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- ★ **LTTE Paralyse Sea Transport**
- ★ **Strife and Split in the UNP**
- ★ **JULY 1983 – A GRUESOME REMINDER**
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"I do not agree with a word
of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it."

-Voltaire

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Cover Photo: Courtesy of Sunday Times

NEWS REVIEW

TULF MP and Five Others Killed

Arunasalam Thangathurai, Member of Parliament for Trincomalee and belonging to the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was among six persons killed in a grenade and gun attack at Trincomalee in eastern Sri Lanka on 5 July. At least 15 more persons were injured. Among the killed were three school principals, Ms Rajeswary Thanabalasingham, the principal of the Sri Shanmuga Hindu Ladies College, S Joseph and K Seevaratnam, a Civil Engineer V. Retnarajah, a leading social worker P S Ganeshalingam and Mr. Thangathurai's bodyguard.

Mr. Thangathurai and others were killed in a grenade attack accompanied by a hail of bullets as the victims and others emerged from the opening ceremony of a new building at the College in the heart of Trincomalee. Hundreds of people including scores of school children who had gathered for the inauguration ceremony were traumatised by the carnage.

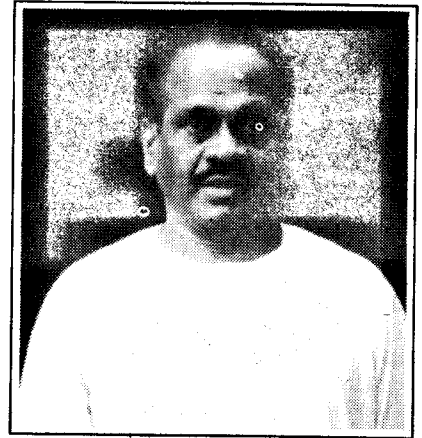
Thangathurai's 88-year-old mother has been in a state of shock unable to accept the tragedy she is confronted with. "She sits alone with her morbid thoughts and does not eat, drink or talk to anyone but only in an endearing voice, full of pain she keeps repeating her beloved son's name," a report in a Colombo newspaper said.

Reacting to the assassination of Thangathurai, a leader of the TULF said its enemies want to silence the party by killing its leaders. Murugesu Sivasithambaram, leader of the TULF made the charge after the killing of the MP and said, "At this moment, I have no basis for suspecting anybody. But we have too many enemies in this country, both among the majority (Sinhalese) community and among the (minority) Tamils."

"It is clear that someone would like to eliminate as many leaders as possible of the TULF, which is the only non-militant Tamil force that is functioning in the country right now," Mr Sivasithambaram said.

Thangathurai was the eighth TULF leader to be killed. In June 1989, LTTE gunmen assassinated the party's former leader Appapillai Amirthalingam and Member of Parliament V. Yogeswaran.

The slaying of the popular Tamil par-



liamentarian from eastern Sri Lanka has raised fears of a new wave of violence against moderate Tamil politicians. A political analyst in Colombo said that Sri Lanka's moderate Tamil politicians are risking their lives as they show their willingness to co-operate with the government to search for a peaceful solution to country's ethnic conflict.

Mr Sivasithambaram condemned the killing as a cowardly and reprehensible act. "We have committed ourselves to finding a constructive political solution to the ethnic crisis. Therefore, the gunshots and grenades cannot change our path," he told the newspaper. He described Thangathurai as an ardent supporter of the peace process and had rendered enormous service to the Tamil community. He said the killing of Thangathurai sent distressing signals. "I am not only saddened, I also don't know what to do. If this is what happens to politicians in this country, you have to wonder whether doing politics is worth the while," he said.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga said that the assassination of Thangathurai had been committed by "frustrated and desperate persons to discourage right-minded persons from seeking a lasting peace."

The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka has denounced the assassination of Thangathurai as a symptom of the deteriorating political culture and a blow to a



Slain TULF MP Arunasalam Thangathurai's wife Sathyashri, son Ahlian and youngest daughter Dharmini in mourning - Photo by Sanjeeva Niroshana, courtesy of The Sunday Times

democratic solution to the conflict. The NPC said that the "dastardly crime was specially deplorable, as it has taken place before hundreds of school children at a school function."

Noting that Mr Thangathurai has a long history of democratic activity and stood for a negotiated settlement, the NPC said that the ongoing war has led to the miniaturisation of society in which assassination is one strategy to achieve narrow objectives. The NPC also expressed its concern over the effect this assassination has in narrowing the field of those who can now claim to be representatives of the Tamil people.

