million in 1999 for the implementation of these reforms. Critics, including leading educationists, have however expressed their grave concern regarding the structuring of the education system in a manner that precludes the expansion of creative abilities and cultural sensitivities, with the prioritising of technical education over subjects such as literature and history.

The President and her team of economic advisors travelled to Washington to attend the G-24 Group meeting. President Kumaratunga was the first woman to chair the sessions of this groups, and in her statement from the Chair, she spoke out on ways and means through which the wealthy nations could provide broader, deeper and faster debt relief to heavily indebted countries in order to sustain their struggle against poverty. The US and Sri Lanka also signed an extradition treaty.

Foreign Minister Kadirgamer once more spoke out on the ethnic issue, re-

iterating his earlier stance that the matter does not require any external mediation. At a meeting with members of the United Nations Correspondents Association (UNCA) in New York, he remained adamant that the UN had no role to play in resolving the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. These comments were picked up by the international press, and in an interview with the BBC on his return from the US, Mr. Kadigamer was forced to backtrack and admit that while 'mediation' was not on the agenda of the Sri Lankan government, external 'facilitation' would be welcomed.

The Foreign Minister is due to introduce legislation in Parliament to give effect to three UN Conventions against acts of terrorism in the world, all of which have been signed by Sri Lanka. The Conventions are (1) against terrorism (2) against taking persons as hostages and (3) against unlawful acts against the safety of maritime navigation. The government of Sri Lanka also signed its first-ever comprehensive extradition treaty with the US in September 1999.

The report from the Department of Census and Statistics for the first quar-

ter of 1999 showed alarming figures for youth unemployment in Sri Lanka.

According to their data, 85% of the unemployed in Sri Lanka belong to the 15-29 years age group. There are 2,98,596 males and 2,81,486 females among the unemployed. While the highest number of the work force employed - 61.3% - is from the Nuwara Eliya District, this District also records the highest number of employed women (54.8%). Viewed in tandem with reports of a slowed rate of economic growth, the figures present a frightening prospect for Sri Lanka in the coming years.

Meanwhile, the 1999 report on Human Development in South Asia, published by the Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre, has given Sri Lanka the dubious recognition of being the country which tops the list for murders and robberies in South Asia. The report identifies as being the world's worst governed region.

Although the Paris Aid Consortium meeting is officially scheduled for December 1999, the Sri Lankan government was reported to be trying to push for an earlier 'pledging' meeting. The war situation in the north and east is

obviously going to be the key issue for discussion at the December meeting, and unfortunately during the past year, the government will have very little progress to report on efforts to reach a resolution of the conflict.

On War Front

During September 1999, the Sri Lankan security forces launched several military Operations, including Ranagosa V in the Vanni districts, with the aim was to drive out the LTTE from areas north of Mannar, near Palampiddy. There were fierce confrontations which resulted in the deaths of 108 soldiers, Over 800 soldiers were injured. Army sources said 127 members of the LTTE had been killed and over 100 injured.

Although the push forwards by the Sri Lankan troops of the 55th and 53rd Divisions led to the destruction of several LTTE fortifications and bunkers in the Periyamaduru area, the stiff resistance from the LTTE led to severe casualties. The LTTE intercepted the troops as they advanced from Pallamaduru, Periyamaduru and Siratikulam on September 12, and the Operation was called off by the end of the day.

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According to Defence Ministry sources, the main reasons for such large numbers of injured soldiers were the artillery attacks mounted by the LTTE during this operation. In the course of the operation, army Divisions broke through the Forward Defence Lines north west of Palampiddy area and advanced east of the Periyamadu tank. No gains in terms of territory were made as a result of this Operation.

During this time, the armed forces also engaged in a limited military operation called "Rala Pahara" which aimed to destroy Tiger fortifications at Paranthan and in the Elephant Pass area. The two pronged attack by the security forces was accompanied by air cover from helicopters and Kfir jets.

LTTE fortifications at Mankulam and North Iranamadu areas were destroyed by air raids on 23rd.

There continued to be isolated incidents between the LTTE and the military within the Jaffna peninsula, and these incidents confirmed the reports of LTTE infiltration within the areas of the peninsula under army control. On September 5, for example, 1 soldier was killed and 15 others injured when the vehicle in which they were travelling was caught in a claymore mine near the Vairavar Temple on the Atchuvelli - Alvai Road.

In the Eastern Province, the army tried to move into the areas under control of the LTTE in the Vakara area, such as Kathiraveli in the eastern province. This was an attempt to cut off the route from which, according to army intelligence reports the LTTE is infiltrating Batticaloa District from the southern part of Trincomalee District. Attacks by the LTTE on outlying Police checkpoints in the Welikanda area in the last week of September bore out the fact that this is critical ground for the LTTE to control and for the army to try and capture.

In the Trincomalee District, 2 Police constables were killed and 11 injured when Tigers attacked the Police post at Shafi Nagar in Mutur on September 13. The generator at the police post was also blasted by the attackers.

In the Vanni, the LTTE continued to engage in a number of ambushes and mine attacks on the security forces. On September 17, 12 soldiers died and 20 were seriously injured in a claymore mine explosion in Thadchanamaruthamadu. This area was one of those brought under army control during the

former 'Ranagosa' operation.

On September 25, the LTTE mounted an attack on a Chinese merchant vessel in the high seas off Mullaitivu. The vessel, Yu Jia, was later escorted to the Trincomalee harbour. Only one of the 34 crew members was injured by shrapnel during the attack. The crew was also able to put out a fire that had broken out aboard the ship during the attack. The attack was reportedly a response by a group of LTTE boats that were fleeing from the Navy. Both the Navy and the LTTE lost vessels in this encounter.

Peace Process

In spite of numerous recent promises, the PA's proposals for Constitutional reform did not go before Parliament even by the end of September. On September 1, the UNP asked the forum brought together by the National Committee for Peace and Economic Development (formerly the Businessmen's Forum for Peace) for a period of two weeks to consult minority parties on the seven prime areas of conflict identified in the devolution proposals. However, unfortunately, these efforts seemed to grind to a halt with the untimely deaths of the two main negotiators, former Foreign Minister A.C.S. Hameed for the UNP and Governor of the Southern Province and former diplomat Neville Kanagaratna from the PA.

Deputy Minister Dilan Perera continued with his own initiative to develop a nationwide dialogue on peace with more demonstrations and meetings of Our Voice (Apey Handa) in Kandy on September 9 and in Matara on September 21.

Following the deaths of a group of civilians in the Vanni due to an air strike by the Air Force, a group of Catholic Bishops comprising the Bishop of Jaffna, Rt. Rev. Thomas Savundranayagam, the Bishop of Mannar, Rt. Rev. Rayappu Joseph and the Bishop of Batticaloa, Rt. Rev. Kingsley Swampillai visited the Vanni to study the prevailing conditions there and meet the people of the area. The Bishops visited Puthukudiyiruppu and expressed their sympathies to the relatives of those killed and also visited those who are undergoing treatment in the hospital. They also met with representatives of the LTTE and emphasised the need for peace. According to the Bishops, the leader of the LTTE's political wing, Thamilchelvam told them

that the LTTE was not against a peaceful solution to the ethnic issue through talks. They reported him as saying, "We are always prepared to co-operate in such an effort. It is the government which should take the initiative to start discussions." In the course of these discussions, Thamilchelvam had explained the LTTE's stand on the issue in detail, saying that they had sent several signals to the government about their willingness for talks but that there has been no response to any of them. The Bishops said they expected to submit a report on their visit and on these discussions to President Kumaratunge.

A group of representatives from the Church of South India also visited the Vanni to study the conditions there. The group led by Rev. Fr. Jeyakumar met with Mr. Thamilchelvam and had talks with him as well. A special 35-member delegation of the Wolfendahl Dutch Reformed Church visited the Chiththamparanathan Refugee Camp in Vavuniya in early September, on a goodwill mission as part of the 250th anniversary celebrations of their church.

On September 13, human rights groups and women's groups came together to commemorate the assassination, 10 years ago, of Dr. Rajini Thiraganama, founder member of the University Teachers for Human Rights in Jaffna. At a meeting held in Colombo, Indian feminist Kamla Bhasin spoke of the connections between South Asian countries on peace and on women's issues and made a fervent plea for peace. On the 21st September, there was a large public demonstration for peace in Colombo, organised by the Rajini Thiraganama Commemoration Committee.

Civilian Life

In Jaffna the resettlement of displaced persons in the peninsula remains a matter of grave concern, due to the fact that some areas are still declared 'uncleared' and therefore the security forces will not permit any resettlement in those areas. The fact that the armed forces are occupying some of the homes of those who now want to return to them, is another factor. This was brought to the notice of the Army High Command at Palaly by the People's Committee for Peace and Goodwill which pointed out the urgent need to pay rent for the houses which are being occupied by the forces as their own-

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ers are forced to live in rented houses themselves.

Prices of essential food items in the Jaffna peninsula have once more reached astronomical proportions, due to transport difficulties. A kilo of par-boiled rice costs Rs. 45/- while sugar is Rs. 75/- per kg. The fact that a few traders control the Jaffna market and prices is also a factor that local residents focus on, when talking about these rises in the cost of living.

Mine-clearing operations supported by the UNDP came to a temporary halt in early September, when a Zimbabwean who was engaged in the removal of landmines was injured in an accidental blast, in Tellippilai. The injured official was admitted to the Jaffna Hospital. According to reports from the UN office in Colombo, the team engaged in the removal of landmines has identified 350 landmines buried at the spot where the blast had occurred. The de-mining team organised by Mine-Tech in Zimbabwe has so far removed 23 unexploded bombs and 378 anti-personnel mines, according to Defence Ministry sources. The de-mining operations resumed on September 13.

Jaffna GA, Mr. K. Shanmuganathan received a directive from the Commissioner General of Essential Services, N. K. Obadage on September 2, to resume the issue of dry rations to those families who had been resettled in the peninsula. The suspension of dry rations in August had created many difficulties for these families, and many political parties and other humanitarian organisations had made representations to the government calling for the withdrawal of this order. In the meanwhile, the security forces also extended the hours during which over 4000 fishermen in the Point Pedro area are permitted to fish.

The boat service between the islands in the Jaffna peninsula was inaugurated on September 8, after a lapse of nearly 15 years. The boat "Thevadharam" capable of transporting 75 passengers would operate from Kayts and travel to Nainativu via Eluvaitivu and Analaitivu. The purchase of the boat was enabled through an allocation from the decentralized budget of EPDP Secretary General, Douglas Devananda and the service would be operated by the Kayts Pradeshiya Sabha.

The publication of a Gazette notification (No. 1083/9 of June 8, 1999) on the acquisition of lands in the vicin-

ity of the Palaly airport and base camp has once again created an uproar among residents of Jaffna. In March 1998, the government initiated action to acquire 4858 hectares of land in the area, but this was halted following representations to the President by many different groups and individuals. However, there now seems to have been a Gazette notification issued regarding the acquisition of the same lands. The fact that some of the land thus earmarked for acquisition belongs to several of the most significant Hindu kovils in the peninsula - for example, the Mavidapuram Kandasamy kovil and the Keerimalai Naguleswar kovil - has also been one of the facts highlighted by some Jaffna citizens. On September 5, the New Left Front staged a protest demonstration against this move in Colombo. Among those who spoke were Mavai Senathirajah, TULF MP, and Siritunga Jayasooriya, Secretary of the United Socialist Party. Mr. Senathirajah and DPLF MP, D. Sitharthan also raised this protest in Parliament. They were supported by UNP MP, Dr. Karunasena Kodithuwakku.

In the Eastern province, after many weeks of anxiety, on September 30, the ship 'Lanka Muditha' left Trincomalee for Kankesanthurai in Jaffna, with 300 displaced persons returning to resettle in the peninsula, 164 state officers and several University students.

The third Governor's Mobile Service was held in Batticaloa on September 9 and 10 at St. Cecilia's Girls' College and at St. Michael's. The security arrangements created great difficulties not only for those who intended to attend the Mobile Service but to the ordinary civilians in the town. Traders from outside the town area were not allowed to bring in their produce to market, and the streets of Batticaloa were relatively deserted during the day.

In the Vanni, despite the gradual resumption of food and drug supplies to the Vanni, the living conditions of the population there remains extremely precarious. The inability of the people of the Vanni to engage in any productive economic activity and the steep increases in the cost of living contribute to this situation. Reports of widespread prevalence of malnutrition among children are a particular cause of alarm.

Focusing on the almost total dependence of the Vanni's people on the relief measures provided by the state, government officials from the area have

stressed the need to ensure the adequate and regular supply of food in the coming months. This was the main topic of discussion at a meeting between Army high ranking officials and senior government officers held in Vavuniya in September. The Government Agents of Vavuniya, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu Districts in particular stressed the necessity to ensure that monthly rations were made available within the stipulated month itself, and there was no backlog or shortfall. At present, the Commissioner General of Essential Services send 80 lorry-loads of essential items to the Vanni per day.

