

10-1 'TEAM VISITED SRI LANKA LAST WEEK'

Centre firm on extradition of Prabhakaran: Advani

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 30. The Centre today asserted it was committed to seeking the extradition of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam chief, Mr. V. Prabhakaran, and informed the Rajya Sabha that a team had visited Sri Lanka in this connection only about a week ago.

Replying to a calling-attention motion in the House on the activities of the LTTE, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, said the Government was keen on the extradition of the LTTE chief who was an absconder in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. He said the ban on the outfit was extended since its activities were prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of the country.

The Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Agency (MDMA) team was in Sri Lanka between November 13 to 23 and met the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General of Sri Lanka to press for Mr. Prabhakaran's extradition, Mr. Advani said, adding that the Centre and the State Governments were keeping a close watch on the activities of the LTTE and its sympathisers, including those of Tamil Nadu Liberation Army and Tamil Nadu Retrieval Force.

Verbal duels

The nearly three-hour discussion was marred by frequent clashes and verbal duels which at times plunged the House into disorder as members belonging to the DMK and Opposition parties, particularly the AIADMK and TMC, traded charges. (According to PTI, Opposition members even sought the dismissal of the DMK Government in Tamil Nadu for encouraging "secessionist ele-

ments" having a nexus with the LTTE.)

Congress and CPI(M) members at times joined issue with the DMK members who strongly defended the party. The heated debate also saw members making reference to the LTTE's links with forest brigand Veerappan in the light of kidnapping of Kannada film star, Mr. Rajkumar.

Tribunal confirms LTTE ban

Reacting to charges of the approach of some members of parties in the NDA towards LTTE, Mr. Advani said none of them had ever opposed the extension of ban on LTTE (which has been confirmed by the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal on November 13), nor done or said anything in favour of the outfit. He said, the Centre was not soft towards any militant organisation and was mobilising world opinion against

cross border terrorism.

The Home Minister also expressed satisfaction over the statement of the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, in the Assembly on taking action against all the organisations advocating separatism.

Mr. Advani said the calling-attention was admitted as the Congress wanted to know the action taken by the Government on LTTE activities in the wake of reports of birthday celebrations of Mr. Prabhakaran in Tamil Nadu. The State government, he said, acted promptly and removed posters depicting the LTTE chief, arrested people from Cuddalore, Thanjavur and Virudhunagar and also registered three cases in Chennai in this connection.

Referring to reports of a function in a Government building, he said it was, in fact, to felicitate Tamil Nationalist Movement leader, Mr. P. Nedumaran, for his role in

securing release of Mr. Rajkumar not to celebrate Mr. Prabhakaran's birthday.

LTTE's activities

Earlier his statement, the Home Minister said despite the LTTE being declared an unlawful association since 1992, its activists and sympathisers have been conducting certain unlawful activities in India from time to time; the involvement of pro-LTTE groups smuggling activities along the Tamil Nadu coast has also been reported.

Some activists have been detained under various laws by the Tamil Nadu Government.

The concerned agencies of the Centre and State governments were keeping a close watch on the activities of the LTTE and the Centre uses intelligence inputs with all concerned.

Veerappan shadow: Page 15

'All help to nab Veerappan'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 30. With the Opposition criticising the delay in launching operations against Veerappan, the Centre today assured it would provide all assistance to the Governments of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in their bid to nab him.

The reference to Veerappan, the handling of the Rajkumar kidnapping case and the links of some persons associated with the release operation with the LTTE overshadowed the calling-attention motion discussion in the Rajya Sabha on the LTTE activities in the country.

Replying to the discussion, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, said the Government

had expressed willingness to extend all help from the Ministries of Home and Defence to deal with the menace. The Centre had no reservations on any demand, including by Karnataka, for NSG commando action for the task.

He said the States have been asked to launch a coordinated exercise to arrest Veerappan. The Centre was concerned since the kidnapping episode had affected the image of the whole country and agreed with members that it was not just a law and order problem. Responding to charges of Centre's inactivity, Mr. Advani said during the entire duration when Mr. Rajkumar was held hostage, neither Karnataka or Tamil Nadu sought Central intervention.

THE HINDU

1 DEC 2000

India, Sri Lanka to enhance bilateral trade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, Dec. 23. — India and Sri Lanka today agreed to enhance bilateral trade and investments between the countries especially in the areas of IT and tourism.

A joint economic council comprising CII delegation members and Ceylon Chambers of Commerce has discussed issues to promote mutual trade between the two countries in areas of IT, tourism, trade fairs and seminars, a CII release said.

"The free trade agreement would facilitate investment and expand bilateral trade between the two countries," the CII president, Mr Arun Bharat Ram said.

CII announce: The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), today announced opening of its branch office in Sri Lanka.

THE STATESMAN

24 DEC 2001

Lankan Supreme Court scraps press censorship

military matters or anything which could create communal trouble had to be submitted to the Competent Authority for clearance.

After a few weeks, Colombo-based foreign journalists were freed from the restrictions. But censorship continued on local papers. A Jaffna-based Tamil paper *Uthayan* was the first ordered closed. Action against *The Sunday Leader* followed when it published a tongue-in-cheek account of a war in 'fantasyland.' It carried a banner headline saying, 'Palaly not under attack.'

It was a 'negative' story, in the true sense of the term. It said heavy fighting was not taking place in northern Jaffna and the military complex in Palaly was not being shelled by Tamil Tigers.

When its presses were ordered shut, *Leader's* sister publication in Sinhalese was also forced to stop publication. Though the censorship was condemned widely by media organisations, the *Leader* Group was the first to go to court. The Opposition had called censorship an attempt to muzzle political criticism ahead of a General Election, rather than an attempt to safeguard infor-

mation related to military operations. Ironically, the humbling court verdict comes just when the Government was preparing the ground for lifting censorship "on its own accord". Only yesterday, it had put out a statement saying that it was considering relaxing Emergency Regulation provisions. And earlier this week, President Chandrika Kumaratunga had ordered slashing the tenure of the six-month ban on *The Sunday Leader*.

In some ways, the lifting of the censorship will not change things. Reporters still remain barred from travelling to the North, and the Sri Lankan press traditionally practices a considerable amount of 'self-censorship' when dealing with reports from the North.

Meanwhile, ruling People's Alliance (PA) and Opposition United National Party (UNP) failed to conclude their talks on a devolution package today — the 'deadline' set by Kumaratunga. But a joint statement reported agreement on several matters, including the appointment of judges of superior courts. The two delegations will meet again on June 7.

Lankan SC scraps press censorship

ASHWANI TALWAR
COLOMBO, JUNE 30

MEDIA censorship in Sri Lanka came to an abrupt end today with the Supreme Court trashing the two-month long restrictions on war-related news as illegal.

In a ruling which thrilled the media fraternity, the Court ordered re-opening of *The Sunday Leader*, which was shuttered down for violating Emergency Regulations. The three-judge bench ordered that *The Sunday Leader* be paid Sri Lankan Rs one lakh (Indian Rs 60,000) as legal costs. The paper has said it would now sue for loss of revenue over the five weeks it remained shut.

While the Emergency Regulations remain, the Supreme Court ruling has meant that the censor-

ship imposed under it is over.

Soon after the ruling, the government's Information Director Ariya Rubasinghe who was the 'Competent Authority' to censor news, said he was now 'refraining' from vetting any newspaper copy. A government proclamation — presumably announcing the lifting of censorship — was expected late tonight, officials said. The Court said the notification clamping censorship had to be ratified within seven days by the Parliament. The Government has not done it so far and told the court that it had assumed this was not necessary under Emergency Regulations.

The government clamped censorship on May 4 as Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam advanced towards Jaffna town. Under censorship rules, any report on

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INDIAN EXPRESS

1 JUL 2000

A blow to Sri Lankan Govt.