Other Tamil political parties such as the PLOTE, EPRLF and EPDP have also condemned Thangathurai's assassination pointing the finger of blame to the LTTE.

The TULF has requested President Kumaratunga to appoint a Presidential Commission of Inquiry to probe the assassination of Thangathurai. In its letter to the President, the TULF states, "We wish to bring to your kind notice that in the past several politically motivated murders had taken place in our country. Unfortunately no proper inquiries into those murders were held and culprits behind those killings had not been brought to book." Describing the assassination of Thangathurai and others on 5 July as "a barbarous act", the TULF letter adds that "the failure to apprehend the culprits in those killings has led to the continuation of political killings in our country... We fear that the inquiry now being held into these killings also would meet the same fate of unsolved political murders of the past."

There is no doubt that Thangathurai was the target of the assassination though many others were killed and injured in the same incident. No one has claimed re-

sponsibility for the assassination. But the blame for the assassination of the TULF MP was placed by the police on the Tamil Tigers who were commemorating July 5 as "Black Tigers Day" in memory of three of their fighters who led the first successful suicide attack against the military in Jaffna a decade ago. However the LTTE has neither officially denied or accepted responsibility. In the meantime, there has also been speculation as to whether any other group or individuals who would have had a hand in the killing of the MP.

Two days after the assassination Sri Lankan police said that they had arrested five persons suspected of having assassinated Thangathurai and five others at Trincomalee. They also claimed that all five

arrested persons belonged to the Tamil Tigers who according to them are the masterminds behind the assassination.

On 12 July, the police announced that they had arrested more persons suspected of having been involved in the assassination of Tamil Thangathurai. They said a three-wheeler driver M. Koneswaran alias Babu, S. Neechandran alias Nijan, a security guard of the Trincomalee Port Authority, and M. Murugathasan alias Jerome were among those who had been arrested. They said plastic cans containing explosives and ingredients for the manufacture of bombs had been recovered from Nijan. The Suspect Murugathasan whose alleged LTTE pseudonym was Jerome had another identity card under the name of Gunaratnam Shakespeare. Cyanide capsules and photographs of Thangathurai had been found in the suspects' possession. The police further claimed that according to the statements made to them, Murugathasan had thrown the grenade at Thangathurai while another suspect who is still in hiding had shot at the MP and into the crowd. Police have recovered 9mm magazine and 13 rounds of ammunition. Another man who is identified as Sivaprakasan Akila Rupan reportedly followed Thangathurai for several months. He had tried to assassinate the MP in Trincomalee several months ago but called off the attempt when the police arrived. The police further alleged that the suspects had confessed that they killed Thangathurai because he was co-operating with the PA government in developing the Trincomalee district.

Despite police assertions of LTTE involvement in the assassination of the TULF MP, neither the party's leadership nor any of the relatives of the late MP have directly accused the LTTE of being responsible.

Tigers Paralyse Sea Transport to Jaffna

The transport of goods and persons to the northern Jaffna peninsula from both the Eastern and Western coasts of the island has in recent weeks been effectively paralysed by military action by the "Sea Tiger" wing of the LTTE.

"We cannot be party to the government use of shipping war materials to Jaffna under the pretext of supplying food and necessities for the people", the LTTE said in a statement on 15 July.

On June 30, LTTE cadres boarded a private ship, the MV MISSEN, hired by the government to ferry Tamil returnees from Mannar and the Vanni region to Jaffna. There were no passengers on board at the time. The LTTE men had forced their way on to the MV Missen and took away its captain Nang Hadi, chief engineer Imam Wahudin and seven crew members. The ship belonged to Newco Shipping (Pvt.)

Ltd. which also owned the IRISH MOANA which was captured and destroyed by the LTTE over two years ago. The crew of the IRISH MOANA remain in LTTE custody up to date.

The MV Nissen was set on fire by the Tigers, and the crew, which included two Indonesian nationals and seven Sri Lankans, were abducted by the LTTE. The two Indonesians were later handed over on to the ICRC and brought to Colombo. The fate of the remaining seven Sri Lankan crew members remains in doubt. "The ICRC remains deeply concerned regarding the fate of the seven remaining members of the crew and is taking all necessary steps to be able to see them as soon as possible," the ICRC statement said.