Meanwhile, 50 farmers representing over 5000 farming families in the Vavuniya District sent an urgent missive to LTTE leader Prabhakaran through the ICRC, calling on the LTTE to halt their destruction of electricity transformers in the Vanni areas. The lack of power was creating many difficulties for farmers who need to mill their paddy and pump water into their fields. Earlier, the farmers had met GA Vavuniya K. Ganesh at his office and complained that they have been driven to the point of abandoning their agricultural activities as a result of transformers being destroyed and removed for security reasons. The CEB says that over 3000 consumers have been deprived of access to electricity due to their decision to dismantle transformers to which the army could not provide security. Among the areas affected are Koomankulam, Samalankulam, Kumankulam, Shanthasolai, Tavasikulam and Maharambaikulam.

There were several complaints of 'disappearances' from the Vanni region during September. From Mannar, there was a report that 8 youths were being sought by their families. Among the names mentioned in the reports were: Selvachandiran Sathiskumar (24) disappeared on August 11, when he was taking his mother who had lost sight on both eyes for treatment; Nadarajah Sureshkumar (24) of Sivapuram, Kilinochchi, reported to have been kidnapped on 22.8.99; Kathikamam Ramanan (28) disappeared in Vavuniya.

PLOTE Travails

On September 2, 1999 Senior Vice President of PLOTE and its Military Commander, Manikkadasan (41) PLOTE Vavuniya District leader, Ilango and another senior PLOTE leader, Vino were killed when a claymore mine ex-

ploded inside the PLOTE's 'Lucky' camp at Rambaikulam on the Vavuniya - Horowpatana road. It was thought that the bomb had been fixed to the ceiling of the building, and had been detonated through the use of a remote control device by the LTTE.

Manikkadasan who had collaborated with the security forces in many anti-LTTE actions, had been at the top of the LTTE's hit list, and had received repeated threats to his life. The bomb exploded as Manikkadasan and the others were about to leave after a meeting held on the first floor of the building.

As a result of this incident, a very tense atmosphere enveloped the entire Vavuniya Town. The police and the Army have intensified their security arrangements.

Manikkadasan's funeral rites were held on September 6, in Vavuniya. The streets of Vavuniya were decorated with white pandals and black banners. Many shops remained closed, and the entire town presented a sombre appearance.

Following the killing of Manikkadasan, there were reports that a group of about 100 members of PLOTE had fled into the jungles around Vavuniya, taking their arms and weapons with them. The army cordoned off and searched several of the camps run by PLOTE in the Vavuniya area, and arrested about 30 members of the organisation. Weapons as well as other equipment were also seized. The police were deployed on security duty at five PLOTE camps, including at Kovilkulam, Vairava Puliyankulam and Lucky Camp.

PLOTE continued to file reports of harassment and attacks on its members by unidentified groups. On the night of September 5, several PLOTE members were shot at while they were on their way to Manikkadasan's funeral.

On the same day, a spokesman for TELO reported that the western barrier of their office opposite the Vairava Puliyankulam Children's Park was attacked and that it was repulsed with the support of the army. The residence of a former MP K.R. Kuhaneswaran at Kali Temple road, Vavuniya was fired at by a gang traveling in a white van, also on September 5.

On September 8, 12 members of the PLOTE who were found armed near the Kovilkulam area were arrested by the army. 7 of them were released after questioning. The other 5 were detained

for further investigations. All the arms in their possession were seized.

Detention of Mannar GA

On September 4, Mannar GA, Mr. S M Croos was arrested by a special Police team. The cause for his arrest was given as the need to make further inquiries into the explosives discovered in his home in the past week, and into the alleged use of his official vehicle to transport explosives to Colombo. His arrest followed information revealed by his driver who was arrested earlier.

A complaint against the arrest and detention of the Mannar GA was lodged before the Committee on Wrongful Arrests and Harassment on September 20. The Committee called for a report from the Mt. Lavinia police in this connection. On September 27, the Police said that they needed more time to pursue their investigation, and therefore asked that the detention of Mr. Croos be extended for a further three month period.

Pudukuduyirippu Killings

On September 15, an air attack on the Puthukudiyirippu market area in the Mullaitivu District resulted in the death of 22 civilians, including school children and women. 41 persons were also severely injured and more than 15 houses were razed to the ground. The attack took place during the daytime, when there was a large crowd of shoppers in the area. The injured were admitted to the Mullaitivu and Puthukudiyirippu hospitals.

When asked about this incident, the Defence Ministry first denied any civilian killings, saying that they had targeted only LTTE fortifications in the area. However, by late evening of the 15th, the ICRC had confirmed the incident which took place about 2 k.m. from its office.

Gonagala Killings

On September 18, a midnight raid by over 100 LTTE cadre into the Gonagala area in Amparari District led to 48 persons being brutally hacked to death. Gonagala is the 31st colony established under the Gal Oya scheme and is about 24 km. from Amparari town. Here, again, many of those killed were women and children. The killers had even ransacked the households and taken away whatever cash and valuables found in them. The funerals for

38 of the victims were held on the 19th in the village, while the other bodies were laid to rest at Maha Oya. Family members of all adult married victims would receive Rs. 50,000/- as compensation. The compensation allocated for unmarried adults was Rs.25,000/- while for those under 21 it was Rs. 15,000/-.

The incident raised once more the issue of security for these villages that lie in the so-called border zones between territory that is controlled by the army and areas that are under the control of the LTTE. On this particular night, the Home Guards assigned to the village had been away protecting the police station. In the wake of the massacre over 1500 villagers from Gonagala, 16th Colony and Galapitagala had fled their homes and moved into schools. They were refusing to return to their villages unless better security was provided.

Following the massacre, the government established two new army camps in the area, one at Bangalawadiya and the other at Sugandagama. 200 soldiers and 300 home guards were recruited immediately to man the two camps. It was also decided to pay a salary of Rs. 4,000 to the home guards without discrimination.

As a consequence of the tension that prevailed in the area, 75 Tamil families from the 4th Colony of the Amparai central camp, which is about 30 kms. Away from the site of the massacre, have evacuated their houses through fear. Several hundred Tamil families from Nugalanda and Srimawatte have fled their homes and sought refuge at Vellaveli in the Batticaloa District. They say they fear some form of retaliation for the massacre.

In the weeks following the massacre, more than 2,500 guns were given to Sinhalese people residing in the border villages of the Amparai District. 22,500 selected villagers have been issued with guns and are being trained to operate them. Although only shotguns and repeater guns have been issued, the villagers will also be trained to use automatic weapons such as T56 and AK47. They will be paid an allowance to undergo this training.

Chenmani Investigation

The pre-exhumation proceedings conducted by Additional Jaffna District Judge Mr. M. Ilancheliyan in connection with the investigation of the mass graves at Chenmani, Jaffna, com-

menced on August 31. 5 persons convicted of the rape and murder of Krishanthi Kumaraswamy indicated 14 more mass graves located on either side of the Kandy road at Chemmani, and speculated that these graves could contain more than 75 bodies.

Somarathna Rajapakse, the convict on whose evidence this investigation commenced, made two requests to the Court when the sittings began. He asked for a lawyer to be assigned to him to look after his interests before he is interrogated by the CID about the mass graves. He also requested that all the sites identified by him should be opened broadly and not necessarily deeply. Both these requests were granted by the Judge. The CID is due to begin questioning Rajapakse on September 29.

Initially, Rajapakse identified about five graves near Ariyalai East, Mampalam Junction, near J/Kanagaratnam Madhya Maha Vidyalaya and adjoining Navalar Road. Referring to a site situated within the Colombothurai camp, Rajapakse said that 2 youths, Parthipan and Sudhakaran, who came to the camp to obtain passes were killed and buried in one of the graves. Education Officer Selvaratnam was also buried at this site. A burial site inside a house along Navalar Road near Stanley College contained the body of a girl, the daughter of a Hindu priest, he said. Rajapakse also identified a grave in an abandoned house near Kottukkinaru Pillayar Temple where persons tortured and killed by Major Thudugalle were buried.

The exhumation of the 25 gravesites thus identified by Rajapakse and his colleagues began on September 6, in the presence of the District Judge M. Ilancheliyan. Dr. William Haglund, an expert on chemical research, was also present at the exhumations.

On the 7th, 2 human skeletons that had been buried facing one another were exhumed. 3 human skulls and other parts of human skeletons were recovered on the 9th. Part of a skirt worn by women, a piece of elastic and a pendent bearing the design of a cross were also unearthed from the graves, where the skulls were found. A further human skeleton was unearthed on the 11th, in a grave behind a checkpoint between the Kandy road and Nayanmarkadu. The body was in an advanced state of decomposition.

Serious difficulties emerged in locating the graves pointed out by

Rajapakse in the saltern area. The excavation of this site was abandoned after two days of excavation since no bodies or skeletons were found. The excavation team then went on to the area where Kottukkinattady Pillayar Temple well is situated in Ariyalai. 2 skeletons were exhumed from a grave located to the north of the Temple on the 16th, and another skeleton was exhumed from a grave located to the south of the temple.

A total of 19 graves were excavated in the period from the 6th to the 18th, and 15 skeletons were discovered. The remains were handed over to the CID for further forensic examination.

On the 21st, Additional District Judge of Jaffna, Mr. Ilancheliyan presided over the Special Court sittings subsequent to the exhumation of the Chemmani graves. Rajapakse, the chief witness in the case, informed the Jaffna District Additional Judge that he had already identified whatever burial sites known to him. He also said that information on other burial sites could be obtained from army officers against whom he has already made allegations of involvement, during his earlier evidence before Court. The judge then ordered the CID to investigate the conduct of 20 Army officers who had been named by Rajapakse as having been involved in killings and burials at Chenmani.

American forensic anthropologist and director of the International Forensic Programme of the organisation Physicians for Human Right, Dr. William Haglund, observed the exhumation along with Ms. Melissa Connor, forensic archaeologist and Robert Stair, Chief Investigator of the Canadian Police in Vancouver. Among the local experts involved in the investigations have been forensic pathologists Prof. Chandrasiri Niriella, Dr. R. Ruwanpura, Dr. U.C. Perera, Dr. K.T.K. Wijeyaweera, Soil scientist Dr. K.A. Nandasena, and archaeologists Nimal Perera and Alfred de Mel.

In the South

Arrests: Following the assassination of TULF MP Tiruchelvam at the end of July, the Police and security forces have been alert to the presence of suicide bombers in Colombo. Search operations in Colombo were intensified as a result. On September 1, newspapers reported that over 50 persons had been taken into custody by the Modera

(Colombo 14) Police. A similar search operation was conducted by the Pettah (Colombo 11) Police, also on the same day. Reports said that 201 LTTE suspects were arrested in this massive joint operation conducted by the army and police.

On days between September 12 and 19, another special search operation was carried out by the police and the army in Colombo. The areas covered were: Slave Island (Colombo 2), Bambalapitiya (Colombo 4), Borella (Colombo 8), Maligawatta (Colombo 10), Kirulapona (Colombo 6), Pettah (Colombo 11) and Narahenpita (Colombo 5). During this operation, 1,180 Tamils were detained for questioning and subsequently, 18 of them were arrested on suspicion. On September 23, a special Police team arrested 35 alleged LTTE suspects in a sudden operation carried out in the Fort Railway station in Colombo. Information received had referred to a Tiger attempt to cause a large-scale massacre by exploding a bomb in a passenger train, informed sources said.

On September 20, there was a round-up in Mannar town, conducted by the police. This intensive search operation was made on information received that LTTE cadres had intruded into the area. About 150 youths were taken to the old police station in Mannar, interrogated and then allowed to go home. There were no arrests. However, the search operation created a tense atmosphere in the area.

Bombs in Public Transport: On September 22, around 3 p.m., a bomb exploded in a bus travelling from Negombo to Kuliyaipitiya, seriously injuring 20 passengers. The explosion occurred as the bus reached the Kirimetiya temple junction in Dankotuwa. The injured were admitted to Wennappuwa and Negombo hospitals. The bomb is thought to have been brought on to the bus in a bag. The woman suspected of having been the carrier had got off the bus en route. Meanwhile, a bomb also exploded in a bus parked at the Negombo bus stand around the same time on the same day. Fortunately, there were no passengers in this bus at the time.

On September 26, 1 passenger was killed and 31 injured when a bomb exploded in a private bus traveling from Badulla to Moneragala. The explosion had occurred when the bus was near the 2nd mile post on the Badulla - Passara

Road. The bomb is believed to have been concealed in a gunny bag full of vegetables, placed behind the driver's seat. The passenger suspected to have brought it was the one reported killed, according to initial Police investigations.

A powerful bomb weighing nearly 3 kgs was discovered by Police close to the Hingurakgoda railway station. Six Tamil persons, working in a nearby paddy field have been taken into custody by the army on suspicion in this regard.

Political Detainees: On September 14, 3 Tamil political detainees in Section 'D' of the Kalutara prison launched a fast unto death campaign demanding an inquiry into their cases. A further 12 detainees joined the fast on the 18th, and were ultimately joined by 121 detainees in the 'C' section. On September 20, following interventions by lawyers Kumar Ponnambalam and A Vinayagamorthy, the strikers agreed to call off their strike until October 15.