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, JUNE 30. The Supreme Court of Sri Lanka today dealt a major blow to the Government by ruling that last month's appointment of the chief media censor was illegal, thereby effectively invalidating the ban order on the weekly newspaper, *Sunday Leader*.

The ruling by a three-member bench of the court was made against a fundamental rights plea by the *Sunday Leader*. The court also asked the state to pay SL Rs. 100,000 (approximately \$1,250) to the newspaper as compensation in the landmark case.

The Competent Authority, as the chief censor was called, was appointed by the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, to implement restrictions on the media as the LTTE's military onslaught in the Jaffna Peninsula peaked in the first week of May.

By ruling that there was no provision under Emergency regulations to appoint him, the Supreme Court has in effect also said that the censorship of the press carried out by the Competent Authority was illegal. The ruling was based on a point of law and was not critical of censorship itself.

The editor of the *Sunday Leader*, Mr. Lasantha Wickremetunge, said he was "overjoyed" by the ruling. He said the weekly, which is known to be virulently against the Kumaratunga Government, would be back on the stands on the coming Sunday.

"The government's march towards dictatorship has been stopped by the Supreme Court. The

court has also shown that this government is so incompetent it cannot even draft a simple legislation, let alone fight a war," said Mr. Wickremetunge.

The newspaper was banned from publication on May 22 under Emergency regulations for a period of six months. Earlier this week, the ban period was reduced to two months.

"It is a slap in the face of the Government and a tremendous boost for the freedom of expression," said Mr. P. Saravanamuttu of the Centre for Policy Studies, a thinktank that deals with various issues including those related to the media.

Mr. Saravanamuttu said the judgment was further proof that the Government's decisions were "bad in law", and had no constitutional basis. "Every time the Government is taken to court, they lose," he said.

A 1998 judgment had found the Government wrong in postponing provincial council elections.

The ruling in this case is expected also to impact on the fate of the Jaffna daily *Uthayan*, which was closed down by the censor on May 20, two days before the banning of the *Sunday Leader*, for alleged violation of censorship regulations. "According to this judgment, the letter (ordering the closure) that was issued to me is also null and void," said the Colombo-based managing director of *Uthayan Publications*, Mr. E. Saravanapavan.

The Competent Authority, Mr. Ariya Rubasinghe, was not available for comment on the ruling.

THE HINDU

1 JUL 2000

ALL GIVE, NO TAKE

S. Kumaratunga makes her moves 117

THERE is really no settlement in sight, but initiatives are again being taken even as hostilities continue in Jaffna. A broad agreement has been reached between the two principal Sinhala parties on devolving power to the Tamils. The reactions of the Buddhist clergy are awaited, but if the two mainstream parties are in agreement, their nuisance value is considerably diminished, especially since nobody considers hard-line, nationalist Sinhala solutions to be realistic. There is also a proposal to set up an interim council in the north-east. President Kumaratunga initially refused to have LTTE on it, but she later relented under pressure from Tamil parties associated with the Government. One doesn't know if this is practical. Would LTTE be willing to sit on it? Would it be willing to share power with Tamil formations that it did everything to eliminate? There would have to be a dramatic change of heart on Pirabhakaran's part for him to say yes. One also has the impression that LTTE has a different way of evaluating the feasibility of its mission. It doesn't do so in purely military terms, otherwise the impossibility of creating Eelam, in the short run, through guerrilla activity would have dawned upon it. It sees Eelam as an absolute long-term goal. How participation in an interim council would fit this is difficult to tell.

President Kumaratunga has also decided to show her devotion proposals to the LTTE, probably under pressure from Tamil parties. The problem is that Tamil parties think the Government should talk to the LTTE, but cannot influence the latter. In fact, all pressures seems to be working upon the Government alone, there is no corresponding pressure on the LTTE, the basic strategic failure of all peace initiatives. At one point the Government had tried to block the LTTE's access to funds abroad, but the Tigers have had no problems with money or arms. Unless some mediator — maybe India — can get the LTTE to compromise, all these political initiatives will remain infructuous. To bring the LTTE around to accepting this will require enfeebling it financially and militarily. It took 70 years for the IRA to talk to the British Government.

THE STATESMAN

- 1 JUL 2000

LTTE rejects devolution package

P. K. Balachandran
Colombo, July 1

HF-12 2/9
THE LTTE's chief negotiator, Dr. Anton Balasingham, has said that the LTTE will not consider the devolution proposals currently being worked out by the Sri Lankan Government and the Opposition United National Party (UNP) because they ignore the Tamils' basic right to nationhood and self-determination as articulated in the Thimpu Declaration.

Meeting on the sidelines of the talks with the Sri Lankan Government in the Bhutanese capital of Thimpu in 1985, the Tamil parties had jointly made a declaration on the basic principles for a solution to the Tamil question. The most important of these principles were the right to nationhood, self-determination, and a "homeland" in the North and East of Sri Lanka.

In an interview to the *Tamil Guardian* published on June 29, Dr. Balasingham said that

the government's constitutional reform proposals did not specifically address the Tamil national question and they had nothing substantial to form the basis for a permanent resolution of the Tamil problem. The LTTE's ideologue said the current package was only a skeleton of the original 1995 package, sucked of all its flesh and blood.

On the Government's proposal to establish an Interim Council in the Tamil North and East and invite the LTTE to join it if it abjured terrorism, Dr. Balasingham said that the LTTE would not be "that stupid" to seek a few seats in a temporary administrative set up renouncing the peoples' only means of defence i.e. arms. A long standing political advisor to the LTTE supremo Prabhakaran, Dr. Balasingham said that President Chandrika Kumaratunga was toying with "ludicrous" ideas like the Interim Council ignoring the "stark realities" of the ground situation in the North East.

64 killed in heavy fighting: Fifty-three LTTE

rebels, including two area commanders, and 11 soldiers were killed in different encounters in northern Sri Lanka, reports PTI.

An official statement said here today that 30 LTTE rebels, including area leaders Jeevakumar and Ramani, were killed in a major army attack on a rebel strong point at Ehtawewa in north-eastern Welioya region last night.

Army sources in eastern Trincomalee said that 10 soldiers, including an officer, were killed and 25 other troops injured in the fighting. But, the official statement said one officer and eight soldiers were injured in the attack.

The sources said that the LTTE also suffered heavily in yet another limited offensive launched by the troops near Periyamadu in Thalladi area in north-west Mannar district yesterday. Fifteen rebels were reported killed in the attack. In another incident, eight rebels and one soldier were killed in four different encounters in northern Jaffna peninsula.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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Vaiko walks on edge as supporters hail Tigers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

ERODE, July 1 — A pro-LTTE procession by the MDMK ahead of its two-day conference made a hero out of Velupillai Pirabhakaran here today, throwing to the winds Mr Gopalasamy Vaiko's promise to the Prime Minister that his party would not embarrass the NDA over Eelam.

Youths with Pirabhakaran badges pinned on their shirts and cloth imprints tied on sleeves wound around the town in a large procession to the meeting venue at Solar some four km off, carrying banners that read "let Tamil Eelam blossom and let commander Pirabhakaran rule it."

The marchers warned President Chandrika Kumaratunga the Tigers would win the Sri Lankan war, and called for "the voice lending support to Eelam Tamils to reverberate in all directions". The "blood spilt by Eelam Tamils is our own," they said, and declared: "We will voice, we will voice, our demand for Tamil Eelam to blossom."

The slogans demanded the TRC chief, Mr VK Ramamurthy, be thrown out of the NDA for asking the MDMK and PMK be banned for having supported the LTTE.

MDMK supporters heckled a police video cameraman trying to film Pirabhakaran's pictures on their clothes, and snatched away his tape. Pro-LTTE slogans were mixed with some others on local issues, said to have been prepared by senior MDMK leaders.