The government has said the Tigers had torched the vessel in an attempt to prevent Tamil people living as refugees in

the Wannu region from returning to Jaffna, where the government is rehabilitating several hundred thousand people who fled when the military captured the peninsula in October 1995.

On July 4, the government ordered that all passenger transport to the north by ship should be halted until further notice. Several thousands of Tamils who want to return to Jaffna have been stranded in Trincomalee and Mannar as a result.

On July 7, the LTTE seized a North Korean registered civilian cargo vessel, Morang Bong, which had been hired by the government and engaged in transporting goods between Colombo and Jaffna. The Tigers captured the vessel which was on its third trip to Jaffna and its crew while it was some eight km (five miles) off Point Pedro on Jaffna peninsula. The ship had carried nearly 3,000 tonnes of food and other essential items to Jaffna and was hijacked after it had unloaded its cargo. The captured ship had been "chartered by traders from Colombo to carry essential goods to Point Pedro... for the civilians in the north," an official said.

After its capture the ship was stripped of all goods, equipment and fuel and lies anchored off the coast of Alampil in the Mullaitivu district. The Sri Lankan navy has made no attempt to approach the vessel for they fear that the LTTE may have booby-trapped it.

The 38 member North Korean crew was taken into LTTE custody. One crew member was shot dead during the capture of the ship by the LTTE and his body was handed over to the ICRC on July 9. On July 11 the other 37 crew members were also handed over to the ICRC.

The LTTE's ability to hijack ships of this type has created a crisis in terms of the Sri Lankan government's capacity to arrange transport for goods and passengers by sea to the northern peninsula. Persons hoping to travel to Jaffna remain stranded in Mannar and Trincomalee while food transport has been also affected. This scenario becomes even more serious when one considers that air transport to the north has been severely curtailed by a series of disasters faced by the Air Force. The onset of the north-east monsoon in October-November will halt sea transport in any event, so the urgency of keeping the sea routes open during these next few months is critical.

Observers see this as yet another military strategy adopted by the LTTE firstly to prevent displaced Tamils now living in the Vanni region as refugees returning to Jaffna in large numbers, and secondly to disrupt the government's effort to gradually normalise the situation in Jaffna by transporting essential supplies for the population there and material required for the rehabilitation of the war-ravaged pe-

ninsula's infrastructure.

Military spokesman, Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe told a news conference in Colombo that more attacks were expected from the LTTE on ships ferrying food and other essential supplies to Jaffna. "They will continue doing these kinds of things, hijacking ships and attacking them, but we will somehow overcome this problem," he said.

A Reuters report datelined 11 July said that thousands of refugees were stranded after shipping companies cancelled services to the northern Jaffna peninsula following attacks on two ships by Tamil Tiger separatists.

The refugees from the Wannu region were waiting in north-western Mannar and eastern Trincomalee for ships to take them to Jaffna, but shipping lines were scared to move without naval escort. "There are at least 3,800 people in Mannar and another 3,000 in Trincomalee. More are likely to come to Mannar. But there are no ships to take them back," the report said quoting an official.

In the meantime the Sri Lankan government has sought the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to escort food ships to northern areas of the island including Jaffna. The ICRC spokesman said that their officials were trying to talk to all sides to meet the government request to provide safe passage for food supplies to the north. "The government has formally approached us to escort these ships. We are working on this. It is under discussion. It will take a little time because of the procedures involved," the ICRC spokesman said.

"Military Supply Ships Will be Targeted" - LTTE

"We cannot be party to the government's use of shipping war materials to Jaffna under the pretext of supplying food and necessities for the people", the LTTE leadership has said on 15 July in a policy statement in its official organ Viduthalai Pulligal.

The statement added that "while holding back the bare necessities to Tamils in Vanni, Sri Lanka is declaring that the people of Jaffna are being pampered, fed and clothed. But the real situation is far different. The government is mainly engaged in feeding, clothing and equipping its Sinhala army of occupation in the peninsula while the Tamil inhabitants of Jaffna do not enter into its calculations at all.

"Under these conditions the LTTE has no option but to regard these military-servicing Sri Lankan vessels as legitimate military targets. Since these supply-vessels constitute a threat to the Tamil people, they will not be permitted to carry out their sinister function.

"It is against the interests of the Tamil nation to allow Sri Lanka to strengthen its entirely-Sinhalese military forces so they can better harm and repress the Tamil inhabitants of Jaffna and conduct further callous military operations against the Tamil people in Vanni. The LTTE is not prepared to compromise the security of the Tamil people and will therefore do its utmost to prevent the traffic of items which do nothing other than strengthen Sri Lanka's military capability."