The practice of keeping Tamil political prisoners in detention for extended period of time without any investigation has been an issue on which there have been many agitation cam-

paigns within the Prison and outside. However, each time, the strikers are pacified with some temporary measures, and there has been no attempt to resolve the issue in any lasting manner.

The strikers had also appealed to the Committee for the Prevention of Unlawful Arrests and Harassment to intervene on their behalf. Their demand is that those against whom the Police cannot muster enough information on the basis of which they could bring charges, should be released without further delay.

There have been growing complaints that the Committee on Wrongful Arrests and Harassment, which was set up to inquire into allegations from Tamil civilians in particular regarding abuse and violation of their basic rights, is not able to fulfill its mandate in a way that gives satisfaction to those who approach the Committee in search of redress for their grievances. Even representations made through MPs have not yielded results. For example, CWC MP R. Yogarajan said that at the request of Minister Lakshman Jayakody, Chairman of the Committee, he lodged a large number of complaints about ar-

rests and harassment by police, for which there was no positive response. EPDP sources said that its Secretary General and MP Douglas Devananda refused to participate in proceedings of this Committee, since he alleged that it did not serve any purpose.

Opposition Politics

The National Sangha Council (NSC) and the National Movement Against Terrorism (NMAT) organised several demonstrations and a poster campaign continuing with their agitation against peace initiatives and against the LTTE. There were veiled threats against all those who have been involved in the ongoing peace initiatives and mobilisations in their statement and public rhetoric. For example, following the massacre of Sinhala villagers in Amparari in mid-September, the Secretary of the National Sangha Council the Ven. Ittapane Dhammaloka, went on record as saying that the organisations promoting peace were 'also partly responsible for these terrorist attacks aimed at cleansing the Sinhala people from the East'.

The five key Sinhala racist organizations, the NSC, the NMAT, the

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National Joint Committee (NJC), Sinhala Veera Vidahana (SVV) and the YMBA also held a demonstration in Colombo on September 22, to denounce the Amparai massacre. Among those leading the demonstration were Kamal Deshapriya, the Coordinating Secretary of the NMAT, Patali Champika Ranawaka, a leading spokesperson of the Movement and the Ven. Atureliye Ratana.

Attack SLMC Rally

On September 14, 17 persons including three police constables were injured when about 500 members of a rival Muslim group attacked an SLMC rally held in Akkaraipattu town. The meeting had been presided over by the party leader Minister M.H.M. Ashraff. Police had used tear gas and fired rubber bullets to disperse the attackers who had been hooting and throwing stones at the rally. The recent cross over of former SLMC national organizer Mustapha to the UNP and former UNP MP for Pothuvil, Uthuma Lebbe and ex-UNP MP Sinna Lebbe to the SLMC had been the root cause for this tensions which led to this attack, said political observers in the area.

Many of the injuries were allegedly caused by the Police firing, although the security forces claimed that only rubber bullets were used. A 'hartal' was called in Akkaraipattu town on September 15, to protest against the police shooting. Shops and offices were closed and school work was also disrupted.

On September 15, leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Kachchi and former SLMC Chairman, Attorney-at-Law, Segu Issadeen and seven others were arrested by Akkaraipattu police on the basis that they had been responsible for the disruption of the meeting. They were produced before the Akkaraipattu Magistrate and given bail on the 16th. The case will be heard on October 14.

Commission on Missing Persons

The Presidential Commission which inquired into Missing Persons, was in the process of drafting its final report. According to the Commission's Secretary, the Commission had been mandated to inquire into 10,136 complaints which had been the residue from previous Commissions. However, the Commission had also received about 15,000 fresh complaints, of disappearances during the previous regime. The

complainants had alleged that they had been unable to lodge their complaints earlier. Among the groups that filed these complaints were the Association of Parents & Children of Disappeared, which had a list of 8,173 disappearances, the SLMC and a People's Organisation in Batticaloa that had complaints of 6,400 disappearances. However, the Commission has no power to investigate these disappearances.

Of the 10,136 representations received by the Commission, only about half of the complainants actually appeared before the Commission to testify as to their situation.

The Organisation of Parents and Families of the Disappeared have said that they would hand over 19,000 further complaints regarding disappearances during the period from 1987 to 1990 to the members of the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances when they make their third official visit to the island sometime in October.

Media Freedom

On August 31, the Journalists Association of the North staged an hour-long protest against the grenade attack on the 'Uthayan' newspaper building on August 21. Over one hundred journalists, writers, representatives of public organisations and political parties participated in the demonstration which was held at the Jaffna Central Bus Stand. Amongst those participating were representatives of Hindu Religious Organisations, the Catholic Art and Literature Circle, the Jaffna University Employees Union, the Tamil Teachers Union, the English Medicine Traders Union, the Lions Club of Kokuvil, the University Students Union, the University Clerical Service Union, employees of Uthayan and employees of the Palaly Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation.

The EPRLF, PLOTE and the EPDP supported the protest. The organisers said they wanted to issue a clear warning against meddling with the freedom of expression, and following the protest, handed over a memorandum addressed to the President to the Additional Government Agent, Jaffna.

On September 8, celebrated the world over as International Media Day, Rohana Kumara, the editor of SATANA, a tabloid newspaper better known for its scurrilous campaigns against political leaders, was shot dead while

on his way home after work. Mr. Rohana Kumara had been traveling in a trishaw when, near the lane turning off to his home, a person shot at him from the rear seat of a car which was parked nearby.

The killing created turmoil within the ranks of the media as well as became an issue on the floor of Parliament, where pandemonium reigned when the opposition implicated the government in the assassination. The opposition has asked for an impartial inquiry into the killing, but media personnel allege that even at the end of September, the law enforcement mechanism had moved very slowly in this case.

The Editors' Guild of Sri Lanka, the Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Free Media Movement organised a Regional Colloquium on the Freedom of Expression and Defamation, in Colombo from September 15 to 17, in collaboration with Article 19, the International Centre for the Freedom of Expression. The meeting was addressed by both the UN Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Expression, Mr. Abid Hussein, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of the Judiciary, Mr. Param Kumaraswamy, as well as by leading media and legal luminaries from Sri Lanka and the region. Criminal defamation laws were the main focus of the deliberations of the Colloquium, and among the recommendations were: - that certain public bodies (including elected and executive bodies and publicly-owned corporations) be prohibited from bringing defamation actions; and - that procedures associated with a defamation case be quick and simple.

Independence of the Judiciary

The appointment of Attorney General Mr. Sarath Silva as the Chief Justice in the face of opposition from many different quarters will remain a controversial issue in the months to come. For months, some sections of the media and the judicial profession had campaigned against this appointment on the basis that Mr. Silva was guilty of acting in an unethical manner. Two Supreme Court judges were appointed to look into the allegations of 'moral turpitude' raised by the editor of the Sinhala tabloid RAVAYA, Victor Ivan, and engineer W.B. Jayasekera, who had cited Mr. Silva as a co-respondent in his divorce case.

Human rights groups have lent their voices to the concerns regarding the appointment of the Chief Justice on the basis that the very manner in which any such appointment can be made under the present Constitution is flawed and allows for authoritarian actions on the part of the President.

Speaking at a public symposium, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of the Judiciary went on record as saying that he had never before hard of a situation in which a person with two motions for disenrolment pending has been promoted.

Critics of the Chief Justice's appointment have also raised the issue of two other instances in which judicial officers - Magistrate Lenin Ratnayake and District Judge A.H.M.U. Abeyratna - have been accused of wrongdoing and the cases have been 'covered up'. In this regard, the Judicial Services Commission declared that with regard to Mr. Ratnayake, a preliminary inquiry had been concluded and the question of framing charges was under consideration. With regard to the case against Mr. Abeyratne, the JSC stated that he had appealed against a decision

made by a previously constituted Disciplinary Committee to send him into compulsory retirement.

Considering the appeal, the JSC had decided to debar Mr. Abeyratne from promotion to the Special Class of the Judicial Service for 2 years from 19.7.99 and transfer him to Mone-ragala.

Fundamental Rights Cases

The National Movement against Terrorism filed a fundamental rights appeal in the Supreme Court against the ban imposed on the broadcasting of a programme containing sermons by the controversial Buddhist monk the Ven. Soma by ITN, the state-owned television station.

On September 1, the Supreme Court granted leave to proceed to P.D. Gunasiri and I.C. Madduma Bandara, both presently detained at the Magazine Prison in Colombo, on their petition that their fundamental rights have been violated by the Tebuwana Police. The petitioners allege that they were arrested on July 17, 1999 on a false charge and tortured while in Police custody.

On September 27, the Supreme Court granted leave to proceed to journalist Sinniah Ganeshan of Chilaw, who has alleged illegal arrest and detention by the Chilaw Police. Mr. Ganeshan. Who works as a local correspondent for the Lake House Tamil publication 'Thinapathi' had been arrested during a routine cordon-and-search operation and detained without any reasonable basis.

Two Tamil political detainees, S. Uthayaraja and Rajaratnam have petitioned the Supreme Court alleging unlawful arrest and detention as well as torture while in detention. They have been at present detained for over 8 months.

On September 29, the Supreme Court awarded Rs. 25,000 as compensation to Don Jagath Senatilaka, a businessman from Mundalama in the Chilaw District, who had filed an appeal alleging unlawful arrest and detention in April/May 1999. He claimed that the Officer-in-charge of the Mundalama Police had penalised him for not contributing to the election campaign of a PA candidate during the Provincial Council elections.

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The East Timor Crisis - the Lessons

Dr. S. Narapalasingam

Recent events in East Timor with the prospect of it becoming an independent state following a UN supervised referendum and the induction of an UN intervention force to contain the violence unleashed against the people have led some to call for such intervention in other areas of conflict such as Sri Lanka.

This article deals with the details for understanding the factors that contributed to the crisis and the discrepancy between the rejection of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor in 1976 by the international community and at the same time its unwillingness to take any action for allowing the people of East Timor to decide the political status of the province. It also deals with the recent developments that led to the August 30 UN-sponsored referendum in which the vast majority of East Timorese voted for independence and the subsequent atrocities perpetrated by the Indonesian army with the help of the pro-Jakarta militias against the East Timorese, which necessitated the dispatch of the UN-backed international force to East Timor. The factors that helped the East Timorese to win the support of the western powers, who had ignored Indonesia's brutal occupation for 24 years are also discussed.

Timor is an island that lies between

Indonesia and Australia with an area of 13,094 square miles. Portuguese occupied the island in the early 16th century but later the Dutch colonised the western half of the island. It was only in the 19th century the two European powers formally partitioned the island between them. During the second world war the Japanese occupied it for a brief period. Their brutal occupation led to the deaths of at least 50,000 East Timorese (about 10% of the population). In 1945 after the war ended, the numerous islands spanning 3,000 miles in the Malay archipelago which were known as Dutch East Indies, an overseas territory of the Netherlands formed the Republic of Indonesia.

West Timor being a former Dutch colony also became a part of Indonesia. East Timor having an area of 5,743 sq. miles (14,874 sq. km) continued to remain a colony of Portugal. It lies approximately 320 miles north of Darwin, Australia and has a mountainous terrain. The population of East Timor in 1975, when the Portuguese left, was 680,000 - 97% Timorese (including mestizos), 2% Chinese, under 1% Portuguese. The population before the recent disturbances broke out was about 800,000 - 78% Timorese, 2% Chinese, 20% Indonesian. There are 12 ethnic groups in East Timor each of which has

same country. Under the circumstances, there is no justification in demanding the approval of the Ministry of Defence from a person who wishes to go to Jaffna.

State Counsel Buvanaka Aluvihare argued that even though Helitours is a private organization, it is the Air Force which is running this air service.

Owing to the damage caused to some aeroplanes recently by the terrorists, civilian air service was stopped. When the Air Force began operating this service, therefore, due to security considerations, it became necessary to introduce certain regulations. The case has been put off for further hearing on 15.2.2000. ●

its own language. A simplified version of the Tetum language was utilised in Dili, the capital of East Timor as a lingua franca by the Portuguese. Tetum is now the main East Timorese language, spoken by about 60% of the population.

For centuries the East Timorese had been farmers, living in scattered hamlets and eating what they grew and exporting mainly coffee. Only a few coastal East Timorese were fishermen. In spite of centuries of Catholic missionary work 72 % of the population in 1975 were animists. The proportion of Catholics after Indonesia's occupation increased rapidly from 28% in 1975 to 85% in 1998.

Indonesia with a population of over 200 million is the fourth most populated country in the world - after China, India and the USA. It is a major regional power with a vast potential market. It is a country of mixed ethnic groups (as many as 300). The Javanese are by far the biggest of them, dominating the others and constituting the country's elite. They, together with the Sundanese who also occupy the island of Java, constitute 60% of the total population. They have been migrating to other parts of Indonesia over many decades.