Despite the open show of solidarity with the LTTE, however, Mr Vaiko continued to in-

sist today his conference was for the "awakening of Tamil Nadu" — not a forum to hail Pirabhakaran or the LTTE.

"Everybody is concerned about the welfare of the Sri Lankan Tamils. So are we," he said. But the MDMK is a "responsible party" participating in the government. "When leaders from the NDA, especially the Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, are participating, we know the level of restraint that we should show."

Mr Vaiko argued every coalition partner was entitled to its views, and allies needn't always agree. "At the same time, when you arrive at an area of concurrence, we'll behave as a responsible ally. This conclave will give the message that we are giving a better government than any of the previous Congress governments."

In contrast to the MDMK supporters' mood at the rally — but in keeping with their leader's conciliatory tone — Erode has been plastered with posters of Mr Vaiko and NDA leaders. These politically correct images, said the Tamil Nadu Congress chief, Mr EVKS Elangovan, have only recently replaced those of Mr Vaiko holding tiger cubs. Graffiti and slogans hailing Pirabhakaran have also been hurriedly wiped off town walls, residents said.

There are chances Mr Vaiko's tightrope walk between extremist cadres and "responsible" partnership will result in the conference adopting a resolution sympathising with "suffering Sri Lankan Tamils" — it will, however, stay clear of controversy that might embarrass Mr Vajpayee.

THE STATESMAN

'Pro-LTTE' overtones at MDMK meet

By M. R. Venkatesh

ERODE, JULY 1. Strong "pro-LTTE" and "pro-Eelam" overtones were unmistakable as the MDMK's two-day "Tamil Nadu Awakening Conference" began here amid the party chief, Mr. Vaiko's assertions of maintaining a moderate stance.

If Mr. Vaiko earlier in the day believed he could manage a "restrained show of strength", his hopes were dashed within hours when the opening rally by party cadres and volunteers turned into a virtual celebration of the LTTE's cause, "Tamil Eelam", and its "hero", Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran.

While a good number of the MDMK cadres unabashedly sported the LTTE chief's photographs on their shirts while marching through the town, the call for a "Tamil Eelam" as being the "only solution" to the Sri Lankan Tamils issue was loud and clear. The rallyists not only hailed Mr. Vaiko as the "revolutionary tiger" and "Prabhakaran of Tamil Nadu", some even saw the "blossoming of Tamil Eelam as inevitable" and the only way to end the "genocide against our Tamil brothers".

Except for the odd poster or two seeking to project Mr. Vaiko as the leader of the world's Tamils, the banners and welcome arches put up seemed to have consciously avoided any controversial "pro-Eelam" slogans.

The processionists, however, looked to convey a different message. Police removing some of Mr. Prabhakaran's photo-



MDMK volunteers holding photographs of the LTTE leader, Mr. V. Prabhakaran, during a rally in Erode on Saturday. — Photo: M. Moorthy

graphs with the LTTE insignia sold at Rs. 5 a piece, did not impede others from wearing it.

"I like Prabhakaran, he defends the Tamils," said an MDMK member.

Though the elderly MDMK partymen looked soberer, the fidelity with which others adhered to the slogans given by it to be raised in the rally, including the four on "Eelam Tamils", was a fair indication that it was not just a political show of strength.

As though there was a subtle link between the "Tamil card" and "Hindutva", at least one placard in the rally proclaimed Mr. Vaiko as the "Tamils' hero" and the BJP leader and the Prime

Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, the "Indians' hero". All this came to the fore after Mr. Vaiko told a group of reporters in the morning that while the party was concerned about the welfare of the Sri Lankan Tamils, it was "not going to any extreme level".

Asserting that the MDMK was a "responsible political party" which would uphold with dignity "the areas of agreement" among the partners of the National Democratic Alliance coalition at the Centre, he said, "we know the level of restraint to be observed".

Mr. Vaiko's remarks assumed significance in view of the unprecedented security arrangements for the participation of the

Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and other top NDA leaders tomorrow.

The DMK president and Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, the Union Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, and the Telugu Desam Party chief and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu, were the star speakers at a special session after the rally.

In an informal chat with reporters, Mr. Vaiko ruled out any discussion on the autonomy resolution passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, but said the need for a Constitution review would be one of the resolutions to be adopted.

Advani rejects Eelam demand

MDMK endorses Centre's stand

By Swati Das
The Times of India News Service
& Agencies

ERODE: On a platform where the majority opinion was that Eelam was the only solution to the Sri Lankan turmoil, Union home minister L.K. Advani on Sunday said a polite, but clear, no to Eelam, saying Balkanisation of India could not be allowed.

Addressing the Tamil Awakening Conference of the MDMK near here, he said, "I would like you to understand that the government of India is concerned not only about Tamils in Sri Lanka but also about people of Indian origin whenever their interests are in jeopardy. Just as we are concerned about the unity of the country, we would like to see that every citizen lives in peace. We should not do anything or say anything which seems to promote secessionism in any other country."

Making it clear that the Union government would not go the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) way, Mr Advani said, "We shall ensure that justice is done to Tamils and they are able to live in dignity and peace in Sri Lanka." Coming down heavily on the Congress for raising the Sri Lankan issue in a bid to split the NDA, he said, "First they tried to break the alliance at the budget session. Now they are taking advantage of the Sri Lankan issue."

On Sunday, around 1,000 Congressmen, led by TNCC chief E.V.K.S. Elangovan, were taken

into custody for staging a demonstration against the home minister.

After Mr Advani's departure, S. Ramadoss, leader of the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), a NDA constituent, launched a scathing attack on the Lankan government, saying Eelam was the only solution to solve the ethnic strife in the island. Claiming that Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee himself had said that Eelam was the only solution to the issue, he said once Eelam was achieved, the Tamils of that Eelam would be more a friend of India than Sri Lanka.

Despite Mr Ramadoss' fiery speech, the MDMK, termed as a pro-LTTE party by its political adversaries, chose to refrain from extending open support to the outlawed Tamil Tigers who are fighting the Sri Lankan army. The party endorsed the Centre's stand not to intervene

militarily in the island republic. In a resolution adopted at its two-day conference, the party thanked the Centre for rejecting Colombo's appeal for military assistance.

Meanwhile in New Delhi, the Prime Minister's Office on Sunday clarified that Mr Vajpayee had never stated that the autonomy resolution passed by the J&K assembly was within the constitution. The PM's press adviser H.K. Dua said Mr Vajpayee had only told that the question of autonomy to J&K would be considered "in accordance with the constitution".



L.K. Advani

TAMILS' TRAVAILS

- No promoting secessionism: home minister
- Eelam the only solution, says PMK chief Ramadoss
- MDMK supports refusal of military aid to Lanka

THE TIMES OF INDIA

3 JUL 2000

New efforts in Lanka

POLITICAL AND constitutional processes in Sri Lanka aimed at ending internal strife, and meeting Tamil aspirations, have followed a tortuous course over the last 15 years. One of the reasons has been an absence of understanding on principal issues between those in power in the island republic and those occupying the opposition benches, irrespective of parties. Indeed, there have been times when even the party in power suffered from a lack of internal consensus on key issues. This was among the major reasons why the India-Sri Lanka Agreement (ISLA) of 1987 was aborted amidst acrimony and blood-letting. The ruling UNP, it transpired, was divided on the ISLA, though its leader, President J.R. Jayewardene, had signed it. Fortunately, in the current round of negotiations, aided by mediatory help from the Norwegians and some quiet backing from India, hurdles of this nature have apparently been surmounted.

