

# Lanka rules out truce

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, Nov. 27. — Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mr Ratnasiri Wickremanayake has ruled out a ceasefire with LTTE and ridiculed foreign peace envoys who had asked the country to adopt experiences of other peace processes.

Mr Wickremanayake was quoted in the Press today saying that he and President Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga firmly believed that LTTE must be "militarily defeated" to have peace in the island.

In his first public appearance after assuming duties as acting defence minister in absence of Mrs Kumaratunga who went abroad on Friday, he said the Tigers wanted a truce because they were weak.

In direct reference to his meeting on Thursday with visiting British junior foreign minister Mr Peter Hain, Mr Wickremanayake said Nort-



Mrs Kumaratunga: 'Wants LTTE to be defeated militarily'.



British junior foreign minister Peter Hain: Shubbed.



Norwegian special adviser Erik Solheim: Efforts in vain.

hern Ireland experience cannot be "planted" in Sri Lanka.

"Sri Lanka cannot compare its situation with that of (northern) Ireland as Pirabhakaran is the embodiment of brutality, killing even his own comrades," Mr Wickremanayake was quoted as saying in the *The Daily News*.

He said there will be no let-up in the military campaign aga-

inst LTTE despite the latest moves by Norway to bring the warring sides to negotiating table. "We will carry on the military option until the enemy is eliminated," he added.

Mr Wickremanayake said he had been asked by unnamed "foreign delegates" if his thinking on Lanka's ethnic strife was the same as that of Mrs Kumaratunga who was

seen as keen on pressing ahead with peace talks.

His outburst against foreign peace delegates came as the government and the diplomatic community here awaited a policy speech today by Pirabhakaran. Pirabhakaran is due to make the speech as part of his 'Martyrs Week' commemoration of some 16,000 of his cadres killed in fighting.

28 NOV 2000  
THE STATESMAN

# Posters hail Prabhakaran's birthday

By Radha Venkatesan

CHENNAI, NOV. 25. The pro-LTTE activists in the State are revving up once again to blatantly celebrate the birthday of Prabhakaran, the leader of the banned LTTE and the prime accused in Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, tomorrow and observe the 'Maaveerar day' on Monday.

Posters featuring Prabhakaran's photographs have appeared in prominent places in the City including Saidapet, Santhome and T.Nagar, hailing the LTTE chief on the occasion of his birthday.

The posters, put up by a little-known fringe outfit, Tamil Youths Federation, near the T.Nagar bus terminus, unequivocally praises the LTTE chief as the greatest hero of the world and an epitome of valour.

However, the posters hailing Prabhakaran, which sprung up in various parts of the City this morning, do not seem to have caught the attention of the police yet.

Leading the pro-LTTE bandwagon in the State is the Tamil Nationalist Movement leader, Mr. P. Nedumaran, who has planned a 'Tamils awakening' meeting on the occasion of the 'Maaveerar day' on November 27 at suburban Avadi and Thorapakkam.

Amidst strident criticism from the Opposition parties in the State, Mr.



The LTTE supremo, Prabhakaran's birthday posters pasted near T. Nagar bus terminus in Chennai on Saturday. — Photo: Vino John.

Nedumaran, a known LTTE supporter, had undertaken a mission to the forest as a key emissary to negotiate with Veerappan for the release of Kannada actor, Mr. Rajkumar.

Significantly, Mr. Nedumaran and fellow emissary and another known LTTE supporter, Mr. Kolathur Mani, will kick off their campaign to 'expose' the STF atrocities, at Kolathur tomorrow coinciding with Prabhakaran's birthday.

The LTTE commemorates November 27 as 'Maaveerar day' in honour of its cadres who died in the Eelam war.

While the Tamil Nationalist Movement functionaries here confirmed the 'Maaveerar day' meetings in the City

suburbs, Mr. Nedumaran could not be contacted for his comments as he was away in Mysore to meet the TADA detenus whose release was one of the key demands of Veerappan.

Though Mr. Nedumaran has been observing the 'Maaveerar day' for the past few years now, his pro-LTTE activism has come into sharp focus ever since the two State Governments allowed him to undertake the mission to negotiate with Veerappan and his Tamil extremist associates.

Mr. Nedumaran had planned a pro-LTTE conference in Chidambaram in May this year to celebrate the Tigers' triumph in Elephant Pass. However, the State Government had banned the meet and arrested Mr. Nedumaran.

At the height of the Tigers' renewed offensive in Sri Lanka during May this year, posters hailing LTTE 'victory' had come up prominently in the City and the police had taken 10 persons into custody for allegedly pasting the posters.

The ban on LTTE was extended for a period of two years by the Central Government in May this year.

Meanwhile, the police have stepped up vigil along the Ramanathapuram coast and armed police personnel have been posted at all the 13 check posts in different parts of Ramanathapuram district to prevent possible infiltration of militants on the 'Maaveerar day'.

## Initiative depends on Prabhakaran

P. K. Balachandran  
Colombo, November 24

THE NEXT move in the international peace initiative in Sri Lanka depends very critically on LTTE chief V. Prabhakaran's Hero's Day oration over the Voice of Tigers radio on November 27. The Tamil rebel leader is expected to outline his latest policy on war and peace, the goal of a separate Tamil Eelam, devolution of power within a united Sri Lanka and foreign mediation.

The Norwegians, who represent the Big Powers—the US, UK, Europe and India in the international peace bid—have made it clear to both the warring parties that the world wants them to settle the question peacefully through negotiations, the LTTE should give up its goal of an independent Tamil Eelam and Sri Lanka should give

substantial devolution of powers to the Tamil North East.

Though both the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE have said many times that they want to settle the matter peacefully, they have blamed each other for past failures to find a peaceful solution and have continued the war. To

### Lanka peace talks

date, neither side has publicly said anything different. Hence the eagerness with which the LTTE supremo's oration is awaited this year. Depending on what he says, the Sri Lankan Government will formulate its policy and the international peacemakers will decide on their next move.

However, according to British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Peter Hain, the LTTE has accepted that it cannot attain its

goal of an independent Tamil Eelam and that the war will not help it secure Eelam. The majority of Tamils even abroad thought that peace and talks were a better bet than war, and the LTTE knew this. Hain told newsmen on Thursday.

Likewise, most Sinhalas were for peace and devolution and Colombo knew this, he added. Hain described the Sinhala extremists as a fringe group of "political dinosaurs". The British minister also said that both Colombo and LTTE had indicated their readiness to talk without preconditions. This itself is a major breakthrough.

Hain did not say that the UK would slap sanctions on Sri Lanka if it did not negotiate or did not give the Tamils a reasonable degree of devolution. Nor would he say that the LTTE would be banned in the UK if it proved to be recalcitrant.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 NOV 2000

# Norwegian envoy makes headway

P K Balachandran  
Colombo November 23

THE NORWEGIAN special envoy Mr. Erik Solheim and the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, are in regular contact discussing the prospect of re-starting negotiations with the LTTE to resolve the ethnic conflict and ending the war, a highly placed source told *The Hindustan Times* today.

"The Norwegians have gone quite far, farther than anybody else earlier. They have indeed done a coronary by-pass

to link the two sides," the source said. India is also constantly kept in the picture, as seen in Mr. Solheim's visit to New Delhi.

However, the source made it clear that actual talks, directly between the government and the LTTE, were a long way off. But there are rumours that some contacts between the government and the LTTE have already been established in London. The LTTE's international headquarters is in London and its political advisor, Dr. A. Balasingham, a British national, is also there. According to the British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Peter Hain, the British too have been in touch with the LTTE.

Informed diplomatic sources here are of the view that the LTTE may come down to accepting that an independent Eelam is not possible in view of the international community's explicit opposition to it. In fact, Mr. Solheim had made this clear to the LTTE supremo Prabhakaran when he met the latter in Wannu on Nov. 1. On Wednesday, the British Minister, Mr. Hain, also said the same thing in a lecture here. The international community is putting pressure on the Sri Lankan government also

## Lankan Peace Talks

to give an acceptable amount of devolution to the Tamil minority and to talk to the Tigers, regardless of their "barbarous assassinations" to use Mr. Hain's expression.

The Tigers face the prospect of being banned in Britain under a tough new law and are losing too many cadres on the battlefield (513 dead since Sept. 3, 2000). And the Sri Lankans face the prospect of some arm-twisting at the Aid Consortium meeting in December. Mr. Hain's almost 'missionary' zeal in urging a ceasefire also puts a heavy pressure on the Sri Lankans. But Colombo will insist that the UK take some action against the LTTE on British soil if only to demonstrate its impartiality in Sri Lankan eyes.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 NOV 2000

# Poll violence in Sri Lanka

By V. Jayanth

**E**LECTORAL VIOLENCE has become an integral part of the democratic process in most countries, despite the inherent contradiction. In Sri Lanka, no election campaign can escape an explosion of violence. With the campaign picking up for the October 10 parliamentary elections, there have already been a few explosions, innumerable incidents of intimidation and clashes in different parts of Sri Lanka. Even if it is not yet clear if the recent helicopter crash was an accident or deliberately caused explosion, the death of the Ports Minister and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader, M. H. M. Ashraff, has already provided a major casualty for this year's elections.

The December 1999 Presidential election witnessed one of the bloodiest campaigns, climaxing with the attempt on the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, on December 18 as electioneering ended. There was a matching explosion at an opposition United National Party (UNP) rally the same night. But more than the high profile cases, it is the daily clashes and violence that have caused concern all round. Over the years, the party in power has managed to tilt the scales in its favour as election day approaches. The Government machinery is willy-nilly coopted in this enterprise: there are also officials who take it on themselves to lead this effort in a bid to curry favour with the powers that be. Many officials, both in the bureaucracy and the police, have perfected this into a fine art.

Since the 1970s, and particularly in the 1980s, Sri Lanka has lived with large scale violence — beginning with the southern uprising of the fanata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the rise of Sinhala chauvinism. The 1980s witnessed the evolution of Tamil militancy, terrorism and the separatist war unleashed from northern Jaffna for Tamil Eelam. But, the violence acquires an edge at the time of elections. There is an added tension in the air: the increase national and international

media focus increases the potential for publicity for such brazen acts such as assassinations.

The situation was such in 1982 that the then President, the late J. R. Jayewardene, held a referendum to extend the term of Parliament and a second term of office for himself, to avoid holding a general or a presidential election. Parliament's tenure was also extended to six years and the next election was held only in 1988. This period witnessed both renewed Tamil militancy and a pro-active

***If the security forces maintain strict neutrality during the campaign, much of the violence could be prevented.***

JVP leading an anti-India campaign following the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka agreement and the arrival of the Indian Peace Keeping Force. Ranasinghe Premadasa was elected the second Executive President, taking office in January 1989. He was assassinated in a May Day rally in 1993, even before completing his first term.

After a year under a lameduck President, the next general elections were held in August 1994, followed by a presidential election a few months later. In that vicious campaign, one of the presidential candidates, Gamini Dissanayake of the UNP, was assassinated by a suicide bomber at an election meeting in Central Colombo. That tilted the balance in favour of Ms. Kumaratunga, who became the President on the plank that she would abolish Executive Presidency in Sri Lanka. Unable to push through a new Constitution, she was elected for a second term in office last December.

The People's Alliance, led by Ms. Kumaratunga and her Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), rode to victory in 1994 on a pro-democracy platform, vowing to undo the authoritarian system that the UNP and the 1978 Constitution had built over 17 years. Without a two-thirds majority in Parliament, she could not get the new

Constitution adopted, though the draft was ready as early as in 1995. Just before the dissolution of Parliament two months ago, a revised draft was presented to it, but not voted upon.

The future of that Constitution and the much-touted reforms in the system will hinge on the outcome of the coming elections. So it will be crucial for both the PA and the UNP. It may be the last chance for the UNP leader, Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe, to establish himself as the undisputed chief of the party. That he

can do only if he leads the UNP to victory in this election. On the other hand, the fate of the President, her PA and the new Constitution will depend on whether she can win a comfortable majority of her own in the new Parliament. That is why, tensions and violence been even more exacerbated. Each side wants to prevent the other from emerging victorious in the battle of the ballot and tends to leave it to hirelings and goons to battle it out with bullets and country bombs.

It has become a custom now to invite a team of foreign observers to monitor the elections in Sri Lanka. Retired diplomats and officials from neighbouring South Asian countries make up this team and camp in the island for a few weeks to oversee the last phase of the campaign and the actual election in all the districts. In addition, a Centre for Monitoring Election Violence has been set up as an NGO to bring to the notice of the Election Commissioner and the Government, the incidents of violence across the country. Last time, the Centre submitted a detailed report on all the incidents, blaming both the main political parties for the violence.

However, if the security forces and the police, who maintain law and order and oversee the arrangements, maintain

strict neutrality during the campaign, much of the violence could be prevented. Quite often, the complaint is that the authorities intervene too late to contain the violence, or even look the other way so that they do not earn the displeasure of those in power. This is not something peculiar to the Sri Lankan election scene. But, this is why it becomes crucial to have a statutory, independent, multi-member Election Commission which can monitor the electoral process without fear or favour and can pull up any political party for unleashing violence or indulging in electoral malpractices. Unfortunately, Sri Lanka does not have such a body and like the appointment of any other Secretary to Government, the Election Commissioner is also nominated by the President. Also, successive Governments have failed to put in place a regular civil service or even a foreign service — though a beginning has been made.

In the 1994 parliamentary elections, the People's Alliance just about managed a majority, though Ms. Kumaratunga went on to win the presidential election with a thumping majority, polling over 60 per cent of the vote. But in the December 1999 election, she secured just over the mandatory 50 per cent to win it on the first count. It remains to be seen if her alliance can manage a comfortable majority this time to enable the President to convert it into a Constituent Assembly and adopt a new Constitution.

Unless she is able to address the basic socio-economic problems, provide a responsive administration, solve the ethnic problem and still keep the Sinhala majority happy, there can be no lasting peace in the island. Only if Sri Lanka can find political solution to the ethnic crisis and remove the distrust between the various communities can it hope to find peace. As long as the tensions persist and a atmosphere of hate prevails, the climate remains favourable for the perpetrator of violence.

# SRI LANKA PROSPECTS

## Problems Facing New Government

By PARMANAND

PUTTING an end to all kinds of uncertainty and speculation, President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga administered the oath of office to Ratnasiri Wickeremanayake on 13 October. Wickeremanayake had earlier assumed the office of the Prime Minister on 10 August, when the late Srimavo Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike, the first-ever woman Prime Minister of the world, resigned this office rather reluctantly. Significantly, though Mrs B — as she was popularly known — resigned from the prime ministership, she did not give up the presidency of the SLFP, which her husband had formed in 1951 after his defection from the UNP.

The People's Alliance — a combination of various political parties, the most prominent of them being the SLFP — could not secure a clear majority in the 225-seat unicameral Parliament in the 10 October election. It is altogether a different matter that it secured two seats compared to 105 in the August 1994 parliamentary polls. Interestingly, it could poll only 46.50 per cent of the valid votes polled, as against 48.9 per cent in August 1994. The PA did, however, emerge as the single largest group, and it got an assurance of support from the Eelam People's Democratic Party, which has secured four seats. Significantly, the party had nine seats in the preceding Parliament.

### RECOUNT

Kumaratunga also succeeded in procuring the support of the National Unity Alliance, which has four seats in the new house. She had a meeting with the NUA leader, Rauff Hakeem, who won only after a recount in Kandy. Earlier Hakeem had said: "We are not going to support the PA unless they take action against those who committed violence". Significantly, Anuruddha Ratwatte, Deputy Defence Minister and brother of Mrs B, has been charged by the NUA with indulging in violence and rigging in Kandy. Hakeem has promised support to the PA on two conditions: the government must take action against Ratwatte, and effect reforms in the election system within 100 days with a view to preventing violence. With these manoeuvres, the PA government has succeeded in securing the support of 116 MPs, including one independent. The arrangement may prove beneficial to all the three parties involved.

The United National Party, led by former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, was also manoeuvring for some time to procure support of some smaller parties to form the new government. Indeed, the Tamil United Liberation Front, which is one of the oldest parties articulating the interests of Sri Lankan Tamils has five

seats in the new Parliament and had offered conditional support to the UNP. It had demanded that the UNP talk to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on the problems of devolution and decentralisation of powers — as promised in its manifesto.

The UNP (formed in 1946), the oldest among the Sri Lankan parties, could secure only 89 seats — five less than earlier — in the new House. Its percentage of votes also came



down to 40.70 from 44 in August 1994. The party contested all the parliamentary seats on its own. After the results started trickling in, it tried to effect an alliance with the NUA but did not get any encouraging response. In any case, even if the TULF and the NUA could have supported the UNP, it would have remained far behind the magic figure of 113.

It should not be forgotten that the Sri Lankan President is better placed in cabinet formation than any other head of state, or government. Article 43 states that the President "can appoint as Prime Minister a member of Parliament, who in his opinion" is most likely to command the confidence of the House.

Wickremesinghe's manoeuvres, therefore, cannot be taken seriously. By saying that had the election been free and fair, the UNP would have equalled the performance of the PA, the UNP leader did not do well politically.

### PEACE

It is against this background that Wickeremanayake became the 16th Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The first and foremost problem confronting his government is the establishment of peace and tranquillity against the background of the ethnic war. Unlike India, Sri Lanka did not have any experience of communal or even ethnic violence at the time of its independence in February 1948. It was only after 1956 — when the "Sinhala only" Act was passed by the SWRD Bandaranaike government — the island began to witness ethnic clashes. And after 1983, they escalated enough to attract international attention. More than 63,000 lives have been lost in these clashes since 1983.

True, the largest and strongest Tamil guerrilla outfit, the Liberation Tigers of

Tamil Eelam is losing popular support — for the polling percentage in the Jaffna peninsula this time, despite the LTTE's threat, was more than 16 in comparison to 2.98 in 1994. It is also losing international support — both moral and financial — very fast. But no perspicacity is needed to realise that no proposal for peace or devolution or decentralisation of power in the North-East province can be enduring without the LTTE's support or at least honest endorsement.

Ever since the LTTE has become a significant force in Sri Lankan politics, it has shown a unique capacity of keeping quiet and bouncing back. Its unpredictability has always been its strong point. But it is a pity that the existing circumstances do not leave any room for a government-LTTE dialogue. One silver lining could be the growing inexplicable UNP-LTTE relationship. Indeed, the UNP had promised to hold talks with the LTTE in the event of coming to power. Not less significantly, no UNP candidate was done in by the LTTE during the hustings. The UNP presidential candidate, Gamini Dissanayake, was allegedly assassinated by the LTTE in the November 1999 polls.

### ECONOMY

The other serious problem is that the economy is drifting, with a growing trade deficit, dwindling reserves, and the total foreign debt at the end of June standing at \$6.8 billion or roughly half the GDP forecast for the year. On the other hand, inflation is rampant, the currency unstable, and foreign investors are shunning the Colombo stock market. A group of influential Sri Lankan traders had called for a national government's formation — comprising the PA and the UNP — to improve upon the situation.

Some members of the Opposition have blamed some members of the government of corruption. Most of their charges relate to kickbacks alleged to have been made during the sale of state assets by the government over the past six years. Prime Minister Wickeremanayake has responded by saying: "We can't discuss economic issues or the cost of living in isolation. It is tied up with the war. So long as the war is on, we can never bring down the cost of living."

In such a predicament only a naive person would imagine better prospects for the Sri Lankan people and polity. India would be happy to see peace and tranquillity established on the island. But the NDA government at the Centre is quite different from the Rajiv Gandhi government both structurally and functionally. And even the Rajiv Gandhi government and the Rajiv Gandhi-JR Jayewardene Accord of 29 July 1987 did not succeed in achieving the desired objective. One hopes something will happen to improve the situation.

SRI LANKA / UNP MP DETAINED

AD-17 31/10

# Arson, rioting continues in central hills

By Nirupama Subramanian

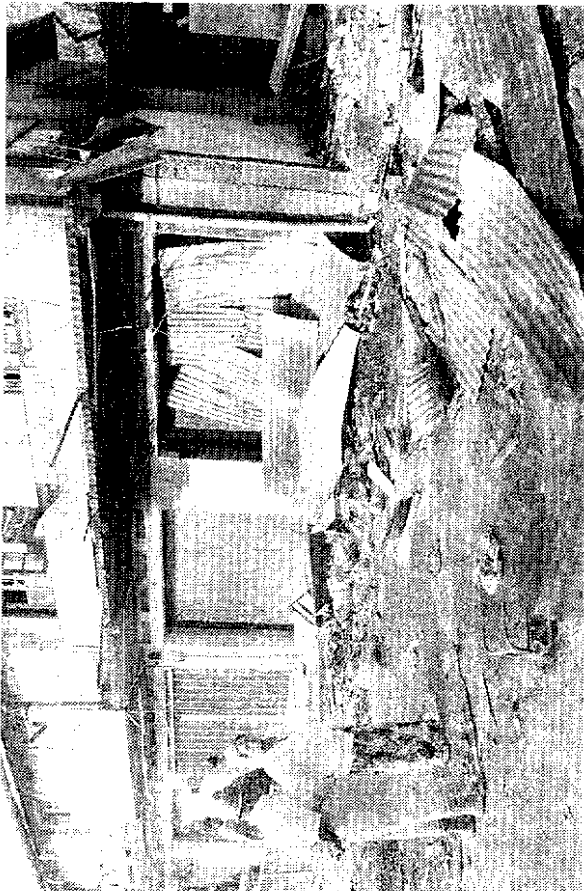
**COLOMBO, Oct. 30.** The leader of the Up-Country People's Front (UCPF) and United National Party (UNP) parliamentarian, Mr. P. Chandrasekharan, was detained in the early hours today following violent clashes in Sri Lanka's central hills on Sunday.

Despite a heavy presence of the Army, the police and the elite Special Task Force, arson and rioting continued in some parts today. Security forces were preparing for further tension with the funeral of a victim of the Bindumuwewa camp attack scheduled for Tuesday in Maskeliya, a town in Nuwara Eliya district.

Sunday's rioting began after the funeral of another victim, who belonged to a tea estate in the area. The overnight curfew imposed yesterday was lifted at 5 a.m. today but tension continued to simmer, and the Government clamped a day-long curfew today.

Despite appeals to estate workers by their leaders to stay indoors, there were protest marches in several areas asking for the withdrawal of the Army. Police resorted to firing at one place. According to reports from the hill town of Ginigathena, hundreds fled their homes after mobs set fire to shops in the area. Mobs also stoned vehicles on the main highway to Nuwara Eliya.

The tea estates in the district and those in



**Sinhalese surveying the ruins of their shop at Talawakelle.** — Reuters

adjoining Badulla were paralysed for the second consecutive day. Mr. Chandrasekhar, who led a demonstration at Talawakelle in Nuwara Eliya to protest last week's massacre at the Bindumuwewa open prison

which sparked the riots, was taken into custody by security forces at about 1.30 a.m. He was brought to the capital and was being questioned at the police headquarters, official sources said. Demanding his

immediate release, another leader of the estate families, Mr. M. S. Sellasamy of the Ceylon National Workers' Congress, who is also a UNP parliamentarian, said keeping him under detention might exacerbate tensions in the hill country.

The rioting began yesterday after the funeral of one of the victims of the Bindumuwewa attack, who was from a tea estate in the area. Mr. Chandrasekhar led a demonstration to protest the camp attack soon after the funeral, defying curfew orders. Police resorted to firing at two places to disperse rioters. A mob set fire to a train. Many shops were looted and burnt.

Meanwhile, the Government said the CID had taken into custody 14 police officers — eight inspectors and six sergeants — and around Bandarawela — in connection with the attack on the camp. The Government continued to assert that the attack was provoked by the inmates, under the leadership of a "hardcore" LTTE cadre who had surrendered to the security forces with the ulterior motive of gaining admittance to the camp and causing disruption.

However, there was no explanation on how a "hardcore" LTTE member had been sent by the authorities to a camp which was essentially an open prison, meant for rehabilitation of those who left the separatist group voluntarily.

## Asia should defend identity: Mahathir

By Amit Baruah

**SINGAPORE, Oct. 30.** The Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, has said South Asia's "experiments with democracy have merely resulted in weak governments which change frequently and seem unable to plan and develop their countries".

Dr. Mahathir, in a speech made in Hong Kong, was quoted as making the remarks in the general context of his view that Asia was in "total disarray".

According to him, Central Asia was very rich in resources, but unable to adjust itself to democracy and the free market.

The Prime Minister, whose independent views have made him unpopular in the West, said Asia should defend its own identity and reject Western conceptions of democracy.

"South-East Asia can recover faster if it is less preoccupied with gaining the approval of the West in the way it manages things politically and economically."

Calling for greater cooperation among Asian countries, the Prime Minister suggested the creation of an Asian Monetary Fund.

THE HINDU

1 OCT 2000

## Barak ready for peace talks if violence drops

**JERUSALEM:** Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak on Sunday said he would be ready to hold peace talks in the U.S. if there is a drop in violence that has rocked the Palestinian territories for a month but was pressing ahead with plans to form an emergency government with the right wing.

"We are committed by Sharm El-Sheikh accord and we want to see if it is possible to relaunch the peace process," he said on public radio, referring to the agreement reached with the Palestinians on October 17 to take steps to quell the unrest. "If the violence drops we will go to Washington to see if there is something to discuss," he added.

President Bill Clinton had invited both Mr Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for separate talks in the U.S. but said on Friday he was disturbed by the continued killings. (AP)

**COLOMBO:** The Sri Lankan government led by President Chandrika Kumaratunga is under strain due to the differences with its key coalition partner Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) over the number of deputy ministers to be inducted in the 10-day-old ministry.



**C. Kumaratunga**

Ms Kumaratunga, already under heavy criticism from the local media for appointing a record 44 member "jumbo ministry", hasn't so far appointed the deputy ministers after SLMC openly demanded five deputy ministries instead of three offered to it.

With 12 MPs, the SLMC has been given two cabinet ministries with plum portfolios to its leaders Raul Hakeem and Harsh Adhikari.

The SLMC on record demand-

ed two cabinet portfolios, five deputy ministries and 14 foreign diplomatic postings for extending support.

The party's demands were criticised by Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake stating that Mr Hakeem was behaving like a shoglock.

However, Mr Hakeem said the criticism was unfair. "Our demands were being made to look unreasonable", he said, adding the granting of five deputy ministries was part of an agreement between him and Ms Kumaratunga before he extended his party's support.

The delayed appointment of deputy ministers has created political problems for Ms Kumaratunga as she could not reappoint her uncle and former deputy defence minister Anuraudha Ratwatte for the same post.

Mr Ratwatte, who masterminded her government's war strategy for the past six years, attended the

## Chandrika under pressure to appoint more ministers

last week's National Security Council meeting, which among other issues discussed the recent LTTE attack on eastern Trincomalee harbour and slaughtering of 29 surrendered LTTE militants at Bandawela by a mob of Sinhalese civilians.

Mr Ratwatte's presence at Security Council meeting made the local media speculate that he has already been sworn-in as deputy minister of defence. This was later denied by a government spokesman.

With growing criticism over SLMC demands for more ministerial berths, Ms Kumaratunga appeared hesitant to appoint 44 deputy ministers.

People's Alliance (PA) sources said that she wanted to cut the size of the deputy ministers to 30 but was unable to do so due to firm stand taken by Mr Hakeem.

Besides the SLMC, Ms Kumaratunga appeared to be under pressure from her own

SFP to accommodate more provincial leaders in the ministry.

The problem could snowball into a political crisis if the deputy ministers were not appointed in the coming weeks, the SLMC sources said.

Meanwhile, security forces in Jaffna launched an offensive on terrorist locations in Madduvil, killing 15 Tigers and captured about two sq km area from their control, a military spokesman said. Air force jets simultaneously bombarded one of the terrorist bunker and completely destroyed it. The troops also recovered several dead bodies.

The spokesman said the troops advanced to north of Madduvil forcing the terrorists to retreat. Three soldiers were injured during confrontation, he said.

The LTTE has violated the temporary truce reached with security forces during countrywide immunisation programme undertaken by UNICEF.



# Match-fixing: report today

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, OCT. 29.** The much-awaited inquiry report of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the cricket match-fixing and betting scandal will be submitted to the Government tomorrow.

Agency sources said the report is likely to name some of the cricketers, administrators and bookies who were allegedly involved in the conspiracy that reeked of malpractices and efforts to destroy the game.

It is learnt that the CBI has indicted at least five cricketers. The agency had started its probe on May 2 and exhaustively questioned nearly 170 persons, including administrators, officials, and cricketers.

The report will be submitted to the Union Sports Minister, Mr. Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, agency sources said. The report was scheduled to be submitted on Wednesday but the agency was left with completion of certain formalities. The go-ahead for submission of the report was given by the CBI Director, Mr. R.K. Raghavan, who has left for Athens for a meeting of the Interpol.

According to sources, the CBI report has also made a number of suggestions for improving the

functioning of the Board for Control of Cricket in India (BCCI) and pointed out certain "weak areas" in the functioning of the Board. The agency had an interaction with top BCCI officials during the course of its investigation.

Apart from former captains, Mohammad Azharuddin and Kapil Dev, the CBI questioned Ajit Wadekar, wicket-keeper Nayan Mongia, Ajay Jadeja, Nikhil Chopra, Ajay Sharma and Manoj Prabhakar, who had blown the whistle on charges of match-fixing and also secretly recorded video tapes of leading cricketers wherein they reportedly admitted to malpractices in the game.

PFI reports:

CBI sources said the report confirms the manner in which matches were fixed, including last minute changes in the team made at the instance of bookies.

During the course of investigation, the sleuths of the special crime branch also traced calls made to and from cellular telephones used by a cricketer allegedly to contact bookies.

The CBI has also some bookies on record saying that some of the cricketers had been paid money in foreign currencies and their travel expenses abroad were met by them, the agency sources claimed.