Suharto's Authoritarian Rule General Suharto, a Javanese, became President in 1966 by ousting President Sukarno in a violent military coup which was followed by the killing of tens of thousands of "communists and their sympathisers", and the setting up of a virtual dictatorship. Suharto's dictatorial powers were derived in part from his personal style and in part from the Constitution, which, among other things, allowed the President to hold office for an unlimited number of terms. The government, which consisted of the President and his ministers, whom he personally chose, controlled the Legislature and the Judiciary. The President and his ministers also controlled the 26 provinces (and East Timor after annexation became the 27th province). All major institutions including the trade unions, the press and the three legally allowed political parties were made powerless.

The armed forces, consisting of army (over 225,000 in 1995), navy, air force and police were given powerful political and social roles with the aim of squashing all opposition. They have since 1945 played a prominent role in

(Continued from page 20)

Freedom of Movement

Attorney and leader of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress had filed a petition alleging violation of his fundamental rights following an incident at the Ratmalana airport, where he was asked to produce a certificate of permission from the Ministry of Defence prior to being allowed to purchase a ticket to travel to Jaffna. He is claiming Rs. 1 million as compensation.

In considering his application, Supreme Court judge D.B.S. Gunasekera stated that there are no laws or regulations in the country that insist on the approval of the Ministry of Defence to go from one place to another within the

Indonesian national life. They were able to sit in parliament, control civilian government and maintain a presence in every town and village. They regarded themselves as guarantors of the nation's integrity, and as such, considered their prime duty to identify any would-be secessionists and those who oppose the government's dictatorial line such as democrats or socialists. The army has throughout had a reputation for arrogance and violence.

Portugal Abandons East Timor For fifty years Portugal was in the hands of two dictators - Salazar 1926-1968, Caetano 1968-1974. In 1961, Portugal pulled out of Goa on the western coast of India following the Indian army moving into the territory. In 1974, the Portuguese army, exhausted by fighting unwinnable wars in Africa, staged the "Carnation Revolution" which brought an end to the civilian dictatorship in Portugal. The process of decolonisation initiated by the new regime led to five African colonies, Portuguese Guinea, Angola, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe and Cape Verde Islands becoming independent countries in 1974-1975. East Timor was the last colony that Portugal abandoned

during this period. Macao will be returned soon to China under a separate treaty.

Following the end of dictatorial rule in Portugal, democracy was promoted from 1974 onwards in East Timor. This resulted in the organisation of three Timorese political parties: UDT (Democratic Union of Timor) advocating a progressive process of autonomy, under Portugal, APODETI (Timorese Democratic People's Union) advocating that East Timor be integrated into Indonesia and ASDT (Timorese Social Democratic Association) which later became FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) advocating total independence for East Timor. This was the most radical and left-leaning of the three parties.

Local elections were held in February and March 1975 in which Fretilin won 55% of the vote, with UDT close behind. Over 90% of East Timorese supported these two pro-independence groupings. APODETI, the pro-Indonesia party scored negligible results, in spite of generous financial support from Jakarta.

Indonesia, aware of the rich oil reserves off the coast of East Timor, and

fearful that an independent East Timor might motivate other ethnic groups in Indonesia to demand independence, set up in 1974 a special command, "Operasi Komodo", designed to destabilise East Timor. Indonesia began to woo certain UDT leaders away from their previous alliance with FRETILIN. In secret meetings between these UDT leaders and certain Indonesian generals, Indonesia managed to persuade the UDT to launch an anti-FRETILIN coup. It was believed that instability would provide a good excuse for Jakarta to invade East Timor for the purpose of "restoring order".

The "coup" was staged by UDT in August 1975, which was promptly countered by FRETILIN. The three-week long running battle resulted in about 2000 deaths. FRETILIN, being more popular, better armed, more disciplined and motivated won the battle convincingly. This resulted in the flight of a few thousand refugees to West Timor.

In the twelve-month period prior to this military encounter Portugal had been gradually withdrawing its civil and military personnel from East Timor. On 27 August 1975, in the mid-

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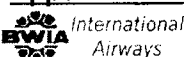
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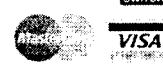


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dle of the strife, the Portuguese Governor with his staff and military left Dili for the offshore Timorese island of Atauro, where they stayed until December 1975 when they finally departed. Thus, from August 1975 onwards there was no Portuguese administration in East Timor. These events have been cited by the East Timorese leaders to assert that a handover by their erstwhile colonial power never took place.

Indonesia's Annexation

Having failed to take over East Timor by indirect means, the Indonesian generals now conducted "Operasi Komodo" towards a more direct military solution. From September 1975 Indonesian troops started infiltrating across the border from Indonesian West Timor into East Timor. By attacking civilians and burning crops and homes in the border region, they tried to create the impression that the civil war was still continuing and that anarchy prevailed.

The military intervention by Indonesia, together with the refusal of the Portuguese to return, forced FRETILIN to proclaim the Democratic Republic of East Timor on 28 November 1975. The Indonesian invasion started in the early hours of 7 December 1975. By April 1976 Indonesia had some 35,000 soldiers in East Timor, with another 10,000 standing by in Indonesian West Timor.

Within two weeks of the invasion, a provisional Timorese government was set up consisting of "ministers" from the pro-Indonesian APODETI party. On 31 May 1976 an "Act of Integration" was staged in Dili. The provisional Government convened a Regional People's Assembly, at which 28 hastily conscripted delegates signed a petition asking President Suharto to grant integration. This "Act of Integration" took place less than 6 months after the invasion, at a time when over 80% of East Timor was under the control and influence of FRETILIN forces. On 17 July 1976, President Suharto signed the Bill of Integration which had been unanimously adopted by the MPR (People's Consultative Assembly or Parliament) two days earlier. Thus, East Timor was officially incorporated into Indonesia as its 27th province. This was the act that Indonesia cited later to justify the legality of its presence in East Timor. Indonesia also claimed that the people of East Timor had already ex-

pressed their choice for integration with Indonesia and, therefore, there was no need for a further referendum.

The Fretilin army, called Falintil, consisted of 2,500 regular troops, 7,000 who had some Portuguese military training, and 10,000 who had attended short military instruction courses. The Indonesian military operations during 1977-1978 finally broke the back of the main East Timorese military forces. The East Timorese President and military commander, Nicolau Lobato, was shot and killed by Indonesian troops on 31 December 1978. From then on, the war was less widespread and continued only in those mountain areas controlled by Fretilin.

The International Red Cross relief workers were not allowed into East Timor till 19 October 1979. The programme was then halted again in July 1983. Many East Timorese were either killed or left the country in the subsequent years. The Indonesian occupation has been characterised by terrible human rights abuses which have well documented and have been the subject of many resolutions by the UN Commission on Human Rights.

In the early years after invasion, Indonesia waged open war against the people of East Timor. Aerial bombardments of villages and communities, massacres of civilians, military operations such as the infamous "fence of legs" operation in 1978, systematic rape and torture, the destruction and disruption of food production causing famine were aimed at destroying the will of the people to resist the occupation of East Timor.

East Timorese leaders have claimed that every Indonesian commander since 1975 has been responsible for extrajudicial and civilian murders. Chopping off heads and displaying them in public; the Commander going along to give an air of solemnity to the act and having his photograph taken among the remains; bodies being dragged by vehicles through the village streets and burning them in front of the people in the market-square; simply burning people alive; pushing people out of helicopters into the sea; and raping women in front of their husbands and children were said to be some of the inhuman practices of the Indonesian army. According to East Timorese, in 1975 alone the death toll was about 100,000.

Indonesia opened the border between East and West Timor in 1989,

after 14 years of harsh repression, claiming that it had "normalised" the situation in East Timor. The oppression, however, did not cease due to the overwhelming military presence. The people were treated brutally and denied a decent life through economic, social and cultural deprivations.

Non-enforcement of UN Resolutions

The United Nations never recognised the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia. In December 1975 and April 1976 the Security Council of the United Nations passed resolutions which demanded that "the Government of Indonesia withdrew all its forces from the territory." For more than two decades Indonesia had managed to ignore the world body. Incidentally, there are other countries like Israel that have also ignored UN Resolutions without being penalised for their non-compliance. These and other non-observance of the UN Charter have become more apparent. The failure to act in the face of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, NATO's attack on Yugoslavia over Kosovo without even a mandate from the Security Council and now the dispatch of an international UN-backed force to East Timor only after getting the approval of Indonesia, despite the fact that the UN never recognised Indonesia's annexation of East Timor are some of the recent examples that come to mind.

Recent experiences also reveal how geopolitics and self-interests of the powerful nations (especially those having the veto powers in the Security Council) influence their reluctance to enforce the UN Security Council resolutions, which they themselves had endorsed earlier. In the case of East Timor, none of the powerful countries wanted to press for the fulfilment of the UN resolutions during President Suharto's rule. Every year between 1976 and 1981, the General Assembly of the United Nations also passed several similar though weaker resolutions, in spite of the US voting against them. But in November 1982, rather than make yet another demand which went unheeded by Indonesia, it requested the UN Secretary-General "to initiate consultations with all parties directly concerned" in order to find a comprehensive solution to the problem. Since then, UN Secretary-Generals have initiated dialogues between Portugal, Indonesia, and on occasions between East

Timorese leaders. But very little headway was made, except for the recognition that East Timor was still high on the list of the UN's unresolved problems.

In 1992 after the Santa Cruz massacre (when Indonesian troops fired into a crowd of Timorese attending a funeral that killed about 100 and wounded 200 people), talks between Portugal and Indonesia were arranged by the UN Secretary-General and since then had continued regularly. Since 1995, three UN sponsored talks between those Timorese who oppose integration with Indonesia (the majority), and those few who support integration with Indonesia took place in Austria. Visits to East Timor by UN Special Rapporteurs, Envoys or Representatives of the Secretary-General and their reports exposed the plight of the population there.

Attitude of Western Powers

Although the western bloc with the exception of Australia did not recognise the annexation of East Timor, the attitude of Western governments had been to accept the Indonesian occupa-

tion as fait accompli. This is a very different response to the US-led rescue operation, which occurred when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1989. In the case of Kuwait, the US and her allies had everything to gain by opposing the Iraqi invasion but in East Timor they had much to lose by alienating Indonesia.

Some of the reasons for the accommodating stand of the West and Japan towards Indonesia were: in the 1970s and 1980s the anti-Communism of Indonesia and its strategic location were important in the Cold War era; the Timor Gap oilfield was known to be among the 23 richest oilfields in the world; the Western countries were keen to sell expensive sophisticated weaponry and they had a keen buyer in Indonesia; Indonesia, as a developing country rich in natural resources, provided wide investment opportunities for Western investors; with a population of 200 million people whose per capita income was rising, Indonesia represented a vast market; for companies re-locating to Indonesia, labour costs were very low; and labour unrests were absent (because of the dictatorial rule). Many industrial countries have

invested heavily in the country and also been benefitting from exports (including military hardware and aircrafts).

Australia's main motive for supporting Indonesia was the presence in the Timor Sea of a very rich oilfield, the exploitation of which required an agreement with Indonesia. There was also a political desire to show that Australia was a co-operative member of the Asian region. In 1972 Australia and Indonesia had agreed to the seabed boundary between the north of Australia and the island of Timor, part of which was Indonesian and part Portuguese. Since Portugal was out of the scene, a gap was left in the boundary just south of Portuguese Timor (East Timor). In the late 1970s oil exploration began in the Timor Sea, where an oilfield was discovered which was potentially extremely productive.

Once Indonesia had annexed East Timor and with Portugal out of the scene, Australia keen to exploit some of the oil gave support to Indonesia's position, so that it could reach an agreement with Suharto's government to "close the gap" in the seabed boundary. Negotiations proceeded for 10

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years and though a clear seabed boundary was not established by 1988, agreement was reached on how to share the oil. Australia and Indonesia agreed to establish a Joint Authority (in

Darwin and Jakarta), the "Timor Gap Zone of Co-operation" in 1989 to jointly develop this oil field. The Treaty came into force in 1991 and is due for review in 2031.

Fretilin Resistance

For the first three years of the war the Fretilin army fought battles on many fronts under a centralised command. Meanwhile their political ministers administered food production, housing, education and health in the Fretilin-controlled areas to which many Timorese had fled. But overwhelmed by helicopter-borne troops and massive bombing, the Timorese army eventually lost 90% of its weapons and 80% of its troops, and in 1979 was on the point of extinction. Supreme leadership, however, by the new commander, Xanana Gusmao, and support by the people, led to an important meeting in 1981 at which plans for mobile guerrilla units were established, and the Timorese military and population were united through the formation of clandestine support units.

The hub of the Timorese resistance, both military and political, was in the mountains of East Timor. The first leader of importance was Nicolau Lobato whose death on 31 December 1978, at the height of horrendous Timorese suffering and losses, nearly brought an end to the resistance.

Later, Xanana Gusmao welded together the remaining scattered soldiers and demoralised followers into a new movement, forming a liberation army and a national political structure called "Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Maubere" (CNRM). When finally

Xanana was captured in November 1992, the armed leadership devolved first to Mau Huno, who himself was captured six months later, and thence to Nino Konis Santana, who has been the Commander since 1993.