The good news is that the ruling People's Alliance Government of Chandrika Kumaratunga, and the Opposition under the leadership of Ranil Wickremasinghe, have jointly proposed constitutional changes relating to devolution of power between the Centre and the regions (called provinces earlier), though loose ends are still to be tied up. This will hopefully serve as insulation against a backlash from the conservative Sinhala elements who are wary of sharing power equitably with the country's Tamil minority. But nothing can be said at this stage of the response from the Tamil side, although the power-sharing proposals on offer within the framework of a united Sri Lanka are believed by many to be the best to emerge in recent years.

It is to the credit of the Sinhala leaders that they could bury political differences in an election year in order to come up with a practicable negotiating framework. Ms Kumaratunga has even said that the LTTE too could find a place in the proposed interim council if it gave up arms. The first response from the LTTE is not encouraging. Which means peace is some way yet. But the Norwegian mediators are said to be hopeful that the extremist Tamil organisation can join the dialogue at some future date. Only time will tell. One can only hope that this promising beginning is not nullified as in the past.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Lanka media hails ruling against censor

REUTERS & AFP

COLOMBO, July 2. — The Sri Lankan media today celebrated a landmark Supreme Court ruling against censorship by punishing the government with scathing editorials and running reports on the ethnic war earlier chopped by the censor.

The SC ruled on Friday that government censorship imposed in May after advances by Tamil Tiger rebels was illegal and ordered that a ban on a pro-Opposition publishing house be lifted.

It said Mr Ariya Rubasinghe, chief censor, had no authority to censor news reports or issue the order last month to shut down the Sunday Leader and

its Sinhalese-language sister publication Irida Peramuna.

The two anti-government weeklies resumed publication here today, two days after the Supreme Court ruling.

"In view of time constraints, the Sunday Leader today publishes a limited edition," the newspaper said, adding that from next week it would be

fully operational.

"Not just this paper, but all Sri Lankans should breathe a sigh of relief that justice has prevailed," the Sunday Leader said in a front page comment after it hit the stands for the first time since 21 May.

The newspaper said the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga was unlike-

ly to take the court judgment in its stride, but would seek other ways to muzzle the press.

"Even as we write, no doubt plotters are plotting and planners are planning on how best to silence the media and keep far from the public's ears the many truths that await the telling".

"The Sunday Leader has in the past angered the government for its investigative reporting. It is viewed as close to the main Opposition United National Party.

"The government must come to terms with the reality that we are in the new information age. Relying on archaic precedents and old-fashioned repression of the press will get them nowhere," the Sunday Times said

NEW ARMY COMMANDER

COLOMBO, July 2. — Major-General Lionel Balagalle will take over as the new commander of the Lankan army in a few weeks, *The Sunday Times* said. Lieutenant-General Sirilal Weerasooriya, whose extended term was to end on 15 December, will be asked to retire early to make way for Maj Gen Balagalle, the newspaper said. Maj Gen Balagalle, formerly the army chief of staff, was due to retire on 14 June, but his term was extended by President Chandrika Kumaratunga. — Reuters

THE STATESMAN

3 JUL 2000

Sri Lankan papers back on the stands

By Nirupama Subramanian, ¹⁰⁻¹⁵⁻⁸⁷ relinquishing his duties.

COLOMBO, JULY 2. Sri Lanka's newspapers, fettered for over a month by stringent censorship regulations, were at the weekend celebrating the freedom granted to them by the Supreme Court by publishing in full portions which the Government Censor had earlier blacked out.

The weekly *Sunday Leader*, known for its opposition to the Government of Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, was back on the stands today after the Supreme Court ruled that its closure by the Government was illegal.

Its re-opening edition declared that "not just this newspaper, but all Sri Lankans should breathe a sigh of relief that justice has prevailed".

In what was a major embarrassment for the Government, the Supreme Court ruled that the Competent Authority, as the censor is known, was an illegality, since there was no provision for his appointment under existing regulations.

Therefore, the censorship rules implemented by him also became illegal. As soon as the judgment was delivered, the Competent Authority announced he was

The censorship regulations had most hit the Sunday newspapers which, with their fly-on-the-wall reports about the weekly Cabinet meetings and juicy inside stories on the military and exposes on corruption, enjoy a good following.

Today it was all back after nearly two months. Gone were the white spaces in the news columns where the censor had scratched out what he believed were transgressions.

The Sunday Times, whose widely read column "Situation Report" about military matters suffered all these weeks, today published in full a report on military procurements.

"The Supreme Court judgment which held the Competent Authority's authority untenable and invalid in law, is another sign that the Government's legal advisers (if any) seem lost when it comes to legal fundamentals," the paper said in its editorial.

However, as the court did not rule against censorship itself, it is learnt the Government may bring in new regulations that will permit the appointment of a censor.

THE HINDU

3 JUL 2 000

Ramadoss backs Eelam, Advani advises restraint

JAYA MENON
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

ERODE, July 2. — Mr LK Advani today urged NDA's Tamil Nadu allies to maintain restraint on the Eelam issue and said just as India fought Pakistan's attempt at balkanisation, any country would oppose secessionism.

The PMK chief, Dr S Ramadoss, however, openly supported the LTTE and its struggle for an Eelam.

"Just as we in India are concerned about unity of the country and like to see that every citizen feels safe, I'm sure every other country would like to do so," the Union home minister said at the two-day MDMK conference here that began yesterday. "While we feel concerned about the welfare of Tamils in Lanka, we should also refrain from doing or saying anything that seems to promote secessionism in any other country," he said.

The NDA government had made it clear that it wouldn't go the IPKF way, Mr Advani said. But it would try to ensure that there was peace in Sri Lanka. He said he understood well the empathy of Tamils of Tamil Nadu for their brethren in Sri Lanka. The Centre, he said, was as keen as Tamil Nadu parties on ensuring that Tamils in Sri Lanka get justice and live a life of dignity and peace.

Mr Advani said adversaries of the NDA were using the Lanka issue to split the alliance. "They are disappointed to find that the DMK, PMK and the MDMK have unreservedly supported the government's policy on Sri Lanka and the MDMK conference is going to disappoint them further," he said.

But, no sooner had Mr Advani left the dais to board the special aircraft (to Chennai en route to Delhi), PMK leader Dr Ramadoss strongly supported the LTTE and its struggle for Eelam. "Sinhalese and Tamils can never live together. Eelam is the only solution. Only when Eelam blossoms will there be peace in India and South Asia," he told wildly cheering partymen.

He recalled Mr AB Vajpayee's 1986 speech at a conference organised by the Tamil Eelam Supporters Organisation. Mr Vajpayee, then in the Opposition, had pledged support to the Tamils' struggle in Lanka. Dr Ramadoss quoted Mr Vajpayee as saying that the blood spilled by Tamils in Lanka was "our own blood."

He requested people to boycott a popular vernacular daily that had criticised parties like the PMK and the MDMK for their pro-Eelam stand. Eelam would be friendly to India, Dr Ramadoss said, pointing out that Sri Lanka had not been friendly during India's war with Pakistan or China.

"Why should we feel shy or diffident to talk about Eelam? The Tamil Nadu chief minister, Mr M Karunanidhi, who heads a state of eight crore Tamils, should boldly air his views," Dr Ramadoss said, causing discomfiture to the MDMK leader, Mr Vaiko, who had taken care to restrain his partymen from shouting pro-LTTE slogans on the dais. Dr Ramadoss, however, claimed the MDMK leader shared his views on Eelam.

THE STATESMAN

India won't be responsible if Sri Lanka splits: Vaiko

By M.R. Venkatesh

ERODE, JULY 2. The MDMK general secretary, Mr. Vaiko, tonight declared that India would not be responsible if Sri Lanka "got divided" due to the "genocidal policy" pursued by the Chandrika Kumaratunga Government, and reiterated that his party had never pressed the Vajpayee Government to take recourse to any extreme step like division to resolve the Tamils issue.

