

# Resurgent tribalism in Fiji

By Sam Rajappa

Island States

*Over decades, the gulf between the indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians has widened.*

THE CRUX of the problem facing the Republic of Fiji Islands, which has witnessed three *coups d'état* since independence from British colonial rule in 1970, is resurgent tribalism. Even after the historic July 18, 2003 judgment of the Supreme Court, ordering Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase to include representatives of the Fiji Labour Party in his Cabinet, the Government has been playing truant. The address of the President, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, to the joint session of Parliament on July 28 stressed the paramountcy of the indigenous Fijian community and asserted that the Blueprint Action Programme contained in the election manifesto of Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua, the party of the Prime Minister, would continue to be implemented. The Blueprint is a 20-year development plan for the exclusive benefit of Fiji's indigenous communities, including Rotumans.

When European colonisers gobbled up Melanesia in the South Pacific in the 19th century, the Fiji archipelago comprising 320 islands, not all inhabited and dubbed as Cannibal Isles, had no takers. To get over this seeming neglect by the 'white man,' Ratu Seru Cakobau, high chief of Bau Island, embraced Christianity in 1854, emerged as the most powerful among the high chiefs, and proclaimed himself *Tui Viti* (King of Fiji). In 1874, Cakobau, in consultation with the other high chiefs, requested Queen Victoria of England to annex Fiji Islands to the British empire and declared her as their Chief of Chiefs. Flattered by the honour, the British allowed the chiefs to retain power traditionally exercised by them, and formed the *Bose Levu Vakaturaga* (Great Council of Chiefs), which, to this day, wields considerable power in Fiji.

Not knowing what to do with the latest acquisition of the jewel in Britain's crown of colonies, Arthur Gordon, who was appointed the Governor of Suva, capital of Fiji, requested his principals to recruit indentured labourers from India to clear the forests in Fiji and raise sugarcane plantations. Two labour depots were opened, one in Kolkata and the other in Chennai. Between May 1879 and November 1916, when the indentured system was abolished, 60,553 workers were transported from India to Fiji in 87 ships. According to the Girit agreement, they were to work initially for a period of five years, after which they would be set free, although no return fare to India was offered. However, if they signed up for another five years, they were promised return passage. Hardly anyone chose to return. After the

abolition of the indentured system, more Indians, mostly from Gujarat, migrated to Fiji and entered into business activities in their adopted country.

Having lived together for long in barracks in the most inhuman conditions in the initial stages and subsequently among aliens with a different culture, the Indian community, irrespective of caste or creed, achieved a great degree of integration not witnessed in its motherland. A hybrid Hindi became their *lingua franca*. Hindus and Muslims lived as neighbours in complete harmony and participated in each other's religious and social festivities. Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages were quite common among them.

Over years and decades, the gulf between the indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians has widened. The two groups have completely different attitudes and philosophies of life. The indigenous Fijian culture is that of a communally kin-based organisation, which restricts economic activity towards an individualistic way of living. The Indo-Fijian attitude is to achieve main ends in life by individual hard work. The Fijian chiefs wanted to preserve the old order in which they have held a privileged position. Commoners owed their chiefs allegiance and paid them tribute in food and other material goods. Thus there existed two separate orders and two different ways of life until Fiji became independent.

While the indigenous Fijians were content to remain a colony of Britain, Indo-Fijians wanted independence. They formed the first political party in the country, the National Federation Party (NFP), and agitated for independence. As a counter move, indigenous Fijians organised the Alliance Party under the leadership of Ratu Kamisese Mara, who eventually became the first Prime Minister of Fiji. Under the 1970 Constitution of Fiji drawn up by the British, Indo-Fijians, who accounted for 48 per cent of the population, and indigenous Fijians, with 44 per cent, were given 22 seats each in the 52-member Parliament. Europeans, part-Europeans and Chinese, who together constituted eight per cent of the population, were given eight seats under the category of General Electors. The Indo-Fijians' demand for a common electoral roll with 'one-man one-vote,' undiluted democracy, and no racialism was rejected. With the support of the General Electors, the Alliance Party was able to form the first Government af-

ter independence with Ratu Mara as Prime Minister. He continued in office for a second term. In the third general election held in 1987, the multi-racial Fiji Labour Party (FLP) made its debut in alliance with the NFP and swept the polls. Timoci Bavadra of the FLP, an indigenous Fijian, became Prime Minister, but his 11-member Cabinet was dominated by Indo-Fijians belonging to both the NFP and the FLP.

Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka, a young officer of the Fiji Army who had obtained a Master's degree in Defence Studies from Madras University, staged a *coup* and brought the country under military rule. Interestingly, the subject of his M.A. thesis was "How to stage a successful coup." Promoting himself to the rank of Major General, Rabuka abrogated the 1970 Constitution and imposed a new one in 1992, under which Indo-Fijians were reduced to second-class citizens; among other things, they could not hold the office of President or Prime Minister. There was a mass migration of Indo-Fijians to countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. This altered the demographic profile of the country. The process continues even to this day and the proportion of Indo-Fijians in the population has come down to 44 per cent. Fiji was suspended from the British Commonwealth while the European Union and neighbours like Australia and New Zealand imposed economic sanctions. The economy suffered and unemployment grew.

To arrest the trend, a new Constitution was drawn up under the guidance of Sir Paul Reeves, a former Governor-General of New Zealand, and endorsed by all political parties in Fiji. It provided for a 71-member House of Representatives, in which 46 members were to be elected from four separate electoral rolls and 25 from an open electoral roll. Voters registered as indigenous Fijians were to elect 23 members, Indo-Fijians 19, Rotumans one; and three were to be elected from the mixed races roll. Under Article 99 of this Constitution, any party that wins 10 per cent or more of the total number of seats is entitled to be represented in the Cabinet in proportion to its numbers and the Prime Minister must establish a multi-party Government. The Constitution was adopted in 1997 and elections were held in 1999. Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, who led the FLP at the polls, emerged with a majority and became the first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister.

Although Mr. Chaudhry did establish a multi-party Cabinet by accommodating a couple of minor indigenous Fijian parties with which the FLP had an electoral alliance, he kept the Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei, the party of Gen. Rabuka that had contested the election on the slogan of "Fiji for the Fijians" and emerged with more than 10 per cent seats, out of his Cabinet.

While the SVT was content to remain in the Opposition, the powerful timber lobby that made millions of dollars from the illegal logging of mahogany for which Fiji is famous, pressed into service George Speight, a part-Fijian businessman, to bring down the Chaudhry Government. Leading seven hooded men with semi-automatic assault rifles and pistols and backed by certain extreme right wing elements in the Fiji Army, Speight held Mr. Chaudhry, his Cabinet colleagues, and MPs belonging to the ruling coalition captives in Parliament House in Suva for nearly two months. The armed forces in Fiji, incidentally, are the exclusive preserve of the indigenous communities. Mr. Chaudhry, whose ancestors hailed from Haryana, looked to India in vain. When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi laid the foundation stone of the Girit Centre in Suva in 1981, she said: "I feel somewhat like a mother about the welfare of a married daughter who has set up home far away." Many years later, all that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee could do was to say that the coup in Fiji was "not acceptable to India."

Eventually the Army installed Mr. Qarase as interim Prime Minister and he, in turn, set up a Government of indigenous Fijians to the exclusion of Indo-Fijians. In the general election that followed in 2001, Mr. Qarase's SDL won 32 seats, four short of an absolute majority, and the FLP 27. Mr. Qarase enlisted the support of like-minded parties such as the Conservative Alliance Matanitu Vanua, the New Labour Unity Party, and two independents while extending a formal invitation to Mr. Chaudhry to join his Cabinet to fulfil the constitutional requirements without really meaning it.