Falintil's Image

Falintil and its political clandestine wing have been scrupulous in confining their struggle to the defence of East Timor against the Indonesian invaders, in military, political and diplomatic ways. Not one single Indonesian civilian has been killed either in East Timor or in Indonesia itself and, unlike other independence movements, Falintil never resorted to foreign based terrorism against non-combatant targets - no hostages, abductions, killing of leaders of other political groups, explosive laden vehicles, landmines, suicide bombers, bombings of buildings, murders, highway explosions, blasting of transformers of sabotage of ships. In short, no terrorist activities at all. This was appreciated by the international community and later contributed immensely to sway international opinion from indifference to tangible support for self-determination.

The diplomatic front revolved largely around Jose Ramos Horta, who, in roving the world for over 20 years had managed to keep the issue of East Timor alive in the minds of the United Nations, western governments and the international press. He also made significant headway in convincing governments of the legitimacy and morality of the East Timor cause. The Catholic Church has been an important sanctuary and voice for the people. Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, joint winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize (along with the East Timorese leader Jose Ramos Horta) played a key role by

providing the moral leadership in the struggle against Indonesian oppression.

At the April 1998 Convention of the Diaspora in Portugal, the CNRM was subsumed into the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT). Xanana Gusmao, who had been captured in 1992 and held prisoner by the Indonesian authorities was acclaimed as the President and the East Timorese Magna Carta mapped out the future for a free and democratic East Timor. Expatriate, Jose Ramos Horta was appointed CNRM Special Representative abroad and personal representative of the jailed Resistance leader Xanana Gusmao. With the emphasis now on the popular and diplomatic fronts to find a peaceful solution, Falintil remained an important symbol of the Resistance within and outside East Timor.

Internationally, East Timorese living in the diaspora worked tirelessly and effectively with a diverse, creative and committed solidarity network. Their conduct won the sympathy and support of the people in their host countries. The 1996 Nobel Peace Prize award to Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo and Jose Ramos Horta, and South African President Nelson Mandela's support of Xanana Gusmao enhanced the integrity of Timorese leaders worldwide.

Xanana Gusmao, the leader of the pro-independence movement has been a cautious and diplomatic politician. The calibre of his leadership was seen by the whole world from the way he reacted to the violence that was unleashed by the anti-independence militia and the Indonesian army against his people in East Timor. He was sometimes too diplomatic for his own commanders, whom he kept under orders to refrain from attacking soldiers even as they deported and killed thousands of East Timorese. He felt that the Indonesian military (TNI), who far outnumbered the guerrillas would seize on any attack to launch massive retaliatory operations and delay their withdrawal. Throughout the resistance, his public relations strategy led to the CNRT keeping the moral high ground by abstaining from violence, pledging to tolerate its opponents and sounding a tone of compromise with Indonesia. Xanana Gusmao's international standing also made him the acknowledged future leader of independent East Timor.

(To be continued on next page issue)

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Pakistan Sinks Further as the Army Strikes Again

Ramesh Gopalakrishnan

It was manifestly a blind-folded chessgame of power when Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif ordered the Karachi and other airports not to allow the Pakistani International Colombo-Karachi flight of the evening of October 12 to land. His adversary was none other than General Pervez Musharraf, appointed by Sharif himself as Pakistan's army chief over the heads of two senior generals. Musharraf was sacked from his job by the Prime Minister when he was in Colombo as the official representative of Pakistan attending the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Sri Lankan Army. Even as the decision to sack him was made, Musharraf had boarded the flight after completing a golf game at Colombo and a sight seeing trip to the Buddhist pilgrim town of Kandy. Operating from the flight cockpit, Gen. Musharraf proved too clever for Sharif and simply took over the airport using his ground troops and airforce allies. Sindh police chief Rana Maqbool, who had been ordered to arrest the general in case the flight landed at Karachi, also promptly disappeared!

Sharif's attempt to divert Gen. Musharraf out of Karachi and other airports in Pakistan failed, with the result that India and Iran heaved an immediate sigh of relief. Otherwise, they would have had to allow the PIA flight to land in Ahmedabad or Teheran and play host to an unwelcome military chief and bear the burden of embarrassment! However, the wily general, immediately after landing, took over the reins at Pakistan and ended up embarrassing the whole world, including the United Nations' secretary-general Kofi Annan and the International Monetary Fund bosses, not just the United States' government of Bill Clinton which had been aiming for an at least a temporary reconciliation between India and Pakistan.

Sharif's battle with the armed forces was over and the army takeover was smooth and apparently even bloodless, starting with airports, television stations, supreme court and legislative buildings and the prime ministerial and other official residences. Last year,

Sharif had sacked the charismatic army chief, General Jahangir Karamat, and nothing had really turned up hot. Sharif had served up the marching orders, a few days ago, to naval chief Fasih Bohkar and nothing, he thought, would turn up against the move. However, Gen Musharraf has now proved that he is of very different mettle.

The key issue in the power struggle between Sharif and his general was, of course, the Pakistani defeat or climbdown at Kargil two months ago. The army chief had made it clear that everyone was aware of the Kargil operations right from the word go. However, Niaz Naik, a Sharif aide, who had made a secret trip to Delhi to meet the Indian leaders during the Kargil crisis, disclosed last month that Sharif came to know about the Kargil operations of the Pakistani military establishment only in April/May around the same time when the Indian government learnt the news through Kashmiri shepherds.

This statement had earlier been corroborated by Indian defence minister George Fernandes who indicated a deep divide between the civil/political establishment at Islamabad and the Pakistani armed forces directing the Kargil operations.

The next move came from an expected quarters - the United States government - which kept issuing warnings against any extra-constitutional takeovers in Pakistan. With the US decisively backing Sharif, his tussle with the armed forces seemed to intensify, but he soon decided to make up with Gen. Musharraf by extending his term as joint chief of staff till October 6, 2001. Sharif also placated Gen. Musharraf by retiring Quetta Corps commander Tariq Pervez for having an "unauthorised meeting" with the Prime Minister and sacking intelligence personnel who put out reports indicating a divide within the army establishment.

All this went for a toss when Sharif struck sacking Gen. Sharif in mid-flight on the fateful evening of October 12. The north-west bound plane got the message from the Karachi television tower that Gen. Musharraf was replaced

by Lt. Gen. Khwaja Ziauddin, the chief of the Inter-services Intelligence, who is regarded as a Sharif loyalist. Both Sharif and the ISI chief were confined to the Prime Minister's residence as Gen. Musharraf prepared rehearsing his 580-word-long terse speech after landing at Karachi. The irony was not lost on anyone comparing Pakistan with India where former prime ministers V P Singh, I K Gujral, Chandra Shekhar and P V Narasimha Rao and shadow prime minister Sonia Gandhi exhibited grace by participating at the swearing-in ceremony of the democratically-elected Atal Behari Vajpayee the next morning.

However, India has to share the blame for the genesis of the latest crisis in Pakistan. Vajpayee's Pokhran nuclear blasts had triggered Pakistan's Chagai blasts last year, following which Vajpayee was forced to come to terms with Pakistan by performing the Lahore bus ride in March last. Sharif too had responded to this move despite the impediments created by his army. The Lahore declaration went silent on the entire Kashmir issue and Sharif saw no option but to push through the Kashmir issue by acquiescing in the army move to push through, along with the Mujahideen, into Kargil. The defeat, or climbdown, resulted in a worsening of the political and financial crisis faced by Pakistan and the power tussle had got more intense.

Pakistan, unfortunately, is a cursed state, with its political leaders repeatedly failing mid-way through their tenures, handing the country on a platter to the waiting military generals. The much-hated political leaders are out, and indeed, the majority of the people in the country simply acquiesced in the army takeover, with none of the ruling Islamic Jamhoori Ittehad leaders and legislators protesting against it. Also, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, despite earning the wrath of the army establishment during her tenure, chose to blame only Sharif and not the army for the sudden change of guard. Hers was a carefully worded interview, coming as it did from London where she has been staying, to please the western democracies disgusted with the army takeover, even as her Pakistan People's Party cadres celebrated Sharif's departure from office courtesy the army! Curious logic indeed!

Gen Musharraf has made all the

(continued on next page)

BJP Coalition Triumphs

T.N.Gopalan

The apprehensions of the Indian liberals have come true. A BJP-led government will be firmly in the saddle at the Centre, at least for a couple of years from now. The BJP and its pre-poll allies, banded together under the banner of the National Democratic Alliance, have totted up more than 300 seats in the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of the Indian parliament, though by itself the BJP could win only 180 seats.

The Congress and its allies bagged only 136 seats, the Congress itself nose-diving to its worst-ever performance with just about 110 seats or so at the time of going to the Press. The Left parties also watched with dismay as their own share declined to only 41 seats, the CPI, especially, winning in only four seats, thus in distinct danger of losing its recognition as an all-India party.

It was unmitigated disaster all round for the secular forces, but the stock markets exploded with joy, The BSE index touching a record 5,000 mark.

The Moody's Investors Service, a leading international credit-rating agency, promptly upgraded India's sovereign rating outlook from 'stable' to 'positive'.

To quote an obviously exulting economic correspondent, "The move has been triggered by strong fundamentals, and an overall belief that the new government will be able to stay in power longer. The upgrade is also an acknowledgement that the Indian economy has

grown stronger despite the sapping side-effects of global financial crises and nuke-related economic sanctions. All this translates into goodnews for Corporate India...."

Whether what is good for the corporate India is also good for the rest of the nation is perhaps a moot point. But before going into the possible implications of the Vajpayee's second stint in power, a brief look at the NDA's victory would be in order.

Most opinion polls and exit polls had indeed predicted that the alliance could notch up to 300 seats. But there were quite a few skeptics. The expected decline in the BJP's fortunes in Uttar Pradesh and possibly in Gujarat would be too much for the party to compensate, even if there would be some gains down south, it was argued.

Thanks to internal bickerings in UP, the party's tally did plummet from a high of 59 to a low of only seats. In Punjab the BJP-Akali Dal combine was routed, and in Karnataka too the Congress emerged a surprise winner in both the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

But there was unchecked disaster in store for the party in most other places. In the New Delhi province itself the BJP swept to victory in all the seven seats, for the first time in history. Encore in Haryana.

In Orissa the Congress managed to scrape through only in two seats.

In Gujarat, the BJP won 19 of the 26 seats at stake, belying the general perception that the Keshubhai Patel

with Gen. Musharaf. The fact that such a regime would lack legitimacy in the international arena does not seem to have bothered Gen. Musharaf at all.

Times, indeed, are going to be tough for the subcontinent. The Pokhran-Chagai blasts have had their political toll at last, with whatever little left of democracy in Pakistan simply snuffed out. With the military fully ensconced at Islamabad, the political resistance to nuclearisation of the subcontinent does not even appear possible. This should indeed be heartening news for the hawks on the Indian side as well. ●

government had become unpopular.

Though a resurgent Congress under Sonia had swept the Assembly polls less than a year ago in Delhi, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the BJP successfully reversed the trend now.

In Rajasthan the BJP won 16 of 25 seats at stake. That is attributed to the Jat anger over their non-inclusion in the list of the other backward castes (OBCs). But how does one explain the defeat of the Congress in Madhya Pradesh where the Digvijay Singh has won all round plaudits? The BJP won 28 out of 40 seats here. Observers are indeed intrigued.

But by far the most stunning shock came from Bihar where the BJP and its allies bagged 40 of the 54 seats at stake, something quite unforeseen in the Laloo land. The avowedly charismatic Laloo Prasad Yadav himself bit the dust at the hands of his one-time mentor Sharad Yadav. He lost by a margin of 30,000 in Madhepura, a Yadav-dominated constituency. This was a blow few had expected. A bulwark of secularism had fallen by the way side.

The ever cocky Laloo would not even meet anyone from the outside world for the first couple of days after the results were out. Whatever his failings, the fact that he was seen as the guardian of the Muslim interests in an increasingly hostile milieu, was a saving grace. A coalition of the upper castes, some intermediate castes ranged against the Yadavs and some sections of the Dalits did him in. With the Assembly elections to follow in the next five months, Laloo should be a worried man.

But not just Laloo alone. Already the Republic of Bihar, as a journalist has trenchantly dubbed it, is in a class all of its own, where anarchy reigns supreme in most places, the Dalits, the intermediate castes and the upper castes flying at each other's throats. But the Muslims felt safe thanks to Laloo.

What will happen now? Will the upper caste-Dalit coalition fostered by the BJP will move forward to consolidate itself leading to war with the Yadavs? There are some indications that certain intermediate castes like the Kurmis - former Railway Minister Nitish Kumar and the leader of the Samata Party, an ally of the BJP, is a Kurmi - could be apprehensive of the future and move back to a closer relationship with the Yadavs. This could even result in a renewed assault on the

(Continued from page 24)

noise about Sharif's bid to get rid of him, his interference with the armed forces' functioning, his party's corrupt governance and other exigencies, necessitating the army takeover as a "last resort". Having suspended the powers of the courts to oust him and dissolved the legislatures, he has, however, had nothing much to state on the contours of the new regime at Islamabad, except that he would function as the chief executive, probably with an advisory council consisting of civilian experts. President Rafiq Tarar, who was considered a Sharif loyalist, now cohabits

Dalits. The future is indeed pregnant with many grim possibilities.