# Mourners clash with police

By Nirupama Subramanian

**COLOMBO, OCT. 29.** Four persons were killed and many others injured as clashes broke out today in the Tamil-dominated central hills of Sri Lanka between police and mourners protesting the massacre at the Bindunuwewa open prison last week.

Most of the violence was centred in Talawakelle, 40 km from Nuwara Eliya town, where incidents of arson were reported till late in the evening.

Residents told *The Hindu* over phone that the situation in the area was "very tense." The government clamped a curfew effective 8 p.m. tonight to 5 a.m. tomorrow on the entire Nuwara Eliya district and the neighbouring district of Badulla, and called out the army to assist police.

Two persons were killed when police opened fire to disperse

demonstrators defying a curfew at Talawakelle this afternoon, official sources said. Ten others were reported to be hurt in the firing. Two persons were killed in other incidents.

The demonstration was organised by the Up-Country People's Front to protest the killing of 27 LTTE detainees last week at a rehabilitation camp in Bandarawela.

Another group of protesters torched several bogies of a train at a railway station 10 km away when police attempted to stop them from boarding it to join the demonstration.

In a statement, the Government expressed "sadness" over the incidents and said all steps had been taken to provide "full protection" to people and property in the area.

Tension was mounting in the area from Saturday, when the

UCPF announced a one-day general strike on the estates today to protest the Bandarawela massacre, and to mourn one of the victims, a tea estate youth who is said to have joined the LTTE, later surrendered to the security forces, and was being rehabilitated at the camp. His funeral was held today. The tension escalated this morning when UCPF activists began forcing all shopkeepers and motorists to fly the white flag, a traditional Sri Lankan mourning symbol.

The police clamped a curfew in Talawakelle and adjoining areas at noon. However, the UCPF held its demonstration in defiance of the curfew. "It was a peaceful demonstration, but at the last minute, some outside elements that wanted to cause disruption, began the violence," said Mr. P. Chandrasekharan, parliamentarian of the United National Party.

THE HINDU

30 OCT 2000

## 13 Pakistani diplomats facing corruption charges

Mubashir Zaidi  
Islamabad, October 25

THE FOREIGN Ministry is investigating into the alleged wrongdoings of many of its diplomatic staff officials including ambassadors and other senior officials who may face removal from service, *Dawn* reported today. At least 13 officers of the foreign ministry are facing serious charges of misconduct, inefficiency, corruption etc. the report revealed quoting official records.

Among those under investigation are consul general of Pakistan in Saudi Arabia Rasheed Saleem Khan; M Nasser Mian, Ambassador of Pakistan in Brasilia; M F Rehman Akbar, High Commissioner in Male; Amanullah I Larik, director, and M Khabeel Khan, counsellor, Embassy of Pakistan, Stockholm; and Barkat Ali, former counsellor, Embassy of Pakistan, Madrid.

Former consul general of Pakistan in Saudi Arabia Rasheed Saleem Khan is being probed for non-settlement of Bank Al-Jazira Jeddah loan amounting to 70,000 Saudi Riyals and advances drawn from the consulate general during his tenure in Jeddah in 1992.

M Nasser Mian, Ambassador of Pakistan in Brasilia, is facing charges of embezzlement/misappropriation of public funds during his tenure as Ambassador to Bahrain from 1996-1999.

## Lanka minorities worried over PA-UNP bid for pact

P K Balachandran  
Colombo, October 25

THE TAMIL and Muslim minorities in Sri Lanka are expressing concern over two developments: One is the ongoing bid by the ruling Peoples Alliance (PA) and the opposition United National Party (UNP) to enter into a pact; and the other is the clarification given by the Sinhala Buddhist clergy for the formation of a National Government comprising the PA and the UNP.

The minorities are certain that the bid for a bipartisan pact and the call for a national government of the two main Sinhala dominated parties are but attempts to fight the growing power of the parties of the minorities in the hung parliament. In fact, the Mahanayake of the Asgiriya Chapter of the Buddhist Maha Sangha, Ven. Udugama Buddha Rakkitha Thera, had told the visiting Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kiriella, that if the PA and the UNP did not form a national govt, both would have to dance to the tune of the minorities.

Mr. V. Anandasangaree MP of the moderate Tamil United

Liberation Front (TULF) and Mr. P. P. Devaraj, an Indian Tamil leader and a UNP MP, have both expressed fears that the PA-UNP "pact" might either brush the ethnic issue under the carpet or harm the interest of the minorities. In a statement, Mr. Anandasangaree pointed out that in the "working arrangement" arrived at between the PA and the UNP there was no ethnic/social rights are not co-terminus. I hope the majority (Sinhala) community will realise this and rectify the error," Mr. Devaraj said.

While the PA is yet to make a statement on the issue, the UNP's negotiator, Mr. Tyrone Fernando MP, had admitted that the main purpose of a bipartisan "working arrangement" was to keep the minority parties in check. The move for a pact was triggered by the way the Muslim-dominated NUA was pushing for a huge chunk of the cake during government formation. However, the PA-UNP pact has run into rough weather with the PA wanting the UNP to abjure "no-trust" motions, and the UNP saying that the government should carry out all the reforms it has demanded by Dec. 31, 2000.

Mr. Anandasangaree said that he acknowledged the need for democratic reforms which the pact was meant to bring into being, but he warned that in the absence of any agenda for finding a solution to the ethnic question, it would be "very

### 10 surrendered rebels killed

TEN SURRENDERED LTTE militants, housed in a rehabilitation centre, were killed and 16 others injured when it was attacked and ransacked by local residents in central Badulla district early Wednesday morning. The youth rehabilitation centre at Bandarewela, where over 40 surrendered Tamil rebels were given refuge, was attacked by a mob, stated to be civilians of the area, preliminary reports reaching here said.

The defence sources confirmed the attack but reasons for the provocation were not immediately known. Many of the inmates were killed on the spot, while several others injured, they said. Army and police reinforcements had been rushed to the area, the sources said.

Colombo, PTI

## Dailies make choices as Gore catches up with Bush in opinion polls

S. Rajagopalan  
Washington, October 25

THE SEASON of newspapers formally endorsing candidates in the tight US presidential race has begun in right earnest even as the embattled Al Gore seemed to have finally caught up with the resurgent George W. Bush in the major opinion polls.

Both have picked up several newspaper endorsements over the last few days, which have seen a closing of the gap between the two. The latest *Washington Post* poll has reported a tie (46 per cent for both), while the CNN/Gallup poll and the Reuters/MSNBC poll gave Mr Bush a statistically insignificant 2 per cent lead.

For Mr Gore, the first morale-booster came last Sunday with the influential *Washington Post* endorsing his candidature. This has been followed by a series of approvals from a variety of regional papers like the *Sun Francisco Chronicle*, the *Star Tribune*, the *Las Vegas Sun*, the *Detroit Free Press* and the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*.

Mr George W. Bush has not been lagging behind. He has secured the backing of some less fancied but significant regional newspapers. *The Detroit News*, the *Columbus Dispatch*, the *Seattle Times* and the

Dallas

*Morning News* have come out with endorsements in addition to *The Washington Times*, a steady Bush supporter.

If the *Washington Post* hailed Mr Gore as a man of good character with better experience, sound judgment and tight priorities, the *Washington Times* has argued that Mr Bush surpasses the Vice-President in terms of political priorities, leadership, personal character and vision of the future.

Newspapers endorsing Mr Gore have singled out in rather harsh terms Mr Bush's lack of experience and credentials for the top job. "There is little in his background or bearing to suggest he is really up to the world's most demanding job," says the *Detroit Free Press*.

Likewise, journals endorsing Mr Bush's bipartisan approach to resolve deadlocks on key issues have been unsparing on Mr Gore's combat approach to politics and his proclivity to exaggerate.

While there is a veritable flood of endorsements by now, the prestigious *New York Times* is still to take a view. The paper, however, has come out with an endorsement for the Senate contest by backing the candidature of First Lady Hillary Clinton, who faces a spirited challenge from Republican Rick Lazio.

# LTTE suicide attacks on navy base

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, Oct. 23. — Tamil rebels launched simultaneous suicide boat attacks on a strategic naval base in eastern Trincomalee and other eastern coast areas today, killing two sailors and shooting down an army helicopter.

At least 40 people were injured in today's attacks. Army spokesman Brig. Sanath Karunaratne said four LTTE suicide boats packed with explosives launched a dawn attack on Trinco harbour, which houses navy's Eastern Command headquarters. But, the harbour is safe.

While one boat exploded near a naval personnel carrier, the other three were destroyed by naval gunfire, he said. A passenger carrier and a fast gun vessel were destroyed. The per-

sonnel carrier sustained heavy damage and started drifting.

Brig. Karunaratne said there were at least two rebels in each of the boats and all were killed in the attack.

Simultaneously, the LTTE launched heavy mortar attack on naval detachments near the harbour.

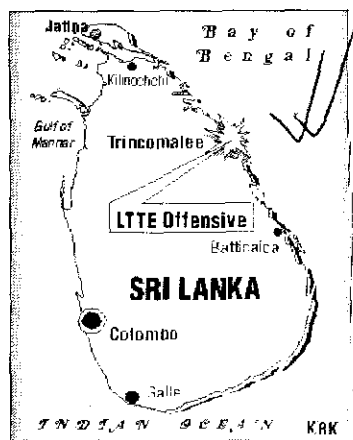
Using anti-aircraft missiles, they shot down an Mi-24 helicopter when it tried to engage LTTE mortar positions. The chopper, which flew over the port area to assist the ground troops, fell like a fireball, killing all its four occupants.

This was second Mi-24 to have been shot down by rebels. On 19 October, the LTTE claimed to have shot down a helicopter with anti-aircraft missiles in northern Jaffna.

Brig. Karunaratne said LTTE boats and fast attack naval craft also clashed today at Kokilai and Fowlpoint on the eastern coast.

Heavy fighting broke out between a flotilla of rebel boats carrying reinforcements to northern Jaffna and the naval craft at Kokilai and Fowlpoint coasts, beyond Trincomalee. The navy reported to have destroyed three LTTE boats.

Trincomalee was the most strategic harbour in Sri Lanka's east, from where the navy attempts to control the LTTE-dominated eastern coast. It was also the last major port in the east still under navy control.



THE STATESMAN

24 OCT 2002

## PM attends to work from home

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 23. The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, is back at work, though operating from his residence. Returning from Mumbai after a knee-joint surgery, he was reported to be attending to the backlog of files needing his attention. "The Prime Minister is attending to file work and also taking telephone calls," according to one of his aides.

Mr. Vajpayee is believed to have walked for a few minutes without the aid of a walker. Officials who met him since his return from Mumbai are unanimous in asserting that the Prime Minister is looking "rejuvenated" and that he seems more energetic and focussed than he was in recent months. These officials say that Mr. Vajpayee's worst medical problem was behind him and that the country has no cause to worry. The only important visitor to Mr. Vajpayee's residence was the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani. He was to have met the Prime Minister on Sunday but got back from Srinagar late in the evening, and therefore was advised to postpone his call on Mr. Vajpayee to this morning.

However, since Mr. Vajpayee is under medical advice to resume work gradually it will be a while before he is able to perform chores such as presiding over a Cabinet meeting.

# LTTE destroys naval craft

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, OCT. 23. Explosive-packed boats of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam breached the high-security Trincomalee harbour early today and destroyed at least one naval craft, while rebel units on the ground shot down an Air Force helicopter in the fierce land battle that followed.

At least two sailors were killed, three were injured and 40 other personnel treated for "minor" wounds, the Defence Ministry said. A fast personnel carrier in the harbour was destroyed and an attack craft was damaged.

The navy destroyed three LTTE boats inside the harbour and two just outside. Casualties on the Tigers' side were not known.

The two-pronged attack began around 5.30 a.m., when the rebels began firing mortars at the dockyard from the southern side of Trincomalee Bay while their suicide boats simultaneously attacked the naval ships.

The Navy fought back and residents of Trincomalee town woke up to the sounds of

explosions, gunfire and mortars. The fighting continued well into the morning with the LTTE keeping up the mortar offensive on the harbour while the Army launched a search and clear operation in the area.

An Mi-24 helicopter gunship was shot down over Koddigar Bay as it tried to provide cover to soldiers on the ground. There is no word yet on the crew of the helicopter, the second Air Force casualty in under a week.

One soldier was killed during the ground operation in a clash with the rebels in a hotel at a beach 16 km south-west of Trincomalee from where the LTTE is said to have launched the attack on the harbour. The attack followed heavy fighting in the Jaffna peninsula where the LTTE has been attempting to breach army defences at Nagarkovil on the east coast.

An Mi-24 was shot down in the fierce fighting at Nagarkovil last week in which each side claimed to have inflicted heavy casualties on the other. The manpower-strapped army today announced a fresh recruitment drive from October 25 which will continue till the end of November.

49-12  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2000

## BRAVING THE ODDS

21/10/2000

THE NEW CABINET sworn in by the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, is widely expected to reflect a broad continuity in basic policies despite its slim parliamentary majority. The updating of the policies will obviously be undertaken by or under the directions and political auspices of Ms. Kumaratunga in her constitutional status as the Executive President. Yet, she may need to assess the evolving political dynamics of the new parliamentary scene for some time before crafting a strategy to try and usher in constitutional reforms with the objective of addressing the paramount question of a rightful place for the minority Tamils among the other themes on her agenda. In this perspective, the larger national cause can be advanced suitably by a certain degree of flexibility in the political styles of the President and the Prime Minister, Mr. Ratnasiri Wickramanayake, given especially the present Government's wafer-thin majority in the newly-constituted Parliament. This does not, however, mean that the President, whose willingness to brave the political and security odds remains undiminished, should change course. The primary thrust of her priorities for constitutional changes is quite conspicuously geared towards a fair ethnic-political deal for all including the majority Sinhala community. In a sense, though, this aspect of her initiative for a future constitutional dispensation is almost inevitably entwined with the other proposals for a re-architecturing of the polity itself. This larger package, originally endorsed in broad principle by the major parties, had turned into something of a plaything in partisan politics in the previous Parliament. Therefore, the present Parliament, more or less evenly balanced as between the new Government and the Opposition, may prove to be a formidable arena for a test of the political will of not only the Prime Minister, acting on behalf of the President, but also the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe. With Mr. Wickremesinghe and the present Prime Minister, who assumed

the same office shortly before the recent general election, being no strangers to the issues on hand, the conventional wisdom is that the political battle lines are already reinforced.

A positive sign, nonetheless, is that the President's brother, Mr. Anura Bandaranaike who belongs to the Opposition, has been unanimously elected the new Speaker. This event has sparked speculation about the possibility of a move by all concerned to explore the feasibility of forming a 'national government' of some kind. Irrespective of the crystal-gazing on that count, the least that can of course be said is that the new ruling coalition, consisting of the President's People's Alliance and the National Unity Alliance with its moorings in the politics of minority Muslims too, has avoided a trial of strength over the Speaker's election. While the continuing crisis in Sri Lanka calls for a bold collective effort by its leaders to rise above the considerations of numbers in Parliament, the political configuration of the present House can yet prove problematic for a constitutional overhaul.

Outside the portals of normative politics, the latest suicide-bombing in Colombo, shortly before the new Cabinet swearing-in, served as a grim reminder, if that was needed at all, of the powerful presence of an extra-constitutional actor. The relative failure of the bombing, despite its tragic toll, has given rise to questions whether the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the prime or sole suspect, is beginning to be less effective in its campaign. On the wider Tamil front, the performance of the Eelam People's Democratic Party and its leader, Mr. Douglas Devananda, in the new Government will be watched with interest. With Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar retaining his old portfolio, Sri Lanka's cause on the external front will continue to be articulated well. A question is whether Colombo will now seek to revive the idea of an external facilitation of an end to the ongoing war with the LTTE.

THE HINDU

21 OCT 2000

Colombo  
alert against  
suicide  
bombers

# Deal for stable Lanka government

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, Oct. 22. — Police have sounded a red alert following intelligence reports that 47 LTTE suicide bombers have sneaked into the capital. Their targets are the new Cabinet ministers and top military officers.

With 44 Cabinet ministers to be sworn in on Thursday, intelligence reports indicated infiltration of 47 suicide bombers to step up attacks in Colombo, police said.

The LTTE suicide bombers have reportedly increased the quantity of explosives in their suicide jackets from 700 gm to six kilograms to cause greater devastation.

Police are also experimenting with various methods to detect and arrest suicide bombers before they can do any harm.

Meanwhile, US officials probing the 12 October suicide bombing on the American navy destroyer, *USS Cole*, near Aden suspect LTTE involvement, the *Island* said.

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, Oct. 22. — The ruling People's Alliance and the main Opposition United National Party have agreed to preserve the stability of the new government, Sri Lankan media said today.

The Prime Minister, Mr Ratnasiri Wickramanayake, has reached a working agreement with the UNP to run his government without any problems for the next two years.

Mr Wickramanayake formed a coalition government this week after obtaining a three-seat majority.

According to the accord, the UNP — which has 89 MPs in the 225-member House — will not confront the government and will adopt a positive approach to help it function smoothly.

The PA, on its part, has agreed to appoint three independent commissions to conduct elections, administer police and other public services — a long-standing UNP demand.

The government also agreed

to bring in media reforms by removing the criminal defamation, the official *Sunday Times* reported.

The agreement, to be ratified by the UNP working committee tomorrow, was reached between Mr Wickramanayake and UNP chief whip, Mr Tyrne Fernando.

The agreement was reached to relieve the government from the undue pressure being exerted by the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress whose leaders were allegedly demanding plum portfolios for extending support.

Another ally, the Eelam People's Democratic Party, which has won five seats has been given one cabinet portfolio.

Terminating the agreement as a working arrangement, Mr Fernando said: "The aim of the exercise is to introduce a new political culture."

The agreement between two arch rivals follows the parties' unanimous decision to elect UNP MP and Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga's politically

estranged brother, Mr Anura Bandaranaike, as the new Speaker.

But the all-important constitutional reforms needed to grant autonomy to the Tamil provinces does not figure in the agreement. Its conspicuous absence has set off speculation that the government would not immediately bring in a new draft constitution.

Mrs Kumaratunga's constitutional reforms invited much opposition from the UNP and Buddhist monks.

**Nowhere near talks:** Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan foreign minister has said there is no dialogue going on between the government and the LTTE and

LTTE participation in peace talks have reached an impasse as the rebels believe they could win their demands by military means, adds UNI.

In an interview with the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, shortly after his return from Oslo, Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar said the Sri

Lankan government had formally asked Norway to continue its search for a peaceful settlement to the conflict through a negotiated settlement.

But Mr Kadirgamar admitted that they were nowhere near "even fixing a date for talks".

A letter carried by Mr Kadirgamar on behalf of the President had assured Norway that Sri Lanka remains fully committed to a peaceful solution and that Mrs Kumaratunga looks forward to continued efforts by Oslo in the peace process.

The foreign minister said he had briefed Norwegian leaders about the security situation in northern Jaffna.

"The LTTE is fighting for a separate state by force. No sovereign state can accept that situation. So in self defence we have to fight. We will continue fighting as long as the LTTE is trying to create a separate state by force," Mr Kadirgamar said.

On whether he still believed in a political solution, he said: "Yes, I think in the long run a political solution is necessary."

THE STATESMAN

23 OCT 2000

10:01 AM

## Sri Lankan Army seeks more military hardware

By V.S.Sambandan HD-13

COLOMBO, APRIL 30. Sri Lanka is "urgently seeking" greater supplies of military hardware, local media reports said.

The "fast-track, multi-billion rupee" effort comes as one of the many steps in the immediate aftermath of last weekend's fall of Elephant Pass, a crucial northern gateway garrison, in an operation in which the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam overpowered the Army with artillery power.

The *Sunday Times*, today said Defence officials had begun meeting representatives of manufacturers from "Russia, Britain, Pakistan, Iran, Czech Republic, Israel and Singapore." Immediately after the Elephant Pass debacle, the Sri Lanka Army Commander, Lt. Gen. Siril Weerasooriya, told a press conference that the Army would change its tactics through "increased firepower".

Another Sunday newspaper, the *Sunday Leader*, said the debacle was due to lack of equipment.

Non-availability of transport aircraft and the non-operational status of the armour in Jaffna have been cited as among the reasons for the reversal.

### India's help sought

PTI reports:

Desperate over the military reversals in the strategic Jaffna peninsula, the nationalist groups in

Sri Lanka, who had opposed the presence of Indian Army during 1987-1990 in the country, are now calling for its return.

"Yes, I was strongly against the IPKF then, but considering the present situation, it is imperative that we invite the Indian Army to help halt the LTTE's advance into the Jaffna peninsula," Buddhist monk, Elle Gunawansa, who had led an anti-India campaign when the IPKF was deployed in Sri Lanka, told a Sinhala language weekly 'Lukbima'.

Gunawansa, considered to be a protege of late President R Premadasa, sought a full-scale Indian military involvement to prevent the LTTE's onslaught in Jaffna. Recently, the main opposition, United National Party (UNP) asked the Chandrika Kumaratunga Government to seek foreign military assistance to stop the LTTE from taking over Jaffna.

### Minister sustains burn injuries

CALCUTTA, APRIL 30. The West Bengal Industry Minister, Mr. Bidyut Ganguly, was tonight rushed to a city hospital after sustaining serious burn injuries in a fire at his residence. The police said the lower portion of his body, including both the legs, were badly burnt. It could not be ascertained how the fire broke out. -- UNI

THE HINDU

1 APR 2000

# EU for tripartite talks on Lanka

P.K. Balachandran  
Colombo, April 6

HI-20 79  
IN A significant move this week, the European Union (EU) has called for joint talks between the Sri Lankan Government, the Opposition UNP and the rebel LTTE to help end the war and resolve the ethnic conflict in the country.

"A tripartite commitment to discussing proposals for constitutional reform and devolution of power could be an important first step," a demarche issued by the EU office here said. Addressed to the Sri Lankan President, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga, and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe, it said that the EU appreciated the cooperation of the UNP in the on-going bilateral talks with the ruling Peoples' Alliance. It also appreciated and supported the Norwegian Government's bid to facilitate talks between the government and the LTTE.

On the need to end the war and the ethnic

conflict quickly, the EU said that the development efforts of the EU collectively, and its member countries individually, would have a lasting impact on the ground only if they were pursued in a secure and constructive environment. "The EU is deeply concerned at the continuing violent confrontation between the Sri Lankan government forces and the LTTE which continues to destabilise the country, to inflict great loss of life and suffering on the civilian population, and to slow down the urgently needed social and economic development of Sri Lanka," the statement said.

The statement is being seen in different ways in Sri Lanka, the "Daily Mirror" noted today that it had come a month before countries which aid Sri Lanka were to meet in Paris to finalise the quantum of assistance. The paper went on to say that the statement reflected a feeling in Europe that development assistance given to Sri Lanka could well be wasted on the protracted war. A former Lankan Ambassador

to the EU, Mr Kalyananda Godage, told *The Hindustan Times*, that the statement stemmed from the apprehension that if there was an agreement only between the government and the LTTE and the UNP was kept out, the latter might sabotage the implementation of that agreement. Hence the plea for a tripartite agreement, Mr Godage reasoned.

While the Tamils have welcomed the agreement, the Sinhala hardliners are disturbed by the EU's initiative. The popular Tamil publication "Thinamurasu" said today that the EU's demarche was a warning to the Sri Lankan government that it could not take the aid givers for granted or pull the wool over their eyes. The support given to the Norwegian facilitation, despite Norway's not being in the EU, showed that in Europe there was no difference of opinion on the issue. This is welcomed by the Tamils because they are setting much store by Norwegian facilitation and European support for it.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 7 APR 2008



# Lanka turns down LTTE's conditions

P K Balachandran  
Colombo, April 7

SRI LANKA'S Deputy Defence Minister, General Anuruddha Ratwatte, on Thursday categorically rejected all the conditions put up by the LTTE for holding peace talks with the government. *The Island* newspaper reported today.

Winding up the Parliamentary debate on the extension of the state of emergency in the country, General Ratwatte said that the government would not agree to any of the conditions laid down by Dr. Anton Balasingham, the chief negotiator of the LTTE.

The Minister made particular mention of the demand for the withdrawal of the army from the North and East and said that the

army would never leave the places it was occupying.

In a recent interview to *The Tamil Guardian*, Dr. Balasingham had demanded the withdrawal of the army to its barracks, an internationally monitored ceasefire and the lifting of all the curbs and embargoes applicable to the North East and its people, before talks could begin.

## 'LTTE smuggled 17,000 Tamils'

THE STATE owned *Daily News* on Friday quoted Sri Lankan law enforcement agencies as saying that one R. Visendrarajan, described as the Head of the LTTE's Finance Division, had smuggled 17,000 Tamils out of Lanka in 1999, netting an \$300 m to \$340 m. They also allegedly smuggled 1,800 tonnes of gold.

Nearly \$ 190 million of this had been sent abroad through private banks using 18,000 travellers' cheques in the name of Tamils, the report added. **HTC, Colombo**

The Deputy Defence Minister further said that the government would never give up Jaffna. "Though the LTTE wants to get control over certain parts of Jaffna, they will never get it back," the state owned *Daily News* quoted him as saying.

In the on-going operations in the Jaffna peninsula, 5 officers and 80 other ranks were killed and 379 suffered slight injury, the Minister added.

THE HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER

APR 2000

# Chandrika to discuss government stand on LTTE with top monks

COLOMBO: Amid mounting pressure from hard-line Sinhala Buddhist monks opposing the proposed government-LTTE peace talks and formulation of a new constitution to grant autonomy to Tamil



C. Kumaratunga

provinces — President Chandrika Kumaratunga has sought a meeting with heads of two Buddhist sects on Monday to clarify government's stand on the issues.

She has invited the influential prelates of the Asgiriya and Malwatta chapters to join her for discussions at the official Temple Trees residence here on Monday, the *Sunday Times* newspaper reported. Officials were not immediately available for comment.

The newspaper said the President informed the Mahanayakas, as they are called by the devout Sinhala Buddhists, that she was unable to meet them at Buddhist temples in southern Kandy town due to security reasons. The Mahanayakas led the protests by monks on April 6 here demanding the government desist from talking to LTTE and in-

stead crush the outfit militarily.

Meanwhile, 16 sailors on board the two Sri Lankan gunboats sunk by LTTE have been presumed dead while 19 others were rescued in search operations, the navy said on Sunday. Naval boats so far rescued 19 sailors, while the fate of 16 others, including five officers, is not known, a navy spokesman said.

Search operations began soon after two Israeli-made Dvora-Class fast moving navy gunboats with 35 personnel aboard were attacked by the LTTE along the Jaffna peninsula coast on Friday evening.

Naval boats continued searches throughout Saturday during which 19 sailors floating with life jackets were rescued. According to local media reports, while one Dvora was destroyed and sunk, the other gunboat lost control and hit a sand bank, about 50 meters from the shore.

The LTTE cadre who directed the fire, later took control of the gunboat and removed the guns and other equipment from the vessel. Sri Lankan navy extensively uses Israeli and Chinese fast moving gunboats to confront vast numbers of LTTE's suicide and transport boats. The navy has 25 Dvora Class gunboats which patrol the western and eastern coasts. (Agencies)

THE TELEGRAPH

10 APR 2000

## Chandrika to meet influential Buddhist leaders today

By V. S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, APRIL 9. With increasing pressure on the Sri Lankan Government to call off the Norwegian initiative to broker negotiations with the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, would be meeting influential leaders of the Buddhist clergy tomorrow, Presidential secretariat sources said.

The meeting with the Mahanayaka of the Asgiriya chapter, one of the two most powerful orders of Buddhism in the island-nation, is slated to take place tomorrow in the backdrop of last Thursday's demonstration by Sinhala hardliners, led by sections of the Buddhist clergy, during which a Norwegian flag was burnt and a BBC's Colombo correspondent was assaulted.

During the protest march across the streets of Colombo, hardliners demanded that the proposed talks with the Tigers be called off, opposed the Norwegian initiative as one of interference and put out a seven-point charter of "non-negotiable" demands, which included retaining the unitary state, the maintenance of existing safeguards for the national flag, the national anthem and the Buddha Sasana and the abolition of the Executive Presidency and the Pro-

vincial Council system. Opposition to an externally mediated settlement apart, hardliners have also been calling for an intensification of the military offensives against the LTTE in the north and east and have been against changing the present constitution to provide for far-reaching devolution to the provinces to end the conflict.

The hardline positions come in the backdrop of a sharp escalation in the military offensives between security troops and separatist rebels in the island's northern Jaffna peninsula during the past few months.

The latest offensive commenced on March 27, with the rebels mounting an attack on the Jaffna Peninsula, overrunning four military camps in the southeastern theatre of the Peninsula and moving closer to the crucial Elephant Pass military complex, which is the terrestrial gateway to the Jaffna Peninsula.

The offensive has so far claimed the lives of 121 soldiers, including seven officers, *The Sunday Times* reported, adding that a total of 16 officers and 361 soldiers have been killed in the northern offensives since December.

The fighting is now focussed on north of the Elephant Pass complex.

THE HINDU

10 APR 2000

# Chandrika to meet monks

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PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, April 9. — Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga has sought a meeting tomorrow with the heads of two Buddhist sects to clarify the Lanka government's stand on the proposed government-LTTE talks and formulation of a new constitution to grant autonomy to Tamil provinces.

The decision follows mounting pressure from hardline Sinhala Buddhist monks.

The Sri Lankan President will meet the influential prelates of the Asgiriya and Malwatta chapters at the official residence, the Sunday Times reported today.

Officials were not immediately available for comment.

Mrs Kumaratunga informed the *mahanayakas*, as they are called by the devout Sinhala Buddhists, that she cannot meet them at Buddhist temples in southern Kandy because of security reasons.

The *mahanayakas* led Thursday's protest by monks, demanding that the government desist from talking to the LTTE and instead crush the outfit militarily.

The monks urged the government not to make any constitutional changes over national flag, anthem and the primacy accorded to Buddhism.