Mr. Chaudhry challenged the denial of representation to the FLP in the Qarase Cabinet in the High Court, the Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court and obtained favourable verdicts. Mr. Qarase, left with no option, grudgingly agreed to accommodate 14 FLP nominees without dropping his allies or reducing the number of the SDL nominees in his 22-member Council of Ministers. The FLP, however, can play a more effective role by occupying the Opposition benches as willed by the people of Fiji in the 2001 election.

# TUG OF WAR IN FIJI

## Court Verdict A Double-Edged Sword

By SAM RAJAPPA

The 18 July judgment of the Supreme Court of Fiji ordering Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase to accommodate the Fiji Labour Party in his cabinet was expected. The 1997 Constitution leaves no scope for ambiguity. Article 99 section 5 of the Constitution says: "In establishing the Cabinet, the Prime Minister must invite all parties whose membership in the House of Representatives comprises at least 10 per cent of the total membership to be represented in the Cabinet in proportion to their number in the House."

### No partnership

In the September 2001 general election, the first after the May 2000 coup which overthrew the Fiji Labour Party government of Mahendra Chaudhry, the first Indo-Fijian to become Prime Minister, the Soqosoqo Duavatanu Lewenivanua of Qarase won 32 seats in the 71-member House of Representatives. The FLP, though multi-racial but dominated by Indo-Fijians, won 27 seats. The remaining 12 seats were captured by minor parties and independents. The President, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, invited Qarase, leader of the single largest party, to form the government. And Qarase enlisted the support of like-minded parties such as the Conservative Alliance Matanitu Vanua of George Speight, leader of the 2000 coup who is undergoing life imprisonment for treason, the new Labour Unity Party and two independents.

Under the 1997 Constitution, the SDL and the FLP alone qualified for Cabinet posts but the two parties were incompatible. Nevertheless, Qarase went through the motions of inviting the FLP to join his Cabinet. In his letter of invitation to Chaudhry dated 20 September, 2001, Qarase said: "I should, however, be candid in stressing that I already have the necessary number to maintain and sustain our position in the House of Representatives as a viable, stable and effective government. Our policies and your politics on a number of key issues of vital concern to the long-term stability of our country are diametrically opposed. Given this, I genuinely do not think there is sufficient basis for a workable partnership with your party in my Cabinet." He also said the requirement under section 99(5) of the Constitution was "both unrealistic and unworkable."

Ignoring the barb, Chaudhry wrote back to Qarase saying how he was "looking forward to working together with your party to rebuild Fiji in a spirit of national reconciliation." Qarase was not amused. Emphasising their differences, Qarase said "running a country is a serious business. It is not a question of simply getting in there and then running into trouble at the first Cabinet meeting," and requested Chaudhry to take

on the role of leader of the opposition. "I give you and the whole country a firm assurance that we shall govern Fiji in the best interests of all its people," Qarase said in his letter to Chaudhry.

When the British gave independence to Fiji in 1970, they awarded a Constitution which was tilted in favour of indigenous Fijians who were slightly outnumbered by Indo-Fijians. Steady

unanimously upheld the verdict of the lower courts. Delivering the historic judgment, Chief Justice Daniel Fatiaki said: "It requires the Prime Minister to select persons from the FLP for appointment to the Cabinet, to advise the President to appoint those persons as Ministers. Article 99 provides an important practical tool by which power sharing is to be achieved. Of



migration of Indo-Fijians in search of pastures new in the last three decades which witnessed three bloodless coups, has reduced their population to 44 per cent against 48 per cent of indigenous Fijians. Lt.-Col. Sitiveni Rabuka of the Fijian Army, who learnt the art of staging successful coups at the Department of Defence Studies, Madras University, in the early 1980's, staged two coups in 1987 against the multi-ethnic government of Bavadra in which Indo-Fijians played a dominant role and brought Fiji under military rule. The 1970 Constitution was abrogated and an out and out racist one imposed in 1990 under which the Indo-Fijians could never hold the office of the President or the Prime Minister of the country.