Yet another stunning show was in Andhra Pradesh. The Telugu Desam Party and the BJP together emerged victorious in 36 of the 42 seats at stake, leaving a mere five for the Congress. In the Assembly elections held concurrently, the TDP swept to power winning 180 seats. The Congress could secure only 90 seats.

The developments in A.P. and Bihar seem to show that the electorate are swayed less by ideology or even by caste and that they are willing to back anyone who could deliver the goods and also reject anyone who would not bother to attend to their day to day problems, whatever his or her image might be.

TDP chief and A.P. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu himself is no great charismatic figure. He tried to make up for it by trying to fashion a relatively responsive government.

Though he did derive a lot of mileage in the media, nationally and even internationally, with his stress on reforms and his penchant for net-working, the hard-pressed people of A.P. did

not seem too very elated over his obviously elitist approach. And when Sonia arrived on the scene, she drew huge crowds everywhere, giving a lot of sleepless nights to Naidu and company.

But by devising some schemes which took the administration to the villages and hamlets and adopting some populist measures, Naidu did seem to regain some lost ground.

Further more his tie-up with the BJP seems to have yielded him rich dividends. After all when the Congress was groping in the dark over the future Prime Ministerial candidate, here was Vajpayee projected as a most acceptable man for the top job. Both Naidu and Karunanidhi were shrewd enough to realise the vote-catching value of Vajpayee, though Naidu was reluctant to the end about formally forging an alliance with the BJP. Anyway in order to thwart the Congress, he finally took that step, wisely as it has now turned out.

In Maharashtra the BJP-Shiv Sena combine benefited by the Sharad Pawar rebellion, they managed to win as many as 28 of 48 seats at stake there despite

the powerful anti-incumbency sentiments. In fact in the Assembly elections, no party has secured a majority, the Congress emerging as the largest single party. Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party too has done well and there is again talk of the two again coming together to form a government and thus frustrate the Shiv Sena. If only the clique around Sonia had not allowed Pawar to break away the Congress might have put up a much better show, given the sorry track record of the Shiv Sena-BJP government.

Ultimately whether tying itself in knots over the issue of the Italian origin of Sonia or projecting a prime ministerial candidate or handling dissidence inside the party, the party high command has proved itself woefully inadequate to the demands on it.

Hitting out at Sonia's arrogant refusal to prop up a non-Congress government after the fall of Vajpayee, noted columnist Saeed Naqvi said: "After the Mandalisation of politics, the BJP reacted swiftly and sought to accommodate all tiers in the Hindu society into the power structure. The BJP,

(continued on next page)

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Verdict in Tamil Nadu

T.N.Gopalan

The verdict in Tamil Nadu (and Pondicherry), as elsewhere in the country, generally conforms to the predictions made by pollsters and journalists. The DMK-led front has won 26 seats and the AIADMK-front 14 seats, the TMC-combine drawing a blank.

The DMK itself won 11 seats, the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) five, the BJP and the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) four each and the MGR ADMK and MGR Kazhagam, two little-known outfits one each.

On the AIADMK side, Jayalalitha's party won ten seats, the Congress three and the CPM one.

The only surprise loser for the DMK front was Union Petroleum Minister Vazhapadi K.Ramamurthy at Salem.

That was some poetic justice. A peripatetic politician who holds fast to no principles or even norms of political decency, he is indeed a paler version of the other notorious maverick Dr.Subramaniam Swamy.

He had become the president of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee way back in 1989 courtesy Jayalalitha, in the wake of the drubbing the party had got under the leadership of Karuppiah Moopanan. It had fought alone and come a cropper.

Thereafter he showed himself off as a strong Jaya-loyalist, speaking up for her even she took up cudgels against his own party high command.

Though for reasons not clear he fell out with her one stage and was humbled in the 1996 elections when he contested as a candidate of the short-lived Tiwari Congress in alli-

during to the run-up to Hitler's ascent to power.,

V.Krishna Ananth, an incisive social commentator, recalls the Communist International's analysis of the Europe of the times: Fascism constructs an economic basis for the organisational unity of large capitalists, rural exploiters and urban petty bourgeoisie, adopts a foreign of militarism and imperialist aggression, mobilises an organisational force of cadres from the urban petty bourgeoisie and the backward sections of the working class, adopts populist slogans and finally in place of liberal democracy, it establishes a structure of direct authoritarian rule.

Does not the BJP talk of a Presidential form of government?

The second government of Vajpayee looks like more enduring than the previous one. Before long the Sangh Parivaar would unsheath their swords, though the BJP itself pretends to have put in the back-burner all controversial issues. When the knives are out, the burning of Father Staines and his sons would look like child's play. Agonising times are ahead for India.●

ance with the PMK.

But he lost no time to make up with her, and Jayalalitha, licking her own wounds after the 1996 debacle, did not mind pardoning him. In fact she found him useful in bringing into her camp both Dr.Ramadas and Vai.Ko.

It was at her instance he floated his Thamizhaka Rajiv Congress last year, secured the ticket for Salem and won handsomely. One of the enduring images of the last year's election-eering was his remaining standing on the dais, an apple in his hands, (apple being his election symbol), when Jayalalitha addressed a rally in his constituency.

He also became a cabinet minister, taking charge of the lucrative Petroleum ministry at that, thanks to her recommendation.

But subsequently when Jayalalitha decided to rock the Vajpayee boat, Vazhapadi rebelled again and started calling her names. He had too much to lose after all. She would never forgive him for his brazenness, rehabilitated former AIADMK minister Selvaganapathy purely for the purpose of settling scores with Vazhapadi and has now succeeded.

Another person to be targeted by her was Dr.Subramaniam Swamy, at Madurai - the AIADMK did not have to sweat it out much there of course, he forfeited his security deposit.

The unexpected defeat of one of her senior cronies, former law minister Thambidurai at Krishnagiri should come as a bitter bill though.

At the same time the victory of her confidante Sasikala's nephew T.T.V.Dhinakaran at Periakulam, though by a narrow margin of less than 50,000 votes, should come as a solace to her.

A man with no political background, but who is her chief factotum, Dhinakaran is tipped to take over as the leader of the AIADMK group in the parliament. Many senior leaders were kept out of the election race just to smoothen the way of Dhinakaran, it is generally believed.

Still it is a big let down for her that she has to be content with a mere ten seats now considering that she had commanded 18 seats in the last parliament. And unless there is a major

(Continued from page 26)

for all its weaknesses, is a politically alert organisation. Look how it created space for powerful regional parties in its framework. The Congress, under the leadership of political illiterates like Sonia Gandhi, has persisted with its self-defeating upper casteism. "No, no, no to coalition." Now let the party go in for a spell of reflection in the political wilderness of its own making." Still the fact remains it was the arrival of Sonia which prevented the Congress from a complete disintegration. And the people themselves seem to have rejected outright the foreigner angle. The Congress has lost out because of various other factors, some cited above.

It is a disturbing situation. Even in West Bengal the Trinamul Congress which has made common cause with the BJP is making serious inroads into the rural areas. The ageing Jyoti Basu has made plain his concerns. When many avowedly secular parties resign themselves to cohabiting with the BJP for their own vested interests, the situation is disturbingly reminiscent of Germany

rumbling in the National Democratic Alliance, her ten seats would not mean much. The days when New Delhi caught cold when she sneezed are gone for good, at least for the moment.

And worse, the trials in some of the cases against her are reaching the final stages. What with hostile governments both at the Centre and at the state, she could indeed be having some harrowing time of it.

She is perhaps rueing the day when she chose to fall for the wily Swamy's syrupy inducements and storm out of the BJP-led coalition. Even her own cadres are muttering under their breath.

But the fact that without invoking the name of the Congress at all, she had been able to win as many as 14 seats, and the two Assembly seats, should help keep the party going for some more time. Indeed she created a sensation by boycotting Sonia Gandhi at a public meeting which was to have been jointly addressed by her.

She might perhaps be contemplating picking up the pieces and rebuilding the alliance which had paid her rich dividends last year but which she herself destroyed in her senseless rage. She could start wooing the Tamil Maanila Congress afresh.

Interestingly the AIADMK won both the Assembly seats, down south, for which by-elections were held, demonstrating the party's standing in that region.

The Congress has managed three seats, against none last year, thanks to Jayalalitha. But its state unit president Tindivanam Ramamurthy lost narrowly in his home constituency of Tindivanam.

But another Congress candidate, the voluble former aide of the late Rajiv Gandhi, Mani Shanakara Iyer, won at Mayiladuthurai. The Pondicherry seat was won by the Congress as also the Sivaganga where the TMC No.2 P.Chidambaram was

pushed to the third place.

Though the TMC itself has been routed, at least in six constituencies the front's candidates, including Chidambaram, another former minister Dhanushkodi Adhithan, Pudhiya Thamizhakam leader Dr.Krishnaswamy and Dalit Panthers leader Thirumavalavan totted up more than a lakh of votes.

That they could do so in the face of very adverse conditions, sans media help and not exactly a well-oiled party machinery should be of some satisfaction to Moopanar.

(Among the front's candidates to lose their security deposit was former union minister S.R.Balasubramanian.)

And in quite a few seats the TMC's division of votes could be said to have caused the defeat of the AIADMK-Congress alliance.

It can also be argued that the TMC actually caused the defeat of the DMK-front candidates for the TMC votes are in essence anti-Jayalalitha votes. Whichever way it is, the fact remains that Moopanar is still some kind of a force to reckon with and cannot be written off altogether.

But what happens now to his dreams of ushering in the "Kamaraj rule" in the state by forging a third front is a different issue altogether.

Well, he has now been humbled and Jayalalitha is surely disappointed, but that certainly does not mean Karunanidhi is exulting. Far from it.

In fact he will be quite apprehensive about what is in store for him and his party in the next elections, for the results clearly go to show that the triumph in the 26 seats is not all his own.

The victory in almost half of them comes from the northern belt where the PMK holds sway. Besides victory margins in many constituencies have been quite narrow some as low as a few thousand. In Tenkasi in fact the AIADMK candidate scraped through by a margin of hardly 800-and odd

votes.

In the circumstances all the constituents including the MDMK and the BJP would stake claim to the victory of the front and in the next Assembly elections clamour for a considerable share in seat allocation. If all of them are to be accommodated, the DMK might not be able to look for an absolute majority for itself. And if Karunanidhi refuses to accommodate them and they jump into the AIADMK bandwagon, it could spell trouble for the DMK.

A cursory look at the available voting figures do seem to make it clear that the days of one-party dominance are over in the state. Perhaps coalition governments could be on the cards.

Besides the Dalit outfits have performed relatively well and they should be looking forward to consolidating their gains, this of course provoking the rallying together of the backward castes. This could cause some serious social tension.

What will the PMK now do with its clout? Will it provoke a caste war in the northern districts? And will the Thevars down south be tempted to do follow suit?

And what about the minorities? For all his talk of protecting the interests of the minorities, both the Muslims and the Christians seem to be very apprehensive of the BJP, and there have been occasional instance of attacks on the Christians and a subtle propaganda against the Muslims in the recent weeks. What will Karunanidhi do now, when he has joined hands with an avowedly Hindu nationalist party?

Will he swallow his pride and play the game along or stand by the defenceless? Especially so when in all likelihood quite a few of his MPs are likely to join the new Vajpayee cabinet? Questions the state would be debating anxiously for some more time to come.



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Remembering Neelan

Harvard University Law School Human Rights Program had a commemorative meeting recently to honour Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, a Harvard law graduate, who worked closely with the Human Rights Program.

Program director Henry Steiner, the Jeremiah Smith Jr. Professor of Law presided. The speakers at this meeting included Professor Stanley Tambiah, Professor Roberto Unger, Professor Clark, Dr. Clarence Dias. Neelan's son, Mithran Tiruchelvam spoke on behalf of the family. Two minutes of silence was observed at the start of the program. Neelan's wife Sithie and his two sons Mithran and Nirgunan were present on the occasion by special invitation by the organisers of the event.

Many Harvard alumni of the Program arrived from all parts of the States to attend this commemoration, and there were many people concerned with human rights in the audience that packed the entire hall. A banquet was hosted after

the meeting, and Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen made the keynote address.

A memorial lecture on "Human Rights, the Prevention of Conflict and the International Protection of Minorities" was delivered to a packed audience in the Old Theatre of the London School of Economics and Political Science on 19 October. The lecture delivered by Max van der Stoep, High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Special Rapporteur of the UN, Commission on Human Rights on the Situation of Human Rights in Iraq, which was "dedicated to Neelan Tiruchelvam, one of world's most influential and determined advocates for human rights and rights of minorities, who was assassinated on July 29 of this year for his efforts to bring a peaceful solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka."