They also opposed proposed changes in the state's unitary character but supported moves to abolish presidency in favour of parliamentary democracy. Mrs Kumaratunga and United National Party leader, Mr Ranil Wickramasinghe, last week decided to intensify negotiations to formulate a new constitution, which offered regional autonomy as a political settlement to end the ethnic war.

The two met for the sixth time on Thursday and agreed to expedite the process to finalise the new constitution by May.

**Rebel boat destroyed:** An LTTE boat was destroyed last night while attacking government troops at sea off Mantivu in Jaffna even as the army bombarded heavily to neutralise terrorist mortars, a UNI report says.

Three soldiers were injured and the rebels are believed to have suffered heavy casualties, the defence spokesperson, Col RP Witana said today.

In two separate incidents at Thanakilappu and Kovilkadu, three rebels were killed when troops fired at them.

The LTTE attacked two fast attack navy crafts on Friday, killing at least 12 on board including two captains. Officials at the navy headquarters said 18 sailors and an officer were rescued.

U APR 2000

# Buddhist monks refuse to meet Chandrika

REUTERS and PTI

51-11

11/9 S. Paul

HOSTAGE

GE FREED

COLOMBO, April 10 — The heads of Sri Lanka's two principal Buddhist sects, who are opposing the government's move to hold talks with LTTE and formulate a new Constitution, declined to meet President Chandrika Kumaratunga today. Local media and government officials said the monks were apparently unhappy because only two days before an agenda was not specified. The Mahanayaka Thero, who they are reverentially called as devout Sinhala Buddhists, said they would discuss the future meeting later this week.

President Chandrika had invited the heads of the Asgiriya and Malwatta chapters of Buddhism for discussions to iron out differences over the proposed peace talks with the LTTE and the new Constitution which is being framed in consultation with the principle Opposition United National Party at her

residence. The monks, who are seen as the spiritual leaders of the Sinhala majority, have been vocal in their opposition to the government's move to hold talks with the LTTE and formulate a new Constitution. They have also expressed their disapproval of the government's move to hold talks with the LTTE and formulate a new Constitution. They have also expressed their disapproval of the government's move to hold talks with the LTTE and formulate a new Constitution.

The government's proposal to hold a national conference to discuss the future of the country has been met with mixed reactions. The monks, who are seen as the spiritual leaders of the Sinhala majority, have been vocal in their opposition to the government's move to hold talks with the LTTE and formulate a new Constitution.

The monks, who are seen as the spiritual leaders of the Sinhala majority, have been vocal in their opposition to the government's move to hold talks with the LTTE and formulate a new Constitution.

refused to," a source close to the priests told the Daily Mirror newspaper.

The monks wanted more time to study the relevant proposals and permission for their legal experts to take part in the discussions, the source said. The monks and their affiliated associations have expressed opposition to the government-led talks under Norwegian mediation and even castigated the way for "meddling" in the country's internal affairs. They also appeared to talks with the LTTE and want the outfit to be ousted militarily.

The monks have also opposed different aspects of draft Constitution which proposes a broad regional autonomy to reach a political settlement with the LTTE. The invitation to talks followed when they sought an appointment with the President to convey their views on the peace talks and constitutional reforms.

About 70 per cent of Sri Lanka's 18.5 million people are Sinhalese, 18 per cent Tamil and most of them Hindus.

11 APR 1995

# Did Colombo bow to LTTE's diktat?

P. K. Balachandran  
Colombo, April 15

THE LTTE is boasting that it has forced the Sri Lankan Government to cancel plans to hold a one-day conference with Tamil expatriates in Canada on the 'Devolution package and the search for peace in Sri Lanka'. *The Island* daily reported in a special front page report today.

Though the Sri Lankan Government is silent on this episode, seasoned observers believe that Colombo backed out after the LTTE complained through the Norwegians that it would not tolerate talks with any other group of Tamils.

The Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE are currently holding "talks about talks" with Norwegian facilitation.

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Lakshan Kiriella was to address the meeting with Sri Lankans, including the Tamils, to be held in Toronto on April 16. He

was to answer all questions patiently and candidly, with a view to winning the Tamils' hearts and minds and alienate them from the baneful influence of the terrorist LTTE.

But at the last moment, Colombo recalled Mr Kiriella saying that his presence was urgently required in Sri Lanka, *The Island's* correspondent in Toronto, Mr Dushy Ranetunge, said in his report.

LTTE's front organisations like

rejected the devolution package and so they should not attend the conference.

According to Mr Ranetunga, the conference organised by the Sri Lankan High Commission in Canada, had 200 confirmed participants, including 50 Tamils. A successful conference of this sort would have been a major setback for the LTTE as the Canadian Tamils were a major source of moral and financial support for the

the edit lamented.

According to Mr Ranetunge, Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Lionel Fernando had no convincing reply when asked why Mr Kiriella was recalled and why the conference was not to be held.

But analyst Dayan Jayatilaka believes that the LTTE had in all likelihood told Colombo that it could not talk to any Tamils other than the LTTE, especially now when there were "talks about talks" with Norwegian facilitation. "The message might have been conveyed through the Norwegians," he said.

Mr Jayatilaka recalled that in the past too, the LTTE had broken off talks with the Sri Lankan Government saying that the latter was talking to other Tamils simultaneously.

President Premadasa's bid to mend fences with the EPRLF and his agreeing to meet them was one of the grounds for the LTTE's backing out of the talks with him in 1990 and restarting hostilities.

## Talks with Canadian Tamils off

the World Tamil Movement and the Tamil publication *Ulagu Thamilar* had earlier appealed to the Tamils in Canada not to attend the conference and give credence to the Sri Lankan Government's propaganda that it was sympathetic to the Tamils and wanted to solve the ethnic question peacefully through devolution of power.

The LTTE's mouthpieces reminded the Tamils that it had

LTTE, he said. But thanks to the cancellation of the conference by the Sri Lankan authorities, the organisers had egg on their faces, he noted.

Commenting editorially on the incident, *The Island* said that a golden opportunity to penetrate the expat Tamil community had been missed. A gift from heaven had been rejected and the ball had been lobbed into one's own goal.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

16 APR 2000

# War costs Lanka 2 years' GDP

P. K. Balachandran  
Colombo April 16

**T**HE WAR over Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka has cost the country the equivalent of its GDP for two years at 1996 rates, says a study conducted by the Colombo-based Institute of Policy Studies (IPS).

A report in The Sunday Times today quotes the IPS study to say that the problem of estimating the cost of the war, which is in its 15th year, is highly complicated because it has to grapple with a bewildering variety of parameters, other than military expenditure by both the Government and the Tamil rebels. It has to include the destruction or debilitation of factors of production, the non-use of or under utilisation of factors of production and the cost of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The war has already resulted in the death of 75,000 people, mainly in the Tamil north and east. It

has led to lakhs migrating to other parts of Sri Lanka and abroad as refugees. The impact of this has to be accounted for. The IPS claims that it has tried to be as objective, accurate and comprehensive as possible in estimating the cost.

The study says that defence expenditure in Sri Lanka, as percentage of GDP, had increased from less than 0.5% in the 1970s to an estimated 6% in 1995.

The more interesting part, however, is that this increase had taken place when the average defence expenditure for developing countries had fallen from 7.1% of the GDP in 1985 to 3% in 1995.

From 1984 to 1996, the Sri Lankan Government's military expenditure totalled SL Rs 287 billion or 42% of the 1996 GDP. In the same period, the Tamil rebels would have spent around 10% of it. To this must be added the damage to infrastructure and the cost of relief,

which came to about 13.5% of the 1996 GDP.

Dr K. M. de Silva, in his paper entitled "Demilitarisation to Militarisation" in the new book "Pursuit of Peace in Sri Lanka", says that Sri Lanka's military expenditure has gone up from US\$ 53.68 in 1982 to US\$ 884.75 in 1998. Giving figures on the defence expenditure as percentage of Government expenditure, Dr de Silva says that it had gone up from just over 4% in 1981 to just above 16% in 1998.

The security forces had also increased in numbers enormously, from 37,600 in 1986 to 1,43,013 in 1996. According to Prof de Silva, Sri Lanka has a much greater proportion of its population in the armed forces, as compared to other countries in South Asia.

In Bangladesh, just under 0.2% are in the security forces, while in India, it is slightly higher but still under 0.2%. In Pakistan, it stands at 0.4%. But the percentage is highest in Sri Lanka, where it is above 0.6%, Dr de Silva says.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 APR 2000

# Fresh fighting between Lanka troops, LTTE

Colombo, April 17: Sri Lankan troops and Tamil rebels exchanged mortar and artillery fire in the country's north as the latest round of fighting entered its fourth week, military officials said on Monday.

The artillery duel came as International Relief agency Medecins sans Frontieres urged the Sri Lankan government to allow the immediate re-supply of urgently needed drugs to the war-torn north where stocks were running out.

Military officials said suspected Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels had planted a bomb on a railway track in the northern government-controlled town of Vavuniya late on Sunday, derailing two compartments of an empty train. No one was wounded in the blast, they said.

The defence ministry said in a statement rebels had fired mortars at troops manning defences on the northern Jaffna peninsula and the military had retaliated with artillery.

The peninsula has been the scene of some fierce fighting in the past three weeks since the LTTE launched a fresh push to capture Jaffna, their former stronghold they lost in 1996.

Government troops had killed at least 20 LTTE rebels in various clashes in the peninsula on Sunday. Two government soldiers were wounded in the battles, it said. The statement said the two sides also exchanged mortar and artillery fire in the northern Wannai region, vast parts of which were captured by the rebels last November when they pushed the military out of several large camps in the area. The LTTE has been fighting

for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in Sri Lanka's north and east since 1983. Nearly 60,000 people have been killed in the fighting.

MSF, or Doctors Without Borders, said in the past three months drug supplies had run low in the northern Mullaithivu and Kilinochchi districts and attempts by humanitarian agencies to renew supplies had been thwarted by security forces. Many patients in the area were suffering from chronic, debilitating diseases such as diabetes, asthma and cardiac problems, and even basic medicines such as paracetamol, antibiotics and anti-malarial drugs were in short supply, the group said in a statement.

"On two occasions within the last week, MSF has been prevented by security forces from transporting drugs and medical supplies through the forward defence lines to Mallavi hospital in the Mullaithivu district," the group said.

A large part of Wannai region, where the Mullaithivu and Kilinochchi districts are situated, is under LTTE control. Medical supplies cannot be sent there without defence ministry permission.

"We are facing a situation where clinics and hospitals have closed or are no longer accepting patients because they cannot provide treatment for these civilians, many of whom are women and children," Isabel Simpson, head of the Sri Lankan mission of MSF (Netherlands) said in the statement. It said three months of supplies from the ministry of health were also awaiting approval for transport into the northern region. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

18 APR 2000



# LTTE claims major gains in raging battle; 56 killed

COLOMBO: The LTTE combat formations on Thursday claimed to have overran several Sri Lankan military camps and captured a quarter of the strategic northern highway after two-days of fierce fighting that left 21 Sri Lankan soldiers and 35 Tamil guerrillas dead and 213 army personnel injured.

"A formidable force of the LTTE consisting of several commando units, with the backing of heavy artillery, launched a massive offensive assault," the rebels said in a statement from London on Wednesday.

The LTTE said its guerrillas had scored a major military victory in the two-day offensive by overrunning several camps and military bases. Its forces also surrounded the military complex at Yakachichi, where an army division was located.

Yakachichi is situated in proximity to the Elephant Pass causeway which connects Jaffna peninsula to the mainland.

"Sri Lankan troops fled in total

disarray, leaving behind scores of dead soldiers and huge quantities of modern weapons," the statement said, adding that the militants had taken control of the six-km highway used by the army to transport supplies to its troops.

Meanwhile, an army release stated that heavy fighting continued in the Massar and Soranpattu areas near the Elephant Pass causeway, adding that troops had adjusted their defences in some places while the air force engaged the LTTE targets in the Maruthakerni area. Both sides reportedly exchanged heavy artillery.

While the army lost an officer and 20 soldiers, 213 others, including 13 officers, were injured in the fighting. Thirty-five guerrillas were also killed in the battle. (PTI)

## Arrack cellar unearthed near Chandrika's house

COLOMBO: The police have unearthed an illicit arrack distillery in a huge underground bunker barely 200 metres from the highly-guarded official residence of President Chandrika Kumaratunga in central Colombo.

"The police on Wednesday discovered the bunker being used by bootleggers to brew illicit arrack called 'kassippu' in the slums adjacent to the president's residence, which has been made an impregnable fortress by her presidential security division," *Observer* reported in its lead story on Thursday.

It said the bunker functioned despite the presence of a well-equipped police station in the vicinity and the policemen took over four hours to actually locate the bunker from where 10,000 bottles of illicit arrack was discovered.

The most surprising aspect was that pits had been built around 200 meters from 'Temple Trees' and had been functioning for sometime now. It also reported that there was heavy resistance to the police raids by local people, who abused policemen for resorting to armed action while the newspaper photographer was prevented from taking pictures of the bunker. One person has been arrested in connection with the case.

The raid took place in the absence of Ms Kumaratunga who is currently abroad to undergo treatment for her right eye which was hurt in an LTTE suicide blast in December in Colombo. The discovery of a bunker of such large proportions has sent shockwaves among the security officials here who stepped up security checks in the area. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

61 APR 2000

10-13  
22/4

# Top Army general to lead Sri Lankan security forces

By V. S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO, APRIL 21.** With intensified fighting in Sri Lanka's northern Jaffna Peninsula and a vital military complex coming under threat from separatist LTTE rebels, a top army general was today appointed to take command over the island's security forces.

The former Sri Lankan Army Commander, Gen. (retd) Rohan Daluwatte, was placed in charge of the island's three armed forces as well as the Police.

Shortly before Gen. Daluwatte's appointment, the island's Deputy Chief of Staff, Maj. Gen. Janaka Perera, was put in charge of the security forces in Jaffna, where Government troopers were fighting back a rebel offensive aimed at isolating the strategic Elephant Pass military complex, officials said.

The President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, who is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces as well as the Defence Min-

ister, is presently abroad for medical treatment for injuries sustained on her right eye after she escaped an LTTE suicide bomb attack on December 18.

The twin appointments of Gen. Daluwatte and Maj. Gen. Perera, come in the backdrop of the Tigers cutting of a Main Supply Route to Elephant Pass - the largest military complex in the Peninsula a few days ago.

In an operation today, the Government opened an alternate coastal route to maintain its supply lines to military installations in the Peninsula.

With today's army appointments, the overall command of the security forces comes under the former Army Commander who is already part of the national security apparatus by heading the Joint Operations Bureau, which reports to the President.

Troops deployed in the Peninsula come under Maj. Gen. Perera, one of the senior-most Generals who led the three-stage

offensive in 1995 to regain the Jaffna Peninsula from the LTTE and played a key role in crushing the JVP insurrections in the 1980 and 1990. In anti-Tiger operations, in the early 1990s he defended a camp where at least 186 rebels were killed in a Tiger offensive on Weli Oya camp in north-eastern Sri Lanka.

The latest offensive in northern Sri Lanka has been on since March 27, when the Tigers launched a major operation on military installations in the Peninsula, overrunning four army camps and wresting control over an highway linking Elephant Pass to government-held territory. The Tigers already control a stretch of the land just south of the Elephant Pass complex, thereby forcing a siege situation on the army positions at Elephant Pass and Iyakachchi. Sources say that the Elephant Pass military complex, which is reportedly manned by two divisions, has adequate stock of rations for a few months.

THE HINDU

22 APR 2000

# LTTE captures Elephant Pass, 1,000 Lankan troops killed

HT Correspondent  
Colombo, April 22

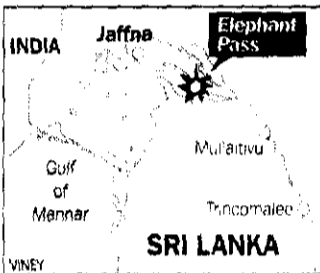
THE LTTE today announced that it had captured Elephant Pass, generally acknowledged as the gateway to the Jaffna peninsula. A statement from the Tamil rebel group in the evening said that over 1,000 Sri Lankan troops have been killed in a fierce battle which raged for 48 hours.

This is the first time that the LTTE has been able to take Elephant Pass. Analyst Dayan Jayatilaka wondered if the capture of Elephant Pass with such a large body of men and munitions will be as strategically significant as Vietnamese General Giap's capture of Dien Bien Phu from the French in 1954. "Yakachchi and Elephant Pass bases, forming the giant military complex of the Sri Lankan Army on the gateway to Jaffna, fell to the combat formations of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam this afternoon following 48 hours of fierce and bloody fighting. Over

1,000 Sri Lankan troops were killed and the rest fled in disarray," the LTTE statement said.

The Sri Lankan Defence Ministry said that it could not comment on the LTTE's claim immediately.

However, military analysts said that government troops had withdrawn from the Yakachchi-Elephant Pass bases and were moving along the road hugging the Jaffna lagoon towards Jaffna in the north. But a few thousand had been left behind and they were trapped.



The LTTE said that its special forces and commando units stormed the Yakachchi military base in the early hours of the morning in a multi-pronged assault and over ran the base after several hours of intense fighting. The Tiger com-

mandos destroyed several pieces of artillery, tanks and armoured vehicles and ammunition dumps. Overwhelmed by the LTTE assault, the defenders who resisted for two days, fled in total confusion.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 APR 2000

# Troops pull out from Elephant Pass

By V. S. Sambandan

*S. Lanka*  
*HO-13*  
**COLOMBO, APRIL 23.** An estimated 14,000 Government troops pulled out of Elephant Pass and Iyakachchi in the Jaffna peninsula, to fortify Jaffna town against a sustained attack by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

In a communique, the Defence Ministry said security forces "relocated their defences in the northern sector of Elephant Pass" and simultaneously "vacated the southern defences" of the vital Army complex to "make sure of the security of Jaffna." Severe fighting is reported from Soranpattu, Settikadu and Massar in the Peninsula.

The Tiger flag was reportedly raised at the Elephant Pass complex. Citing LTTE officials, the TamilNet said the flag was hoisted by a senior LTTE commander.

One hundred and twenty eight soldiers and 162 militants were reported killed and over

*24/4*  
600 soldiers injured in the battles, the Defence Ministry said. The latest acquisition of the vital bases effectively swings the situation in favour of the rebels.

Jaffna town, the epicentre of the decades-long conflict, has come into focus. With Elephant Pass now under the control of the Tigers the next step, observers feel, would be the takeover of Jaffna town and the Peninsula.

"A likely scenario is that the Tigers could move further in the Peninsula, confining the Army to the barracks," an analyst said, pointing out that the "low morale of soldiers" would work in their favour. "They would demarcate new defence lines and continue with their thrust towards Jaffna."

Political analysts are of the opinion that with the fall of Elephant Pass, the time has come for looking beyond military developments.

Mr. Kethish Loganathan of the Centre for

Policy Alternatives says the present setting "is the most convenient for both the Government and the LTTE to agree upon cessation of hostilities as a prelude to a more permanent ceasefire, paving the way for negotiations."

Sinhala hardliners, who have been calling for stepping up the offensive against the Tigers have not yet reacted to the latest and most serious reversal of the Army.

AFP reports:

The United National Party (UNP), Sri Lanka's main opposition party, called today for an emergency session of Parliament to discuss the massive rebel onslaught that forced thousands of troops to retreat amid heavy casualties.

"The situation is so grave that we must have an emergency meeting of Parliament to discuss the tragedy at Elephant Pass," UNP spokesman, Mr. W. J. M. Lokubandara said.

THE HINDU

24 APR 2002

# Kumaratunga urged to seek SAARC help against LTTE

*India can mediate, says Lanka's former envoy*

COLOMBO: A demand has been made that the Sri Lankan government should appeal to SAARC countries to assist in the battle to safeguard the country's territorial integrity.

The 'Puravasi Peramauna', a party formed by a former United National Party minister Sirisena Cooray, said in a statement that with the withdrawal of the troops from Elephant Pass, the country has entered one of the most critical turning point in its history.

"Either we can take the undoubted setback we suffered at the Elephant Pass as a stern warning and change our course. Or we can continue in our usual way in which case our beloved country may not remain undivided for much longer", the statement said.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga as the current chairperson of SAARC should immediately appeal to other member countries to assist promptly and in every possible way, our battle to safeguard our territorial integrity. We should point out that if secessionism succeeds in one country it will pose a threat to all other countries in the region", the party suggested.

In a sequel to such calls, a former diplomat has queried whether India could help its neighbour to pre-

vent the division of the country. Dr K Godage, Sri Lanka's former European Union ambassador and deputy high commissioner in India suggests India could, for instance, demand that the LTTE enter into negotiations with the government of Sri Lanka with the only precondition that no separate state be demanded.

Recognising its status in the region and the perilous situation Sri Lanka is facing after the LTTE captured the Elephant Pass, the gate way to Jaffna, the diplomat says "India could even issue an ultimatum to the LTTE". Dr Godage quoted external affairs minister Jaswant Singh's reaffirmation that India is committed to the territorial integrity and unity of Sri Lanka. "The significance of the statement could be enormous as it comes at a time when territorial integrity of the country is in serious jeopardy."

The diplomat also points out that India did not at any time support the establishment of a separate state in Sri Lanka as it was and is not in her interest to do. It is an accepted fact in India that a separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka would create aspirations in the present linguistic states of India, that would be hard for the Indian army to control. (Agencies)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 APR 2000

# Security beefed up after hijack threat

By V.S.Sambandan

COLOMBO, APRIL 27. Gearing up to the possibility of LTTE attacks on the air passengers, civil aviation authorities in Colombo have further strengthened security at the international airport.

An already tight security apparatus, which was further strengthened a couple of months ago by barring visitors into the departure lounge, has come in for an overall review. "We have beefed up all security aspects," a senior airlines official said on conditions of anonymity.

"Even after the Kathmandu incident, we have stepped up security and have undertaken an overview of security measures. The security measures are all beefed up and we are vigilant. We have taken one or two more steps."

Though "security in Colombo is generally tight", airlines authorities have explored all possibilities and have taken "additional steps" as part of beefing up security, the sources said. Aviation security experts have also discussed possible scenarios with airline officials, an official said.

No chances are being taken and recently an Air Lanka flight from London to Colombo was delayed for nearly four hours at Heathrow airport following a hoax.

Even before the latest security overhaul, security at the Bandaranaike International Airport remained tight, with thorough checks being carried out on all those entering the premises.

A van-bomb in June 1995, in which no person was killed and a parcel bomb explosion on board an Air Lanka Tri Star aircraft headed for Maldives, in which 11 persons were killed are the two earlier explosions at Sri Lanka's only international airport.

## Sri Lanka President holds security review

The Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, today held an overall review of the security situation in the immediate aftermath of the Elephant Pass military reversal.

Ms. Kumaratunga, who cut-short her overseas visit for medical treatment in London and returned to the island today, summoned the Chiefs of the Armed forces and held an emergency meeting of the National Security Council, a senior presidential aide told *The Hindu*.

Those present at the meeting included heads of the Army, Air Force and the Navy as well as the Deputy Defence Minister, Gen. Anurudha Ratwatte and the Defence Secretary, Mr. Chandrananda D'Silva.

The President, is undergoing medical treatment for injuries sustained in her right eye when she survived a suicide bomb attack in Colombo on December 18.

The President had left for London a fortnight ago to undergo medical treatment and was originally scheduled to return only next week.

In intensified fighting during the last weekend, the LTTE gained control over the stron-

gest military garrison, Elephant Pass, following pitched battles.

## 34 killed in clash

PTI reports:

In renewed fighting in northern Jaffna, at least 34 people, including nine soldiers, were killed as the Government's forces engaged rebel targets. The operational headquarters of the Defence Ministry said that in the general area of Vallimunai, troops attacked a bunker line occupied by terrorists, killing at least 15 ultras.

In the encounter, seven soldiers died and twelve were injured. In an encounter at Nagar Kovil, troops killed at least seven militants while loosing two. Three more rebels were killed in another encounter.

## India alerted Chandrika on Dec. 18 LTTE bid

It has now been officially revealed here that the Government of India had given a fairly early and accurate alert to Colombo about a possible attempt on the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, by the LTTE on December 18 last. Official sources here told PTI that in the thick of the campaigning for the presidential polls, India had informed Chandrika's Government about a likely LTTE suicide attack on her on December 12, 14 and 18. The assassin, believed to be a woman suicide bomber, finally struck during the midnight of December 18, when Ms. Kumaratunga was leaving her last poll rally in central Colombo.

THE HINDU

28 APR 2000

# LTTE aim is only to force Govt for talks, say Tamils

Colombo April 27  
P K Balachandran

*HT-11 S Lanka 28/4*

SRI LANKA'S minority Tamils believe that by flexing its military muscles, the LTTE is only trying to make the government realise the futility of the military option and come to the table for a peaceful settlement of the Tamil question.

"The Tamils feel that the LTTE has to display its military prowess to get anything substantive from the government on the ethnic question." TULF MP Mavai Senadhirajah told *The Hindustan Times*.

Unlike the majority Sinhalas, who are mourning the loss of Elephant Pass, the gateway to the prized Jaffna peninsula, the Tamils are not unhappy. If they are worried at all, it is about the effect of the fighting on the Tamil civilians in Thenmarachechi now, and Jaffna in the days to come. They would, of course, not show elation openly, as

that would be imprudent, but privately they do not hide the feeling that the Tigers' display of military might will help them in terms of getting the government to abandon the military option and come to the negotiating table.

The Tamils have consistently felt that if the LTTE were militarily crushed or marginalised, the Tamils as

## Chandrika back after eye treatment

AMID REPORTS of heavy fighting in northern Jaffna peninsula, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga returned Colombo on Thursday after undergoing a 16-day eye treatment at an undisclosed foreign destination. State radio said Chandrika has returned to the capital but gave no details. Media reports said that she went to London few weeks ago to undergo further medical tests for her right eye damaged in a suicide attack on December 18.

PTI, Colombo

a people would be left with no lever and as a result of that, there would be no gains either. They fear that the majority Sinhalas would merrily brush their problems and demands under the carpet, perhaps for ever.

However, the Tamils' public posture

is that, given the ground situation in the past few years, it would be prudent for the government to stop the fighting and talk to the LTTE. They point out that events have proved that the government cannot hope to militarily crush or marginalise the Tigers and force them to come to the negotiating table.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 APR 2000

# Talk peace or face war, Chandrika tells LTTE

PK Balachandran  
Colombo, April 29

AS THE LTTE bandwagon rolls down to its former citadel Jaffna, the Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga on Friday offered to hold talks with the rebels. But she also said the government and the armed forces would continue to pursue the military option to bring peace to the war-ravaged island nation.

In a televised address to the country, Mrs Kumaratunga said: "We invite the LTTE to join the peace process by renouncing violence and mayhem by laying down arms and ammunition. If they are unwilling to lay their arms down, as a strong government committed to safeguarding human freedom and human life, we are not willing to compromise the safety of all the citizens of this country. I wish to state on this occasion that the government has unequivocally decided to protractedly and relentlessly pursue the military operations."

"We have continued with the war relentlessly with the objective of ushering in lasting peace to the entire nation. Therefore my government, the armed forces and I have firmly resolved to unleash all our maximum

## Ranil invited for talks on May 2

THE SRI Lankan President has invited opposition UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe for talks on May 2. The meeting is expected to be stormy as Mr Wickremesinghe had held the government responsible for the current warlike situation in the country and demanded that an emergency session of Parliament be convened. The UNP has also joined the bandwagon in asking for foreign assistance to save Jaffna from the LTTE. The government, on its part, is said to be working on some purchases of military hardware from overseas. **HTC, Colombo**

energies to combat this menace and usher in peace," a combative President said.

Mrs Kumaratunga, who dubbed the LTTE a "curse" and "bane" of the entire country, recalled that she had invited the rebels for talks twice before. But the LTTE had rejected the offer outright.

While being hard on the LTTE, the President said the military operation was not against the Tamil people and other minorities in the country. "It is against the threat to the entire nation posed by LTTE terrorism" that we are pursuing the military option, she said.

Mrs Kumaratunga described the evacuation of forces from Elephant Pass as a "setback" and blamed a section of the armed forces and the opposition UNP for it. Some sections in the armed forces had placed their personal interests over the country's interest, the President alleged.

She blamed previous UNP governments for "weakening" the military by "fortifying" the LTTE. The previous Government had provided the LTTE with cement to build bunkers, allowed the occupation of the Jaffna fort and gave the Tigers the "option" of slaughtering 600 policemen, Mrs Kumaratunga alleged.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 APR 2000



# Bloodbath in the emerald isle

SMOKING GUNS seem set to scorch slender olive branches in Sri Lanka. The April 22 fall of Elephant Pass, the garrison which guards the northern Jaffna Peninsula, signifies a drastic shift in the military balance in favour of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the decades of fighting against Sri Lankan security forces.

It also raises serious questions about the direction the proposed peace talks between the rebels and the Government will take. The guns and roses strategy of the Sri Lankan Government which followed the war for peace approach to conflict-resolution has come under its most serious challenge.

Cutting off the well-fortified military complex which sits imposingly on a narrow causeway linking the northern Jaffna Peninsula to the mainland, the LTTE forced a pullout by Government troopers from the base -- for the first time in 17 years of the conflict.

From the hit-and-run guerrilla tactics of the Eighties and the early 90s, the Tigers moved on to the use of suicide-cadres to bust defence lines and overrun military camps as in the Mullaitivu (1996) and Kilinochchi (1999) takeovers.

With the conflict gradually escalating during the last few years, the warfare of the Tigers is now based on long-range artillery fire. Especially since late last year's Vanni debacle, that the Government bases are manned heavily has, ironically, turned the tide in the favour of the Tigers as pull-outs are ordered to "minimise casualties". If an army position is manned by say 10 soldiers, those of the Tigers are said to be manned by just three or four militants. Consequently, if the Tigers and the Army were to score a successful hit on each other's positions, more Government troopers would be killed.