### Historic judgment

Expulsion from the British Commonwealth of nations and growing isolation of Fiji under the military rule of Rabuka forced him to discard the 1990 Constitution and adopt a new one and hold elections. A new Constitution was adopted in 1997 and elections held under its provisions in 1999 which saw the emergence of the FLP as the largest party and Chaudhry became the Prime Minister. Before he could complete one year in office his government was overthrown by George Speight.

Denial of representation to the FLP in the Qarase Cabinet led the FLP to challenge it in the courts. The High Court and the Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the FLP against which the Qarase government appealed to the Supreme Court. A five-member Bench of the Supreme Court

course it requires good faith and honest dealings on both sides of politics." Mr. Justice Fatiaki also ruled that it did not require prior agreement about policies and political agendas. Emphasising the concept of power sharing among the different communities as central to the 1997 Constitution which he described as the "tools to make multi-party government possible." Mr. Justice Fatiaki said it did not require the Prime Minister to accept a minority position in the Cabinet. When Article 99 was properly applied, the majority party or coalition would always have a majority in the Cabinet.

Left with no option but to accept the verdict of this verdict, Qarase grudgingly extended an invitation to Chaudhry. At the same time, Qarase made it clear that he would remain loyal to his colleagues in the government. "Let me assure my party, the SDL, its coalition partners and our supporters that in accommodating the requirements of the 1997 Constitution, I will remain loyal to them. They have been loyal to me and they will receive my loyalty in return," he said. By way of rewarding loyalty, Mr. Qarase decided to form a jumbo Cabinet of 36. By retaining all the 22 Ministers in his present Government, he will have to offer 14 berths to the FLP to ensure proportionality envisaged in the Constitution.

Should the FLP choose to join the Qarase Government, not only the 36-member Cabinet will be unwieldy but also the FLP with 14 members will remain a rump with hardly any influence over their indigenous Fijian counterparts. Worse still is the near total

absence of opposition in Parliament. When the FLP joins the ruling coalition its strength will go up from 42 to 69 in the 71-member House, leaving only two to occupy the opposition benches. With its perpetual minority status in the Cabinet, the FLP could neither swing decisions in its favour nor oppose the government on the floor. Hardly an enviable position to be in.

Another disturbing aspect of the post-judgment politics in Fiji is the selection of FLP nominees for Cabinet posts. The Prime Minister must consult the leader of the FLP but the Supreme Court judgment has made the point very clear that the right of the FLP leader to be consulted is not a right of concurrence. In other words, Qarase need not accept Chaudhry's nominees for the Cabinet. The choice is entirely the Prime Minister's. Realising this aspect, Chaudhry has selected a panel of 25 out of the 27 FLP MPs for the consideration of the Prime Minister.

### Mandated role

Under these circumstances, Chaudhry and the FLP could serve Fiji in general and the Indo-Fijian community in particular better by opting to remain in the Opposition. The 1997 Constitution confers considerable powers and privileges on the leader of the opposition. For instance, the Senate (Upper House) consisting of 32 members is made up of 14 members recommended by the Bose Levu Vakaturaga (Great Council of Chiefs), nine on the advice of the Prime Minister, eight on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and one on the advice of the Council of Rotuman. The Chief Justice of Fiji is appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister following consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

A strong parliamentary opposition is essential for a vibrant democracy. The leader of the opposition is shadow Prime Minister and the shadow Cabinet is drawn from members of the main opposition party. If the FLP joins the government and the opposition is left with just two members, both belonging to minority communities, they will not be taken seriously as an alternative government. The 1997 Constitution provides for the setting up of sector standing committees in the House of Representatives with a view to giving members of the opposition and backbenchers of the ruling coalition an opportunity to consider legislative proposals and independent reports on the government like those of the Auditor-General. The truncated opposition could hardly find enough members to occupy due places in Parliament Committees like the public Accounts Committee.