Alan Philips, Executive Director of the London-based Minority Rights Group, of which Neelan Tiruchelvam was Chair until his untimely and tragic demise, spoke paying tribute to Neelan. Ms Sara Hossain of Interights and Lis Philipson also spoke. Professor Fred Halliday of the LSE presided. The event was organised by the Centre for the Study of Human Rights of the London School of Economics.

Elected Councillor

Mr Bala Balendra, a Sri Lankan Tamil residing in Sydney in Australia for the last 13 years, has been elected as a member of the Auburn Council in the elections held on 11 September. Of the 26 candidates who contested in the elections, Balendra was one of 6 members elected to Ward 2 of the Council.

Although the established Labour and Liberal parties also fielded candidates, Balendra's victory is considered a personal triumph for him because he contested as an independent candidate. Balendra is an accountant by profession with his own financial consultancy practice. His wife Jaya, who is also quite popular in the local community, is the owner/director of two pre-school Kindergartens.

Before emigrating to Australia in 1986, the Balendra had worked in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Singapore and Papua New Guinea. During the 13 years in Australia, Balendra has served in various community activities, local organisations and participated in international conferences. He is also the Secretary of the Lidcombe Safety House, member of the Ethnic Communities Council and President of the Sydney Tamil Resource Centre.

Brilliant Tamil Play 'Kannaadi Warpukal'

This play was one of those staged by the Tamil Performing Arts Society at the Secombe Theatre, Sutton on 18th September 99. It had already been staged in Sri Lanka in 1978 with great success. Patience, enjoyment, participation, appreciation and pin drop silence even among the children were the order of the day, a very mature and culturally oriented audience. This itself was a tribute to the high standard aspired to by the Tamil Performing Arts Society. Tamil Drama lovers are indeed fortunate to have such a dedicated Drama group, who are swimming against the current, to produce plays of superb quality. Mr and Mrs Balendra are the inspiration for this aspiring Drama Group which certainly deserves support from the Tamils in the UK and also from the UK Arts Council.

The social realism in this play is remarkable as it has brought out the concerns and anxieties of a mother who brings up her daughter, Usha and son Jegan all by herself, the father having deserted them. The generation gap between, on the one hand the overbearing mother who is unable to break with showpiece living and obscurantist aspects of Tamil culture and unable to change with time and on the other hand her children, who truthfully are aspiring to live lives of their choice, is well portrayed. Home life under their overbearing mother is suffocating Jegan and Usha. There is no space and freedom for them to develop and their naturally healthy personalities are becoming stunted. This is the common scenario in most Sri Lankan Tamil homes in the UK.

Unable to escape the stranglehold of home, Usha shrinks to the miniaturised world of her glass dolls through which she finds tranquillity and expression. The mother believes that Usha is mentally ill and is anxious that she will not be able to find a suitable match for her daughter who has neither formal education and employment nor dowry. In desperation the mother pesters Jegan to bring any suitable boy for fixing a marriage for Usha. He brings his work mate, Ramesh to a prearranged dinner evening, all of which are resented by Usha, who was in love with a boy of the same name at her old school. Ramesh was unaware of the ulterior motive behind this dinner invitation. Eventually it turned out, much to everybody's surprise, that the guest who arrived for dinner was in fact the same Ramesh once loved by Usha. During intimate conversation in the same evening Ramesh tells Usha that he is engaged to another girl whom he loves. Usha was shattered and so is her mother. The play ends thus!

A brilliant play well acted by all especially by Anandarany Balendra whose dramatic talents are second to none. It is scheduled to be staged again at the Bharata Vidya Bhavan on 21st November. A golden opportunity to see it, for those who missed it.

Reviewed by: M. Sooriasegaram

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional bride for son, 28, 5'3", British citizen, B.Sc. Economics & Mathematics, M.Sc. Investment Management working for International American Investment Bank. Send horoscope, details, M 1132 c/o Tamil Times.

Lady Doctor in UK, 37, divorcee seeks suitable partner, Send details. M 1133 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna uncle in UK seeks professional partner for UK educated graduate spinster niece, 41, appreciative of Hindu traditional values, British citizen in good permanent employment. Send horoscope, details. M 1136 c/o Tamil Times.

OBITUARIES



Mrs Rajeswary Sambanthan, Retired teacher, beloved wife of Mr. Sambanthan; loving mother of Chandragupthan, Pragashine, Raveendran (Ragu), Thevarajan and Shankaran; mother-in-law of Rita, Varathan, Kamala, Suganthini and Sureka; grandmother of Aarabai, Priyanka, Gowthaman, Vigirathan, Brinavan, Sharanka, Vithuran and Sharuka passed away peacefully on 30th August 1999 in Mississauga, Canada and was cremated on 4th of September.

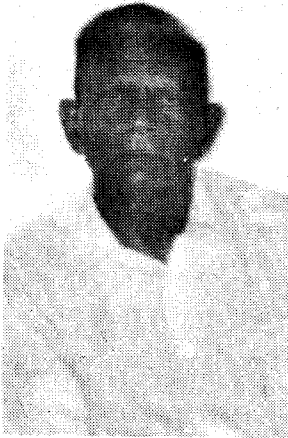
The members of the family wish to thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and assisted in several ways during the period of great sorrow. - 861 Consort Crescent, Mississauga, Ontario L5C 1J8, Canada. Tel: 905 281 1578.



Mrs Manonmany Vyra-vanathan, beloved wife of Mr. P. Vyra-vanathan; daughter of late Mr S.Thillaiampalam and Mrs Annammah Thillaiampalam; loving mother of Murugesh, Kaushalya and Indradevi; mother-in-law of Kali Ramachandran; dear sister of late Rohini Wijeyadevendram, Pavany Manickasingham, Sivaramalingham, Kanthimathy Balasingam, Srikanthan, Sripathy, Sriharan, Senthimathy Chanmugham, and Srigananathan (all of Boston, USA) passed away on 23rd of September 1999 in Boston, Massachusetts.

The members of the family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted them during the period of bereavement. Murugesh, Kaushalya and Indradevi - 20 Mt. Vernon St., Somerville, MA 02145. Tel: 617 623 1799. T.Sripathy - 31 Albamont Road, Winchester, MA 01890. Tel: 781 729 0968.

T. Sritharan - Tel: 781 721 2791.



Mr. M.S. Sebastiampillai, Retired teacher, Skanda Varodaya College, Chunnakam, Sri Lanka; beloved husband of Clarice (Pandaterupu); brother of late Christine Antonypillai (Uduvil), Bridget Emmanuel (Retired teacher, Colombo), Pushpam Stanislaus (US), uncle of late Alfred Soosaihasan, Matilda Rajanayagam (UK) Dr. Lida Wijayaratnam (Australia), Edward Keerthisingam (UK), Gilda Kumarathasan (UK), Linda Thiruchelvan (Uduvil), Charles Rubasingam (Canada), Dhayalini (US), Laleendra (UK), Dhanendra (US), Vimalendra (Colombo), Dharmini Sakthikumar (Canada) and brother-in-law of Kingsley (Canada), Anton (UK) and A.E. Joseph (UK) passed away in Colombo on 9th October 1999 and funeral took place on 16th October. Information given by Mrs Gilda Kumarathasan, 'Mountford' 4 Hartley Hill, Purley, Surrey CR8 4EL, Tel: 0181 763 2538.

J.P., son of the late Mr. S.R. Mutthiahpillai (Proprietary Planter, Balangoda) and Mrs Mutthiahpillai; dearly beloved husband of Gnanadevi; loving father of late Ranjit, Indradevi (UK), Mohan Raja (Australia), Ravi and Yamunadevi (both of Canada); loving father-in-law of Rajalakshmi (Sandilipay, Sri Lanka), Malalgoda (UK), Anushaya (Australia), Shyamala and Sarvananthan (both of Canada); loving grandpa of Ranjitha (Sri Lanka), Rajeev (New York), Rajika (UK), Shamilee, Shatish (both of Australia) Manuska, Natasha, Kishani and Kishorekumar (all of Canada) passed away after a brief illness in Colombo on 20th September 1999 and was cremated on Wednesday, 22nd September at the General Cemetery, Kanette. The members of his family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted them during the period of bereavement. - 'Shanthinivasa', 96 Celeborn Street, South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford, Essex, UK. Tel: 01245 322852.

IN MEMORIAM



In this long night of my faith, Lord, sorrow seems to have no end. Yet I know the warmth and comfort of a never failing friend. So I rest, securely sheltered in your love and gentle care, knowing even in the darkness there is light. For you are there.

In loving memory of Dr. Rasiah Dharmaindra, on the second anniversary of his passing away on 18th October 1997. Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his wife Beatrice, his son Bernard and daughter Angeline. - 1 Nightingale Road, Petts Wood, Kent BR5 1BG.



Mr. M. Rajendram, M.B.E.,

IN MEMORIAM

Lovingly Remembered on the 10th Anniversary of the
Passing Away of



Daniel Selvarajah Sanders Ph.D., ACSW

Sept. 28 1928 – Oct. 14, 1989

Internationally known as a leader in efforts to achieve world peace, human rights and Social Justice; Daniel S. Sanders was Dean, Professor and Director of International Programs, University of Hawaii School of Social Work, Honolulu, Hawaii USA from 1971-1986. Dean, Professor and Director of the Center for Study of International Social Welfare Policies and Services, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Social Work USA from 1986-1989.

A Founder and First President, Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development USA from 1980-1989.

The Ninth Annual Daniel Selvarajah Sanders Peace, Human Rights and Social Justice Lecture – Dr. Jack Otis, Dean and Professor, School of Social Work, University of Texas, USA gave the memorial lecture on April 13, 1999 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign USA. His subject was **CHILD LABOR : POLICY AND PROGRAM ISSUES.**

The Sixth Biennial Daniel Selvarajah Sanders Peace and Human Rights, and Social Justice Lecture was given at the Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development (IUCISD) 11th Biennial Conference at the University of Capetown, South Africa on July 8th, 1999. The speaker was Dr. Franklin A. Sonn, Former South African Ambassador to the United States, who spoke on **POVERTY.** The lecture was held at Robben Island prison, where **NELSON MANDELA** was imprisoned.

The University of Illinois School of Social Work at Urbana-Champaign awarded the Daniel S. Sanders Fellowship in International Social Development to Lakshmi Tata from India in 1997, and to Lora Schmid Dolan from USA in 1998. Lakshmi's research area – Social and Economic Impact of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in India. Lora's research in Mexico is in International Development Programs and Housing.

The National Institute of Social Development, Colombo, Sri Lanka awarded the Daniel S. Sanders Scholarship Fund for Social Development to three students – Mr. B.M.H. Bandaranayake, Miss Kumari Jayawardena, Miss T. Sarojini.

With our love to Rajan.

Chelvathy Sanders, Sanders/Niles families – Selvaranee, Chandraranee, Chandran and Mangai, Balan and Susila; Ariam and Sushila, Alagan and Thavayogam; Augusta, nieces and nephews, grand nieces and grand nephews. – 1807 Vancouver Place, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822 USA.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- Nov 1** All Saints Day.
Nov 2 All Souls Day.
Nov 4 Krishna Eekathasi.
Nov 5 Pirathosam; Iypasi Velli (3).
Nov 6 6.30pm Tamil Performing Arts Society presents Drama Festival 99 (3) in aid of Tamil Elders' Centre at Winston Church Hall, Pinn Way, Ruislip. Tel: 0181 904 5939/ South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Drop In. Tel: 0181 542 3285.
Nov 7 Deepawali; Amavasai.
Nov 8 Skantha Shashti Viratham starts.
Nov 10 Feast of St. Leo, the Great.
Nov 12 Sathurthi; Iypasi Velli (4).
Nov 15 Sri Murugan Thiru Kalyanam; Feast of St. Albert, the Great.
Nov 19 Eekathasi.
Nov 20 SLTWG Drop in. Tel: 0181 542 3285.
Nov 21 Pirathosam; Feast of Presentation of the Blessed

Virgin Mary.

- Nov 22** Sarvalaya Theepam; Full Moon.
Nov 23 Karthigai.
Nov 26 Sangadahara Sathurthi.
Nov 27 SLTWG Women's Front meets. Tel: 0181 542 3285.
Nov 28 Sashti.
Nov 30 Feast of St Andrew.
At Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171 381 3086/4068.
Nov 21 6.30pm Tamil Performing Arts Society presents popular Tamil Drama 'Kannadi Vaarpugal' directed by K. Balendra. Tel also: 0181 459 4335/470 7883.
Nov 25 7pm. Improvisations – East & West – Saxophone: Paul Dunmali, Mridangam: M. Balachandar & Bass: Paul Rogers.
Nov 28 6pm. Bharatanatyam by Vena Gheerawo.

St Johns & Chundikuli Past Pupils' Kalai Vizha

The Second Annual Kalai Vizha organised by St Johns & Chundikuli Past Pupils' Association (UK) was held at Winston Churchill Hall, Ruislip, Middx on 21st August 99.