Editor Convicted of Criminal Defamation of the President

The protracted 75-day trial before the Sri Lanka High Court of the editor of weekly, The Sunday Times, Sinha Migara Ranatunga, on charges of criminally defaming the island's President, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga, ended on 2 July with the editor being found guilty and convicted as charged on two counts.

In delivering his 328-page judgement, High Court Judge Upali de Z Gunawardene said, "freedom of the press is part of the larger freedom of the individual, however the freedom of the press is not higher than the freedom of an ordinary citizen and is subject to the same limitations as are imposed on an individual. It has been said that every person possesses a right to his reputation which is regarded as property. As such nobody can use his freedom of speech or expression as to injure another's reputation or to indulge in what is called character assassination..."

The prosecution of the editor was launched by the Attorney General under the country's Penal Code and the Press Council Law. On the first count framed under section 480 of the Penal Code making the editor liable for criminal defamation of the President by the offending article, the editor was sentenced to twelve months simple imprisonment suspended for a period of seven years and a fine of Rs.7,500. On the second count under sections 14 and 15 of the Press Council Law, holding the editor vicariously liable for the publication of the defamatory article, the Judge imposed a sentence of six months simple imprisonment suspended for seven years and a fine of Rs.2,500.

Human rights and journalist organisations in Sri Lanka had condemned the government's recourse to the criminal law in bringing the prosecution as an attack on freedom of expression. "We are not for

a moment saying that those who carry defamatory articles against others ought not to be punished. But we are for trying them under the country's civil law and not under the criminal law," the Free Media Movement said in its first reaction to the editor's conviction.

The article which was the subject of the court proceedings was published in the Sunday Times on 19 February 1995 under the heading, "Courting Days are Here". The offending excerpt read, "Therefore let's start at the top, about a party graced by none other than Her Excellency the President, Chandrika Kumaratunga. The occasion was the birthday of Liberal Party National List MP Asitha Perera (Well Mudliyar Chanaka - how?) The place was Mr Perera's permanent suite at the 5-star Lanka Oberoi. But this time the President was more circumspect about her appearance and used the rear entrance of the hotel, watched by a phalanx of security guards and myself. She spent about 90 minutes at the party from 12.30 in the heat of the silent night until 2 am and as for what she ate, it was not food from the Hilton. The reading public now has a fair idea of its first citizen's epicurean tastes. But what of her estranged brother?"

The editor was defended by a team of lawyers led by former Attorney General Tilak Marapana and included Kumar Ponnambalam and S L Gunasekera.

The prosecution case was that the editor had engaged in character assassination of the President under the guise of writing gossip. Having known that the offending piece in the article was false, neither the paper nor the editor published an apology. The editor had not expressed any regret in his paper or in court during the hearing having published an article which the editor knew to be totally false.

The defence argued that the article was part of a "gossip column" and therefore should be taken lightly because it contained light banter. The editor admitted during the initial investigation by the CID that the whole article was written by one writer. But in the course of the evidence he said that it was written by more than one person and that he wrote at least three paragraphs of the article, but did not write the offending piece. He also refused to reveal the name of or identify the person who wrote it. The judge held that the editor's evidence in regard to the composition of the offending article was "teeming with contradictions and irreconcilable positions".

The Garlanding Controversy

The day after Sinha Ranatunga, the Editor of Colombo's SUNDAY TIMES, was found guilty in Colombo High Court for 'criminally defaming' President Chandrika Kumaratunga, the MIDWEEK MIRROR of

the same newspaper company said it all in a captivating headline: "Editor with Conviction."

Not so captivating, however, was the post-conviction controversy that received the attention of many pages in the Colombo press. Throwing into a state of insignificance the fundamental issue of the obscure yet revived criminal defamation law, the question of a garland has received headlines in the press and much TV and radio time in the electronic news has been devoted to this incident as well.

Despond Fernando, a leading human rights lawyer and the President of the International Bar Association, placed a garland around Editor Ranatunga's neck, shortly after he (Ranatunga) had been pronounced guilty by High Court Judge Gunawardena. A colour picture, taken by a news photographer of the ISLAND, appeared in the press following day, bringing the garlanding episode into sharp public focus.