Winding up the MDMK's two-day "Tamil Nadu Awakening Conference" here, Mr. Vaiko likened the plight and uprooting of the 'Eelam Tamils' in the wake of the current offensive by the Sri Lankan army, to that of the 'Pandavas' in the 'Mahabharatha'.

The 'Kurukshetra' battle was necessitated as the Pandavas were deprived of even five villages by the Kauravas, he pointed out. "If I were to say that the Eelam Tamils will eventually win, like the Pandavas did, I am only arguing analogically," Mr. Vaiko said to drive home the point that there was nothing anti-national about his assertion.

Accusing the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, of needlessly whipping up racial chauvinism, Mr. Vaiko said even in a recent message to her army she had told them not to despair as "they would win like the Sinhalese kings of yore." He wondered whether such language could inspire any confidence in the Tamils.

"We can also give an example by citing the conquest of our Chola kings, but we fully realise that we belong to India and are ready to make any sacrifice to uphold its unity and integrity," Mr. Vaiko said and added that merely seeking to voice the tragedy that had struck the 'Eelam Tamils' in various fora could not be construed as betraying India's interests.

Asserting that history was the best teacher, he said all through the post-Independent history of Sri Lanka, the Island Government had not honoured any agreement with the Tamils. The Buddhist clergy threw everything into the dustbin, including the 'Annexure-C proposals' authored by Mr. G. Parthasarathy.

It was in this background that apprehensions about the Sinhalese and Tamils no longer being in a position to co-exist had been voiced and it was under such circumstances that the DMK President and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, had merely suggested the Czechoslovakian model of peaceful separation, Mr. Vaiko said.

The MDMK leader also took the large gathering by surprise by disclosing that there was information about a 'serious threat' to the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani's life while participating in the Erode conclave today.

The Home Ministry officials had even alerted Mr. Advani about it, but the latter chose to participate in it saying he feared nothing as long as "Vaiko is around," the MDMK leader said.

Earlier, speaking at the Conference, the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, made it clear that the country would be prepared to offer any kind of humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka only if both sides to the conflict "separately ask" for such aid. India, under Mr. Vajpayee's leadership would not repeat the mistakes that were made in 1987-88, Mr. Fernandes said explaining the Centre's decision not to send the army to the Island nation.

The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, defending the autonomy resolution passed by the State Assembly recently, said their demand was well "within the Constitution." He wanted the 'wall of hatred' between India and Pakistan to collapse and dialogue initiated on all issues to ensure permanent peace between the two countries.

The Punjab Chief Minister, Mr. Prakash Singh Badal, said while major restructuring in Centre-State relations was unavoidable, there was room for improving State-to-State relations, particularly in the economic and cultural spheres.

The Senior Akali Dal leader and Union Minister of State for Sports, Mr. Dhindsa blamed the 'wrong policies' of the Congress (I) in the past for the terrorist problem which had plagued Punjab.

THE HINDU

3 JUL 2000

PM thanked for 'correct stand'

By Our Special Correspondent

ERODE, JULY 2. A key resolution on the Sri Lankan Tamils issue, adopted at the MDMK conference here, wholeheartedly thanked the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and the Union Government "for their correct stand on the on-going tragedy in Sri Lanka."

The resolution, recalling the developments in the 'war theatre' since November 1999, said Sri Lanka had procured sophisticated weapons from many countries, particularly Pakistan, and sought military assistance from India "with the objective of seeking a military solution to the ethnic strife." However, with the "sincere concern" for the suffering Tamils, the Indian Government rejected all the pleas of the Sri Lankan Government for military assistance and physical intervention, it said and recorded with appreciation India's categorical stand that it shall neither supply nor sell arms to the Island nation.

In another resolution, the MDMK said that a review of the Constitution was necessary in

line with the changing times, welcoming the Vajpayee Government's decision to constitute a panel to undertake the exercise. The review should also look into ensuring continuity of Parliament and the State Legislatures for their full terms, it urged.

Placing as many as 17 issues for consideration before the Constitution Review Commission, the MDMK sought the implementation of the recommendations of the Sarkaria and Rajamannar committees to devolve more powers to States.

Other demands raised included equal representation for all States in the Rajya Sabha, making all the languages listed in the Eighth Schedule, including Tamil, as Official languages of the Centre, nationalisation of river water resources, enabling the States to fix their own levels of reservation for Dalits and OBCs, scrapping of Article 356 and empowering States to decide on having two-tier or three-tier structure for local bodies.

Expressing concern at the intensifying caste divide in Tamil Nadu, the party declared in an-

other resolution that it was willing to go any length and pay any price "to create a casteless society".

Urging the Centre to allocate more funds for the implementation of the Sethu Samudram Project (deepening of the Palk Straits), the conference said it was imperative for the long-term economic growth of Tamil Nadu.

Paying rich tributes to the late rationalist leader Periyar's efforts for the uplift of women, that led to concrete benefits including making their marriageable age statutory, the MDMK demanded that the Constitutional amendment providing for reservation to women in Parliament and the Legislative Assemblies should be passed by the Centre at the earliest.

But curiously, the MDMK was silent on the percentage of reservation, saying "due representation" should be given to women.

Urging the Kerala Government to reconsider its approach to resolve the Mullaiperiyar dam issue, in way that enhanced good neighbourly relations between the two States, the party wanted the Centre to declare Tamil as a classical language.

THE HINDU

Lanka devolution plan may be put on hold

P K Balachandran
Colombo, July 3

S Lanka HF 14

INTER-PARTY CONSULTATIONS on a new Sri Lankan Constitution may be put on hold after the next round of talks between the ruling Peoples' Alliance (PA) and the opposition United National Party (UNP) on July 7 because parliamentary elections are near. Parliament is due to be dissolved on August 24 and elections to it are to be held within 11 weeks after dissolution.

Political leaders as well as analysts are of the view that given this tight timeframe, the government will not be able to finish discussions with various parties, including the Tamil and Muslim parties, place an agreed draft in Parliament, get it passed by a two-thirds majority and have it ratified by a referendum before the elections.

Recently, Sinhala communal groups demanded that they be consulted too and these might well be consulted.

There are innumerable other hurdles too and these also cannot be crossed in a hurry, points

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out Dr Pakiasothy Saravanamuttu, Director, Centre for Policy Alternatives. Listing the hurdles, he said the Tamil parties were not going to agree to the joint PA-UNP formulation on land, which was that power over land in a province would be vested in a Land Commission and not the provincial government.

The Tamil parties would not agree to the stipulation that the unification of the Tamil North and East should be subject to a referendum in five years' time. Then, there is the joint government-UNP proposal for an Interim Council for the North and East, but this is not going to satisfy the Tamil parties. Only EPDP, and to some extent, PLOTE, support it. Other parties say the interim council idea is only a ruse to favour the EPDP, a staunch ally of the government.

If, as proposed, representation in it is based on the current parliamentary representation from the North and East, the EPDP would get a lion's share of the council 73 seats. Dr Saravanamuttu wondered if it would be correct to go by the current parliamentary strength at the fag end of its life.

Then there is the ticklish question of powers to be devolved to the Interim Council. Should they be based on the agreed aspects of the new draft Constitution? If so, will the Tamil parties go along? There is yet no agreement on Muslim rights and representation in the Interim Council and this is a key issue, given the fact that the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress is a member of the PA. Last but not the least, there is the LTTE factor to contend with.

The LTTE has rejected the package in toto and dubbed support for it as treachery for which there is no forgiveness. No marks for guessing what it would do to thwart the council and its supporters.