The FLP after all was voted to occupy the opposition benches by the people of Fiji in 2001. By playing its mandated role it could serve the people better than by occupying the treasury benches as unwelcome guests waiting for crumbs from Qarase's table.

*The author, a veteran journalist who retired from The Statesman, is based in Chennai.*

SATURDAY, JULY 26, 2003

Indian States

## ETHNICITY AND POLITICS IN FIJI

POLITICS IN THE Pacific island nation of Fiji has come a long way, with a Supreme Court ruling helping to heal the wounds inflicted by three coups since Fiji won independence from Britain in 1970. It is not clear whether the mainly Indian origin Fiji Labour Party (FLP), ousted from power by a chauvinistic and reactionary cabal in May 2000, will be given its due place in governance as directed by the Supreme Court. But the court ruling has at least shown up the reality that the multi-ethnic 1997 Constitution, itself the outcome of a decade-long struggle for democracy and equity, is not being worked either in letter or in spirit. The concept of power sharing among the main communities in the island is central to this Constitution, which was evolved through the bitter experience of three decades. The previous two Constitutions, the first adopted in 1970 and the second imposed in 1990 by the Rabuka regime, did a grave injustice to Fijians of Indian origin by denying their political rights and due.

Article 99(5) of the present Constitution, on the other hand, is very clear. Any party holding at least 10 per cent of seats in the House of Representatives has a legal entitlement to be represented in the Cabinet in proportion to its numbers in the House. In Commonwealth-supervised elections held in September 2001, the FLP led by Mahendra Chaudhry won 27 seats in a House of 71, against the 32 seats won by the Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase's party, Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL), which draws its support from indigenous Fijians. Mr. Qarase wrote to Mr. Chaudhry inviting his party to join the Government and Mr. Chaudhry promptly accepted the offer. But the Prime Minister, in his recommendation to Fiji's President, did not include any representatives of the Labour Party. The issue went to the courts and

eventually the Supreme Court ruled in favour of Mr. Chaudhry's party. A week of parleying has, however, failed to end the political stalemate. There is no reason to fear a repeat of the ethnic eruptions that targeted people of Indian origin in the summer of 2000. In a tiny land that has been no stranger to military takeovers, the last coup is remembered for the gangster-style methods used. A gang of adventurers led by George Speight, representing powerful interests, held Mr. Chaudhry and his Cabinet at gunpoint inside the country's Parliament in Suva for nearly two months. Fortunately, the damage was undone through the intervention of the Commonwealth, other forces and the country's higher judiciary, with the result that Speight is now locked up, serving a life sentence for treason.

"Indians" today constitute about 44 per cent of the population, compared with 48 per cent made up of "native Fijians." Mr. Qarase, the current favourite of the Fijian establishment, is evidently reluctant to share political power with the democratic representatives of the Indian people. The question of legal entitlement is important, but a political question must be independently asked: will Mr. Chaudhry's party serve its constituency better by going into the Government or by remaining in opposition? With Mr. Qarase apparently unwilling to drop any of his 22 Ministers, if Mr. Chaudhry exercises his party's entitlement and claims 14 Cabinet seats, there will be no fewer than 36 Ministers in a 71-member House of Representatives. Moreover, the Leader of the Opposition in the Fijian constitutional scheme is a powerful figure. Perhaps the politically astute course for the up-standing FLP leader is, having asserted his people's entitlement, to turn down a political rival's grudging invitation.

## Fiji Indians offered 14 Cabinet posts

7/24/03  
487

SUVA (FIJI), JULY 23. Fiji's Nationalist Prime Minister caved in Wednesday to a Supreme Court order to offer a proportion of seats in his Cabinet to the ethnic Indian-dominated Labour Party, but also expanded the Cabinet so that the current indigenous Fijian Ministers can keep their seats.

The Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, said Labour would be offered 14 seats in the Cabinet, but that the body would be expanded from 21 members to 36. Ethnic Fijians will retain their majority with 19 seats. The other three Ministers include an ethnic Indian Minister and a Minister who is part Fijian and part European.