In November 1999, for instance, when the Vanni offensive commenced, the LTTE moved from the eastern sector of the four Tamil majority districts and, cutting away supply lines, brought Government defence positions within LTTE artillery range. "We pulled out the soldiers to minimise casualties," an army officer had reasoned. Consequently, the Tigers gained considerable territory which took them to Paranthan, just south of the Elephant Pass garrison, in the second phase of their operations.

The fall of Elephant Pass was always on the cards. Military officers were "prepared for the worst", though there was some scope for optimism that the most-fortified Government position in the entire island would hold through a rebel onslaught.

*30/4 2004 8 Lanka*  
**The fall of Elephant Pass signifies a drastic shift in the military balance in favour of the LTTE...**

**The guns and roses strategy of the Sri Lankan Government has come under its most serious challenge.**  
**V. S. SAMBANDAN takes a look at the evolving scenario.**

But, in a changed tactic, the Tigers gained control over Elephant Pass without launching a direct attack on it but by cutting supply lines to the camp from Government-held

territory. Isolated from the mainland, the sprawling Elephant Pass complex depended on an eastern sea route and a northern land route for supplies.

Since December 11, the Tigers have been gaining vital positions in Jaffna's southeastern theatre. Rather than taking Elephant Pass head on, the LTTE entered the Jaffna Peninsula through a side-gate -- an eastern coastal stretch which would, ultimately, take the Tigers to a position from which they could choke Sri Lanka's strongest military base.

Gains made by the LTTE in the southeastern Jaffna theatre -- especially between Chempianpattu and Vettalaikerni -- were serious indications of the hurricane which was to hit the peninsula.

Hovering about on the south-eastern theatre and consolidating the arm which links the Peninsula to

eastern Mullaitivu district in a string of operations since March 27, the direction in which the Tigers would move was anyone's guess. A direct move into Jaffna, leaving behind Elephant Pass, or a direct thrust on Elephant Pass were among the possibilities. The Tigers did neither, but cut across a narrow lagoon and took control of a patch of the road between Elephant Pass and Government-held Jaffna territories. Uncertainty prevailed over the Tigers' next moves: to the north was Jaffna and to the south, Elephant Pass.

The siege of Elephant Pass had well and truly begun. Following the Vanni debacle last year, Sri Lankan security forces had relocated the well-trained 53 Division to the Elephant Pass garrison. Comprising four brigades, this division, which is the main fighting force of the army, was supported by the 54 Division as well as a brigade of the 55 Division.

While a direct attack by the Tigers on Elephant Pass was the most considered scenario, the LTTE clearly had different ideas. Deploying their conventional strength to the north of the garrison, the Tigers lay in wait. Gaining control over Vettalaikerni -- a key naval supply route for the Army -- the Tigers were choking off supply lines to the Elephant Pass complex. Any direct attack on the Elephant Pass by the Tigers could have been repulsed effectively given the terrain and manpower situation.

While intense fighting took place around Elephant Pass, the Tigers did not attempt an incursion into the Government stronghold. Rather, they trained the focus on Jyakachchi, the northern segment of the Elephant Pass complex, which was also a vital logistics base. The Tigers lay in wait north of Elephant Pass giving their prey the option to either vacate or face a massacre.

Fighting along the road linking the military complex to Government territory further north had severed the army's main supply route. An alternate supply route was opened, but that too was considered more temporary and seen as a passage through which troopers could pull-out.

Operation Oyatha Alaigal III as the Tigers had described their offensive on Jaffna launched on December 11, reached a highpoint on April 22, when the rebels claimed control over Elephant Pass. The Army Commander said he ordered a pull-out as prudent to save the fighters rather than face a siege. "Holding Jaffna Peninsula is our priority. We have to ensure that the LTTE is not able to get Jaffna now," the Sri Lankan Army Chief, Lt. Gen. Sival Werasooriya, said after the fall of Elephant Pass. "It is better to save our forces and use them later."

The LTTE claimed to have seized a haul of military hardware including five artillery guns -- three 152mm guns and two 122 mm guns. The Army boss, however, said that "only one gun was lost to the 'Tigers'" as the other guns were "disabled" by withdrawing troops. The Army has not ruled out retaking the Elephant Pass complex.

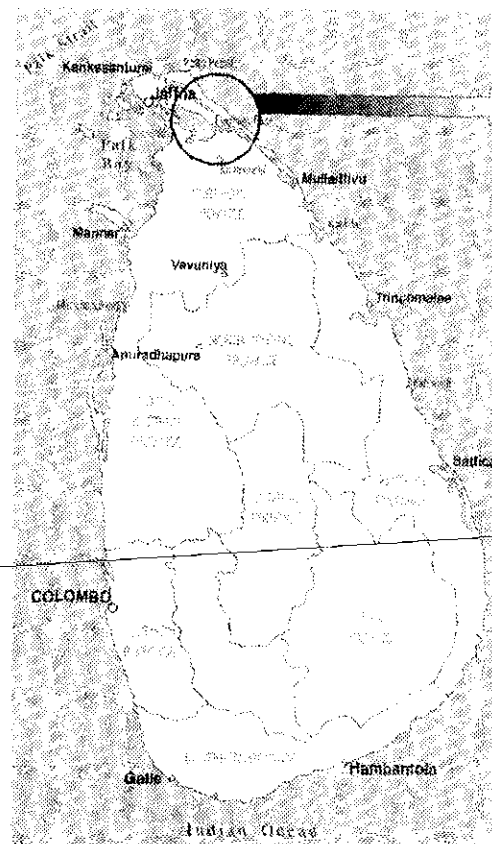
A cross-over point for civilians from the Sri Lankan mainland to northern Jaffna, Elephant Pass gets its name from its pre-colonial days when elephants were used to carry goods across the shallow waters, which have since been bridged by a narrow causeway. This bridge has passed into LTTE control, and changed the military balance. This also raises several imponderables about the fledging peace process which commenced with an international effort at brokering talks

between the Government and the LTTE in February.

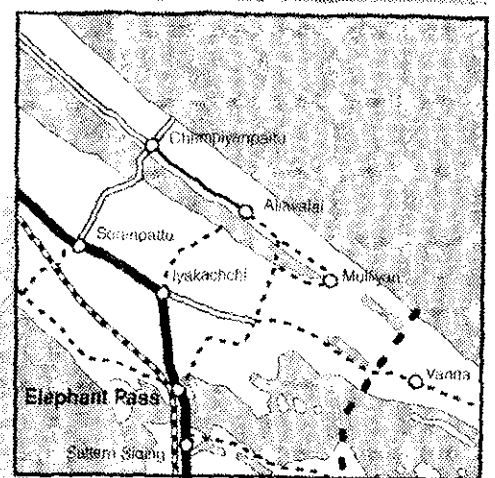
With the Norwegians accepting the challenge of initiating direct talks between the rebels and the Government, attempts are on within Sri Lanka to forge a bipartisan consensus between the sharply opposed political formations -- the ruling People's Alliance (PA) and the Opposition United National Party (UNP). The differences between the two parties have been the biggest hurdle to peace, and the polarised opinions expressed by the southern parties had, in substantial measure, contributed to the escalation of Tamil demands from greater provincial powers in the 1950s to a full-fledged secessionist aggression during the past two decades.

In this backdrop of a history of scuttled opportunities, the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, offered a set of comprehensive constitutional reforms to Parliament in October 1997. The draft proposals aimed at providing greater devolution of powers to the regions and attempted to move away from the unitary nature of the Constitution. Differences between the PA and the UNP on the nature of devolution, however, scuttled the effort and the reforms were, for all purposes, unimplementable as the Government

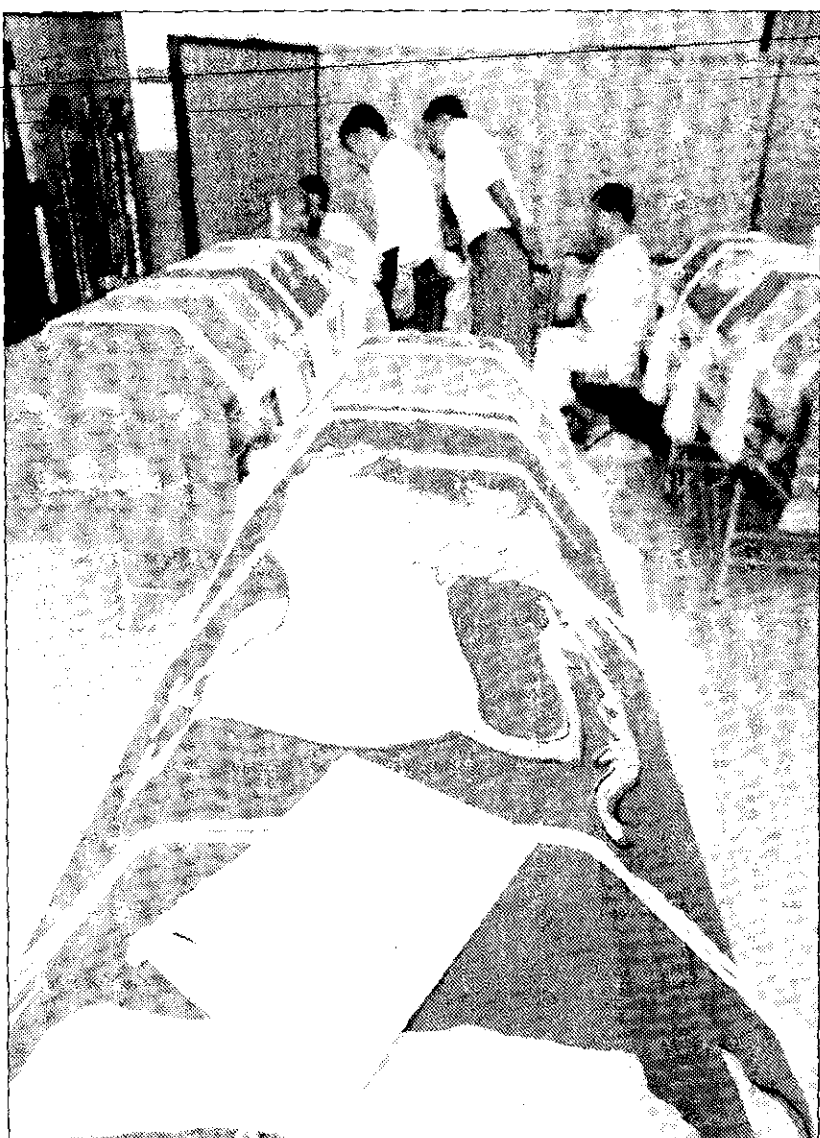
## ELEPHANT PASS: ITS HISTORY



Graphics by VARGHESE KALLADA



- From a minor detachment in 1958 to the most fortified military complex in Sri Lanka, the metamorphosis of Elephant Pass coincides with the island's history of militancy.
- In 1958, a detachment was stationed at Elephant Pass under the command of the Security Forces headquarters, Jaffna following disturbances after the Sinhala-only official languages Bill.
- The military camp grew in strength with the commencement of militancy by the 1980s.
- Elephant Pass came under the first major attack by the LTTE in 1991. The siege was warded off with Elephant Pass linking up to Vettalaikerni.
- With the fall of Vettalaikerni in December, 1999, and the thrust of the Tigers from Jyakachchi, a few km north of Elephant Pass, the camp fell to the LTTE on April 22.



The father of a dead Sri Lankan soldier, killed in the fighting at Elephant Pass, searches for his son's coffin... a vicious cycle of violence.

could not go ahead without the required support from the UNP for a two-thirds majority in Parliament. Bipartisan bickering continued for the past two years, while the LTTE maintained its pressure on the security forces. Commencing with the bombing of the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy -- considered to be the most sacred to Buddhists -- in January 1998, the Tigers stepped up their attacks on both civilian and Government targets. The assassinations of two Jaffna Mayors, Mrs. Sarojini Yogeswaran (May), who was elected in the Mayoral elections January, and Pon Sivapalan (September), effectively took the bottom out of the Government's attempts to restore a semblance of civilian authority in the Peninsula. In 1999, the assassination of the renowned Constitutional expert, Neelan Tiruchelvam, dealt a significant blow to the path of peace taken by the Government. The unresolved killing of a Tamil political leader and vocal supporter of the Tigers, Kumar Ponmambalam, in Colombo this January also comes as a matter of concern for Tamils. Then the two political formations started bilateral talks on narrowing differences. The thinking behind these talks, which are centering around broadbasing powers in the

regions, is to present the Tigers a set of proposals accepted by the two major Sinhala parties. This bipartisan acceptance is important in that all earlier offers by ruling parties of the day were scuttled by the then Oppositions. The next round of bipartisan talks is set to resume on May 5. The UNP leader, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, while confident of continuing talks with the ruling party, sees the latest LTTE gain as giving it considerable "clout" at the bargaining table -- if and when talks are held. Calls for cessation of hostilities, from those who have been pushing the line of talks, to those for a further escalation of the military efforts, from hardliners, mark the immediate aftermath of the Elephant Pass debacle. A larger question also arises -- would the Tigers be keen on talking at all and, if they do, what would their demands be. There has been no indication by the Tigers of a scaling down from the demand for a separate Eelam. Now, more than ever before, as the separatist conflict enters a defining moment with the Tigers knocking at the doors of Jaffna with military might, is the time for Sri Lanka to address in full measure, more politically than militarily, its decades-long battle for identities.

# SOS from Sri Lanka

**N**ORWEGIAN FOREIGN Minister Knut Vollebaek is the latest initiator of a possible peace process to resolve the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Norway's claim to play this role of mediator or facilitator is based on the success which it achieved while brokering a peace accord between the Palestinians and Israelis in 1993 and its similar successes in Latin America.

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga apparently agreed to a Norwegian role in resolving the military stalemate between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan forces. This has happened in the backdrop of discussions within the major Sinhalese political parties about proposals formulated to meet Tamil aspirations after the failure of the India-Sri Lanka accord of 1987. The LTTE has also conveyed some kind of an agreement to a Norwegian mediatory role. This is reflected in the fact that Mr Vollebaek had a preliminary but detailed discussion with Anton Balasingham, advisor to V. Prabhakaran and one of the senior ideologues of the LTTE, in London early in February. That the Tamil-Sinhalese conflict can be resolved only by political means is labelling a truism.

India remains deeply interested in the restoration of normalcy and in the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. Through India's own mediatory efforts and direct involvement in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka between 1983 and 1990 did not succeed, New Delhi remains convinced that a negotiated solution responsive to Tamil aspirations within the framework of a politically and territorially united Sri Lanka is essential. Mr Vollebaek went to Colombo and had discussions with Ms Kumaratunga and Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar in mid-February. It was announced subsequently that representatives of the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE may commence discussions at Oslo with the Norwegian foreign office functioning as a facilitator.

Any initiative aimed at resolving the ethnic antagonisms in Sri Lanka is a positive development. Leaving aside Indian efforts, there have been previous initiatives by other countries and multi-lateral entities to mediate between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, the Commonwealth Secretary General and the UN Secretary General were

involved in similar initiatives over the last two decades. These efforts did not succeed primarily because of the lack of trust between Tamils and the Sinhalese.

What then are the prospects of the Norwegian attempt? Norway has certain advantages compared to other countries which took similar initiatives. It is a distant country without any colonial linkages in South Asia or an identity as an influence-seeking power. Unlike India, Norway does not have any ethnic, religious or linguistic affiliations with either of the protagonists — the Sinhalese or the Tamils. So Norway's credibility as a mediator with both ethnic groups should be high.

The down side of Norwegian mediatory prospects is that Norway faces a more complex and fragmented situation in Sri Lanka. Compared to the eighties, political developments, constitutional discussions and patterns of conflict between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan army have contributed new characteristics to the crisis. The critical question is whether Norway will be able to persuade Tamils and Sri Lankans to move towards realistic compromises, outside the framework of Tamil demands and Sinhalese negotiating stances. Apart from the overall negotiating positions of Tamils and Sinhalese respectively, there are dissensions within the Sinhalese majority about to what extent they should respond to Tamil demands.

While former President Jayewardene partially implemented the proposals contained in the India-Sri Lanka agreement with reluctance, his successor Premadasa scuttled the proposals through indirect political means and by pretending to negotiate new compromises with the LTTE. Ms Kumaratunga inherited a more fractious situation compounded by higher levels of suspicions and incremental trends of violence. The ethno-linguistic and reli-

gious conflict acquired an additional dimension with Muslims claiming a separate identity and homeland, and a compartmentalised devolution of power. These were claims which affected the Tamil demand of a composite homeland consisting of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai. Muslim political parties have put forward territorial claims in these three provinces despite a majority of Muslims being Tamil speaking.

The rise of a separate Islamic identity in Sri Lankan politics and civil society is a new phenomenon which the government and any mediator will have to cope with. The task is difficult because the LTTE is not inclined to accept these claims. On the other hand, the Sinhalese are responsive to Muslim claims as it erodes the Tamil demand for an integrated homeland of the northern and eastern provinces. It is in this context that constitutional reforms suggested by the Kumaratunga Government contained proposals for the re-demarcation of the boundaries of the provinces and districts. The package for the devolution of power to the Tamil areas in these reform proposals — while expanding some provisions of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution — modify other provisions which were not acceptable to the Tamils. The main opposition party, did not agree to the constitutional package as originally suggested. Therefore, it was referred to a select committee of Parliament in 1997. The recommendations of the select committee have still not been accepted by the Sinhala political parties or those Tamil parties which are participating in the Parliament.

The LTTE and other Tamil parties have indicated that the constitutional reform proposals are not fully responsive to Tamil aspirations. Tamil leaders who were involved in fine-tuning reforms proposals have attracted retribution from the LTTE. The prospects of a workable solution depend on the



extent to which the Sinhalese majority is willing to meet fundamental Tamil demands about the northern and eastern provinces being merged and declared a Tamil homeland with a single provincial government. It depends on the implementation of extensive devolution of financial and administrative powers to the Tamil Provincial government. Another prerequisite is the removal of inequalities against Tamils in terms of language, religion, educational facilities and opportunities in government service in the civil, police and military fields.

One does not know as to what extent the LTTE will roll back its demands for a resettlement of Sinhalese settled in areas previously belonging to the Tamils in the Mahaweli valley. Reconciling the newly emerged competitive territorial claims between the Muslims and Tamils in the eastern province would be a difficult exercise. The port city of Trincomalee is subject to highly emotional claims by both Tamils and the Sinhalese.

These are the substantive political issues which Norway has to grapple with. Plus, there are new influences affecting the prospects of solutions. Twenty years of military operations have made the Sri Lankan armed forces — consisting mostly of Sinhalese — a more assertive factor in deliberations about possible compromises. The Buddhist clergy remains intensely assertive about Sinhalese claims. No Sinhalese party can ignore the views of the armed forces and the Buddhist clergy. Besides, Prabhakaran has not withdrawn his demand for an independent Tamil State — "Eelam".

Both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government consider Indian support for the Norwegian effort relevant. LTTE representatives have been in indirect touch with their contacts in Tamil Nadu on this matter. Sri Lanka's High Commissioner in New Delhi was present during Mr Vollebaek's discussions in Colombo. The Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary also visited New Delhi to take the Indian Government into confidence. This reflects political realism on the part of both the Tamils and Sinhalese. Given its experience over the last two decades, India should not get directly involved in this latest mediatory exercise. It should, however, do everything possible to strengthen the Norwegian effort and encourage Tamils and the Sri Lankan government to move away from rigid stances and towards practical compromises.

## Sinhala lobbies oppose interim council for Tamils

Colombo, March 1

WITH THE Sinhala hardliners opposing any move to set up an interim Provincial Council for the minority Tamils, hopes have receded of early talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the separatist Tamil guerrillas under Norwegian facilitation.

It now looks that there will be prolonged talks between the ruling People's Alliance (PA) and various political parties to arrive at a consensus before the rebel LTTE is invited for negotiations aimed at ending the island's long drawn out ethnic conflict. A section of the PA has joined the Sinhala hardliners in opposing the establishment of an interim Provincial Council for the Tamil-majority north and east,

as proposed by the main opposition UNP. The North-Eastern Provincial Council, set up under the July 1987 Indo-Sri Lankan accord, has been defunct since 1990 and the region has been administered by the provincial governor appointed by Colombo. Dinesh Gunawardane, leader of the Sinhala nationalist MEP, who had supported President Kumaratunga in the presidential election in December 1999, said the interim council idea was part of a plot to hand over the north and east to the LTTE.

"People of this country voted Mrs Kumaratunga and defeated the plans of (UNP leader Ranil) Wickremesinghe to prevent betrayal of the nation," said Gunawardane. (IANS)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 2 MAR 2000

# Chandrika Govt accused of hindering peace process 3/3

P K Balachandran HT-12  
Colombo, March 2

THE SRI Lankan National Peace Council (NPC) has expressed deep dismay over the government's refusal to respond to the LTTE's latest overture for peace which has come in the form of a request for talks on the release of government soldiers in its custody.

"The government's successive refusal to engage the LTTE on the issue of prisoner release is another example of withdrawal from the conflict resolution process," the NPC said in a statement today. In the past, the LTTE's initiatives had led to several soldiers and policemen being released, it pointed out.

The NPC charged that the government's attitude also reflected poorly on its concern for the fate of young men who had been called upon to make the supreme sacrifice for the sake of their country.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), there were 21 Sri Lankan

servicemen languishing in LTTE jails since 1993.

Unofficial figures, however, range from 400 to 800. In February, the LTTE earmarked 15 of the 29 for release and asked for a government representative to hold talks on the issue. But despite the lack of response from the government side, the LTTE released four of them on Monday. As for the rest 11, it said that they could be released only if the government cared to talk to it.

But the Sri Lankan Government has ruled out talks with the LTTE on this issue. "We have no plans to send a political representative. At least not yet," government military spokesman Brig. Palitha Fernando told The Hindustan Times.

Apparently, in the government view, the LTTE's overture is a well-laid trap to swing major concessions. Analysts say that the LTTE could ask for anything now, because the government is committed to talking to it with

Norwegian facilitation. In fact, the LTTE's chief negotiator, Dr. Anton Balasingham, has told Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek that the Sri Lankans should clear the decks for talks on a political settlement by withdrawing the army from the "Tamil Homeland", ordering a ceasefire and lifting the embargoes and restrictions on the movement of goods and people in the troubled north-east. But for the government, these are impossible conditions.

The LTTE's confidence is boosted by the fact that the opposition UNP has already told President Chandrika Kumaratunga, that she should abandon the constitution making exercise and instead de-escalate the war, restore normalcy in the north-east, and talk to the LTTE.

To add to this, the relatives of the soldiers held by the LTTE are now going to make a plea to Mrs. Kumaratunga to send a political representative to negotiate the release of the 11 still in custody.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 3 MAR 2 000

# Chandrika, UNP to meet on March 9

By V. S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, MARCH 3. Amidst continuing signals of political impasse, the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, has called the Opposition United National Party (UNP) for a discussion on the constitutional reform process next week.

The meeting, scheduled for March 9, was to have taken place on February 22, but the UNP had asked for another date citing 'inadequate time' and the need for an agenda as the reasons.

The proposed meeting is in the backdrop of revisions made by the ruling People's Alliance (PA) to the 1997 constitutional reform proposals. The revisions include, among others, provisions for transitional powers during the switch over period from the present constitution, which would see the continuation of the present form of Executive Presidency and titular Prime Ministership.

The UNP which has already opposed the transitional powers, has now taken the position that the revisions were procedurally wrong as the proposed consti-

tutional reforms were debated in the Parliamentary Select Committee. The party has taken the view that the Government's revisions were 'unilateral'.

The latest position by the UNP on Constitutional reforms puts at doubt further progress on the much-required southern consensus between Sri Lanka's two major parties — the PA and the UNP — which is seen as a necessary starting point for conflict resolution. The present efforts towards conflict resolution center around a Norwegian effort to initiate direct talks between the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan Government, for which a southern consensus is seen as vital.

There has also been a build-up of pressure for a southern political consensus from peace-associations, especially in the past two months, with organisations calling for a coming together of the two major parties. The latest such call came from the National Peace Council (NPC), which has urged the 'conflicting parties to respond positively to the positive initiatives of their opponents.'

"In any genuine effort at conflict reso-

lution, it is necessary for the conflicting parties to constantly seek to engage constructively with one another," the NPC said, expressing concern that the "exact reverse appears to be the case in Sri Lanka."

On the UNP's declining to meet the President on February 22, the NPC said "the public message" by the Opposition party's refusal to meet the President was "extremely negative" and that the party leader, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe should have "met the President and directly expressed his objections."

## Chandrika meets Perumal

As part of the on-going efforts to arrive at a common ground on constitutional reforms, Ms. Kumaratunga met the former Chief Minister of the North-East, Mr. A. Varatharajaperumal, yesterday and expressed her 'satisfaction and happiness' over the discussions she had with the Tamil parties on the reforms.

Ms. Kumaratunga told Mr. Perumal that she was confident of securing a two-thirds majority in Parliament, despite the continuing political stalemate between the PA and the UNP.

At the hour-long meeting, Mr. Perumal

also suggested proposals based on his experiences as the former Chief Minister of the North-East. The problems faced by Tamils due to travel restrictions and the need for an accelerated reconstruction and reconciliation programme were among the issues discussed.

## Wickremesinghe accepts offer

PII reports:

The UNP today agreed to hold talks with the Kumaratunga Government on the controversial constitutional proposals on March 9. After staying away from a previous meeting with Ms. Kumaratunga, the Opposition leader, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe responded positively to the president's second offer, UNP sources here said.

# Analysts rule out LTTE contesting Lankan polls

P K Balachandran  
Colombo, March 4

THE WEEKEND Express, owned by a Tamil entrepreneur, said in a front page lead story today that the LTTE was planning to revive its dormant political party, the Peoples' Front of the Liberation Tigers (PFLT), and fight the Sri Lankan parliamentary elections due in August.

The report said that Pottu Amman, the LTTE's intelligence wing leader had contacted some Tamil personalities in the eastern district of Batticaloa in a search for candidates and organisers.

But reliable sources in Batticaloa told *The Hindustan Times* that though a rumour to this effect had been circulating there for about two or three weeks, few believed that the LTTE would contest elections before the ethnic question was settled to its satisfaction, a prospect widely believed to be impossible, at least before August. Those who believe in the willing-

ness of the LTTE to contest elections recall that it allowed EROS to be its proxy in the 1989 polls. But others point out that the LTTE asked the EROS MPs to resign after a few months. And the MPs meekly did. The LTTE had sensed the dangers of being in Parliament, in the democratic process, in a political halfway house, and acted swiftly, disregarding the impact this had on those who believed that it could be made to participate in democratic politics.

"The LTTE cannot afford to be seen as being part of the Sri Lankan system. Participation in the Sri Lankan Parliament, either directly or by proxy, means that the LTTE gives credence to Sri Lanka's being one country," said the leader of a former Tamil militant group. A source in Batticaloa pointed out that LTTE feared that its MPs would necessarily develop ties with the Government to get their constituency work done and this could clash with its extremist agenda. The LTTE's MPs would

also be sitting ducks for militant groups opposed to the LTTE, said a member of a non-LTTE militant group. "These MPs cannot be hiding in the hideouts of the Wann, unlike their leaders. Just as the LTTE takes shots at us, we could also take shots at them when they are out in the open," he said.

But what is not ruled out is LTTE's posturing to make it acceptable in the world, especially now, with the Norwegians trying to broker talks. Triggering a rumour of electoral participation could help send the right vibrations to the West, where the fate of lakhs of Tamil refugees is at stake. It is also suspected that some politicians who want to fight and win the next elections in Batticaloa district are floating the rumour in the hope that the LTTE would indirectly endorse them. These politicians base their calculation on the expectation that the Norwegian initiative would work out and that the LTTE will agree to fight the elections even if only indirectly.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 5 MAR 2000

# India's mediation will be more fair than that of Norway?

**P.K. Balachandran**  
Colombo, March 5

IF SRI Lanka has to get a third party to help end the ethnic conflict, that country must be India and not Norway," said Dr. Piyasena Dissanayake, Secretary of the National Joint Council of Sinhala Organisations (NJC).

"Sri Lankans have no fear of India. We believe that India will not divide this country," Dr. Dissanayake told *The Hindustan Times* here today.

Mr. Dayan Jayatilaka, Secretary of the Premadasa Centre, went a step further and said that India must play a role vis-a-vis the LTTE if only to defend its sovereignty.

"Cross border terrorism represented by the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by the LTTE is a

direct and brazen assault on the sovereignty of India, India and Sri Lanka should have a joint approach to the LTTE. The two countries could work jointly against the LTTE internationally," Mr. Jayatilaka said.

The movement against the involvement of the Norwegians in solving the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is gathering momentum among the majority Sinhalese in the island.

Two top Buddhist prelates, the Mahanayakas of the Malwatta and Asgiriya chapters, are to back a petition against Norwegian facilitation which will be submitted to President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

Dr. Dissanayake said that the Mahanayake of Malwatta had already

signed the petition. It is due to be presented to the Mahanayake of Asgiriya in Kandy on Monday, he added.

Dr. Dissanayake said that Norway was not only "very, very partial" towards the LTTE, it would also throw the doors open to greater international involvement in Sri

tiating itself with Sri Lanka by sponsoring peace projects both in the government and non-government sectors.

According to Dr. Piyasena Dissanayake, Norway gave US\$ 120 million to the government's "Ranga Jawalama" roadshow to popularise the devolution package and peace.

According to Mr. Dayan Jayatilaka, Secretary of the Premadasa Centre, Norway had given the Constitutional and Ethnic Affairs Ministry, SLRs 140 million to set up the National Integration Policy Unit (NIPU).

An influential peace research institution in Colombo was given SLRs 10 million to buy land for expansion.