Given these factors, the constitutional exercise may grind to a halt after July 7. Parties will then be steeped in election work. Though there is a substantial group of MPs both in the PA and UNP wanting a postponement of the polls, their leaderships do not want to be associated, at poll time, with a constitutional package which the majority Sinhalese may not like. The matter can be taken up only after polls.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

4 JUL 2000

Tamil leaders are up in arms against interim council plan

By Charu Lata Joshi

The Times of India News Service

COLOMBO: Having extended the deadline for formalising a constitutional package for the creation of an interim council for the North-Eastern provinces, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga seems to be up against a combined opposition from the Tamil leadership in the country. Even as a majority of the moderate Tamil parties seek to dissociate themselves from the LTTE, there is an emerging consensus between them and the Tamil Tiger rebels as far as the political package is concerned.



Chandrika K.

The LTTE, in a statement issued from its London headquarters had two days ago, rejected the package as a means to resolve the aspirations of the minority Tamil community. Close on the heels of a statement issued by Anton Balasingham, the LTTE's London-based spokesman, came a rejoinder issued by TELO leader N. Srikantha.

Adds EPRLF leader Suresh Premachandran, "Even though we don't wish to be identified with the LTTE, we can say that the present package for an interim council is watered down and is not a proper basis for discussion." The TELO leadership is more vehement. "What is being agreed to between the ruling People's Alliance and the opposition UNP, is a half-way home. How can any self respecting Tamil party accept this package?" For once the LTTE appears to enjoy a consensus on an issue with

other partners.

Says TULF leader, V. Anandsan-gari, "We had said even earlier that neither will the LTTE touch it nor will we. If we are not given control over the basic issue of land, how do you expect us to settle for this?" Once again, the 1985 Thimpu Principles, have emerged as the basic negotiating ground, acceptable to both the LTTE and the moderate parties.

The bone of contention for most Tamil parties is the proposal to hold a referendum in the Eastern provinces to decide on the issue of merger with the North, after the interim council has been in place for five years. "This is totally unacceptable. Any solution should ensure full-fledged self-rule for the Tamil nation in its traditional homeland," says Srikantha.

Meanwhile, government troops, encouraged by last week's military success, attacked another Tamil Tiger base in the north, killing at least five guerrillas, AP said quoting a government spokesman on Monday. One soldier also died in the fighting on Sunday in the Chavakachcheri area, nearly 10 km east of Jaffna, the spokesman, Ariya Rubasinghe, said.

The troops destroyed two rebel vehicles, Rubasinghe said. On Friday, the government had its first major advancing success since the rebels launched a big offensive in May to recapture their former capital Jaffna. Using artillery, the troops destroyed several front-line rebel bunkers in Welioya, 220 km north-east of the Sri Lankan capital. The rebels admitted losing 16 guerrillas, including 10 women fighters. They said 15 soldiers were also killed in the fighting.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

4 JUL 2000

PMK not to pressure NDA on Tamils issue

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JUL. 3. The Pattali Makkal Katchi founder, Dr. S. Ramadoss, met the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, here today and reiterated his party's stand that only an independent "Eelam" would bring about a lasting solution to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka.

Dr. Ramadoss was reported to have told Mr. Vajpayee that in 1989 the PMK had adopted a resolution "that Tamil Eelam was the only solution to put an end to the ethnic conflict in the island." Asserting that there was no change in his party's stand, he impressed upon the Prime Minister the need for India to help put an end to the hostilities between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan army.

However, according to sources, he was reported to have assured the Prime Minister that his party would not bring in any pressure on the NDA and that he would abide by the alliance's stand.

Though Dr. Ramadoss' meeting with the Prime Minister was scheduled quite some time ago, his assurance assumes significance in the wake of the MDMK's two-day "Tamil awakening conference" at Erode in Tamil Nadu, which heard pro "Eelam" demands.

Dr. Ramadoss also impressed on the Prime Minister the need for introducing a Constitution amendment Bill in the monsoon

session of Parliament to ensure that the existing 69 per cent reservation in Tamil Nadu to educational institutions and employment was not affected by the 50 per cent ruling of the Supreme Court. He also wanted the Centre to recognise the 18 national languages as official languages.

Dr. Ramadoss brought Mr. Vajpayee upto date about the latest manifestations of disunity among the NDA partners in Tamil Nadu, particularly the Tamizhaga Rajiv Congress chief, Mr. K. Ramamurthy, who has time and again locked horns with the PMK on various issues. Dr. Ramadoss wanted the Prime Minister to play the referee and if necessary, show a yellow card to Mr. Ramamurthy.

Dr. Ramadoss urged the Prime Minister to reconsider the Centre's decision to close the Hindustan Photo Films factory at Udhagamandalam.

While he was at mending fences, the PMK leader had the benefit of the company of Mr. N.T. Shanmugham, PMK representative in the NDA Ministry.

Dr. Ramadoss also met the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, and discussed the atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan Navy on fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu.

Later the PMK leader met the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, in his office and it was described as a courtesy call.

THE HINDU

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TUESDAY, JULY 4, 2000

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EELAM AND ERODE

THE HOME MINISTER'S decision to dignify the MDMK's so-called "Tamil Nadu Awakening Conference" by his presence was regrettable and has unquestionably hurt the national interest. The two-day-long political jamboree at Erode may have been staged by one of the NDA's constituents, but Mr. L. K. Advani ought to have considered (particularly, when the situation in Sri Lanka has reached a critical juncture) the kind of purposes the occasion would be used for. The main problem of course does not lie with the resolutions adopted at the conference; it may be noted (and with considerable relief) that the most sensitive and keenly watched one on Sri Lanka stopped merely at appreciating the stance taken by the Union Government in connection with the ongoing conflict in the island nation. What was objectionable of course were the strong pro-LTTE overtones that marked the meet. Pictures of youthful cadres bearing photographs of LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran. Slogans hailing the MDMK's chief Mr. Vaiko as the "Prabhakaran of Tamil Nadu". Voices (most notably that of the PMK leader Dr. S. Ramadoss) proclaiming that Tamil Eelam was the only solution to the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka. All in all, the attempt at sobriety reflecting in the MDMK's Sri Lanka resolution was drowned in the distressing endorsement of the LTTE and Eelam, a stance which stems directly from a sense of misplaced Tamil chauvinism.

Therefore, when Mr. Advani expressed happiness that the BJP's allies in Tamil Nadu "unreservedly support" the Centre's policy on Sri Lanka, he was either being extremely shortsighted or extraordinarily hypocritical. His charge, that the Opposition is using the Sri Lankan Tamil issue to create a rift in the NDA, is wholly irrelevant to the main issue at hand. The point is that there is a difference between the position adopted by the Centre and that endorsed by the NDA's allies in Tamil Nadu, particularly the

MDMK and the PMK. By supporting the creation of Eelam, the latter are peddling a line which is at total variance with the country's foreign policy and creating a situation which puts considerable and unwarranted pressure on New Delhi's attempt to respond sensitively to developments within Sri Lanka. Given such a divergence of views, it is ironical that both sides claim there are no differences. Clearly, this is a charade where everyone disagrees, only to agree.

At Erode, Mr. Advani said it was the Centre's endeavour to see that justice is done to the Tamil population in Sri Lanka in order to enable them to live with peace and dignity. While such a concern is perfectly legitimate, the best way of ensuring this is under a system which guarantees an adequate degree of political and financial autonomy to the island's Tamil population. In this context, it is extraordinary that the Sri Lankan President, Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga's devolution proposals which offer a far-sighted and comprehensive way out of the impasse have been conveniently ignored in the conference's fulminations against the Sri Lankan state. At a time when Sri Lanka is trying to iron out certain obstacles in the way of reaching a broad political consensus on the reform package, it is imperative that New Delhi's role is encouraging and supportive. The fact that the LTTE has rejected the package may be a dampener, but the process of forging a consensus must not be undermined by the continued intransigence of the militant organisation. The proposals must also not be allowed to be derailed by quibbles over details since the broad contours of the package are equitable inasmuch as it devolves a fair amount of power to the regions. Sri Lanka is currently at a political watershed. If India wants the Tamil population in the island to enjoy a measure of autonomy, we could do without conferences such as Erode. We could also do without a Home Minister who chooses to grace them.