In a strange twist to the nationally televised announcement, Mr. Qarase then urged the Labour leader and political

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rival, Mahendra Chaudhry, not to fill the 14 new seats, saying it would be a "recipe for unstable and ineffective" Government.

Mr. Qarase said that Labour could not be trusted to cooperate in implementing government policies which it had been "relentless and vocal" in attacking for the past two years.

Labour doesn't have any seats in the current 21-member Cabinet despite occupying about one-third of the seats in Parliament. By contrast, indigenous Fijians have 19 Cabinet seats.

In a ruling last Friday, the Fiji Supreme Court said Mr. Qarase was required by the constitution to offer the Labour Party up to eight Cabinet posts, a number based on the 27 seats it holds in the troubled Pacific nation's 71-seat Parliament. — AP

## Fiji PM offers to meet deposed rivals

SUVA, JULY 21. The Fiji Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, today invited key political rivals for talks this week on the issue of forming a multi-ethnic Cabinet in response to a Supreme Court ruling.

On Friday, Mr. Qarase lost his last legal bid to keep the deposed Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, and his Fiji Labour Party (FLP) out of the Cabinet when the court ruled that power sharing was required by the Constitution.

Though the court ordered creation of a multi-party Cabinet without delay, Mr. Qarase has not spoken yet with Mr. Chaudhry.

But speaking on Fiji Television, he issued an invitation to Mr. Chaudhry and the FLP — which draws much of its support from the Indian community— to talks on Wednesday morning.

Mr. Qarase said he would invite Mr. Chaudhry to submit a Cabinet list, but made it clear he still believed the differences between the two sides would be too great.

Mr. Chaudhry was the country's first Indian Prime Minister, elected in 1999, but was overthrown in a coup led by now

convicted George Speight in May 2000.

Mr. Chaudhry said he had received the invitation, but felt that the Government was trying to hold the issue up.

"It is not right for the Prime Minister to drag his feet on the issue," Mr. Chaudhry said, noting that the court had ordered for action without delay. — AFP

### India welcomes verdict

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 21. India today welcomed the July 18 ruling by the Fiji's Supreme Court that a multi-party Cabinet as per the country's Constitution was "obligatory."

"India also welcomes the statement made by the Prime Minister, Mr. Laisenia Qarase, that he will abide by the Court's decision," the Foreign Office spokesman told presspersons.

"It is hoped that in the coming days, both sides will be able to reach an accord and arrangement which will fully comply with the Court's judgement, in the best interests of Fiji and its people," he added.

22 JUL 2003

THE HINDU

US 28/6

# Sentences unprecedented, says Judge

SUVA, JUNE 27. Two convicted traitors were today sentenced to life imprisonment with heavy minimum terms to serve for their role in Fiji's 2000 coup.

The sentences, described by the High Court Justice, Andrew Wilson, as internationally without precedent, came after Parliament retrospectively scrapped the mandatory death sentences and issued new sentencing guidelines 11 days ago.

The former politician, Timoci Silatolu, was sentenced to life with a minimum of nine years to be served from tomorrow. Journalist, Jo Nata, was given life with a minimum of seven years. The men have already served three years in Suva Prison since their arrest.

Neither man showed any emotion at the sentence, and neither had friends or support-

ernment of Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry.

They were first charged with treason in August 2000 and in February 2002 Speight pleaded guilty and was sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted to life imprisonment within hours. Nata and Silatolu pleaded not guilty and went to trial, which started on June 4 last year. They were convicted in March.

Nata had been Speight's media organiser while Silatolu although a member of Mahendra Chaudhry's coalition Government, had coordinated the assault on Parliament by Speight and six special forces soldiers. He was on the floor of the House and joined Speight immediately, being sworn in one point as Prime Minister.