Dr. Dissanayake said that Norway's "facilitation" would definitely lead to

"mediation" as in the case of the PLO-Israeli peace talks in Oslo. He feared that a western peace keeping force might be foisted on Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka might have to go the way of Indonesia in the case of East Timor.

In this connection a reference could be made to a *Sunday Times* report on Feb. 27, which said that the UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations and the US Pacific Command had recently conducted exercises in Nepal to train South Asian armies in Multi-National Peace Keeping Operations in the region.

The joint exercises, meant to contain an ethnicity based internal war in mythical "Spubistan", had participants from the US, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and were watched by the US Pacific Navy Commander, Admiral Denis C. Blair.

## Solving Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict

Lanka's internal affairs. "Sri Lankans will find it very difficult to throw the foreign yoke off," he warned.

On Norway's partiality towards the LTTE he said that four villages had been set apart in Norway for LTTE sponsored Tamil refugees.

He charged that Norway had been ingrat-

## Role in Sri Lanka

DESPITE OCCASIONAL suggestions from Colombo urging India to play a mediatory role between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan Government, New Delhi has understandably shown little inclination to take up that onerous responsibility. Some of the moderate Sri Lankan Tamil groups have shown an interest in Indian intervention to ensure that Tamil interests can be peacefully secured and the ethnic conflict ended. Now, representatives of a couple of Sinhala organisations have also endorsed suggestions regarding an Indian role in bringing peace to the strife-torn island. Piyasena Dissanayake of the National Joint Council of the Sinhala Organisations has averred that India would be better placed in playing a mediatory role in the proposed peace talks than Norway which, he thought, would be "very, very partial" to the LTTE. Dayan Jayatilake of the Premadasa Peace Centre has gone even further in urging India and Sri Lanka to evolve a joint approach to deal with the Tamil Tigers.

It is worth noting that even as these groups seem to be seeking Indian participation in the peace process, there are marked differences in their expectations of what such involvement should actually mean. That by itself should be enough to warn New Delhi of the risks of disappointment to the concerned parties. Apart from the fact that India's earlier experience in this area has been far from happy, there are other equally important reasons that should rule out a mediatory role for it. Different ethnic entities in Sri Lanka have different expectations from what the mediator should be able to do or not do. There is lack of unanimity even on whether the third party should enter the scene as a mediator or just a facilitator.

Even before the peace talks have reached a preliminary stage, there have been strong hints of hardening of positions among the Sinhalese Buddhist clergy. In fact, the Maha Sangha has begun to voice its opposition to any further concessions to the Tamils. The absence of a national consensus on the extent of devolution makes it appear doubtful if the Sri Lankan Government can actually deliver on a peace deal even if one were available. Although it may be somewhat flattering for India that even a section of the Sinhala leaders is beginning to look towards New Delhi as a fair mediator, it should resist any temptation to get involved in the unfortunate civil strife.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 MAR 2000



# Chandrika, Ranil deal on new statute likely

P.K. Balachandran  
Colombo, March 7

THE SRI Lankan President, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga, and the United National Party (UNP) chief, Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe, seem to be going halfway to arrive at an understanding on a new Constitution for the country. Even in the midst of acrimonious rhetoric, some of their utterances give rise to the hope that they will reach an understanding when they meet here on March 9.

In a significant interview to the state owned TV network, Rupavahini, on Monday, Mrs Kumaratunga quashed the controversial notion that she wanted to be both Executive President and an Executive Prime Minister under a parliamentary system for her full six year term.

Mrs Kumaratunga has now clarified that she plans to combine the two offices only for a transitional period to prevent a situation in which the country may be without an Executive President or an Executive Prime Minister. This transitional period could be short, she indicated.

Lambasted by the UNP for trying to cling desperately to the Executive Presidency, Mrs Kumaratunga said that she "detested" the Executive Presidency and that as a committed democrat, she preferred to serve the people from Parliament, where there was a "greater human touch."

The President also came out clearly on another controversial issue which had raised hackles in the UNP, namely, Minister S.B. Dissanayake's outburst that Parliament or the courts would be closed if the new Constitution was

not passed, or was set aside by the courts. Mrs Kumaratunga trashed this threat by describing it as "a load of rubbish."

It is apparent that the government is keen on swinging an agreement with the UNP on the new Constitution. The state owned *Daily News* ran an edit on Monday praising the UNP for agreeing to meet the President on March 9, and carried interviews with eminent persons hailing the UNP's decision.

The UNP said that it will support the October 1997 package and that it is not in favour of the current Presidential exercise of redoing it through fresh discussions with other parties. However, reliable sources in the UNP say that the party may not be dogmatic about this, provided the transitional period for the Executive Presidency is a mutually acceptable short one.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 8 MAR 2000

BOOST TO PEACE EFFORTS / TIME-FRAME FOR TALKS

## Chandrika, Ranil agree on agenda

By V.S.Sambandan

COLOMBO, MARCH 9. The efforts to resolve the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka today gained momentum, with the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, agreeing on an agenda and a time-frame for talks. Ensuring a continuity in the proc-



Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga

ess, the two leaders also agreed to meet again next week to take the initiative further.

Today's talks are part of a political process to arrive at a bi-partisan consensus on the Government's constitutional reforms proposed in 1997 aimed at resolving the decade-long separatist conflict.

The parleys are crucial, given the need to evolve a southern consensus on the offer to be made to the

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as a means to end the conflict.

A joint communiqué on the talks between the ruling People's Alliance (PA) coalition and the Opposition United National Party (UNP), and chaired by Ms. Kumaratunga, said the parties "agreed upon the agenda and the dates for subsequent meetings for further discussions in March" and that both parties "expressed satisfaction" at the progress of the meeting during which "discussions commenced on several chapters of the Draft Constitution."

That the 1997 Constitutional reforms continued to remain at the core of the discussions became clear from the statements made by Ms. Kumaratunga and Mr. Wickremesinghe, with both the leaders referring to the importance of the proposals in conflict resolution.

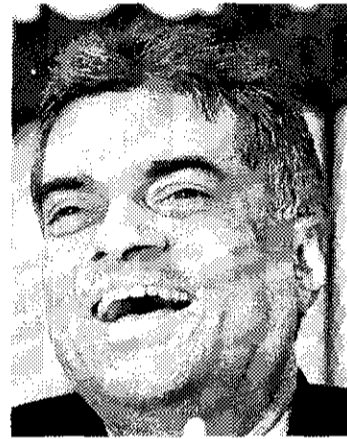
Skirting an issue of recent contention, the two leaders scaled down the public postures on the Government's proposed revisions to the 1997 reforms, providing for the continuation of the Executive Presidency. Ms. Kumaratunga, in her opening remarks said: "we have not amended the draft proposals of October 1997 in a serious way." And, Mr. Wickremesinghe, reiterated his position that the "cornerstone of any lasting solution" required a bipartisan approach.

A Government spokesperson described the talks, held for nearly two hours at the high-security "Temple Trees" official residence

of Ms. Kumaratunga, as "historic" and that the "process will continue."

Talking to journalists after the meeting, Mr. Wickremesinghe quipped "both parties survived the meeting and agreed to meet again."

Mr. Wickremesinghe also said that he was briefed on the current status of the Norwegian initiative,



Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe

which had accepted to initiate direct talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tigers.

Today's talks, held primarily to discuss the agenda and the modalities for further talks, are the first to be held between the two arch political rivals who were pitted against each other in December in a no-holds-barred race for the Presidency. Ms. Kumaratunga emerged successful, trouncing Mr. Wickremesinghe.

THE HINDU  
10 MAR 2000

# Chandrika, Ranil vow to continue dialogue

HT Correspondent  
Colombo, March 9

THE ESTRANGED Sri Lankan President Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe, broke the ice at a critical meeting here on Thursday and agreed to have a series of talks to find a solution to the vexed ethnic question.

"Both sides survived the meeting," a relieved Mr Wickremesinghe told the Press after the meeting. In fact, he looked smug and satisfied but refused to go into the details saying that a joint communique would be issued later in the evening.

To stress the seriousness of the business, there were religious services before the commencement of the meeting at Temple Trees, the Presidential palace. The Buddhists took 'pansil', Mr M. H. M. Ashraff recited a verse from the Koran, and Mr K. N. Choksy, a Parsi, said his prayers from the Zoroastrian scriptures.

As Mr Ronnie de Mel of the UNP delegation told The Hindustan Times earlier, both sides had realised that time was running out for Sri Lanka. "There

is international pressure to settle the conflict. The IMF has not given Sri Lanka a cent in the last five years and the Aid Consortium had not met last year. Sri Lanka badly needs US\$1.2 billion at the least for infrastructural development and meeting the budget deficit. There is going to be a crucial meeting of the consortium soon."

Pressed for details about today's meeting, Mr Wickremesinghe said that both the leaders made opening remarks in which they laid down their view of the situation and how to get about solving the problem. Both stressed the importance of the meeting and the need to try and reach a consensus on how to end the north east conflict. The President briefed the meeting about the progress of the "talks about talks" with the LTTE being conducted with Norwegian facilitation. The UNP stressed the need to abide by the 1997 Fox Agreement to have a bi-partisan approach to any talks with the LTTE. It also wanted any constitutional change to be done with the approval of all sections of the people of Sri Lanka. The UNP wanted the government's October 1997 constitutional proposals to be the basic document.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES  
10 MAR 2000

# Five ultras blow themselves up in Colombo

55-10  
12/3

ASSOCIATED PRESS, PRESS TRUST OF INDIA & REUTERS

COLOMBO, March 11. — With anti-terrorist commandos closing in, five suspected Tamil Tiger rebels hiding in an apartment killed themselves today after failing in an apparent bid to assassinate the country's deputy defence minister and armed forces chiefs.

The five had taken shelter in the building after the aborted strike, in which 21 people including a suicide bomber were killed and 64 wounded.

The men appeared to have used explosives to blow themselves up just as security forces were preparing an assault on their hide-out, officials said.

Security forces commandos fired teargas shells to smoke out the rebels. The fate of the several families staying in the flats was not yet known.

Police pressed in powerful search lights to locate and fish out the small band of rebels holed up in the apartment by cordoning off area. Sporadic shooting took place through out the night.

"The terrorists had come very well prepared," said Defence Ministry spokesman, Brigadier Palitha Fernando.

"They had assorted weapons, like machine guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers."

A trail of violence that started with a powerful explosion yesterday continued for 13 hours overnight and into the morning, killing a total of 27 people.

Police said in yesterday's explosion a suicide bomber had intended to target a motorcade of government ministers and other political leaders, but pre-

maturely triggered the device strapped to his chest.

The bomb blast triggered a gunbattle between the bombers' accomplices and police. Two more rebel bodies were found at the blast site early today.

The attack came at a time when the Sri Lankan government and main Opposition party are holding talks on a peace plan to present to the guerrillas, in an attempt to end the long-standing Tamil ethnic crisis.

Norway is playing the role of a facilitator in an attempt to bring the two warring sides to the negotiating table.

Large areas in the Rajagiriya suburb of the capital, near the blast site, had been sealed off and gunfire and some explosions could be heard from there.

Police said the search operation was still on today as they believed more guerrillas might be hiding.

Details were sketchy, but people had been advised to stay indoors and nobody was being allowed to get into that area.

Yesterday's attack occurred on a route to parliament where lawmakers were meeting for a monthly vote on extending the state of national emergency and to discuss the defence ministry budget.

The Deputy Defence Minister, General Anuruddha Ratwatte, a prime target of the LTTE, and several senior military and police officers were in parliament at the time of the explosion.

The government information department said in a statement late yesterday that a civilian

had informed a police checkpoint that there was a suspicious man armed with automatic weapons in a nearby shop.

Two policemen went to make checks and then there was an explosion followed by firing, the statement said, adding that special police commandos from a nearby camp had opened fire at the suspected LTTE guerrillas, killing three of them on the spot.

The statement said that police had recovered suicide bomb jackets, automatic weapons, grenades, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and ammunition from the blast site.

Senior military officers said they were investigating how a group of suspected rebels carrying such large quantity of arms and ammunition could move around the capital unnoticed.

Military helicopters with searchlights hovered over the area through the night to aid hundreds of security forces personnel combing the district for the fleeing rebels.

Analysts said the rebels seemed to be testing the government's resolve for peace.

There were no claims of responsibility for the explosion but previous bomb blasts have been blamed on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Eight vehicles were damaged in yesterday's shoot-out and explosions.

One T-56 rifle, two hand grenades, two disposable rocket-propelled grenades, one timing device and four T-56 magazine were recovered from the scene of the attack.

THE STATESMAN  
12 MAR 2000

# Chandrika plans electoral reforms prior to changing Constitution

P.K. Balachandran  
Colombo, March 12

THE SRI Lankan President, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga, will amend the present Constitution to change the electoral system before making the controversial move to replace the Constitution itself with a new one to give greater devolution to the provinces, a

leading weekly said here today. The Sunday Leader's political columnist "Suranimala" said that the idea was to put in place an electoral system which would help the ruling Peoples' Alliance (PA) get a two-thirds majority in the August parliamentary elections.

It has been Mrs Kumaratunga's complaint that the present proportional representation system does not allow any party to get a two-

thirds majority, a kind of majority necessary to change the Constitution. She has been wanting to change the Constitution ever since she came to power in 1994 to enable the devolution of power to the provinces and solve the vexed Tamil problem.

The Sunday Leader said that Mrs Kumaratunga plans to bring in the "first past the post" system, though only partially. 168

MPs would be elected as per the first past the post system; 77 on the basis of a bonus system operating in the 22 electoral districts, and 29 would come in through a national list based on proportional representation.

Mrs Kumaratunga hopes that her Peoples' Alliance would be able to get a good majority of the 'first past the post' seats and would also get a fair amount of the remaining seats, to

give an overall two-thirds majority. Of course, any amendment of this sort would have to have get two-thirds majority in the present Parliament. She hopes to get this through defections from the opposition UNP. She has already got five of the 16 MPs needs. She hopes to entice the rest by promising to give them district and national-level-bonus-seats after the polls, the "Leader" said.

# Chandrika keen to resume talks with LTTE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, March 13. — The Sri Lankan President, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga said she still prefers to talk to the LTTE to reach a negotiated settlement, but at the same time would continue the war with them if proposed talks under the Norwegian facilitation failed.

Speaking in a phone-in programme on the state television last week, she said the aim of her government was to reach a negotiated settlement with the LTTE to end the war. But at the same time "the government will have to continue

the war if negotiations with the LTTE do not end successfully," she said.

Extracts of the programme were carried today by the state-run newspaper, the "Daily News". Mrs Kumaratunga said peace was in the hearts of all the people in the country, irrespective of the ethnic origin. On her part she had tried to work out a ceasefire with the LTTE for the last two-and-half years, but gave up in the end as the rebel group was not willing to agree to it.

Mrs Kumaratunga also said she would go ahead with the

Constitutional reform process even if the main opposition, the United National Party, refuses to support it.

Responding to questions, she said 12 of the 16 registered political parties in Sri Lanka supported her Constitutional proposals. The UNP leader, Mr Ranil Wickramasinghe has already expressed his party's support to the draft

Constitutional proposals finalised by the government in 1997.

But both leaders have differed on the new transitory proposals enabling Mrs Kumaratunga to retain her presidential powers till the end of her six-year term.

## LTTE suspects arrested:

Sri Lankan police have arrested 12 more

LTTE suspects in connection with last Friday's bomb attack by a rebel suicide squad and shooting that left 29 dead.

Those detained, include two suspects, who attempted to provide a hideout to rebels in central Colombo, where five suicide bombers exploded themselves after waging a night long battle with security forces.

The entire weaponry along with suicide bombers were transported in a van, which made several rounds to that place. But the plan went haywire after a civilian tipped the police about the movement



Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga

THE STATESMAN

14 MAR 2000

110-12 ✓

## A GRIM SITUATION

S. Kumar  
15/3

IT IS UNFORTUNATE that at a time when the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, is striving to create a consensus with the major opposition United National Party (UNP) on building a durable peace process, the Norwegian Government should have fallen and unprecedented violence, with street-fighting, should have broken out in Colombo, with suicide bombers on the prowl. Whatever the provocation, nothing should derail the present efforts to evolve a bipartisan consensus between the two major Sinhala parties. The historic meeting between Ms. Kumaratunga and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, after such a bitter election campaign, must be welcomed. There are compulsions for both of them to be seen talking, though it is very difficult to envisage Mr. Wickremesinghe disregarding his own political compulsions and responding constructively to the devolution package or the political and electoral reforms on the President's agenda. Just as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are likely to adopt delaying tactics on the proposed resumption of direct talks with the Sri Lankan Government, it does seem that the UNP would tactically engage the President in negotiations merely to delay the parliamentary elections. But time is running out for Ms. Kumaratunga, who prefers early elections.

In these talks with the UNP leadership, the President is trying to hammer out a Sinhala consensus on the devolution package and the whole lot of constitutional reforms she has been advocating since 1994. The life of the present Parliament expires in August and Ms. Kumaratunga would like to push through the reforms and hold the next election under a new Constitution, if possible. Apparently, the UNP's only point of agreement now is to scrap the Executive Presidency and curtail the powers of Ms. Kumaratunga. But the President wants to provide for a period of transition from the present system to a Westminster-type parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Wickremesinghe would like to see the end of her regime by the end of the present six-year term. With a change of system, she can come back as Prime Minister. Similarly, she would like to amend the electoral system by combining the first-past-the-post election in a majority of constituencies, with a small percentage of seats through proportional representation. If the President seeks to undo the Jayewardene Constitution and enable the ruling party to secure a two-thirds majority in Parliament, the Opposition will try to stonewall this for now.

The President and the Leader of the Opposition should recognise that solving the ethnic problem is as important as pushing through other constitutional changes at this juncture. They need to take on the whole gamut of reforms in the polity, the electoral system and the sharing of powers with the provinces, with the minorities. The draft proposals on the reforms and the devolution package tabled by the Chandrika Government provide the best starting point for any negotiations with the UNP or the Tamil parties, including the LTTE. Now that the President has commenced a political dialogue with other parties, it is up to the people of Sri Lanka, especially the Tamils, to launch a campaign to strengthen democracy and restore peace in the island. It remains to be seen if the fall of the Norwegian Government will really affect its facilitation role. But the LTTE will not be unduly perturbed by the delay. Realising there can be no lasting peace without the LTTE, Ms. Kumaratunga wants to go ahead with the Oslo process. It is for the UNP and Mr. Wickremesinghe to demonstrate their seriousness. The explosions in Colombo by suicide bombers, and the street-fighting by suspected Tamil Tigers, obviously waiting to target the Deputy Defence Minister, Gen. Ratwatte, among others, carry a strong message — the LTTE does not give up its targets easily. This is the grim scenario in which the peace process must go on.

THE HINDU  
15 MAR 2000

# Chandrika vows to finalise new Constitution by August

P.K. Balachandran  
Colombo, March 15

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**D**ESPITE THE LTTE's continuing terrorist attacks and the opposition UNP's truculence, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga has vowed to continue the talks with them to put in place a consensual constitution for the country. But she has warned that if the discussions did not yield results within the next six months, she would unilaterally announce the new Constitution and put it before the people for approval.

Addressing the foreign press corps here on Tuesday, Mrs. Kumaratunga said that though she knew that the LTTE was wedded to violence, murder and terror and that it would make another attempt on her life, she saw a "softening" in its attitude to talks with Norwegian facilitation. It had accepted this after rejecting it for two years. "There is a ray of hope now", Mrs. Kumaratunga said.

She hoped to finish her talks with the UNP by mid-April and then she would send a draft "consensual" constitution to the LTTE for its inputs. But she would insist that the LTTE come back with its comments within a definite time-frame, so that the entire process of consultations could end within six months.

This means that the new constitution would be ready

by August, in time for parliamentary elections. She quashed rumours about plans to advance or postpone these polls.

But government had a contingency plan if the UNP and the LTTE did not come on board and cooperate, Mrs. Kumaratunga warned. "We will implement the package whether the UNP and LTTE join us or not", she said.

On the controversial issue of the merger of the North and East to form a single Tamil province, she said that the constituent units of the ruling Peoples' Alliance had already reached agreement and she hoped that the UNP would agree too.

About the LTTE future, she said despite its belief in the efficacy in murder and mayhem, in the long run it would be forced to agree to a negotiated settlement "for practical reasons".

It was time that the LTTE realised that violence would not solve the Tamil problem, because the Tamil people might opt for peace.

As a reconciliatory approach towards the LTTE, the government has not put any preconditions for the talks. But government would never agree to the pullout of troops from the North East during the talks. "There would be de-escalation as the talks progress and on its successful conclusion there would of course be withdrawal of troops", Mrs. Kumaratunga said.



Chandrika Kumaratunga

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

16 MAR 2000



# Devolution 'no panacea' for Lanka's problems

HT Correspondent

Colombo, March 17

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EVEN AS the Tamils clamour for devolution of power to the Tamil majority North and East and the Chandrika Kumaratunga Government thinks that all Sri Lankan provinces, and not just the North-East, are entitled to devolution, Sri Lankan scholar Dr Tisarane Gunasekera has used data from home and abroad to show that devolution is not a panacea for iniquitous development. It could even trigger iniquitous development, she has warned.

In a monograph published by the Kandy chapter of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Dr Gunasekera points out that Sri Lanka with a unitary structure has done better in terms of regionally balanced development as compared to many countries with a federal structure.

According to the Report on Human Development in South Asia, 75 per cent of the out of school children in federal India live in the six backward States of Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, UP and West Bengal.

Out of 1,000 polytechnics, 70 per cent are in just four States.

Kerala's Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.597, which is equal to China's, but Madhya Pradesh's HDI at 0.341 is equal to Rwanda's.

Explaining this, the UNDP says that local elite often seize power that is devolved to the lower levels, to the detriment of the poor. Dr Gunasekera mentions the increase in the hegemony of the Chiapas in Mexico.

In Sri Lanka, doctors in provincial hospitals have struck against the hegemony of local administrations and demanded that they be made part of a national structure.

Decentralisation in Mexico and Venezuela has led to increase in costs due to needless multiplication of administrative structures. Blockages have increased. Too many layers of administration may lead to loss of clarity in thought and action.

Decentralisation might lead to greater grassroots participation, but lack of funds, awareness and expertise could lead to fall in standards, the UNDP warns.

Lack of funds at the provincial level due to a small tax base, could lead to failure to meet the aspirations of the local people, which in turn could trigger fissiparous tendencies.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 8 MAR 2000

## Lanka should seek international aid to crush LTTE

P. K. Balachandran  
Colombo, March 23

**A**N MP belonging to the Opposition United National Party (UNP) has urged the Sri Lankan Parliament to pass a resolution seeking international military assistance, short of troop deployment, to combat the separatist LTTE.

Mr Sarath Kongahage, MP, told Parliament on Wednesday that the People's Alliance (PA) and the UNP, which were in dialogue on a new constitution to solve the ethnic question, should take a pledge not to discontinue or interrupt the struggle against terrorism until final victory, which could be either the elimination of the LTTE or its verifiable surrender, was achieved.

While organisations like National Movement Against Terrorism, the Premadasa Centre and the Buddhist Mahanayakas will welcome Mr Kongahage's suggestion, the leaderships of both the PA and the UNP are unlikely to respond favourably as both are now committed to peace and talks with the LTTE with Norwegian facilitation.

Sure enough, even as Mr

Kongahage was making his plea in Parliament, a non-governmental organisation, said to be close to the Government, issued a statement calling for a peace task force comprising the leaders of civil society to strengthen the current move to find a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflict through talks with the LTTE.

Prof Tissa Vitharana, convenor of the National Alliance of Peaces, said that the task force would act immediately to fully make use of the emerging opportunities for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Prof Tissa Vitharana supported the on-going dialogue between the People's Alliance and UNP on the

constitutional and ethnic issue and urged a discussion with the LTTE after the two parties had reached a consensus.

Mr Kongahage wanted the Sri Lankan Parliament to ask the people to enroll in the armed forces. It should categorically state that the LTTE, led by Velupillai Prabhakaran, described by the *Milennium* magazine of *The*

continued presence of a group like the LTTE would only encourage similar behaviour by separatist and terrorist elements throughout the region and the world.

But the Government, being committed to the peace process, is keen on quashing any opposition to the latter.

Last Friday, it sent Minister for Constitutional Affairs Prof G. L. Peiris post-haste to meet the Buddhist Mahanayakas of Mahawatte and Asgiriya in Karady and assure them that it would do nothing to damage the interests of the Sinhala-Buddhist majority. Four Mahanayakas had signed a letter to the Sri Lankan President asking her to stop the talks with the LTTE through Norwegian facilitation and crush the LTTE instead.

But the Government is unlikely to yield to the Mahanayakas' demand for war. An indication of this was found in an edit in the State-owned *Daily News*, a few days ago, which castigated the Mahanayakas for seeking a military solution overlooking the horrendous consequences of such a solution for the Tamils of the North and East.

### Lankan Parliamentarian's appeal

The PA and UNP, which were in dialogue on a new constitution to solve the ethnic question, should take a pledge not to discontinue or interrupt the struggle against terrorism until either the elimination of the LTTE or its verifiable surrender, the PA member said.

*Times*, London, as an individual "singly responsible for the largest number of killings in the world today", was solely accountable for the unprecedented fear and anxiety in the minds of the people of Sri Lanka.

Parliament should state that the

519  
29/3

# 200 killed in Army-LTTE battle

*S. Lanka*  
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, March 28. — At least 52 government soldiers and 150 rebels have been killed and 275 others injured in the two-day fighting for the control of northern Jaffna peninsula even as the Army had to pull back from a strategic detachment due to heavy overnight fire from LTTE guerrillas, the defence ministry said here today.

Also the death toll of the civilians killed due to artillery firing by both sides has gone up to five, reports from Jaffna said.

A defence press release this evening here said naval gunboats and helicopter gunships destroyed five LTTE boats full of its cadre when they attempted to land in southern Jaffna

coast today.

It said so far 50 Army soldiers and two officers have been killed and 94 others along with nine officers injured in the fighting. Another 172 soldiers sustained minor injuries in the two-day battle.

Amid heavy counter-attacks, the LTTE made several unsuccessful attempts to land a large number of its cadre on the peninsula, the release said, adding that casualties on the rebel side were over 150.

Earlier, the Army admitted that it pulled its troops from Mamunai detachment near a strategic supply route after it came under heavy fire from the rebels last night.

Three artillery guns stationed in the Army camp were damaged due to the firing. The Army also said it destroyed a

battle tank used by the LTTE for the first time. The LTTE had seized the tank from the Army earlier.

The clandestine LTTE Radio, meanwhile, today said only four of its cadres were killed. It claimed its guerrillas have gained territory on many fronts inflicting huge losses on the Army. The fighting mainly concentrated at Palay village, located on the main highway connecting Jaffna peninsula with the rest of the country.

Palay, by virtue of its location, formed the gateway to the peninsula and provided a key supply route to 1,700 Army troops holed in the Army's biggest garrison at narrow causeway, elephant pass.

Both Army and the LTTE made conflicting claims over the control of Palay.

THE STATESMAN  
29 MAR 2000

# No withdrawal of troops for talks with LTTE: Chandrika

P K Balachandran  
Colombo, January 31

SRI LANKAN President Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga has made it clear that while she will give the on-going peace process every chance, there is 'no question' of withdrawing the security forces from their camps and bases to facilitate talks with the LTTE.

According to *The Sunday Times*, Mrs Kumaratunga told the commanders of the army, navy and air force on Friday that the LTTE would also have to renounce violence and lay down arms as part of the peace process. Analyst Iqbal Athas understands that the President has even ruled out the possibility of the forces being "confined to barracks" during the talks. "When the security forces were confined to their camps and barracks during the peace talks in 1989 and 1994, the LTTE made full use of the freedom to move about to build up and regroup to the utter detriment of the forces," Mr Athas pointed out.

Confinement to the camps, with no offensive patrolling, would give the forces a debilitating 'defensive mindset', warned analyst Dayan Jayatileka. Peace talks would perse weaken the government's negotiating position because they send out the signal that the guerrillas have, by their grit and determination, forced a weak government to

hold talks, he said. "Also, talks will send out the signal to rebel groups across the world that by killing big leaders like Rajiv Gandhi and Premadasa or attempting to kill a President like Chandrika Kumaratunga, they can force a government to come to its knees," Mr Jayatileka pointed out. He deprecated the current tendency to put the state and the insurgent group on an equal footing. "While the state is expected to fight a limited and humane war, the insurgents are given the freedom to fight a total war using naked terrorism and assassination," he said.

Urging an unrelenting military campaign, Mr Jayatileka said that it was time Sri Lankan forces were given offensive weapons which could inflict "unacceptable levels of casualties" on the enemy. He advocated the purchase of AWACS, high flying ground attack aircraft with electronically driven cannon and helicopter gunships.

"The security forces are now in a good position to take on the LTTE with such weaponry, because the latter is now using the tactics of a conventional force, deploying large formations. The open and flat terrain in Jaffna and Elephant Pass, where the next round of fighting is expected to take place, suits the use of such weapons. But apparently, no attempt is being made to buy such equipment," Mr Jayatileka said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 1 FEB 2000

# 'Join us, be a hero,' new LTTE mantra

Recruitment drive to net at least 30 pc of school children coming of age

P.K. Balachandran  
Colombo, February 1

HAVING SUSTAINED heavy casualties in the conventional battles fought in the past five years, the LTTE is increasingly turning to school kids to replenish its strength, says the latest report of the University Teachers' for Human Rights (Jaffna).

Going by the vigour and scale of the recruitment drive in Wannai, an area in north Sri Lanka which the LTTE controls, the Tamil rebels may be planning to entice or motivate at least 30 per cent of the school boys and girls coming of age, the UTHRJ says.

The report points out that according to the LTTE's own admission, it has lost 10,000 fighting cadres in the past five years or 2000 per year.

It will therefore have to recruit 2000 a year at least to maintain its past strength. Given the demographic situation in the Wannai with a population of 300,000, this means that it has to target at least 30 per cent of the school kids coming of age there.