THE HINDU

July 4, 2000

ADVANI AND EELAM

Home minister's plain speaking is timely

ALTHOUGH censorship should not have been imposed in Sri Lanka and that country's distinguished foreign minister, Laxman Kadirgamar, made no secret of his dislike for the measure, it would be churlish not to welcome the lifting of the restrictions. It is surprising that the same mistake is made again and again, in spite of demonstrably ill effects not only on domestic and international opinion but also on the troops involved in the actual fighting who do not need to be told by the head of the Media Centre that the military situation is better than it is. The effect on the civilian population is equally devastating. On the streets of Colombo, in shops and other public places, the common refrain is that the army is taking a beating because the Government will not tell. As much was officially admitted when a spokesman said earlier that with the improvement in the military situation, censorship on foreign media was being eased. The implication is obvious. Censorship implies that things are going badly, with this difference that no one is allowed to know just how badly. Rumour and panic take over and the effect is the opposite of what could possibly be intended. It is to be hoped that Sri Lanka will not treat its citizens and the international community, which wishes it well, with such conspicuous lack of maturity.

With respect, credit must also go to the country's Supreme Court for striking down the censorship order as illegal and *ultra vires* the Constitution. The judgment is cogently argued and is a model for other countries to follow. The Sri Lankan press has won a famous victory and it should be a precedent for the future. Ordering the lifting of the ban on the Leader group of newspapers and the award of compensation for loss caused by the enforced closure ought to jolt the administration out of their pathetic belief that what they do not allow to be published does not happen. It is to be hoped that the lesson will be learnt and those who advise the President will not seek another opportunity to repeat it. There is no government in the world that is not tempted to tame the press; wisdom lies in recognising that press and government have different functions, often adversarial, and while mutual respect is desirable, if government and media develop a cosy relationship, either the government are not governing or the press is not doing its job.

No comment on the situation can pass without applauding the home minister, LK Advani, for what he said in Chennai on 2 July. Addressing a meeting convened for the purpose of rousing cheap, chauvinistic passions, India's home minister plainly told his audience that dismemberment of Sri Lanka, implicit in the calls for Tamil Eelam, is not part of Government policy, which remains in support of the territorial integrity of the island nation. It took courage to say it at the time and place and although Vaiko was careful, Ramadoss, who heads another minuscule outfit was not. It is to be hoped that their ilk will not try to make a monkey out of the home minister again. These small time Tamil politicians whose space in the political spectrum is woefully limited, have been put in their place with verve and style and they ought not to recover too easily from the shock administered by the home minister's plain speaking. Well and bravely spoken, Sir!

THE STATESMAN

- 4 JUL 2000

MDMK meet leaves out thorny issues

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

ERODE, July 3. — For all the media hype that the Erode conclave organised by the MDMK would be used as a forum to propagate the LTTE's demand for a separate Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, it turned out to be a pretty insipid show.

For a party which had never hesitated to passionately air its love for the LTTE and its 17-year armed struggle for a separate Eelam, the MDMK and its leader, Mr Vaiko, put up a relatively sober show. The *puratchi puyal* (revolutionary storm, as he is referred to by partymen) was quite restrained, even going to the extent of saying that he was not insisting on secessionism in Sri Lanka but only to stop genocide of the Tamils there and give them equal rights in his speech late last night, while winding up the two-day show here.

Heeding to caution by the Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, earlier yesterday, that the Vajpayee government would not be a party to secessionism in any country, "especially a friendly neighbour," Mr Vaiko took care to leave out any references to the Eelam issue.

Except for a bitter tirade against the Sri Lankan President, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga, for her "half-hearted" attempts to solve the Tamil problem and against the Lankan armed forces for unleashing atrocities against

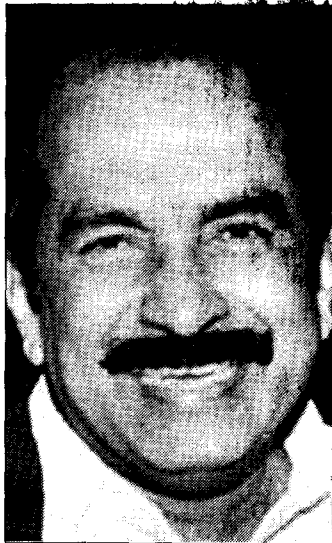
the Tamils there, Mr Vaiko never once broached the controversial Eelam issue in his speech.

However, the MDMK leader broke down, choking on his words as he spoke at length about the "physical torture and the barbaric acts" perpetrated on the Tamils by the Sri Lankan armed forces. If there were any doubts in the minds of the pro-Eelam lobby on his sudden softening on the issue, this emotional display would have reassured them that for Mr Vaiko and his party, Eelam was a subject very close to their hearts.

According to party sources, the MDMK had been forced by circumstances to leave out the strong pro-LTTE and pro-Eelam rhetoric that the party and its leader are known for. The Union home minister and the other NDA leaders had virtually "blackmailed" Mr Vaiko to take a more neutral stand on the issue, threaten-

ing to boycott the meeting if he failed to do so, said a senior MDMK leader.

In fact, the party had planned to pass a strongly-worded resolution favouring a separate Eelam. But the watered down version, said to have received Mr Advani's approval, merely thanked the Vajpayee government for its "correct" handling of the Lankan issue. Even the theme of the conference was changed from "Tamil awakening" to "Tamil Nadu awakening" on the insistence of the NDA leaders, it is said.



Mr Vaiko

GOVT RULES OUT EELAM BUT DEMANDS AUTONOMY FOR TAMILS

Lanka, LTTE favour Indian role in solving dispute: Mishra

New Delhi
3 JULY

INDIA SAID on Sunday that it had indications that both Colombo and the Tamil Tiger rebels wanted New Delhi to play a greater role in ending the ethnic fighting in Sri Lanka.

"There seems to be some desire on part of both parties that India should play a greater role to bring about an end to this," India's national security advisor Brajesh Mishra told STAR Television.

"The United States, the European Union, others, they are all saying that nothing can be done there without India's involvement," Mr Mishra added.

He reiterated the Indian government's stand on the demand by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

for a separate state.

"So far as the government's policy is concerned, the National Democratic Alliance's policy, — no Eelam, but the legitimate rights and grievances of the Tamil population must be



Mishra: Feeling the vibes

taken into account," Mr Mishra said.

The Sri Lankan military is fighting the LTTE rebels, who want a separate homeland for minority Tamils in the island nation's north and east.

The fighting in Jaffna has

ceased at present, but military officials say it is only a matter of time before the battle resumes again.

The LTTE said last week that taking Jaffna, their former stronghold, was their ultimate objective.

The Sri Lankan government has said it would never withdraw troops from Jaffna.

India brokered a peace accord between the rebels and Colombo in 1987 and sent troops to disarm the rebels but left three years later after the deaths of more than 1,000 Indian soldiers.

Asked how actively India would play a role of a facilitator in the crisis, Mishra said: "If we have a role to play there in mediating or whatever, it must be at the request of both sides. It cannot be at the request of one side." — Reuters

The Economic Times

4 JUL 2000

Jayakody's visit a thanksgiving mission

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, JULY 4. The Sri Lanka President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga's special envoy to New Delhi, Mr. Lakshman Jayakody, the Minister for Culture and Religious Affairs, will thank the Indian Government for extending "moral support" during Sri Lanka's hour of crisis. *J. S. Senaka*

Mr. Jayakody, a senior and respected member of the Kumaratunga Government, will meet the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Jaswant Singh, during his two-day visit to India that began today. "The mission does not seek to go beyond that," Foreign Ministry officials here said. Mr. Jayakody is also expected to brief New Delhi on the political developments here, including the progress on the constitutional reforms package.