**A policeman stands beside the sculptor of a Fijian warrior outside the Supreme Court in Suva in this March 2003 file photo. The Court is holding a rare session to decide on the legality of the Government, which took office 20 months ago after a general election restored democracy to the coup-plagued Fiji.**

ers in the court, which was filled with lawyers, diplomats and reporters.

The two were convicted for country's first Indian-led Gov-

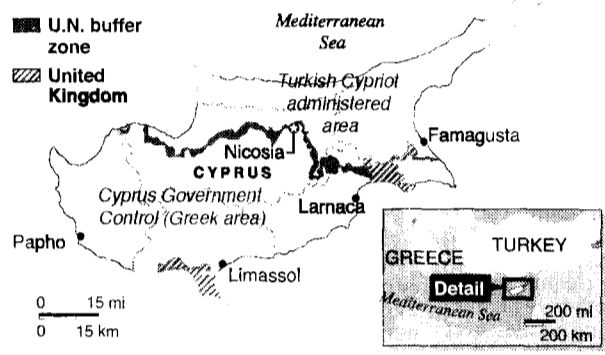
28 JUN 2003



## Mending a divided land

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2579

For the first time in three decades, Greek and Turkish Cypriots crossed the U.N. buffer zone from one side of their war-divided island to the other.



SOURCES: United Nations; CIA World Factbook; Facts on File Encyclopedia of the 20th Century; 2002 World Almanac; Associated Press AP

## Cypriots breach 'iron curtain'

**NICOSIA (CYPRUS):** More than 4,600 Cypriots crossed the demarcation line dividing the Turkish north from the Greek south after the so-called Green Line was opened for the first time in 29 years, the Cypriot Interior Ministry announced on Thursday. Visitors had until midnight on Wednesday to view the territory many had never seen. The demarcation line was created in 1974 as a U.N.-patrolled buffer zone. Turkish troops seized the northern portion of the Mediterranean island 29 years ago in response to a coup in Nicosia aimed at uniting the Greek-dominated island with Greece. According to the Ministry, 1,752 Greek Cypriots crossed into the Turkish side while 2,926 Turkish Cypriots visited the Greek south. The transit agreement was proposed by Rauf Denktash, leader of the Turkish Cypriots. Cyprus expects to enter the European Union next year. E.U. diplomats have been pressuring Turkey to agree to a settlement that would eliminate the Green Line, described as the last "iron curtain" in Europe. — DPA

25 APR 2003

THE HINDU

# Talks to reunify Cyprus failed: Annan

Associated Press

THE HAGUE (Netherlands) March 11. — Talks to reunify war-divided Cyprus have failed, UN Secretary General Mr Kofi Annan announced today as he left all-night negotiations with Greek and Turkish leaders of the Mediterranean island.

"We have reached the end of the road," Mr Annan said, signaling the end of months of intense efforts to reunite the island split into Greek and Turkish sides since 1974.

Mr Annan had used Cyprus' impending entry into the European Union to pressure Greek Cypriot President Mr Tassos Papadopoulos and Turkish Cypriot leader Mr

Rauf Denkash to agree on a federation plan that would bring the two sides together under a single weak Central government.

"The efforts to salvage the project of a united Cyprus ... regretfully have not proved successful," Mr Annan said.

If the plan had been approved by the Greek and Turkish communities, Cyprus could have signed an accession agreement with the European Union on 16 April as a united country. Without agreement, the whole of Cyprus will be accepted as a member, but with provisions for EU laws to apply to the breakaway Turkish north only after the island is reunited.

In Brussels, the European Union said the island's Greek-Cypriot side remained on course to join



Mr Kofi Annan

the European Union in May 2004. The EU head office cautioned Turkey that its own bid to join the

EU would depend on how hard it cooperates in reunifying Cyprus.

The talks stumbled over Turkish insistence that their breakaway Cypriot state win full recognition, and demands by the Greeks for the right of refugees to return to homes in northern Cyprus that they left 29 years ago.