The report says that the LTTE's recruiting parties, spearheaded by powerful speakers, barge into schools, and after getting the regular classes suspended, deliver fiery speeches in a

bid to inspire the youngsters to join the movement forthwith.

The propagandists, some of whom show battle scars, instil a sense of shame in the young minds sitting in front of them by rhetorically asking them what they are doing for the Tamils' struggle for freedom when fellow Tamils are being killed, maimed and raped by "Sinhala racists."

"They are given highly exaggerated accounts of the "brutality" of the Sinhalese army, told how food is denied to them, and how their women are raped and murdered in areas under army control. "It is better to fight such an enemy and die as a martyr than to die having done nothing. The Tamil nation will remember a martyr forever," the LTTE propagandists say.

Living in a battleground for the past 16 years of the ethnic conflict, with the fear of death, destruction and displacement stalking them day in and day out, and with no end to this in sight, what the LTTE propagandists say strikes a chord among the kids, and some do join up, the UTHRJ says. But there is resistance too, it adds. Resistance is triggered by the magnitude of the recruitment effort.

Two thousand per year or 30 per cent of the school-goers in Class X and above from a population base of just 300,000, is a large proportion indeed. So, schoolmasters tell the kids to

obediently listen to the lectures but ask them not to join up. Many kids are sent home if the masters get to know of the recruiters' presence.

The UTHRJ report says that the LTTE leadership is aware of this and they make it a point to tell the kids that their education will not be stopped if they join the movement because classes teaching the regular Sri Lankan curricula will be held for them in the camps.

LTTE supremo Prabhakaran's commitment to education is stressed very strongly to appeal to the Tamils' penchant for education and somewhere appease the parents.

The recruiters also let the unwilling return if they want to go back to their homes. Though there is a fear that deserters may be caught and taken back, there are cases of kids escaping and not being chased.

At the same time, there are very real pressures on Wannai's people, the UTHRJ says. There is compulsory military training three days a week for everybody, not just for school kids. Unless one is a participant in these training sessions, he or she will not be able to get the LTTE card necessary to make purchases in the local market.

And a family which has nobody undergoing training cannot leave the Wannai unless it coughs up a heavy fine running into half a lakh sometimes.

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- 2 FEB 2000

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## NORWAY AS FACILITATOR

THERE APPEARS TO be some movement at last on the Sri Lankan peace process as the country celebrated its independence day. Recently, the main opposition United National Party (UNP) offered to cooperate with the Government in finalising the devolution package. And now, Norway has agreed to play the facilitator's role to broker talks between the Government in Colombo and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Optimists may call it a breakthrough. But this is only one side of the picture. Since you need two hands to clap, there can be no meaningful talks unless the LTTE indicates a real seriousness about finding a negotiated political solution to the ethnic issue. Oslo has been lucky in facilitating a peace process in other strife-torn parts of the world, notably in West Asia. It remains to be seen if it can bring into play the same magic and luck for the strangulated peace process in Sri Lanka. Colombo had also suggested the Norwegian initiative and the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, made it known last month that the LTTE had turned down the good offices of the former Secretary General of the Commonwealth. There has been no formal communication yet from the Tamil Tigers on whether they are prepared to accept the Norwegian offer and if they are ready to break the ice.

More important perhaps is the UNP's offer to cooperate with the People's Alliance Government in wrapping up the devolution package, which has been on the table for more than four years now. It could not be pushed through the Parliamentary Select Committee or Parliament itself without the backing of the main Sinhala opposition party. It is not as though the UNP and its leader, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, suddenly see merit in the devolution proposals or on the need for a national consensus now. The imminent threat of a Bill to legitimise floor crossings in Parliament has shaken the UNP, amidst persistent rumours that the 16 or more party MPs

needed to provide the Chandrika regime with a two-thirds majority in the House are now ready to change their loyalties. The offer of cooperation may be aimed more at preventing a split in the UNP. But whatever the motive, it is now incumbent on the part of the Government to evolve a 'southern' consensus on the devolution package. If the two Sinhala parties agree on the core contents, the Tamil and Muslim parties represented in Parliament may be willing to consider it more seriously. It is the Sinhala political will to find a solution that will now be on test, and if a national consensus emerges, the pressure will mount on the LTTE to negotiate a settlement or face the consequences. Even the Buddhist clergy has volunteered to facilitate a Sinhala consensus on a peace plan.

Time is running out for the present Parliament as elections are due by August this year. If the Government and the Opposition agree on the devolution package and constitutional reforms that have been talked about for five years now, Parliament can vote the changes with the required two-thirds majority before its term expires. Fresh elections will then be held on that basis. Though Colombo wants to invite the LTTE to a kind of round table discussion on the package, it is doubtful if the Tamil Tigers will attend such a meeting at this stage. But if they are made to realise that a national consensus is on the anvil and the international community wants to see an end to the ethnic strife in Sri Lanka, the LTTE's options will be narrowed down. If they continue to shun the path of peace, reconciliation and democracy, they will face greater and greater isolation. Norway deserves all the support and luck to get the two sides back to the negotiating table and to continue to talk till an agreement is reached. Oslo is taking on a challenging and unenviable role, trying to bridge the chasm between a Sinhala Government and the dreaded militant outfit.

THE HINDU

5 FEB 2000

# LTTE role vital, says Chandrika

By V. S. Sambandan, Colombo

**COLOMBO, FEB. 4.** The Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, today said the separatist LTTE had to have a 'vital role' in ending the conflict and reiterated her Government's resolve to end the conflict through a negotiated settlement. She also called upon the supporters of the Tigers to 'persuade' them into negotiations.

In her National Day address over the state TV, the President, who stayed away from the public celebrations at the Parliamentary enclave, invited the LTTE to participate in the 'noble and great' process of 'reaching a consensus' on resolving the conflict, which had 'dogged' the nation.

"The LTTE has a vital role to play in concluding this extended sadness for the Tamil people, the LTTE must also recognise that assassinating Sinhala and Tamil leaders and innocent citizens can never resolve the problems of the Tamil people or the minorities," the President said.

Referring to the crisis, Ms. Kumaratunga said, "it is urgent that we end the heartless violence of terror and its result - the war. All those who support the perpetrators of terror must even now decide to persuade them to adopt the strategies of dialogue and negotiations."

Negotiations, Ms. Kumaratunga said, was "the only path" to free people from the "shackles of oppression and terror of all types. We cannot sacrifice anyone lives at the altar of anyone's cause." The Government, she said, would "continue to seek dialogue because we truly believe that the future that the Tamil people dream of, and that we desire for all Sri



The Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, addressing the nation on the 52nd Independence Day from her 'Temple Trees' residence in Colombo on Friday. — Photo: Sriyantina Walpola

On the "partisan nature of contemporary Sri Lankan public life," Ms. Kumaratunga said, "these rivalries do nothing to strengthen us" but weakened and exposed the nation to destruction.

Calling upon the nation to work towards realising the 'great dreams' for 'personal and collective future,' Ms. Kumaratunga said, "the people of the North and East dream of living in security and prosperity. Thousands of soldiers dream of returning to their homes and families. The people of the south dream of an end to terrorism, the war and of prosperity."

## Skips function

Earlier, the Speaker of the Sri Lankan Parliament, Mr. K. B. Ratnayake, unfurled the National Flag at a public function in the Parliament enclave.

The President, who was scheduled to participate in the function stayed away and addressed the Nation over state radio and TV for the first time at an Independence Day celebration. While the state media yesterday reported that Ms. Kumaratunga was 'indisposed,' security factors have also reportedly weighed in the decision of President to stay away from the public appearance.

As Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike, the aged Prime Minister also did not participate in the function, the Speaker unfurled the national flag.

The President's address to the nation was on state-TV after the National Flag was hoisted at the public function, which was attended by members of the Cabinet and the diplomatic corps stationed in Colombo amidst tight security.

The President urged "all Sri Lankans, irrespective of their political beliefs to join in the process of constitutional reform, formulation of a new political culture and the re-building of a new Sri Lankan nation."

Forming the "resolution of the minorities question" the "single most important challenge we must collectively take on," Ms. Kumaratunga said, "for too long, all parties to this conflict have known that it continues at a significant cost to our nation's present and most lamentable, to its future." The Nation, she said, had watched "the magnificent future that we know can be ours, remain on the far horizon, like a ship that fears to come in to an unfriendly harbour."

Lankans can ultimately be achieved by our collective efforts, within a process of dialogue."

Ms. Kumaratunga, who was elected for a second term of office at the Presidential elections held on December 21, after surviving an assassination attempt on December 18, said the victory was a mandate by the people for the specific purpose of ending the conflict. Recalling that her efforts at working out a negotiated settlement since 1994 were thwarted by "the major opposition group and one militant group," Ms. Kumaratunga invited "all democratic political leaders to do battle for their country by reaching a consensus on the means of resolution of this conflict which has dogged us far too long."

# Lanka may scrap presidency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, Feb. 6. — The Sri Lankan President, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga, and her ruling People's Alliance partners, currently discussing the draft proposals on changing the island's constitution, have agreed to revert to parliamentary democracy, a minister said today.

The justice and constitutional affairs minister, Mr GL Peiris, a key figure behind the government's move to change the constitution, told the *Island* newspaper that PA leaders have agreed on changing the executive presidency and devolving powers to the regions.

He said the devolution proposals, specially to the Tamil dominated north and east, would be put forward to the LTTE in the forthcoming peace talks. He, however, did not

comment on the reported plans of the Norwegian foreign minister, Mr Knut Vollepack, to visit Colombo next week to firm up his government's role as a facilitator in the peace talks between the government and the LTTE.

The state-run *Daily News* said today the PA partners have reached consensus on the key issues of devolution and executive presidency and proposals would soon be put forward to the main Opposition, United National Party, and moderate Tamil parties.

Besides, Mrs Kumaratunga said in an interview to an official Sinhalese newspaper that she proposed to bring peace through a constitutional revolution.

She said a referendum would be held to ascertain the popular view over the proposed changes to the constitution.

According to the present rules, any change or amendment to the constitution should be passed by parliament by two-thirds majority, followed by a simple majority in a referendum.

## ARMY PUSH

COLOMBO, Feb. 6. — Sri Lankan troops blasted a rebel bunker with rockets in Jaffna peninsula, killing five Tamil rebels, and killed seven more militants in other skirmishes, the defence ministry reported today. The bunker was in Muhavil, near Elephant Pass on the peninsula that has once again become the battleground in the war between government forces and LTTE. — AP

Mr Peiris said the government will present the LTTE a consensual document to enhance the prospects of its implementation. "The LTTE will join the process after the discussions with the UNP. The President is

keen on a breakthrough of achieving consensus with all other parties to be presented to the LTTE."

The LTTE, meanwhile, reportedly issued leaflets in northern Vanni saying it was willing to hold talks with the government provided army withdrew its troops in the north and east to the positions held before 1995 and a third party is involved as mediator.

It also expressed its opposition to any secret talks, the *Sunday Times* quoting travellers from Vanni said today.

THE STATESMAN  
- 7 FEB 2000



## HT-13 Ways to change

AMONG THE election promises that politicians find hardest to implement are the ones that propose to reduce their own power. President Francois Mitterrand of France rode to victory in the 1981 elections pledging that if elected, he would cut the seven year term of the French presidency to five. He left the Elysee Palace only after he had completed two full seven year terms. Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga won the elections in 1994 on the mandate that she would abolish the executive presidency and revert to the Westminster style of parliamentary democracy. With the parliamentary elections due later this year, she has been repeatedly reminded by her critics of the unkept promise. Moreover, several smaller parties, including the one constituted by the former JVP rebels, had pledged their support to her in 1994 on the specific assurance that she will see through the constitutional change. They set up their own candidate against her in the presidential elections, last October, to underline their unhappiness over her failure to deliver on the promise.

Mrs Kumaratunga is now keen to salvage her credibility by conveying her earnestness in pursuing the proposal. Several of her partners in the ruling alliance too have been insisting that the country should be returned to the parliamentary system. They feel that the rise of insurgency, especially in the south, has been a consequence of concentration of all constitutional power in one person. The opposition United National Party, which had ushered in the presidential form of government in 1978, has also shown its inclination to support the move for such a constitutional change. Now that Mrs Kumaratunga's coalition partners have reached an agreement on the detailed proposal, it is to be taken up with the Tamil parties next week. Most Tamil parties have been of the opinion that the ethnic tangle could have been sorted out much earlier under a more horizontally spread out power structure. So, there appears to be a broad consensus emerging in favour of a return to the Westminster style of government. However, difficulties could arise if this proposal is combined with other suggestions for constitutional change such as the one concerning sharing of power between the Centre and the regions. That is one of the issues on which the views are sharply divided. So, if all the proposals for constitutional reforms are put up as a single package, it is likely that the move will again get stuck. It would be far more practical to use the emerging consensus for abolition of the executive presidency in the first place, and leave the more controversial issues to be dealt with subsequently. Such an approach will also be indicative of the government's earnestness in seeing through the long-awaited change.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 FEB 2000

## Norwegian minister arrives in Colombo for peace talks

COLOMBO: The proposed peace talks between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE are expected to formally begin on Wednesday with the arrival of Norwegian foreign minister Knut Volleback here to brief leaders in Colombo about his recent discussions with LTTE representatives in London.

During his visit, Mr Volleback will also be firming up Norway's role as a third party facilitator in talks between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. He is scheduled to meet President Chandrika Kumaratunga, foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and leader of the opposition United National Party (UNP) Ranil Wickramasinghe.

Significantly, the Norwegian minister is visiting Colombo after his reported meeting with LTTE spokesman Anaton Balasingham in London last week. The talks between the two were confirmed by foreign officials here. It was still not clear whether LTTE has laid down any conditions for resuming talks. The Sri Lankan government, for its part, insists the rebel group should give up its demand for 'Eelam', a

separate state for Tamils.

Leaders of moderate Tamil parties here speculate that as a precondition for talks, the LTTE has been insisting on a pull-back by the Sri Lankan army to pre-1994 positions, which includes the withdrawal of soldiers from government-controlled northern Jaffna.

Announcing Mr Volleback's visit, a foreign office press release said here on February 11 that he would be coming to discuss "the possibility of Norway assisting discussions to take place between the government and the LTTE aimed at resolving the ethnic problem."

President Kumaratunga recently said that a similar initiative by the Norwegian government had been turned down by the LTTE last year, stating that it would talk only after the December 21 presidential polls, which she won.

Besides the army pull-back to pre-1994 positions, the LTTE has also been insisting on an international third party mediator who could provide guarantees for the implementation of any future agreement. (PT)

# SRI LANKA GAG

## Ban On Informing The People

**C**OULD the government deny the press access to all public institutions and prohibit interviews with all governmental employees? Justice William Douglas of the United States Supreme Court asked. On 1 February, Sri Lanka's government answered the question in an arrogant affirmative. It, in effect, barred public servants from speaking to the press and also gagged the citizen. For, his only source of information is the press, judicially recognised as "surrogates for the public". Deprived of information, the citizen cannot subject official acts to his scrutiny.

What Chief Justice Warren E Burger said of the role of the press in reporting trials in courts is all too true of its function in relation to the entire process of the country's governance. He wrote in 1980 in the famous Richmond Newspapers case, "Instead of acquiring information about trials by firsthand observation or by word of mouth from those who attended, people now acquire it chiefly through the print and electronic media. In a sense, this validates the media claim of functioning as surrogates for the public."



### COLONIAL ETHOS

The Cabinet decided to enforce the old Establishment Code of colonial times "strictly". A highly respected political scientist, Jayadeva Uyangoda, aptly characterised it as an "arcane and outdated piece of legislation" which hitherto, did not prevent government officials from speaking to the media freely, albeit discreetly. The letter of the code must be read in the context of the climate of constraints which the government is building up.

Not surprisingly, a fierce controversy has erupted since that day, 1 February, when the minister for posts, telecommunications and the media, Mangala Samaraweera, brought the Establishment Code to the notice of the Cabinet and said it would, hereafter, be enforced strictly; in particular, section 3 of chapter XXX of volume I and section 6 of chapter XLVII of volume II of the code. The former bans interviews by officials to the press "in order to criticise the government".

It is section 6 which concerns "release of information to the press or the public". It says: "A Secretary or Head of Department may use his discretion in supplying to the Press or the Public, information regarding Government and Departmental activities which may be of interest and value to the pub-

lic. Such information should normally be channelled to the Press through the Director of Information.

"They may, however, issue such information direct if they

*The author is a lawyer and commentator on current affairs.*

consider that the circumstances make it necessary to do so. The information should in all cases be confined to facts, statistics, etc., and on no account should any expression of opinion be preferred. No information, even when confined to statements of facts, should be given where its publication may embarrass the Government as a whole or any Government Department or officer. In case of doubt, the Minister concerned should be consulted."

Not seldom a bare recital of facts and statistics can be misleading. Giving the complexity of modern government the media relies on officials to provide the background and describe the implications of a decision. The two build up a rapport based on mutual confidence. This is of the essence of the relationship between the state and the media in present times.

The minutiae that follow reflect the colonial ethos faithfully. The head of the department is directed to inquire "from every staff officer" whether he was the source of a press report which attributes it to an official source.

### FREE MEDIA

Only the secretary or head of department may speak to the press (para 6:2). Others, unless "specially authorised", are barred from doing so. Para 6:5 adds: "An Officer, not specially authorised in that behalf, other than those referred to in section 6:2, is forbidden to allow himself to be interviewed on, or communicate, either directly or indirectly, any information which he may have gained in the course of his official duties to any person, inclusive of the press, who is not officially entitled to receive such information."

How many of these harried top officials will have the time to meet the press? The "specially authorised" officer will be no more than an official spokesman dishing out the official spin, with extra crumbs for favourites who toe the government's line.

This will have what the courts characterise as "a chilling effect" on the flow of information to the government's masters, the people, and be a gag on their right to know. As Justice Douglas pointed out, while posing his rhetorical question, "A state might decide

that criticism of its affairs could be reduced by prohibiting all its employees from discussing governmental operations in interviews with the media, leaving criticism of the state to those with the time, energy, ability and inclination to communicate through the mails."

Such gags might well come into vogue in India if we do not watch out. In 1981, MGR's regime in Tamil Nadu, made an order forbidding its officials from furnishing any information to the press. Gujarat followed suit shortly thereafter. The police control room in

Ahmedabad was instructed not to give any information to the press in the wake of the police revolt. The Shiv Sena-BJP government of Maharashtra made an order on 3 November 1997 on the same lines as MGR's edict.

In a policy statement on the opening of Parliament on 6 January 1995, President Chandrika Kumaratunga lamented: "Our capacity to protest had become blunted;

a dissenting view was seldom heard; and our ability to feel and to express outrage was no longer capable of effective expression. No greater tragedy can befall a society which respects even the basic elements of the democratic tradition. ... The media in our country have operated for too long in an atmosphere pervaded by inhibitions and pressures. We wish to bring into existence conditions which will enable the media to operate without hindrance."

### BROKEN PLEDGE

That pledge has been broken. Article 14(1)(a) of the Constitution of Sri Lanka guarantees to every citizen the fundamental right to "the freedom of speech and expression including publication". Article 15 mentions the grounds on which the right can be restricted by law — racial and religious harmony; parliamentary privilege; contempt of court; defamation; incitement to an offence; national security; public order and the protection of public health or morality; respect for the rights of others; or "the just requirements of the general welfare of a democratic society".

None of them covers the code. It is saved only by Article 16 which exempts existing laws even if they are violative of the rights. The first working draft of a new Constitution, which the government placed before the select committee of Parliament on 25 January 1995, and the new draft, which it published on 26 March 1997, also retained the exemption clause for existing laws (clause 24).

Of what avail the fundamental rights if they are to be subject to colonial laws? The Constitution of India declares (Article 13) existing laws to be void if they are inconsistent with fundamental rights.

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18 FEB 2000

## LTTE: Pre-1995 position not a condition for talks

P K Balachandran  
Colombo, February 17

THE LTTE has told the Lankan government through a Norwegian facilitator, that it would not insist that the security forces withdraw from the Jaffna peninsula to pre-1995 positions as a pre-condition for talks, reliable sources told The Hindustan Times today.

Observers here view this as a "significant climb down." But apparently, it was not a unilateral step. As a quid pro quo, the Lankan government is understood to have assured the LTTE that it would not insist that the LTTE lay down arms ahead of talks.

The LTTE's offer was conveyed by its political advisor, Dr Anton Balasingham to the Norwegian facilitator, Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek, when the two met in London last Saturday. The LTTE demand that the Lankan government to withdraw its armed forces

to pre-Operation Riviresa or pre-1995 positions had been a major stumbling block in any effort to hold talks.

Now realising that the government would not, on any account, give up the gains made in the 1995-96 operations in the peninsula, and given the difficulty of recapturing Jaffna militarily, the LTTE leadership has now sidestepped the demand. But such a climb down can be justified without loss of face, because the government has, on its part, also climbed down from its earlier stand that there can be no talks unless the Tigers lay down arms and eschew violence. However, weighing the two steps, independent observers consider the LTTE's climb down to be more significant. The Sri Lankans think that the LTTE's new attitude stems from its inability to recruit enough people to carry on the armed struggle in the way in which it is being conducted now. The LTTE is now fighting a conven-

tional war, throwing large numbers into battle to capture camps and hold territory especially in eastern Wanni, its "heartland" and the location of Prabhakaran's communication and command centre, the so called "On Four Base".

The trophies that a conventional war can secure give rise to visions of grandeur and power, which in turn, are excellent grist to the Tigers' propaganda mill. But conventional war has also meant the deployment of large number men and the possibility of losing large numbers of them. The LTTE does not have the manpower to throw so many into battle. Nor can it lose many. In recent operations it has taken heavy casualties.

The LTTE's recruitment pool is very small. The continuous migration of Tamils has resulted in the dwindling of the community. It is also abundantly clear that the people still in the Jaffna peninsula (approximately 500,000) do not want to join up.

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## LTTE wants troops withdrawn before resuming dialogue

COLOMBO: The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) will demand withdrawal of all troops from the north and east, before resuming negotiations with the government that were being facilitated by Norway, the local media quoting the LTTE's Anton Balasingham reported.

Another condition the LTTE would insist on, is the removal of all check points and the smooth flow of food and medicines to the areas under LTTE control. Mr Balasingham, however, is reported to have said that the LTTE would talk to the government, though it did not believe President Chandrika Kumaratunga was sincere. It would do so, simply to prove to the western world that the LTTE was prepared for a negotiated political settlement, he said.

Ms Kumaratunga last week held talks with Norwegian foreign minister Knut Vollebaek who was asked to use the good offices of his government to bring the LTTE before the negotiating table.

According to a report in *The Sunday Leader*, foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar is expected to meet Dr Balasingham and LTTE's international spokesman V. Manoharan shortly, to facilitate talks with the Sri Lankan government.

A government official said that India will be kept privy to the peace moves, as it had helped Sri Lanka on numerous occasions.

Mr Balasingham, who had announced the LTTE's conditions for talks last week, during an address to a large number of Tamils in Eng-

land said that Ms Kumaratunga was not sincere in her efforts to solve the ongoing conflict. An audio tape of his speech had reportedly been sent to Ms Kumaratunga by the Sri Lankan mission in London.

Meanwhile, if agreement is reached for talks between the LTTE and the government, through the good offices of the Norwegian government, the talks will in all probability be held in the Norwegian capital Oslo, informed sources said.

"A government delegation will not be keen to go to the Tiger controlled territory, nor will an LTTE delegation be prepared to meet in government controlled areas," a top government source is reported to have said.

*The Sunday Leader* also said that in the wake of the current developments, the draft constitution will not be passed into law until the outcome of the peace negotiations with the LTTE is known. A ministerial source has reportedly said that in such a situation, the general election will be held under the present constitution and prevalent system of proportional representation.

The Norwegian foreign minister, who was in Sri Lanka on a day's visit on Wednesday, has thrown his country's hat into the ring, to bring about a negotiated settlement to Sri Lanka's two decade insurgency that has claimed more than 56,000 lives.

A government official is reported to have said that preliminary discussions on exploring the modalities of peace negotiations between the government and LTTE may

take place in Oslo with Norwegian government facilitation. "We will move very cautiously. It will be a long and painstaking process," he said.

Meanwhile, a brief hint of opposition to the peace process came on Friday, when a small group of Sinhala activist groups hostile to peace moves, demonstrated outside the Norwegian embassy. Some participants who attempted to enter the embassy premises were warned and dispersed by police.

Norwegian sources are tight-lipped about the immediate follow up to the visit by their foreign minister. His one day visit was to formally meet president Chandrika Kumaratunga and other government leaders besides opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Diplomatic sources in Colombo said that Norway's style of facilitation of such difficult negotiations between conflicting parties was of a persuasive nature and did not rely on the use of political pressure.

Mr Vollebaek himself observed that the conflict in Sri Lanka "can only be solved by political means." He has also stated that he was "encouraged by the expressed willingness to seek a political solution, but warned that it would take time."

Tamil parties have welcomed the initiative taken by the Norwegian foreign minister. "It is encouraging to see the Norwegian minister with his vast experience in dealing with serious global issues offering his services to bring an end to the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis," one Tamil party leader said. (UPI)

# Preliminary talks with LTTE in Oslo

By V. S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, FEB. 20. In what is seen as a "long, painstaking process", preliminary discussions on the latest Norwegian initiatives towards conflict-resolution in Sri Lanka are likely to take place in Oslo, the state media reported today.

The presence of the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to India, Mr. Mangala Moonesinghe, during the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Mr. Vollebaek's meetings is also seen as an acknowledgement of "keeping India informed."

The state-run *Sunday Observer* today reported that the preliminary discussions exploring the modalities of peace negotiations between the Government and the LTTE may take place in Oslo with Norwegian facilitation. No time has been set for the talks.

While Sri Lankan political observers see the need for confidence-building measures between the Government and the rebels, a senior British Conservative parliamentarian, Lord Naseby, has been reported as calling for the accommodation of the Thimpu principles in the process.

Mr. Ketish Loganathan of the Centre for Policy Studies, who was involved in the 1985 Thimpu talks, told *The Hindu* that the more immediate focus prior to the talks was likely to be on "military matters" such as the "modalities of ceasefire troop-positioning."

Comparing the present situation to the Thimpu setting, he said "the state has moved further from Thimpu. There is a need to demystify the Thimpu principles. But, to give it a

concrete shape, the burden lies on the LTTE. Take out the emotive content from the Thimpu and replace it with a Constitutional and political form," he said.

He said "the most serious confidence-building measure is some mutual assurance to the safety of the respective leaderships."

On the southern reaction to an external player, Mr. Loganathan said the presence of an "international peace-keeping force would strengthen the hardliners."

Mr. Sunil Bastian, researcher at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo, points out that the present initiative required "a concerted effort over a long-term and would have to be a continuous process."

The Norwegian interest in world affairs

apart, pressure from European countries, which provide refuge to the Sri Lankan Tamils, is also seen as a factor pointing to a larger effort behind the present initiative.

The possibilities of hardline Sinhala opinion upsetting the applecart "will happen only if the two main political parties take their lines. By themselves they would not mean much." The present situation did not envisage a scenario in which the southern polity would accommodate hardline opinion, he said.

The Secretary General of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front, Mr. Suresh Premachandran, pinned much of the outcome of the latest initiative on narrowing the chasm between the Tigers and the Government.

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## Islamic orthodoxy gaining ground in Sri Lanka

P K Balachandran  
Kattankudi (Sri Lanka) Feb 22

IT IS ironic that at a time when reformists are on an upsurge in Iran, the home of modern Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic orthodoxy should gain ground among the Muslims of Sri Lanka, long thought to be the most progressive in the South Asian region.

"Awareness of our Islamic heritage is increasing by the day. Attendance in mosques has increased so much that this town of

55,000 people has 33 mosques today," said Mohammad Khalil of Kattankudi, an all-Muslim town in the Batticaloa district of east Sri Lanka. Kattankudi with its minarets, dusty streets, and women in their *hijab* (headscarf) and *abaya* (the full-sleeved neck-to-toe robe) scurrying past to dodge the male gaze, is reminiscent of the Middle East of the Ottoman era. "70% of the women here wear the *abaya* and *hijab*. Women are like treasure, which cannot be put on public display," explained Khalil

who is a leader of the Federation of Kattankudi Mosques and Muslim Institutions. Kattankudi is one place in Sri Lanka, which has no form of public entertainment. No cinema theatres or video shops. There are no liquor shops or lottery vendors either.

But Kattankudi is not an isolated case. Fundamentalism has permeated Muslim society right across Sri Lanka. Twenty years ago, there was no fundamentalism here. But now Sri Lankan Muslims share with the Muslims of Kerala the dis-

inction of being the most Islamised in South Asia," says Ms. Arberia Haniffa of the Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum (MWARAF). A much greater proportion of Muslim women cover their heads with a *hijab* in Sri Lanka than in the Islamic countries of Pakistan or Bangladesh. Students studying in posh schools, bank employees and English language journalists are also taking to the *hijab-abaya* outfit. In Muslim schools right across the island, a stitched *hijab*, with an

opening only for the face, is part of the uniform even for ten-year-olds. "A group of westernised elite women are promoting the Islamic dress code and other aspects of fundamentalism," informs Ms. Jazima Ismail, former Principal of Muslim Ladies College. This makes Islamisation "fashionable" too. According to Mr. Khazib, Islamisation has been made acceptable also by the popular Naleemiya movement, which promotes western education side by side with Islamic indoctrination.

## UNP against executive presidency

By V. S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, FEB. 24. Sri Lanka's Opposition, the United National Party (UNP) has decided to work for abolishing the Executive Presidency - an office it introduced 22 years ago.

Abolition of the Executive Presidency, which has come to the Sri Lankan political centrestage, threatens to derail fresh efforts towards forging peace in the island with the two major parties taking positions which are poles apart.