The President's secretary, Mr. K. Balapatabendi, and Sri Lanka's High Commissioner designate to New Delhi, Mr. Senaka Bandaranayake, are accompanying Mr. Jayakody.

The Minister is carrying a letter of appreciation from Ms. Kumaratunga, expressing Sri Lanka's gratitude to India, especially for the visit by Mr. Singh.

"Sending a minister of Mr. Jayakody's seniority is a public way of saying thank you. We wanted it to be so," said an official. Sri Lanka will also send special envoys to six other countries, including Pakistan and China. Mr. Jayakody will double as the special envoy to Pakistan, and will be accompanied on that visit by the Army Chief, Lt.Gen. Srilal Weerasooriya. Reports in the local media have indicated that Lt.Gen. Weerasooriya may be Sri Lanka's next High Commissioner to Pakistan after he retires in Dece.

Pak. assures help

Sri Lanka bought multi-barrel rocket launchers from Pakistan in May, besides ammunition and small arms. *The Daily News* reported today that Gen. Musharaff had assured Sri Lanka of his country's continued support.

"Even India supported Sri Lanka militarily by sending troops where hundreds of Indian soldiers lost their lives in Sri Lankan soil. We did not go to that extent, but why cannot we support Sri Lanka, another brother nation," he is reported to have said at a press conference.

Ban on Tamil daily goes

Security forces permitted the reopening of the Jaffna Tamil daily, *Uthayan*, late last night.

The management of the newspaper had complained to the Inspector-General of Police that the security forces continued to keep its office in Jaffna closed.

THE HINDU

- 5 JUL 2000

Tamils laud Panja's 'package', Sinhalese wary

P. K. Balachandran
Colombo, July 5



SRI LANKAN Tamils have welcomed Indian Minister Ajit Kumar Panja's statement that India has a devolution package that will help solve the ethnic question in Lanka.

But a radical group of Sinhalas has said that a foreign intervention is "undesirable."

The Minister for State for External Affairs, Mr. Ajit Kumar Panja, had told reporters in Bangalore on Tuesday that India had a devolution package for Sri

Lanka which would, at once, safeguard the unity and integrity of the island country and guarantee rights for the Tamil minority there. Mr. Panja refused to give details, but said that the package would be offered at the "appropriate time."

TULF senior vice president V. Anandasangari wondered if India would by itself come out with a devolution package, given the troubles it was having in Kashmir and Assam in regard to autonomy. But he would welcome an Indian initiative.

"India should step in and suggest improve-

Blast in court

ONE PERSON was killed and 13 were injured three of them seriously, when a bomb exploded in a court premises in the outskirts of Colombo on Wednesday. The police said the injured included several prisoners who were brought to the court at Gangodawila.

UNI, Colombo role, the TULF leader said. "Neither the Sri Lankan government nor the LTTE can brush it aside. India cannot be ignored," Mr. Anandasangari said.

ments in the package now being worked out between the (ruling) Peoples' Alliance (PA) and the (opposition) United National Party (UNP). It should then get the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to discuss it," Mr. Anandasangari said. Given its position in the region, now acknowledged internationally, India should play a pro-active role, the TULF leader said.

The spokesman of Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), Mr. K. Srikantha, said that India ought to play a role, but he wondered how it could when the LTTE was a banned organisation in India.

The LTTE, he said, faced a "psychological barrier" in regard to India because it was a banned organisation in that country. How could the LTTE consider India a neutral party with the ban on? he asked.

Former Chief Minister of the Tamil North Eastern Province, Mr. A. Varatharajaperumal, said that India should step in quickly as the situation in Jaffna was grave. The people in Jaffna were wondering when the fighting would erupt again and they would have to flee. The LTTE, he said, was on a recruiting spree.

497 India reiterates support to Sri Lanka

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JULY 5. India today renewed its support to any "forward movement" in the Sri Lankan political process to find a lasting solution to the ethnic conflict in the island-nation.

This was conveyed by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, to the visiting special envoy of the Sri Lankan President, Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, here today.

The Sri Lankan special envoy, Mr. Lakshman Jayakody, called on Mr. Vajpayee late this evening and handed over a letter from Mrs. Kumaratunga expressing Colombo's appreciation of India's support during the current crisis.

According to diplomatic sources, Mr. Vajpayee enquired about the road-map for the current effort to resolve the ethnic crisis. Mr. Jayakody briefed the Prime Minister of the latest move by Colombo to build a consensus on

granting substantive powers to the Tamil minority.

Earlier in the evening, Mr. Jayakody had a 40-minute meeting with Mr. Jaswant Singh.

In his remarks to the press after his meeting with Mr. Singh, Mr. Jayakody said Colombo wanted to present the package of proposals on devolution before the end of this month to the outgoing Parliament.

Questioned on the apparent rejection of the devolution package by the LTTE, Mr. Jayakody pointed to the emerging consensus between the ruling party, the Opposition United National Party and various segments of Tamil opinion.

Mr. Singh, according to a Foreign Office spokesman, reiterated India's support to a political process that will find a solution within the framework of Sri Lanka's unity and territorial integrity and meets the aspirations of all sections of the nation.

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India still reaping benefits of 1987 pact, says Lankan expert

PK Balachandran
Colombo, July 22

WHILE MOST people tend to be dismissive about the 1987 India-Sri Lanka accord saying that it is now only a scrap of paper, a Sri Lankan diplomat-turned-scholar asserts that India is still reaping the benefits of the accord, thirteen years down the line. "The accord is by no means moribund because India continues to enjoy the geo-political gains made through it," says Dr John Gooneratne, former Sri Lankan ambassador and author of *A Decade of Confrontation: Sri Lanka and India in the 1980s*, to be launched here on the eve of the 13th anniversary of the accord on July 28. Dr Gooneratne told *The Hindustan Times* that India had retained its supremacy over Sri Lanka as envisaged in the letters exchanged between President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as part of the accord. "And with Sri Lanka firmly in its sphere of influence, India has secured its southern frontier," he pointed out.

The identical letters had stated that Sri Lanka would ensure that the employment of any foreign military or intelligence personnel would not prejudice Indo-Lanka relations; that Trincomalee or any other Sri Lankan port would not be made available for military use by any country in a manner pre-

judicial to India's interests; that the work of restoring and operating the Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm would be undertaken as an Indo-Sri Lankan joint venture and that Sri Lanka's agreement with foreign broadcasting organisations would be reviewed to ensure that their facilities were not used for military or intelligence purposes.

Dr Gooneratne argues that the recent events clearly show the relevance of these stipulations. After toying with the idea of by-passing India and getting the help of other

countries, Sri Lanka has realised that India, a regional power, the only neighbour, and a country which has a natural interest in finding a solution to the Tamil question, cannot be wished away. It is now 'standard practice to keep India briefed on all issues of interest to her. Following the May crisis in Jaffna, Colombo

UNP pulls out of talks

UNITED NATIONAL Party chief Ranil Wickremesinghe walked out of the constitutional talks with Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga on Friday saying that he was being unjustly accused by the state media of clandestinely meeting an LTTE leader in Singapore recently. Wickremesinghe said that things had come to such a stage that the Kollupitya police were investigating the alleged meeting with Gnanakoon, the LTTE leader.

HTC, Colombo

had to look to New Delhi first, and take it into confidence before buying arms from Pakistan and Israel. When India expressed displeasure about Norwegian facilitation for talks with the LTTE, Sri Lanka put it on the backburner. As regards the Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm, the *Daily Mirror* had reported that India thwarted a plan to lease it to a foreign firm. But Dr Gooneratne notes that India is no longer as interfering now as in the eighties, and is subtle in making its demands, having learnt the lessons of the turbulent eighties.