The Greek Cypriots wanted more clearly defined powers for the central government and an agreement on "security issues," a reference to the number of troops from the two motherlands that could be stationed on the island.

Mr Annan huddled with special envoys from Greece, Turkey and UK for several hours after Mr Papadopoulos stormed out of talks accusing Mr Denkash of rejecting Mr Annan's reunification proposals.



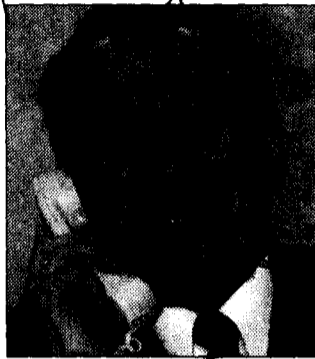
# Setback to UN plans on Cyprus

The Times, London

NICOSIA, Feb. 17. — The future of the UN's peace plan to end the division of Cyprus was thrown into confusion today by Turkish Cypriot calls for the abandonment of "imaginary solutions" advocated by the new President of the Greek half of the island.

The tough Turkish stance was a reaction to the dramatic victory of Mr Tassos Papadopoulos in the Greek Cypriot presidential elections.

Regarded as a hardliner by his opponents, Mr Papadopoulos is seeking substantial improvements to the UN plan to reunify Cyprus, just days before the deadline for its



Mr Tassos Papadopoulos

acceptance by the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.

He insists that he is committed to peace negotiations. "We do not wish to see any gap in the course of negotiations. We will do everything possible to ensure they continue

9 of land 80% unhindered," he said. He has disappointed his Turkish counterpart, Mr Rauf Denktas, already.

Mr Denktas: "I am saddened by the will of the Greek Cypriot people not desiring an agreement... As long as Mr Papadopoulos does not draw himself a realistic plan and abandon his imaginary solutions, there is no reason to continue with this dead-end process."

The timing allows little opportunity to appoint new negotiators to replace the team of Mr Glafcos Clerides, the defeated President. "The UN has made clear that changes at this stage can really only be tweaks," a Western diplomat in Nicosia said.



### Jolt to Aceh peace

HO-19 10/1

**LHOKSEUMAWE (INDONESIA):** Government soldiers allegedly shot four civilians as they made their way to an anti-military rally in Indonesia's Aceh province on Thursday, despite a peace deal between the



Government and separatists here. Local activist Al Kautsar Muhammad said the four were shot after soldiers tried to stop a group of villagers in Geudong village, about 14 km east of Lhokseumawe town, from attending the rally. Two were seriously wounded and hospitalised in

Lhokseumawe, according to the Indonesian Red Cross. The other two had minor injuries. A few hours later, soldiers fired warning shots and dispersed about 5,000 people attempting to hold the rally. Police claimed the group did not have permits for the gathering. "The military must be pulled out before peace can come to Aceh," Mr. Al Kautsar said. No security officials were available for comment on the shootings (the picture shows Muzakkir Manaf, top commander of Aceh's GAM guerrilla group at this week's secret meeting of the organisation's leaders in Aceh). — AP

### Nauru President voted out

9/10/03 HO-19

**WELLINGTON (NEW ZEALAND):** The President of the tiny Pacific nation of Nauru has been ousted by a no-confidence vote in Parliament, but has refused to accept defeat, New Zealand officials said on Thursday. Bernard Dowiyogo, a former President, took over Nauru's Government after the vote against Rene Harris (in the picture) on Wednesday, said New Zealand's Foreign Minister, Phil Goff. Mr. Harris and his Cabinet boycotted the vote. The no-confidence motion followed a vote against Mr. Harris' proposed budget, New Zealand government officials said. "President Harris is seeking legal advice about an injunction against the appointment of a new government led by Bernard Dowiyogo," Mr. Goff said. "Dowiyogo has been declared the new President, but Mr. Harris hasn't accepted defeat." Mr. Goff added there were "legal uncertainties" over the ouster. — AP



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