The High Court Judge's Association immediately reacted to the episode censuring Despond Fernando. According to their statement, this act was a violation of court decorum and a reaction to a judgement not appropriate for a lawyer of Fernando's seniority and stature. Those who disapprove Despond Fernando's action point out that the garlanding took place inside the court premises. They argue that Fernando's action amounts to staging protest demonstrations in front of judge's houses, as happened in during President J. R. Jayewardene's time.

R K W Goonasekera, a very senior lawyer and a much respected champion of human and fundamental rights and former principal of the Law College, said that he did not believe his eyes when he saw the picture in the newspaper. "I didn't think Despond would have "garlanded" him. If the accused had been acquitted and was garlanded outside the precincts of the court, there would not be any objection. But garlanding a person who had been convicted is unthinkable."

Despond Fernando is no stranger to controversy. During the Sunday Times trial, he came to the High Court to give evidence as a Defence witness and avoided being cross-examined by going abroad, reportedly without obtaining court permission. Upon his return, he was not summoned to conclude his evidence. He also earned the wrath of the opposition and sections of the human rights community during President Premadasa's tenure when he, as the President of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka, praised Premadasa, in eloquent terms, for restoring the independence of the judiciary.

There are also those who argue in defence of Despond Fernando's action. They say that Fernando was merely demonstrating his opposition to journalists be-

ing accused, tried and convicted for criminal defamation, instead of civil offences.

Meanwhile, the Free Media Movement in a statement has urged the government to repeal the criminal defamation law. Last year, a committee appointed by the Media Minister to propose media law reforms, also recommended that this particular law be rescinded. Human rights groups are planning to intensify the campaign to repeal all repressive laws relating to the media and freedom of expression.

Judges on the "Garlanding Issue"

Expressing concern and displeasure over Despond Fernando garlanding the convicted editor of The Sunday Times, the High Court Judges Association in a statement said: "This Association expresses its great displeasure at the incident in which a witness for the defence, a former President of the Bar Association and President of the International Bar Association welcomed the convict with a garland inside the court premises at the time of the taking of fingerprints of the convicted person.

"This incident recalls the era in which the judges were insulted and demonstrations were held against their verdicts and the government paid the fines imposed on criminals. Similarly, we cannot ignore the tendency among prominent personalities in this government to publicly criticise decisions of superior courts, though in a less serious way.

"There is no question that media freedom is an essential component of democracy. But it is a matter for regret that even prominent lawyers who speak about media freedom have not understood that independence of the judiciary is an essential element of democracy. The courts give decisions according to the existing law. If there are defects in the existing law, its revision is a different matter. When the courts give a verdict on the limitations of media freedom, there is a legal mechanism to challenge it. We are of the opinion that nobody who thinks justly would approve of lawyers acting in a manner that would belittle the independence of the judiciary and bring it into disrepute. It's like looking up and spitting.

"The foundation of democracy is the Rule of Law. The Rule of Law is protected by the judiciary. Just as journalists have media freedom, we as judges value the independence of the judiciary very much. Independence of the judiciary as well as media freedom are essential components of a benevolent democracy. It is good if all media personnel, all lawyers and politicians realise that a remedy could be obtained for an injustice caused to a journalist or a President's Counsel only if the independence and honour of the judiciary are protected."

Sirisena Cooray Detained on "Conspiracy" Charge

At first the reasons for the arrest and detention of Sirisena Cooray, President Premadasa's once powerful deputy, was shrouded in mystery. Cooray was detained on June 16 under Section 17 of the Emergency regulations. According to press reports, the Defence Secretary invoked the state security provisions of the law in issuing the detention order.

Strangely enough, the usually well informed Colombo press did not come out with any behind-the-scenes stories of the Cooray arrest. The most common interpretation heard in Colombo was that the government had decided to move against Cooray after a political deal with him had fallen through. The so-called 'deal' referred to the government's designs to drive a wedge between the Cooray and Wickremasinghe factions of the UNP by promoting Cooray. The highly publicised Premadasa Birthday celebration, scheduled for June 29, was seen as a move made by Cooray with the government's tacit support, with a view to challenging Wickremasinghe's control over the UNP machine. The 'deal theory' had it that after UNP top lawyer Choksy had mediated and made peace between Cooray and Wickremasinghe, and publicity was given to the possible active participation of Wickremasinghe and members of the Premadasa family in the anniversary celebrations organised by the Premadasa Centre, the government decided to close in on Cooray.