The programme started with the President Mrs Renuka Sriharan lighting the traditional oil lamp. The first item was a Dance Recital by Brinda Kugabala, disciple of Ragini Rajagopal and recently of Mahaluxmi Kameshwaran of India. Brinda commenced with Pushpanjali and followed it up with Padams, Keerthanam and a Thillana. She danced with composure and poise seen only in professional dancers. This was followed by an Instrumental item by Venuganamani Pitchaiappa Gnanavarathan.

After the interval, SLBC fame 'Chakadaththar' appeared to have arrived in London and kept the audience rolling in laughter and brought back fond memories. The final item was music from the Tamil Film World - both old and new rendered by children Aarthi Pankayatchelvan, Dakshana Sivaloganathan, Nithika Kugabala, Inthu and Sinthu

Pathmabaskaran. The standard of music was very high indeed and it was nice to see that children can really get into film music just as in carnatic music, which they have already proved they are good at. The music was ably accompanied on instruments by Rajan's group. Dr. W.T. Maheswaran compered the show eloquently both in Tamil and English. Dr Ranjanbabu proposed the vote of thanks.

On the whole, it was an evening of programmes chosen with good taste and held the attention of the audience throughout. The committee must be congratulated on this entertaining annual venture.

Medical Institute of Tamils

MIOT Youth Forum will host a conference at 1 p.m. on 13th November 1999 at Rushgreen Medical Centre, 261 Dagenham Road, Rushgreen, Romford RM11 2TS. The aim of this conference is to offer advice to youths currently at GCSE or A-Level, regarding entry into medical fields such as **medicine, dentistry, physiotherapy and pharmaceuticals etc.** Additional career advice would be given to those already in medical fields regarding a **continued on page 32**

continued from page 31

furtherance of their careers.

Speakers are medical/dental students, doctors and medical consultants. Entrance is free and refreshments would be served. Those interested, please contact Dr. R. Gowribalan, Youth Affairs Secretary. Tel: 01472 507479.

Bharatanatiya Arangetram of Geethanjali Vipulanandan



My wife and I were among the four hundred guests privileged to witness the Bharatanatiya Arangetram of the 10-year old Geethanjali Vipulanandan. This dance debut took place on 7th August 1999 at the Rice University's Hamman Hall in Houston Texas. Geethanjali, daughter of Dr. C. Vipulanandan (Professor, Civil Engineering, University of Houston) and Dr. Giritha Vipulanandan (Pediatrician), is a disciple of Mrs. Rathna Kumar, Founder Director of ANJALI, Center of Indian Performing Arts, Houston.

The evening's program was initiated with a devotional song (prayer) melodiously rendered by Shanthi Panchacharam. Geetha commenced her debut in the traditional manner with Ganesha Stuti, an invocatory dance in praise of Lord Ganesha, which she executed with great piety and devotion. The other six numbers in the repertoire - Jathiswaram, Varnam, Theeratha Vilayattu Pillai, Ananda Nadamidum Patham, Thillana, and Kurathi had been chosen by the guru with meticulous care to suit the physical capacity of her pupil.

Right from the commencement of the repertoire, Geetha kept the audience enthralled and mesmerized with her superb rendering of the numbers with rhythmic limb movements, graceful gestures and remarkable facial expressions. Every step, every movement, and every expression was executed with command, confidence, precision, ease and exquisite elegance, inviting constant smiles from the guru and rounds of applause from the audience.

With a supple physique and an expressive face combined with discipline, dedication, and perseverance, Geetha appeared to have acquired absolute control over time measurements (tal) as well as a remarkable mastery of the minutest details of intricate footwork patterns (jatis) and taxing

postures (karnas). These qualities were particularly exemplified in her rendering of the Varnam, Ananda Thandavam, and Thillana. While enacting the number Theeratha Vilayattu Pillai, Geetha switched roles and emotions with the ease, grace, and composure typical of a talented and seasoned artiste.

Geetha's outstanding performance was also facilitated by the excellent orchestral support provided by a troupe of eminent accompanying artistes specially flown from South India: Vanathy Raguraman (vocal), N.K. Kesavan (miridangam), B. Muthukumar (flute) and Gomathi Sundram (violin). Guru Rathna Kumar was on the nattuvangam. Saro Vinayagalingam who exceeded the performance added color when introducing the items making them of educational value and interest especially to the large number of guests not familiar with South Indian culture in general and Bharatanatiyam in particular.

Geetha's parents, Vipu and Gin, who had over the years given their unflinching encouragement and support, had every reason to be proud of their daughter's marvellous accomplishments. However, the proudest person on that occasion was none other than the guru, Mrs. Rathna Kumar, herself a leading exponent of the Kuchipudi and Bharatanatiya classical dance styles. When she came on the stage to receive the acknowledgment and obeisance of her pupil, Rathna, visually moved with emotion, embraced and carried the pupil in her arms as if to gesture to those present that Geetha was indeed a guru's dream come true. The spontaneous response of the audience was a standing ovation that lasted several minutes.

S. Selvaratnam

Retired Senior Expert,
United Nations, Bangkok.

Gayithri's Bharatha Natya Arangetram



The Bharatha Arangetram of Gayithri daughter of Dr. & Dr. (Mrs) Sooriakumaran of Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex and student of Smt Rajini Moganaraj took place before a packed audience in Logan Hall, London WC1 on 11th September 1999.

The concert commenced with the traditional items of Pushpanjali, Thodaya Mangalam and Jathiswaram followed by Sabdam wherein, Abinaya, the expressive

aspect of conveying emotions were portrayed and Gayi executed the piece with perfection. Varnam which is the hall mark of any Arangetram gave ample scope to the dancer to exhibit her stock of jatis and abhinaya variations. The ease with which she wove complex movements won the hearts of the audience.

After the short interval, in Keerthanam, 'Ananda Kuthadinar' Gayi depicted with ease the power and beauty of Lord Natarajah appearing in the different poses and in Navarasa Ramayana she confidently brought out the nine sentiments of love, surprise, anger, dislike, fear, compassion, humour, bravery and peace. Her portrayals in the Patham, 'Kuyile' and in the Thillana scored high appreciation from the audience.

Gayi's Guru Smt Rajini Moganaraj who did the Nattuvankam should be congratulated for the excellent training she had imparted which was clearly noticeable. Her carnatic vocal Guru Smt Manorama Prasad did the vocal accompaniment and her melodious voice contributed to the success of the Arangetram. The other members of the orchestra who shared in the success were Shri Bhavani Shankar - Mridangam, Smt Renuka Shriananda - Veena, Shri Balu Raghuraman - Violin and Shri Muthu Sivarajah - Tabla.

The Chief Guest, Mrs P.M. Elliot, Headmistress of Gayi's school spoke about her excellence as a student and her contribution to the school through her creative and graceful personality and wished her success. Mr. Reginald Massey, Fellow of the Royal College of Arts, who was the Guest of Honour congratulated Gayithri. Dr. & Dr (Mrs) Sooriakumaran have every reason to be proud of Gayithri. Well done Gayi.

Kugan.

Kokuvil Hindu College Old Students Association (UK)

The 7th Annual General Meeting of the above association was held on 19th September 1999 at Colston Primary School Hall, Greenford. The chief guests were Mr S. Bavan and Mrs Maev Bavan. The following were elected to the Executive Committee for the 1999/2000 session.

President: Mr. S. Kanagasundaram,
Vice-Presidents: Dr P. Arumugaraasah,
Mr. R. Gugeswaran and Mr. N. Ranjit Kumar,
Secretary: S. Selvaratnam, **Asst. Secretary:** Mr. K. Kukendrarajah,
Treasurer: Mr. V. Thamarajah, **Asst. Treasurer:** Mr. S.K. Chetti, **Sports Secretary:** Mr A. Prabakaran, **Asst. Sports Secretary:** Mrs. D. Suthenthiran,
Committee Members: Messers K. Kandapillai, P. Ananthasivadas, K. Kugathanan, S. Sri Ranjan, G. Parameswaran, S. Vijayan, A. Thivaharan and Mrs. G. Balasubramaniam, **Auditor:** Mr. P.N. Yoganathan.

The A.G.M. was followed by a delectable vocal and veena music recital by Selvi Janani Arunachalam.

SCOT's Programme Of Humanitarian Assistance 1998/99

Since 1st September '98 to 31st August '99, SCOT has donated £22900 for relief and rehabilitation projects in North and East Sri Lanka. This aid has been disbursed as follows:

	£
1. Jeeva Jothy Children's Home, Batticaloa – Tuition fees for the children in the home	250
2. Jesuits Refugee Service, Batticaloa – Legal assistance to youths in remand prison	500
3. Manikavasagar Boys' Home, Santhively – Gardening tools for income generation & cooking utensils	350
4. Ramakrishna Ashrama & Children's Home, Ramakrishnapuram – Running cost of 2 girls' and one boys' homes	500
5. Thilagavadiyar Girls' Home, Thiruppalugamam – Improve sanitation	250
6. Vipulananda Children's Home, Thiruppalugamam – Supply clean, safe water to drink, cook and wash	250
7. Vipulananda Students' Orphanage, Akkaraipattu – Maintenance cost for 50 orphans	1500
8. Vivekananda Welfare Organisation, Thiruppalugamam – Distribution of educational materials for 1500 children	150
9. Vivekananda Day Centre, Thiruppalugamam – Purchase of nursery furniture for 40 infants	250
Total for Batticaloa region	£4000
10. All Ceylon Hindu Congress, Colombo – Relief supplies to Wannu refugees and the running cost of Ratmalana orphanage	1250
11. Annai Illam Kilinochchi – Counselling & support to traumatised victims of war atrocities	500
12. Association For Health & Counselling 'Shanthiham', Jaffna – Counselling victims of post traumatic stress & stress disorders	1000
13. Centre For Women & Development, Vannarponnai – Supply of 'nutrition mix' for pregnant mothers and children under 5 years	3600
14. Durga Devi Thevasthanam, Tellipallai – Needs of destitute women from Colombo, Jaffna, Mannar and Wannu	750
15. Grace Home For Children, Chedikulam – Running cost of the home	500
16. Kilinochchi Association For The Rehabilitation Of Disabled – Food for 250 disabled families Artificial limbs for landmine victims & aids for daily living	1100
17. People's Welfare Organisation, Kopay – Training in shorthand, typing, stenography & sewing - co-funded with North East Tamil Society	800
18. Sri Sarada Sevaashrama, Pt. Pedro – Clothing, milk powder and books for 1000 disadvantaged children	1000
19. The Hindu Board Of Education Children's Homes, Thirunelvely – Food, clothing, medicine and education	500
20. Federation Of Young Men's Hindu Association, Sri Lanka – Books, pens & pencils for 500 most disadvantaged students	500
Total for Jaffna region	£12500
21. Annai Saratha Girls Home, Muthur – A typewriter for training and clothing for 25 girls	500
22. Eastern Rehabilitation Organisation, Trincomalee – Chillie cultivation by war widows for income generation	500
23. Hindu Samaya Abhivritti Sabha, Trincomalee – Carpentry training	1000
24. Sivananda Thapovanam, Uppuveli – Education and transport for 120 orphans	750
25. Sri Lanka Evangelical Action Team International, Trincomalee – 100 families to embark on home gardening of onion and brinjal	1500
26. Trincomalee District Development Association – Emergency relief supplies to displaced people	1500
Total for Trincomalee region	£5900
27. All Ceylon Hindu Council, Colombo – Immediate relief supplies to the victims of fire in 3 estates in Ratnapura	500 £500

SCOT is an independent charity, registered in U.K. – no. is 274499. Further information may be obtained from the Project Officer, SCOT, 107 Coleman Court, Kimber Road, London SW18 4PB or phone – 0181 870 9897.

If you wish to make a donation, please kindly make cheques / money orders etc payable to SCOT and forward to the aforesaid address. You can make a big difference to many lives.

Project officer.

Thanuja's Arangetram



The Bharata Natya Arangetram of eighteen year old Thanuja, daughter of Sivakumaran and Easha of Kokuvi, Sri Lanka and student of Guru Yamini Sarvananthan took place in Arnsberg, Germany on 18th September 99 to an appreciative audience of Germans and Asians. Guru Yamini is a disciple of the famous dancer, teacher and choreographer Padmasri Chitra Visveswaran and had special training at her Chidambara Dance Academy in Chennai.

During the first part of the programme, Thanuja excelled in the 'Kali Kavithvam'

and the Varnam 'Velanai Vara Cholladi' in Vachaspati Ragam. Her performance after the interval in the 'Navarasa Ramayanam' and Thillana in Rasigapriya Ragam, which were choreographed by Chitra herself, deserve special mention.

Thanuja was ably supported by Guru Yamini Sarvananthan - Nattuvangam, Smt Ambika Thamotheeram (London) - Vocal, Sri S. Pranavanathan (Germany) - Mridangam and Sri S. Radhakrishnan (Chennai) - Violin. The programme was compered by Mr. Valentine, a popular presenter from Germany.

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