The ruling People's Alliance (PA), which wanted to abolish the high office, prefers its continuation at least till the end of the term of the incumbent President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga. The UNP, which until a few days ago said that there was nothing wrong with the Executive Presidency but wanted a President answerable to Parliament, has now vowed to work for its 'complete abolition.' A decision to this effect was taken at a high-level joint meeting of the UNP Parliamentary group and the party's policy-making working committee yesterday.

The immediate significance of the reversal of positions is that it has set out the sharp differences between the PA and the UNP during efforts to forge a southern consensus on the Government's devolution proposals, aimed at solving the island's separatist

conflict. "It has pushed the devolution issue into the background," a Tamil Parliamentarian said. As the Executive Presidency was introduced, among other reasons, as a measure to overcome majoritarian pressures on political decision-making, minority political leaders contend that there is some advantage in retaining the office, but with lesser powers of immunity and greater accountability to Parliament.

Talks between the PA and the UNP are to be held to discuss revisions planned by the Government to its October 1997 draft constitution proposals which provide for the abolition of the Executive Presidency post and greater devolution of powers. But with the two parties adopting sharply opposite views on the Executive Presidency, the possibilities of a southern consensus remain distant.

The UNP's decision to work for the abolition of the office is in the backdrop of the PA's thinking to continue with the office for six years, to enable the President to complete her term of office.

The Government's argument for the continuation of the office is that Ms. Kumaratunga had recently won a six-year term of office and that the new Constitution should not deprive her of the mandate she has been given.

THE HINDU  
25 FEB 2000



# Lankan peace talks may be delayed: Paper

WIT-14 28/2  
The Lankan peace talks may be delayed, the UNP has told the government that any change should be made only after a working solution acceptable to all sections of Sri Lankan society is reached. This implies a wish that the final shape of the new Constitution should only follow negotiations with the LTTE.

In another significant development, groups espousing the Sinhala cause plan to mount a series of protests and unite the majority community against the Norwegian mediated negotiations with the LTTE and the ruling party's proposed Constitutional proposals.

A spokesman for such groups said they did not oppose a negotiated settlement to the ethnic problem but the government and the Opposition UNP must ensure that whatever the solution, it should be within the framework of the unitary and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. (UNI)

process towards finding a solution to the conflict in northern and eastern Sri Lanka. The UNP asked the government that it be informed of any intention on part of Colombo to start talks with the LTTE or to open dialogue with a third party facilitator.

In one of the proposals for Constitutional reforms, the UNP has called for the setting up of a Constitutional Council, including the Vice President (Chairman), the Prime Minister, the Opposition leader, one Chief Minister and two retired judges of the Supreme Court. The decision in the council would be taken by a two-thirds majority.

The party has said that establishment of a five member representative Election Commission responsible to Parliament would strengthen the public confidence in the electoral process.

While discussion on Constitutional changes should commence, the UNP has told the government that any change should be made only after a working solution acceptable to all sections of Sri Lankan society is reached. This implies a wish that the final shape of the new Constitution should only follow negotiations with the LTTE.

that the government had not even thought of picking a delegation for talks in the foreseeable future as such a position was still some way down the road.

The Norwegian Minister had agreed to present the Sri Lankan Parliament's proposals for devolution to the LTTE for consideration. But the government and the main Opposition party were still squabbling about dates to meet.

Meanwhile, the Opposition UNP yesterday submitted to the government its proposals that include setting up of five independent commissions to handle vital issues.

Leaving out the proposals to kick start the

changes should commence, the UNP has told the government that any change should be made only after a working solution acceptable to all sections of Sri Lankan society is reached. This implies a wish that the final shape of the new Constitution should only follow negotiations with the LTTE.

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# Kumaratunga's peace proposal not likely to get backing from UNP

Colombo, December 31

SRI LANKA could be heading for early Parliamentary elections after President Chandrika Kumaratunga failed to get a Presidential mandate strong enough to press ahead with her peace proposals.

The main opposition United National Party (UNP), whose support in Parliament is crucial for Kumaratunga to implement her proposals to restore peace in the Indian Ocean island torn by ethnic violence, is unlikely to lend her support.

With UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, Kumaratunga's main rival in the December 21 Presidential election, virtually rejecting Kumaratunga's overtures to the party after her narrow victory, she may be left with no option but to go for early Parliamentary elections, analysts said.

The current six-year term of Parliament expires in August.

Kumaratunga, in her victory address, had invited Wickremesinghe to join her in forming a national government to resolve the ethnic conflict. She also invited the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for talks.

Kumaratunga started peace negotiations with the rebels after she won power in 1994, but the talks collapsed after the LTTE unilaterally

broke the ceasefire, accusing her of not being serious.

Kumaratunga retaliated by launching what she called "war for peace" against the guerrillas, marking a sharp escalation in the conflict that has claimed more than 55,000 lives in the last 17 years.

Analysts said by inviting Wickremesinghe to join a national government, Kumaratunga was trying to drive a wedge in the UNP.

The calculation was that if Wickremesinghe rejected the call a sizeable section of the party would defect to her ruling People's Alliance (PA).

They mentioned how five UNP lawmakers had crossed over to the Government's side just before the Presidential elections.

"There may be one or two individuals in the party who want to cross over to the Government if the UNP opposed the formation of a national government," said Jayalath Jayawardena, a member of the UNP Working Committee.

He ruled out any split in the party because the Presidential elections proved that over 3.6 million voters were behind Wickremesinghe. He said the party would do better in the Parliamentary elections.

At the first meeting of the UNP's policy-making working committee, Wickremesinghe, who

won most of the Tamil votes in the election, demonstrated his authority over the party, thus belying reports about a possible threat to his leadership.

Wickremesinghe, however, said he was not opposed to any move towards a peaceful settlement of the ethnic problem, but wanted more clarification on Kumaratunga's offer.

"I am ready to discuss with her on her return from London," he told party members, who were keen to know his response.

"It was my proposal that the Government and the Opposition adopt a bi-partisan approach on the national issue and then talk to the LTTE on the setting up of an interim committee to govern Tamil majority north and east until a permanent solution is found," he said.

"How can I not support my own proposal," he asked. However, Wickremesinghe expressed doubts if the LTTE would come for conditional talks as offered by Kumaratunga and said her Government was likely to continue the military campaign against the guerrillas.

No action could be taken on the President's offer until her return from London, where she is undergoing treatment for injuries suffered during the attempt on her life. The incident had left 24 people dead and more than 100 wounded. She is expected to return next week.

(LANS)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 1 JAN 2000

# The Sri Lanka presidential poll

By V. Suryanarayan

THE CASSANDRAS were proved wrong. The false prophets painted a dismal scenario. The Sri Lanka Army would suffer serious reverses in Elephant Pass; there would be a blood bath in Colombo following the LTTE's attacks on Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga and the UNP rally at Ja Ela; and the new President would be forced to follow a Sinhala chauvinist line, exacerbating the ethnic conflict.

Except for a few incidents, the election, in the unanimous view of the International Observer Group, was "free and fair". The LTTE leader, Mr. V. Prabhakaran, expected the Army to desert its positions in the Jaffna peninsula, but that did not happen. It was adequately prepared for defence and counter attack. It is a signal tribute to the people of Sri Lanka that the island remained peaceful. In her first statement, Mrs. Kumaratunga assured the people that the election "will be held as scheduled"; she made a special plea against any attacks on or harming of any member of the Tamil community or political rivals. What is more, in her first policy statement soon after assuming office for a second term, Mrs. Kumaratunga called upon the people "to unite and fight against the forces of hatred and terror", reaffirmed her determination to usher in "peace and reconciliation" and made a special appeal to the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, to "cooperate" with her and play a major role in the common effort "to forge a new Sri Lanka of tranquility and tremendous opportunity".

The 1999 election was not the first occasion when the Tigers intervened to change the course of history. In May 1991, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by an LTTE suicide bomber. Prior to the Sri Lanka Provincial Council election in May 1993, Lalith Athulthammudali was killed. A few days later, President Premadasa was annihilated at a May Day rally. On October 24, 1994, Gamini Dissanayake, UNP presidential candidate, was killed in a bomb blast. The attack on Mrs. Kumaratunga on December 18, 1999, in which two Cabinet Ministers were injured and 13 persons killed, was definitely an act of terrorism perpetrated by the LTTE.

Why did the Tigers attack the UNP rally

and kill Major General Lucky Alagama? Controversy surrounds the incident; some reports maintain that it was a grenade attack and others speak of the involvement of a male suicide bomber. Maj. Gen. Alagama was a controversial figure. During the JVP (Japata Vimukti Peramuna) insurrection, he was in charge of Ratnapura district. Later he was transferred to Galle. In both places, he put down the revolt with a heavy hand. He was promoted in 1989 and entrusted with the task of dealing with the

movement, to switch their loyalty from the JVP and the Left Democratic Alliance to Mrs. Kumaratunga's People's Alliance. In Ratnapura, considered a bastion of the Left Democratic Alliance, Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara polled only 202 votes (0.28 per cent). Fearing violence, many UNP supporters did not exercise their franchise. Even in the UNP strongholds such as Colombo, Mr. Wickremesinghe's tally was far below the party's expectations. The Tigers, unwittingly, helped Mrs. Kumaratunga es-

## The UNP and the PA must give up confrontationist politics and adopt a common stance, at least on the issue of finding a solution to the ethnic conflict.

establish a mammoth lead over her UNP rival. The results in Hambantota district bear testimony to the above factors. As a member of the International Observer Group, I spent three days there. Located in the southern part, Hambantota is one of the least developed areas. Predominantly Sinhalese, with a sprinkling of Muslims, the district is one of the JVP strongholds. My gut feeling was the JVP would receive about 20 per cent of the vote in the district. The postal votes (cast earlier) lent credence to my assumption. For, 18.43 per cent of the postal ballots were for the JVP; 38.93 per cent were in favour of the UNP and 40.74 per cent went to the PA. After the attempt on Mrs. Kumaratunga's life, many JVP followers voted for her.

Another interesting aspect deserves to be highlighted. I asked Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse, Minister for Fisheries, who was in charge of the election campaign for the ruling party, about the fallout of the Tigers' abortive attempt on Mrs. Kumaratunga's life. He pointed out that the Sinhalese were deeply concerned over the incident. However, he channelled their energy, arranging for a large number of meetings in Devalayas where they prayed for her speedy recovery. The meetings were well attended and had a salutary effect on the overall situation.

Thirteen candidates contested. Except Mr. Abdul Rasool, an independent, all were Sinhalese. A few independents were

frontrunners for the UNP and the PA, obviously to split the vote. Mr. Kumar Ponnambalam, president of the All-Ceylon Tamil Congress, wanted to contest. But, according to informed sources, he did not get the green signal from the LTTE. A clear indicator that the Tigers wanted the Tamils to vote for Mr. Wickremesinghe.

The LTTE strategy was obvious from the beginning. In his Heroes Day message, Mr. Prabhakaran singled out Mrs. Kumaratunga for a vitriolic attack and characterised her five-year rule as "the worst form of tyrannical oppression" and "curse on the Tamil people". The LTTE ideologue, Mr. Anton Balasingham, was more explicit: "If Chandrika comes to power again, it can only mean that the problems and hardships will continue... We take no sides but the Tamil people know what to do." The LTTE support enabled the UNP to mobilise more votes than the PA in Vanni, Batticaloa and Trincomalee. To the surprise of many observers, in Jaffna, Mrs. Kumaratunga got more votes than Mr. Wickremesinghe.

The majority of the Tamils preferred to vote for the UNP. In the 1994 parliamentary elections, they extended wholehearted support to Mrs. Kumaratunga. Now they were disenchanted that the promise of peace with honour which stretched forth was not fulfilled. What is more, because of security regulations, many of them had to undergo a lot of hardship and indignities. The Tamil preference for Mr. Wickremesinghe is a clear illustration of a protest vote.

The need of the hour is statesmanship. The UNP and the PA must give up confrontationist politics and adopt a common stance, at least on the issue of finding a solution to the ethnic conflict. After the LTTE massacre at Ja Ela, Mr. Wickremesinghe would have realised the dangers of riding the tiger. It will be a great tragedy if the two gifted leaders do not see the writing on the wall. Those who do not learn from history will be condemned to repeat it. (The writer is a former Director of the Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Madras. He was a member of the International Observer Group. These are his views and should not be construed as those of the International Observer Group.)

# Investigators identify Mother and sister of human bomb are questioned by CID sleuths

By Charu Lata Joshi

The Times of India News Service

COLOMBO: A crack team of CID sleuths which went to Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka to investigate into the assassination attempt on President Chandrika Kumaratunga on December 18, has taken a woman and her daughter, suspected to be the mother and sister of the female suicide bomber, for questioning. The attack on the President killed 23 while injuring her.

While police sources were unavailable for comment, the director, information, Arya Rubasinghe, said the identity of the assassin had been established. "Parts of her clothes and body organs were pieced together along with the DNA and other tests to firmly establish her identity," he said.

The bomber has been identified as 33-year-old Gunanayagam Leela Lakshmi and was apparently a resident of Thalankuda in Batticaloa.

It is believed that she is a former student of Tholankuda Vinayagam Vidyalaya and reportedly joined the LTTE around 10 years back. The CID team also questioned the present and former principals of the school.

In the past, the Tigers have been accused of assassinating top politicians, including former president Ranasinghe Premadasa and India's former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. The Tigers have, however, denied the charges.

The rebels reportedly targeted Ms Kumaratunga because of her military campaign against them in the past five years.

Meanwhile, Ms Kumaratunga alleged that Tamils in the north and east, except in Jaffna, had voted for the opposition largely fearing the

LTTE. "If not for those threats, I would have got around 56 per cent votes," she said, speaking about the reduction of her vote base in last month's election. She had won the 1994 presidential election with 62.5 per cent votes.

"Even then one cannot compare the 1994 victory. That victory was during a very significant time. It was a time when the people wanted a change from a cruel UNP regime," she said.

In a widely publicised two-hour interview on the national television on Monday, the President came down heavily on certain private media and warned that she would take legal action against them for carrying defamatory stories against her during the election campaign.

"I will not allow the media, in coalition with the opposition UNP, to sling mud against me or my children in the future," she warned. "People should have the right to know the truth after paying a price for a newspaper. Our government is obliged to protect this right of the reader," she added.

Meanwhile, a fresh, inter-departmental controversy appears to be brewing within Sri Lanka's investigative agencies.

Sources from the country's National Intelligence Bureau (NIB), speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Bureau had passed on a photograph of the suicide bomber to the police department a week before the incident occurred.

The NIB team had apparently procured some photographs of members of the 'Freedom Birds' — the female suicide squad of the LTTE — who were allegedly deputed to create trouble during the presidential election campaign.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

- 5 JAN 2000

PRO-LTTE TAMIL LEADER SHOT DEAD

# 13 killed as suicide bomber triggers blast in Sri Lanka

By V.S.Sambandan

COLOMBO, JAN. 5. Colombo reverberated to violence today with a suicide bomber exploding herself near the Prime Minister's Office and a prominent Tamil political leader being gunned down in two separate incidents.

The toll in the suicide blast, triggered by a woman suspected to belong to the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), has been put at 13 killed and 22 injured.

(On December 18, a suicide bomber triggered an explosion at an election rally addressed by the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, at the town hall grounds.)

Today's suicide bomber carried a National Identity Card with the name entered as Tillakaratne Yasoda of either Kalmunai or Akkaraipattu in the Eastern Batticaloa district, the island's Defence Ministry said.

The suicide bomber exploded herself around 9.10 a.m. Six per-

sons, including the suicide bomber, four police personnel, two of them women, and a Sinhalese woman interpreter were killed on the spot. Investigators recovered a metal implant from the suicide bomber's severed leg, indicating that she had suffered possible battle injuries.

The bomber's age is estimated to be between 16 and 22 years.

While hospital sources placed the number of dead at 11, the Defence Ministry said seven per-

sons, six of whom were constables, were killed.

A couple of hours later, Mr. Kumar Ponnambalam (61), the leader of the All-Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) and a well-known lawyer, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in a Tamil residential area in Colombo around 11 a.m.

Versions differ on the circumstances leading to the killing of Mr. Ponnambalam, known for his pro-LTTE pronouncements. Ideologically attuned to separatism, he was a fierce advocate of the cause of separation both within Sri Lanka and abroad.

One version was that he was shot dead by unidentified gunmen who knew his movements, while another said he could have been killed by a person who could have been travelling with him in his car. Two nine-mm cartridges found at the site of the killing are the only evidence available.

The suicide blast near the PMO is seen by the police as a possible attempt on the life of a Cabinet Minister, "most probably" the Deputy Minister for Defence, Gen. Anuraddha Ratwatte. As the aged Prime Minister, and mother of the President, Ms. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, rarely attends office, it is unlikely that she was targeted, police said, adding that the explosion occurred on one of the routes taken by Cabinet Ministers to attend the weekly Cabinet meetings scheduled for Wednesdays.



Sri Lankan policemen survey the scene of the bomb blast outside the Prime Minister's office at Colombo on Wednesday. — Photo: Sriyantha Walipola

Another report, photograph on Page 14

THE HINDU

- 6 JAN 2000

# Can Sri Lanka find peace?

By V. Jayanth

WITH THE Presidential elections behind her and a fresh outbreak of violence, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga must now be wondering when to call parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka. Though the President got over 51 per cent of the vote, she did not enjoy the support of a majority of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, with the exception of those in Jaffna (for various reasons).

In her address after assuming office, Ms. Kumaratunga gave two clear messages — she was more determined than ever to bring peace to the troubled island and the “days of terror are numbered, and that number is small”. There was a warning.

On the very day results were announced, she was sworn in President for a second time and the same night she left for London, ostensibly for medical treatment of her right eye. The fact that she was in London gave rise to speculation that the President had begun behind-the-scenes preparations for resuming the peace process in Sri Lanka.

Sources in Colombo suggest that “Despite the battle for Elephant Pass, the recent military reverses and above all the attempt on the life of the President, intermediaries are still active. The LTTE’s idologue, Mr. Anton Balasingham, is still in London and a couple of Labour party functionaries in the U.K. are active trying to break the impasse”. A few weeks before the Presidential poll, Mr. Balasingham and the TULF leader, Mr. R. Sampanthan, met in London at the initiative of these Labour Party functionaries. And it was known that the TULF representative had the blessings of the Sri Lankan President for this contact.

Two weeks ahead of the elections, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, told this writer that the Chandrika Government was ready to let a “facilitator” break the ice with the LTTE so that talks could be revived. But after the assassination attempt on December 18, there were doubts whether the President would want to negotiate again with the LTTE. But it must be said that a majority of Sri Lankans — Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims or Burghers — want peace at any cost and confess there can be no lasting solution

without the involvement of the LTTE.

The ground situation in the northern war theatre calls for a “de-escalation” of some kind. Just before the election, the Tamil Tigers had virtually surrounded the Elephant Pass camp of the army. This was after retaking most of the territory captured by the armed forces during the past

agenda of his own and must only create the climate for talks and ensure that both sides remain “engaged” till there can be a satisfactory outcome. That is a tall order. Even under pressure from India, the LTTE refused to be a party to the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement and made sure that the pact failed. The Sri Lankan Government

dence of a majority of Tamils this time, the President must re-establish her credibility by implementing some of her promises. For instance, the Equal Opportunities Bill she got passed by Parliament has no teeth and the Tamils feel it is not being implemented the way it should be.

It is still not clear whether Ms. Kumaratunga will take a calculated risk and call for parliamentary elections, or clear the decks for floor-crossings from the Opposition to get her devolution package passed by Parliament. But she needs to do more. A whole lot of Constitutional reforms are imperative to scrap the Executive Presidency and change the electoral system to make it more democratic. She must decide if she wants a Constitutional Assembly or even a non-binding referendum.

Above all, Colombo is acutely conscious of the “India factor”. Any solution to the Tamil question must be endorsed by New Delhi, even if it does not want to be directly involved in the process. Having burnt its fingers before, India may only want to be briefed and kept in the picture. Of course, New Delhi may not want some agencies or countries to be involved in the process or as a “facilitator”. After all, its strategic interests in the region have to be protected.

Sri Lanka watchers are convinced that the LTTE will not settle for anything less than “Tamil Eelam” and it may want to cite the East Timor case — even if there are no similarities. No Government in Colombo will ever accept secession. Unless a very seasoned and successful facilitator can find some middle ground, the battles in northern Sri Lanka will continue.

Since it is anyhow her last term as President, Ms. Kumaratunga must ensure her personal safety and security, especially after the unsuccessful attempt on December 18. The decision to eliminate her

may have been taken in 1995, with the fall of Jaffna. Even if the LTTE resumes talks, it does not normally rescind its “sentences”. Her vituperative attack on the LTTE and the opposition UNP, as well as the latest round of violence in Colombo have only vitiated the atmosphere even more.

## *The LTTE will not settle for anything less than 'Tamil Eelam' ... No Government in Colombo will ever accept secession.*

too did not inspire confidence among the Tamil groups to make it work. Subsequently, the LTTE agreed to talk peace with President Ranasinghe Premadasa, whose main agenda was to get rid of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) — an objective shared by the Tamil Tigers. Once that was achieved and the LTTE also got a gift of arms and ammunition to defend itself against the IPKF, the honeymoon with Premadasa was over and he was ultimately assassinated in 1983.

A mega show unveiled in 1994-95 when Ms. Kumaratunga won a landslide victory in the presidential election on a peace plank. After several rounds of talks in Jaffna, the official delegation could make no headway with the LTTE and the negotiations never reached the core issues. There was an exchange of letters between Ms. Kumaratunga and the LTTE chief, Mr. V. Prabhakaran. The talks finally collapsed and another edition of the Eelam War was launched in April 1995.

That history of failed peace talks hardly inspires confidence, though international commentators believe that it takes time to get over the hump. If it can happen in South Africa or in Northern Ireland, they see no reason why it cannot succeed in Sri Lanka when the time is ripe.

It must be clear to the President that the “war for peace” strategy has failed. Territory is won and lost and precious young lives are lost on both sides. The army cannot obviously dominate both the north and the east. It does not seem to be a winnable war for either the armed forces or the LTTE. Having lost the confi-

two years, and with it a huge haul of vehicles, tanks, arms and ammunition. According to military analysts, “There may be anywhere from 3000 to 7000 troops in and near Elephant Pass. If that crucial base falls, the army cannot hold Jaffna. After the elections, the LTTE has launched a fresh offensive and this battle will soon enter a critical phase. It needs an understanding with the LTTE to de-escalate the situation in the north.” On the LTTE’s side, though they are high on morale and hardware, they are short of fighters and need some breathing space. That is, perhaps, why the Tamil Tigers virtually endorsed Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe’s candidature, as he offered an olive branch and unconditional talks.

No one underestimates the task of getting the LTTE back to the negotiating table. The Tigers may at best talk about talks, without going on to substantive issues. Which is why Colombo prefers to let a “facilitator” prepare the ground. Choosing a facilitator itself may pose problems. Ms. Kumaratunga recently revealed that two facilitators had tried their best in the past two years, without any success. The former Commonwealth Secretary General, Chief Emeke Anyaoku, and the Norwegian Government tried to bring the LTTE to the negotiating table. Of late, the U.K. has taken on this role. The LTTE has called for U.N. mediation and its emphasis is on “mediation” not “facilitation”. The Norwegians will try again.

The Sri Lankan Government makes it clear that the “facilitator” must have no

THE HINDU  
7 JAN 2000

## KILLING FIELDS

10.17 ✓  
THERE HAS BEEN another round of violence in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo. Another human bomb exploded, taking a toll of over a dozen lives, and unidentified gunmen shot dead a Tamil leader, Kumar Ponnambalam, in a Tamil-dominated suburb the same morning. The Sri Lankan police have no doubts that the woman suicide bomber was from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and her target could have been the Deputy Minister for Defence, Gen. Ratwatte. He was supposed to pass through that road. It is quite possible that over the years there has been an improvement in the quality of security and a deterioration in the quality of the LTTE recruits. What is tragic is that there is just no value for human life. Except for registering its continued presence in Colombo, the LTTE gains little by these explosions, which kill innocent civilians too. There have been various theories on who killed Kumar Ponnambalam. He was known to be a voice for the LTTE in Colombo. Like the assassinations of Vijaya Kumaratunga and Lalith Athulathmudali, this too could remain an unsolved 'political murder'.

The continuing violence compounds the crisis in the island and the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, is back to square one. She may have lost her vision in the right eye in the December 18 blast and shocked the nation with her recent interview and then her speech on television with a closed eyelid. Unfortunately, her swearing-in speech and the address to the nation have not exactly inspired any confidence. After preaching against hatred, she has gone on to lambast the opposition, the LTTE and even a section within the military establishment. This does not make it any easier to work towards a negotiated settlement to the ethnic crisis. The President must make up her mind on the kind of approach she needs to take. Does she want to

S. Janka ✓  
call a parliamentary election soon to secure a more comfortable majority? Is she going to encourage defections to engineer a two-thirds majority in the present House? Or will she set up a Constituent Assembly to take up a full-fledged reframing of the Constitution? Ms. Kumaratunga has admitted that two 'facilitators' have tried to bring the LTTE back to the negotiating table, in vain. There may be another attempt soon.

Before she finalises her approach and plan, the best course would be to take the opposition into confidence. It must be clear that there can be no solution to the Tamil question without a broad bipartisan consensus between the two major Sinhala parties. Instead of making a public appeal for the opposition to "join hands" with her and then going hammer and tongs at it, she might as well invite it for talks to hammer out a consensus. Without taking that step, she cannot get to the LTTE or the nation with a package. Unless the two Sinhala parties agree to put the country first and find common ground in search of a solution, Sri Lanka will continue to bleed and the LTTE will persist with its game of playing one party against the other and eliminating one national leader after another. Now that the President feels she has a 'divine mandate' to solve the ethnic problem and then retire from active politics, she must take some meaningful steps to work towards that solution. Enough lives have been lost on both sides of the ethnic divide and the people, despite all the provocations, have preferred peace to war and violence. If Ms. Kumaratunga is serious about going down in history as the leader who solved the problem, she needs to do more than criticise the opposition and blame past leaders. At least in the new millennium, one fervently wishes there is peace in the troubled island.

Police cite taped conversation as proof

# Whiff of coup in bid on Chandrika

Colombo, Jan. 10 (Agencies): Investigators have found a link between the attempted assassination of President Chandrika Kumaratunga last month and a wider coup conspiracy by military officers, businessmen and Tamil Tiger rebels, a state-run newspaper said today.

The *Daily News*, quoting reports from the Criminal Investigation Department, said the wife of a wealthy Tamil banker was being questioned in connection with the alleged plot.

The newspaper, which named no source, claimed police had evidence of the conspiracy from taped telephone conversations. It also said the businessmen allegedly involved in the conspiracy turned against the President because they were denied government contracts.

Government officials declined to comment on the report.

Kumaratunga was wounded in an attempt on her life on December 18 when a suicide bomber detonated explosives strapped to her body at an election rally in Colombo, killing 26 people. The President returned to office for a second term in the election held two days later.

Two newspaper editors, singled out for criticism by Ku-

maratunga in a speech last week, called the allegations of a conspiracy ludicrous. Although they were not named in the report, they said they had learned through other channels that they were under suspicion.

The coup allegation "is an attempt to undermine democracy and is the first step towards establishing a police state", said Victor Ivan, editor of *Ravaya*, a Sinhala-language weekly.

The *Daily News* said the alleged conspirators celebrated the news of the bomb attack against the President, and that army personnel had planned to seize power in a military coup if the President were killed.

On national television last week, Kumaratunga accused several businessmen of supporting the LTTE. Elaborating on the allegations aired over state radio and television last night, the *Daily News* said the plot came to light with arrest of Renuka Shanmuganathan, the sister of Colombo-based Tamil businessman Thirukumar Nadesan.

An unnamed party from the south and a few journalists were involved in the plot, it said, quoting police. "There are also reports that several army personnel too are linked to this alleged plot and

there had been plans to capture power through a military coup if the President was killed in the townhall bomb blast," it said.

Defence spokesman Brigadier Palitha Fernando, however, refused to comment on the allegations saying he had no information on the subject.

The paper said police had unearthed "vital information" pointing to involvement of a "southern hand" along with other businessmen sympathetic towards the Opposition United National Party (UNP), whose leader Ranil Wickremasinghe was defeated by Kumaratunga in last month's presidential elections.

The UNP denied the charges and criticised the government for making "irresponsible" statements. UNP secretary-general Gamini Athukarale told reporters that the allegations were part of a conspiracy by the government to discredit the party.

"The government is trying to destroy democracy by implicating opposition parties in needless controversies," he said. The paper said the businessmen have been funding both the UNP and the LTTE. Several other leading personalities connected to this alleged plot were to be taken in for questioning by the CID soon.

THE TELEGRAPH

71 JAN 2000



# Police probing 'plot' to kill Chandrika, bank MD's wife being interrogated

HT Correspondent  
Colombo January 10

THE SRI Lankan police are probing an alleged broad-based plot to kill President Chandrika Kumaratunga and seize power through a military coup.

The independent *Sunday Times* said yesterday that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) had taken in Mrs Renuka Shanmuganathan for questioning under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). She is the wife of Mr S. Shanmuganathan, Managing Director of the privately owned Union Bank.

The state owned Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) took up the story in its evening bulletins. And today, the state-owned *Daily News* gave startling details of the alleged conspiracy in a front-page story under a three tier banner headline.

*Daily News* said that in the process of investigating the LTTE's abortive attempt on the life of the

President on Dec 18, it was found that the conspiracy was broader than imagined. It could well have involved the opposition UNP, other Tamil businessmen, two editors of leading Sunday papers, sections of the Army, besides the LTTE.

Mrs Shanmuganathan, sister of millionaire Tamil businessman Mr Thirukumar Nadesan, who in turn was linked to a major business group, was allegedly part of a group of businessmen who were funding the UNP and the LTTE.

*Daily News* said that on December 18, the day an LTTE suicide bomber made an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the President, the businessmen had gathered in a posh bungalow in Ward Place and celebrated the bomb blast with champagne.

The paper said that Mrs



Shanmuganathan and other "conspirators" allegedly made several calls to the Nawaloka Hospital, where the injured President was taken after the blast, making anxious enquiries as to whether she was alive or dead.

*Daily News* said that the CID had tapes of phone calls made by the conspirators in connection with the plot.

The assassination, if successful, was to pave the way for a military take over, *Daily News* and the state radio said quoting CID sources.

There are also reports that several army personnel too are linked to this alleged plot and there had been plans to capture power through a military coup if the President was killed in the Town Hall blast, the paper said.

Alleging the involvement of two top journalists in the plot, *Daily*

*News* said that the CID was probing whether or not two editors of Sunday newspapers, funded by the businessmen concerned, were part of the conspiracy.

The state media further said that more arrests were in the offing and "startling revelations" were expected in the next few days.

Opinion is divided on whether the probe is a politically motivated post-poll witch hunt or not. It is quite possible that the plot to kill the President could be wider to include interests other than the LTTE.

The *Daily News* identifies these as elements which had failed to get financial benefits (business contracts) from the government of Mrs Kumaratunga.

To quote the *Sunday Times*, the President herself had said in her marathon TV address on Jan. 3 that Mr Thim Nadesan (brother of the detained Mrs Shanmuganathan) was a "crook". She said that she would take action against such "crooks".

# Parcel bomb detected at Kumaratunga's office

**NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN**  
COLOMBO, JAN 18

A PARCEL bomb addressed to President Chandrika Kumaratunga is reported to have been detected at her office on Monday morning and later defused.

Officials of the Presidential Secretariat said the parcel bomb was in an ordinary long envelope, and arrived at the Presidential Secretariat around 10.30 am.

When security staff opened it, they found a second envelope inside. Suspicion grew and the envelope was passed through a X-ray machine and a wrist watch discovered inside, officials said.

A bomb disposal squad then took the parcel to the ocean-front not far from the President's office to investigate its contents. "The bomb disposal squad defused it. They said it was a bomb," said an official at the President's Secretariat when asked if the parcel actually contained an explosive. The remnants of the parcel have been sent for forensic analysis, he said.

President Kumaratunga escaped an attempt on her life last month at a public meeting three days before the Presidential election. She lost an eye in the attack carried out by an LTTE suicide bomber. Twenty-five people were killed and 100 others injured in



**Chandrika Kumaratunga**

that attack.

Sri Lanka's Criminal Investigation Department are trying to establish that there was a wider conspiracy hatched by pro-opposition businessmen, sections of

the army and press to kill her and take over the government through a military coup.

No arrests have yet been made, but the state-run *Daily News* runs details of the alleged conspiracy every day. The latest is that the wife of a banker who was questioned and released by the CID had allegedly transferred 95 per cent of the shares of a company she owned to the chief secretary officer of opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe.

According to the newspaper, the inspector-rank officer held no official position in the company in which Sri Lanka cricket captain Sanath Jayasuriya is reported to be one of three directors.

It is not yet clear what connection such a transfer of shares, if it actually happened, could bear to the attempted assassination. Earlier, the newspaper alleged that the same woman had taken a loan of 50 million Sri Lankan rupees from her husband's bank, and that investigations were on to ascertain if these monies had been diverted to the LTTE.

On Monday, the newspaper seemed to be backing this theory, and said the millions could have also been used to finance the UNP for a local election last year.

Meanwhile, security forces rounded up more Tamils said to be LTTE suspects in a cordon-

and-search operation in a suburb of the capital. The lightning raid began at midnight on Saturday and lasted till Sunday morning, with hundreds of policemen and soldiers combing the area, taking in 43 people on suspicion. The operation was reportedly kept top secret till the last minute from even the personnel who were to carry it out in order to ensure total surprise.

Most people were asleep when the raid was carried out. Those who could not furnish proper proof of identity were taken away. Hundreds of Tamils have been rounded up in the last two weeks in similar operations country-wide.

# Lanka Govt to invite LTTE for talks

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN  
COLOMBO, JAN 20

THE ruling People's Alliance (PA) said on Thursday it would invite the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to discuss its proposed peace package, which it has decided to present in Parliament within three months.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the PA chaired by President Chandrika Kumaratunga. A senior Parliamentarian said the President was determined that the package should go before Parliament as quickly as possible.

The peace package, which is a set of Constitutional reforms, requires two-thirds support from Parliament to take effect. The Government has only a one-member majority.

It is not known how the LTTE will respond to the Government's invitation when it is made, but Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the group, is set against Kumaratunga.

A LTTE suicide bomber attempted to assassinate Ku-



Chandrika Kumaratunga

maratunga three days before the Presidential election last month.

Today morning, the LTTE launched a mortar attack on a police passing out parade in Moraweve, in the eastern district of Trincomalee, killing four civilians and one policeman. At least 58 others were injured in the attack.

A Deputy-Inspector-General of Police who was inspecting the parade escaped unhurt.

A large number of civilians, including parents and relatives of new recruits, were at the parade when shells hit the ground.

## Wickremesinghe too backs move to keep flock together

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
COLOMBO, JAN 20

IN A desperate gamble to keep the United National Party (UNP) and his leadership of it intact, Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe has unexpectedly announced the party's support to the Government's peace package after opposing it for five years.

In a letter to President Chandrika Kumaratunga on Wednesday, Wickremesinghe said that despite reservations, his party would extend parliamentary support to the constitutional reforms that include controversial measures for devolution of power to the embattled north-east.

Wickremesinghe's overtly conciliatory offer came amidst reports that the government was planning to introduce a bill that would enable Opposition members to cross over to the Government without losing their seats in Parliament. Chandrika Kumaratunga is pushing the "cross-over" bill so that her Government can muster the mandatory two-thirds support required to pass the constitutional reforms through Parliament.

It was being speculated that a number of UNP members were ready to switch allegiance to the ruling People's Alliance (PA) for a variety of inducements, but could not as they would lose their seats in Parliament under existing provisions.

By extending UNP support to the package, Wickremesinghe is trying to blunt the rationale for a proposed legislation that will splinter his party and threaten his leadership of it. It is now to be seen if Kumaratunga will call Wickremesinghe's bluff or steam on ahead with the cross-over bill.

The fate of four UNP parliamentarians who crossed over to the PA before the December Presidential elections and were expelled by the party hangs on the success of the bill.

At a meeting of the PA chaired by Kumaratunga today to discuss the constitutional reforms package, Wickremesinghe's peace offer was discussed. "The President was surprised by it. But we will take it up, and give an appropriate reply," said a senior parliamentarian from the coalition.

### PEACE PACKAGE

INDIAN EXPRESS

21 JAN 2000

## Chandrika's reform package gets support

P. K. Balachandran  
Colombo, January 20

AT LONG last, the decks have been cleared for the passage of the Sri Lankan Government's radical Constitutional reform package in Parliament with the Opposition United National Party (UNP) saying that it will unreservedly support it for the sake of solving the vexed ethnic problem. This was stated in a letter from the UNP chief, Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe, to President Chandrika Kumaratunga on Wednesday.

"It is our position that your course of action is not the solution to this problem. But since you do not have any other solution, we will not stand in the way of the course of action you wish to adopt. Therefore, in order to ensure that it is successfully introduced, we will extend you our support in Parliament. My party will support



the government's Constitutional proposals despite its reservations," Mr Wickremesinghe said.

The support of the UNP, which is the largest individual party in Parliament and is the main Opposition, will ensure that the package gets the required two-third majority. The UNP leader's sudden about-turn, on the question of the package, is popularly attributed to some pressures working on him. There has been pressure from the liberal lobby both in the country and overseas. Major powers like the US and UK and the regional power India, have been subtly telling him to cooperate with the government and get the package passed so that the bloody war is ended and ethnic harmony returns to the island.

Then there was the threat from the proposed Cross Over Bill. Many UNP MPs had been on the verge of defecting to the UNP for various reasons. Typically, they saw no future for them in the UNP after Mr Wickremesinghe lost the Presidential elections.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 JAN 2000

# Civil war in Sri Lanka

By A. P. Venkateswaran

**The Tamils, who are over 20 per cent of Sri Lanka's population, will never agree to be treated as second class citizens. Until that realisation dawns on the Sinhalese majority, the ethnic struggle is bound to continue.**

THE GENERAL elections in Sri Lanka held last month, resulted in Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) winning another term in office, after she narrowly escaped an assassination attempt by a suicide bomber. Her main political opponent, Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe, of the United National Party (UNP) lost by a much narrower margin than expected, reflecting the steep drop in Mrs. Kumaratunga's popularity since the last election. In fact, the margin may have been even narrower but for the sympathy factor following the bomb blast working in her favour. The almost concurrent bomb explosion at the opposition rally served to accentuate the dilemma in which the voters in Sri Lanka found themselves. However, one thing was clear — whatever hopes had been raised amongst the general population about an early solution to the ethnic problem, at the beginning of Mrs. Kumaratunga's first term in office in 1994, had all but vanished.

Although Mrs. Kumaratunga had won her first term on the electoral platform of putting a speedy end to the ethnic strife in Sri Lanka, events did not move in that direction for a number of reasons. Firstly, there was the insurmountable barrier of mutual suspicion, built up over the years during the civil war, which kept coming in the way of either side showing the necessary degree of trust in the other. Secondly, there was a conspicuous absence of momentum on the Sinhalese side in translating into deeds the many verbal assurances given by the President in regard to devolution of powers and autonomy for the Tamils. Thirdly, as time passed, the hard-liners amongst the Sinhalese bureaucracy and the military managed to gather sufficient strength to nullify whatever political will the President might have initially had to find a solution acceptable to the Tamils. It was no wonder in the circumstances that the talks broke down...

It was the United Front Government with Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike as Prime Minister in 1972 that had repealed the country's first Soulbury Constitution promulgated at the time of Ceylon's independence, jettisoning Section 29 thereof which had guaranteed against any discriminatory measures. This set the stage

for the conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. In the words of the ruling given by the Privy Council at that time, Section 29 of the Constitution was unalterable, since it ensured "the solemn balance of rights between the citizens of Ceylon, the fundamental condition on which *inter se* they accepted the Constitution". The Republicanism Constitution that replaced it was aimed at consolidating the gains the Sinhala Buddhists had been systematically making ever since Ceylon attained independence, nullifying the assurance to the Tamils of equal treatment.

The new Republican Constitution of 1972 excluded the Tamils from any power sharing, rejected outright their demands for federal autonomy and any regional devolution of power, as well as denied them the inclusion of Tamil as the official language of the North and the East, where they constituted an overwhelming majority. Moreover, its Articles specifically provided for Sri Lanka to be a Unitary State (Art. 2); excluded any possibility of delegation of powers except "to make subordinate laws" (Art. 45-1); made Sinhala the official language (Art. 7); and gave "Buddhism the foremost place", declaring that "it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism" (Art. 6). This in a country where one-fourth of the population is Hindu, Muslim and Christian, and one-fifth speaks Tamil as the mother tongue!

It was in protest against these discriminatory measures that the Federal Party leader Chelvanayakam resigned his Parliamentary seat. Two years later, he won a landslide victory in the by-elections declared immediately thereafter: "We have for the last 25 years made every effort to secure our political rights on the basis of equality with the Sinhalese in a united Ceylon. It is a regrettable fact that successive Sinhalese Governments have used the power that flows from independence to deny us our fundamental rights and re-

mi-speaking people of the country. The results were spectacular with the TULF returning in all 17 Members of Parliament from throughout the North and the East of the island. The TULF election manifesto rhetorically asked the Tamil voters: "What is the alternative now left to the nation that has lost its rights to its language, rights to its citizenship, rights to its religions and continues day-by-day to lose its traditional homeland to Sinhalese colonisation? What is the alternative now left to a nation that has lost its opportunities to higher education through 'standardisation' and its equality in opportunities in the sphere of employment? What is the alternative to a nation that lies helpless as it is being assaulted, looted and killed by hooligans instigated by the ruling race and by the security forces of the state? Where else is an alternative to the Tamil Nation that gropes in the dark for its identity and finds itself driven to the brink of devastation? There is only one alternative and that is to proclaim with the stamp of finality and fortitude that we alone shall rule over our land that our forefathers ruled."

The above background will place in perspective the fierce struggle of the Tamils for the restoration of their legitimate rights as equal citizens of Sri Lanka. These rights have been repeatedly denied to them by the Sinhalese majority. The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957, as well as the Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Agreement of 1965 had conceded many of these rights to the Tamils, but even before the ink was dry, the agreements were reneged upon. The country-wide violence unleashed on the Tamils in 1983 had been actively abetted by the Sinhalese Government, and led to the resurgence of Tamil militancy.

As Sir Hugh Cleghorn, British Colonial Secretary of Ceylon, wrote in 1799: "Two different nations have from a very ancient period divided between them the possession of the island... These two nations differ widely in their religions, languages and manners... The Tamils, who are over 20 per cent of Sri Lanka population, will never agree to be treated as second class citizens. Until that realisation dawns on the Sinhalese majority, the ethnic struggle is bound to continue."

(The writer is a former Foreign Secretary)

duct us to the position of a subject people. These Governments have been able to do so only by using against the Tamils the sovereignty that is common to the Sinhalese and the Tamils. I wish to announce to my people and to the country that I consider the verdict at this election as a mandate that the Tamil Eelam Nation should exercise the sovereignty already vested in the Tamil people and become free. On behalf of the Tamil United Front, I give you my solemn assurance that we will carry out this mandate."

Justice Satchi Ponnambalam, Sri Lankan jurist, has noted in an article that it was only in 1976 that Tamil politics became radicalised, due to the reign of terror unleashed on the Tamils by the Sinhalese Government. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), formed in 1976, had then passed a resolution which declared *inter alia* that "the Tamils of Ceylon, by virtue of their great language, their religions, their separate culture and heritage, their history of independent existence as a separate state over a distinct territory for several centuries till they were conquered by the armed might of the European invaders and, above all, by their will to exist as a separate entity ruling themselves in their own territory, are a nation distinct and apart from the Sinhalese and their Constitution, announces to the world that the Republican Constitution of 1972 has made the Tamils a slave nation ruled by the new colonial masters, the Sinhalese, who are using the power they have wrongly usurped to deprive the Tamil Nation of its territory, language, citizenship, economic life, opportunities of employment and education and thereby destroying all the attributes of nationhood of the Tamil people."

Significantly, in the 1977 general elections the TULF went to the people seeking a mandate to establish an independent state of Tamil Eelam, that included all the geographically contiguous areas that had been the traditional homeland of the Ta-

# 'Separatism will not work in Sri Lanka'

By Prasad Kariyawasam 110-11

The current political and security situation in Sri Lanka has been a subject of focus by many analysts and writers in *The Hindu*. In keeping with the highest journalistic standards, most such contributions have been unbiased and factual. However, the op-ed feature of January 21 by the former Foreign Secretary, Mr. A. P. Venkateswaran, entitled "Civil War in Sri Lanka" is a conspicuous departure from the tradition of balanced views expressed by others who contribute regularly to *The Hindu*. His article contained inaccurate facts, selective quotes and misrepresentations, making his contribution appear as a justification for separatism in Sri Lanka. The following comments are a response to some of his tendentious remarks.

It has been widely accepted by many political analysts that the drop in the percentage of votes in the victory for the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, was primarily due to the anti-incumbency factor and due to the tactics used by the LTTE to ensure her defeat. Yet she gained more votes than the Opposition leader in the all-important Tamil area, Jaffna district. In an editorial comment following her victory, *The Hindu* stated, "yet even if a number of Tamils may not have voted for the President in her re-election bid, she remains their best bet to usher in an era of peace offering as she has, the first non-chauvinist dispensation in Sri Lanka."

The commitment shown by the President following her previous massive electoral victory in 1995 to find a political solution to the ethnic issue is well known. She not only sent emissaries to Jaffna to talk to the leaders of the LTTE, but the group comprised trusted and committed personalities close to her, manifesting the President's earnestness to reach a political settlement. This hand of friendship was repudiated by the LTTE leaders who simply refused to talk on substantive political issues. Despite pleas to focus on issues of relevance, the LTTE harped on tactical issues like withdrawal of troops, etc. Finally, the talks collapsed when the LTTE sank several Naval ships in a surprise attack in violation of the ceasefire agreement, and not allowing the Government to talk on the devolution of power proposals with the LTTE.

Justifying the current grievances of Tamils on the basis of the 1972 Republic Constitution is not only anachronistic but also down right absurd. This Constitution has been replaced by the 1978 Constitution for which there are no less than 16 other amendments primarily introduced to placate the grievances of the Ta-

mils. Among those amendments, provisions were made to declare Tamil and Sinhala as the languages of administration throughout Sri Lanka. Moreover, several provisions were also introduced to guarantee the fundamental rights of citizens of Sri Lanka without prejudice to their ethnicity or religion.

Since the advent of Buddhism in Sri Lanka at the time of King Ashoka in India, the Sri Lankan state had traditionally provided a protective umbrella to this religion. However, this provision has never been at the expense of other religions in the island. It was only to safeguard to the practitioners of Buddhism perhaps from the forces of religious coercion that was sweeping through the sub-continent from time to time against the will of the people. Perhaps this may be the reason why Buddhism survived only in Sri Lanka in the sub-continent since its birth in India 2,500 years ago. In this context, provisions were re-introduced in the 1972 Constitution and were retained in 1978 which state that, "it was the duty of the state to foster Buddha Sasana while assuring to all religions, the rights granted by Articles 10 and 14. It must be emphasised that Buddhism is not a state religion under the Constitution. In fact no religious group in Sri

## OPINION

Lanka has complained against such provisions in the Constitution, manifesting that they enjoy all the privileges and facilities to practice and foster their religions without any hindrance. Only those who promote separatism are ostentatiously aggrieved by this provision on religion in the Constitution.

The population by ethnic composition in Sri Lanka is "Sinhalese — 74 per cent, Sri Lankan Tamils — 12 per cent, Indian Tamils — 6 per cent, Muslims — 7 per cent and Others — 1 per cent." It may be noted that 6 per cent of the so-called "Indian Tamils" are of recent Indian origin and live predominantly in the central province of Sri Lanka among Sinhalese. They and their leaders who have been Cabinet Ministers in the Government, have always disassociated themselves from violence and the separatist Tamil lobby. Most of their demands have been won primarily as a result of peaceful agitation by their leaders, in particular the late Mr. S. Thondaman, the eminent Tamil leader born in India and who became a well-known national figure in Sri Lanka.

Many Tamil separatists in the past and present continue to use Cleghorn's Minute of 1799 as a justification to a two-nation theory in Sri Lanka. However, it is well known that

Mr. Hugh Cleghorn lived in Sri Lanka only for a brief period before being interdicted from his official duties on charges of corruption. Governor North, the first Governor of the Colony of Ceylon indeed dismissed the work of Cleghorn in the following terms: "the greatest part of what he (Cleghorn) wrote after the coup d'oeil which he took of the country during the few days he was in it in '96 (1796) was absurd." In fact, if one is to go by the interpretations given by some Colonial administrators on the situation in our region, it would lead to greater irony.

For instance a statement of another of Cleghorn's contemporaries, Robert Percival, said that: "Besides the native Ceylonese who live under the dominion of the Europeans, and are distinguished by the name of Cinglese (sic) the coasts are chiefly inhabited by Dutch, Portuguese and Malays... When the Portuguese first arrived in the island, the whole of it, with the exception of the woods inhabited by the wild Bedas (Veddas) was possessed by one race." Interestingly, no mention of the Tamil ethnic group at all, which is equally absurd as Cleghorn's minute.

In the post-Independence era, most Tamil parties had used Tamil nationalism as a vehicle to capture votes in the elections. Perhaps this was a reaction and a response to such tendencies prevalent among some Sinhala politicians. However, in order to justify the cause of Tamil nationalism, some Tamil politicians of yore and militants at present in fact invent history and make many a myth to embellish their campaigns. It would be unfortunate, if such myths and fabrications are to be believed as facts and reality. What the TULF stated in its election manifesto in 1977 is now history. In fact the very same TULF leaders like Messrs Amrithalingam, Yogeswaran and several others in the past and the first Tamil Lady Mayor of Jaffna and many other TULF leaders like Dr. Tiruchelvam had been brutally murdered by LTTE rebels. The issue in Sri Lanka at present essentially is a struggle with separatism which applies means of the most violent kind. It would be the best for the people of India to support the people of Sri Lanka to build a democratic, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation which will contribute towards the social emancipation and economic progress of the sub-continent as a whole. Separatism will not work in our region. Responsible citizens of India should not be swayed by their ethnic loyalty or personal prejudices in viewing the situation in Sri Lanka but should merely go by facts, figures and actual history.

(The writer is Deputy High Commissioner, Sri Lankan High Commission, New Delhi).

THE HINDU  
22 JAN 2000

## *Deadline for Lanka's draft constitution set*

By Charu Lata Joshi  
The Times of India News Service

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga's efforts to resolve the ethnic dispute moved a step forward as the ruling People's Alliance (PA) executive committee set a deadline of two weeks to finalise the draft constitution.

The draft which will subsequently be tabled in Parliament, will include proposals for amendment to bring in devolution of power for the north-eastern provinces. PA general secretary, agriculture and lands minister, D.M. Jayaratne said future discussions would be held under an agenda based on subjects such as state, Parliament, executive and legislative powers and the devolution of powers therein. After these issues had been discussed threadbare, the draft will be presented to the party executive committee and subsequently presented to the opposition United National Party (UNP) and the LTTE among other parties.

The decision to set a deadline for the draft Constitution comes in the wake of a letter of support sent by leader of opposition, Ranil Wickremasinghe to the President recently. Political pundits say that having got such an assurance from the main opposition party, Ms Kumaratunga has also given up an idea to introduce a 'cross-over bill' in Parliament, which was a step to legitimise the entry of disaffected members of the UNP into the ruling PA and thereby secure a two-thirds majority for the passing of the draft Constitution in Parliament.

PA insiders said the government was now in the process of trying to secure a two-thirds majority in Parliament through a method of dialogue and consultation. Government sources also say that the ruling party is likely to formally invite the UNP to join the peace process and nominate three members to the committee appointed to make changes to the draft Constitution. While the UNP denies having been approached on an official level yet, there is a sense of renewed optimism in both camps.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 JAN 2000

110-14  
24/1

## Talks with LTTE on reforms package: Peiris ✓

By V. S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO, JAN. 23.** The Sri Lankan Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister, Prof. G. L. Peiris, has expressed confidence that the proposed constitutional reforms would gain a Parliamentary majority, amidst increased hopes on a Norwegian initiative to play a "third-party role" in resolving the ethnic conflict. In addition, the Government's plan to talk to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is also seen as part of the latest initiative to end the conflict.

In tune with hesitant hopes of a coming together of the island's two main political parties — the ruling People's Alliance and the Opposition United National Party (UNP) — sections of the Sri Lankan media have highlighted the need for a consensus between the southern political parties in resolving the conflict. The State-run *Sunday Observer* has quoted Prof. Peiris as saying that he was "confident that the Government could muster the two-third majority in Parliament to see the Bill through since the UNP has pledged support."

After arriving at a political consensus, the proposals would be discussed with the LTTE, the newspaper said, adding that the Government was keen on securing "the widest possible consultation with all shades of political opinion" including the LTTE, "before the final presentation of the proposals in the form of a legislation before Parliament."

On the possibilities of the Norwegian involvement

in resolving the crisis, the *Sunday Island* said today that "governmental sources confirmed that Norway will play a third-party role" in the talks to be held with the LTTE on the draft constitution.

"The LTTE has favoured a Norwegian mediation role and has pressed for it," the *Island* said, adding that a visit by the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Mr. Knut Vollebaek, to broker peace talks "was postponed" because the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, was not in the country.

There has been no official word from the Foreign Ministry on the reports on the Norwegian Foreign Minister's visit. The *Sunday Times*, commenting on the stand taken by the UNP to extend support to the reforms said, the growing bipartisan support to push forward the political package, which seeks to turn the country to a *de-facto* federal state in all but name, gave a ray of hope. Tracing the history of opposition between the two main parties, the *Daily Mirror* on Saturday said "the fact of the matter is that neither of these two leaders (Ms. Kumaratunga and the UNP Leader, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe) are chauvinistic. But, for narrow partisan considerations to either remain in power or come to power they have prevented a solution to this conflict in the past. But this time around, can the country torn asunder by petty party politics in the past 50 years hope that these two leaders would arrive at a consensus on the political package? This may be the last real opportunity for peace."

THE HINDU

24 JAN 2000



## Clergy renews peace efforts

By V. S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, JAN. 24. In tune with the overall mood of optimism on a resolution of the decades-long separatist conflict, the Sri Lankan clergy has renewed its efforts to support the Government proposals to seek a peaceful solution.

A clergy organisation, the Inter Religious Peace Foundation (IRPF), represented by a majority of Buddhist clergy proposes to call a meeting with its members and other religious organisations to discuss how the clergy could co-operate with the Government and the Opposition in bringing about peace, the State-run *The Observer* reported today.

The role of the clergy was significant in the conflict resolution process as attempts to give greater powers to the minority Tamils

in the past were met with resistance by sections of the Buddhist clergy, who apprehend such changes as a threat to the Sinhala-Buddhist identity. Earlier, the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact could not be implemented due to pressure from sections of the Buddhist clergy.

The recent efforts by the clergy had been on emphasising the pluralistic nature of the Sri Lankan State and on serving as bridge-builders between the conflict-ridden North-East and southern Sri Lanka.

In this backdrop, the IRPF had plans to write to the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, and the Opposition leader, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, seeking meetings with the two leaders to discuss how the clergy could co-operate with the Government

and the Opposition in bringing about peace.

Police released a photograph of the suicide-bomber behind the December 18 assassination attempt on Ms. Kumaratunga, and announced a Rs. 2 million reward for those providing information. The photograph was published by the State-run *Daily News*, but no name or other identification details were given.

UNI reports:

The former Indian Prime Minister, Mr. I. K. Gujral, the former Chief Justice, Mr. P. N. Bhagwati, and scholars Mr. Upendra Baxi and Mr. Ashish Nandy are among the 100 international participants who will attend a series of events being organised to commemorate the late Dr. Neelam Thiruchelvan's birthday here on January 31.

THE HINDU  
25 JAN 2000

# Bilateral talks will not be effective now, says Lankan minister

By Charu Lata Joshi  
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Mixed reactions have greeted a Norwegian delegation's recent efforts to broker a peace deal between the Sri Lankan government and the militant LTTE. "In the prevailing atmosphere of mistrust, bilateral talks between the two sides will not work. We welcome facilitation," said G.L. Peiris, minister of justice and constitutional Affairs. The opposition United National Party (UNP), which has been trumpeting the cause of a brokered settlement, is welcoming but wary.

Says party general secretary, Karu Jayesurya, "We have agreed to provide conditional support to the government's peace initiatives. While the delegation has not yet met us, this is a good start."

The start involved broad discussions between Norwegian state secretary, Leiv Lunde and leaders of Tamil parties.

"They (Norwegians) wouldn't indicate anything because whatever they are engaged in is very sensitive and they are doing it very discreetly. But it is clear that their initiative continues and nobody should do anything to hinder the process given their expertise," says R. Sampanathan, general secretary of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF).

The reference point obviously is the historic peace deal between the Israelis and the Palestinians in 1993 and the Norwegian deputy foreign minister Wegger Stroem-

men's earlier statement that Norway would attempt the same solution in Sri Lanka.

It was in view of these developments that the Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek had planned to visit Sri Lanka last week but the trip was cancelled as his Sri Lankan counterpart Lakshman Kadirgamar was not in the country. The Norwegians have maintained that no effective solution can be worked out without the complete participation of the militant LTTE.

The initiative comes in the wake of LTTE leader Prabhakaran's annual birthday address on November 26, last year, in which he had emphasised the need for a "foreign, third party mediation." But there is little euphoria among foreign ministry insiders who feel that it would be difficult to get the LTTE on to the negotiating table. Says an insider, "President Kumaratunga's devolution proposal was mooted three years back and rejected by the LTTE, there's little reason for them to agree now."

However, there are reasons to believe that the situation is slightly different today than it was three years back. The ruling People's Alliance (PA) coalition has obtained the conditional support of almost all parties in introducing a new constitution in Parliament within the next three months that would aim to devolve power to the regions, including the north and east administered. And with a tangible mediator in the loop, there may well be reasons for greater optimism for the doves.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

29 JAN 2000

# US, Lanka forging closer ties

## But decisive edge over LTTE still eludes armed forces

P.K. Balachandran  
Colombo, January 30

THE UNITED States and Sri Lanka are forging closer military ties together. However, it is felt that the emerging Washington-Colombo politico-military axis may not give the Sri Lankan armed forces what it should have: A decisive edge over the LTTE.

The Sunday Times revealed today that the US has agreed to sell Sri Lanka two more Hughes AN/ATQ36 Fire finder locating radar (worth over \$22 million) and three new Bell 412 helicopters.

Another transaction is the purchase of high calibre ammunition from Spain, where these are made under license from the US. Since the banning of the LTTE by the US in October 1997, the US had stepped up its military cooperation with Sri Lanka.

The Special Operations Command (Pacific) has been training Sri Lankans in intelligence, handling of explosives, casualty evacuation, aircraft safety and maintenance and the law of armed conflict. A US forensic team has been in Colombo studying the LTTE bomb attacks here on Dec

18 last and Jan. 5.

The United States defense attache in Colombo, Lt-Col Frank Rindone told the *Sunday Times* that the US-Lanka military cooperation was founded on a "shared interest in democracy, peace keeping, human rights and regional stability".

But analyst Dayan Jayatilleka feels that the US input will not shift the strategic balance in favour of the Sri Lankan forces even in the long term.

This was because the weapons to be sold were defensive, not offensive.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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