In Colombo, where intrigue is now becoming a familiar mode of conducting politics, many did not consider the deal theory plausible. However, later speculation suggested that Cooray was likely to be indicted in connection with the Lalith Athulathmudali assassination case. The arrest of UNP Provincial Councillor U. L. Senewiratne, whose name figured repeatedly in the proceedings of the Athulathmudali Commission, and some other underworld figures also known to have links with Mr. Cooray, reinforced this possibility. The Colombo press also predicted the imminent arrest of one or two senior Police officers who were alleged to have maintained close links with Sirisena Cooray when he was a minister during the previous UNP tenure.

The Lake House papers have, in the meanwhile, continued to focus on the fact that there was a plot to assassinate the President and that the Cooray arrest is linked to this. On the contrary, Cooray's lawyers have gone on record saying that he has not been questioned in this connection.

At last, an official version of the much-

talked about 'Cooray Conspiracy' became public. Some under-world friends of Sirisena Cooray, according to this version, have bought property and built houses near the ancestral home of President Kumaratunga in an elaborate plot "to cause physical harm to the President".

This and more details of the alleged 'conspiracy' were disclosed in Defence Secretary Chandrananda de Silva's affidavit filed in the Colombo Supreme Court on July 09. The affidavit asserts that the detention of former UNP strong man is 'valid in law and made in good faith.'

Earlier, Cooray's lawyers filed a fundamental rights petition, challenging the Defence Secretary's order to place Cooray under detention. When the fundamental rights application came before the Su-

preme court, the Attorney General on behalf of the state asked for time to file affidavits. The Court postponed the hearing till July 24.

The Defence Secretary's affidavit also makes the dramatic claim that the Criminal Investigations Department had received 'reliable intelligence' that Cooray 'had sought assistance from certain members of a criminal gang' to cause harm to or assassinate the President.

The affidavit provides the names of the criminal gang. They are Don Ranjith Upali alias Sothi Upali, Malwatte Some and Sudu Mahattaya. Sothi Upali, the affidavit suggests, has master-minded sub-plots of the main plot from jail. Sirisena Cooray emerges in the affidavit as the main figure in the conspiracy drama.

The Defence Secretary has also sought the permission of the court to submit the intelligence reports he had received about Cooray and his associates 'under confidential cover for the perusal of court only.'

Strife and Split in the UNP

Sirisena Cooray's predicament does not seem to have aroused much sympathy in his own party, the UNP. After initial protests made by the UNP leadership soon after Cooray was arrested, the party leadership appears to maintain an official silence over the entire affair.

The MIDWEEK MIRROR in its July 9 edition carried a story attributing rumours that purportedly suggested 'a plot against UNP leaders Ranil Wickremasinghe also' to 'some media' reports.

With the conspiracy charge, Cooray's alleged links with the criminal under-world are back in the public mind. This has effectively destroyed the little mystique that Cooray tried to build around himself through the Premadasa Centre. And the Premadasa Centre, which suddenly found itself in the national news last month, appears to be the first casualty of whatever the conspiracy that Sirisena Cooray is blamed for.

The poorly attended Premadasa commemoration ceremony, held on June 29 at the massive Sugathadasa stadium, received appropriate publicity in the state controlled RUPAVAHINI (television) news programs. The star speaker of the commemoration ceremony, in the absence of Sirisena Cooray, was Rev. Elle Gunawansa, a Buddhist monk of extreme Sinhala nationalist views. The monk was the power-broker who attempted to bring about a reconciliation between Cooray and Wickremasinghe a few weeks ago.

Neither the UNP leader Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe nor the Premadasa family participated in the ceremony. It would appear that the UNP leader had agreed to participate at the ceremony provided the

director of the Premadasa Centre and the organisation of the ceremony was brought under the direct control of the UNP leadership. That suggestion was summarily rejected by the directors of the Premadasa Centre.

Cooray's message from his detention was read out to the audience by one of the directors of the Premadasa Centre, Dayan Jayatilake. Delivering a blistering tirade against the UNP leadership, Rev. Elle Gunawansa said that people should rise up to chase out "ungrateful and treacherous elements" who worked overtime to sabotage the R Premadasa commemoration ceremony and create disunity among UNP members who should reject the present so called leaders of the UNP who aim to make the party a "Cinnamon Gardens Party". He said that certain eminent personalities in the UNP were so ungrateful that they had forgotten the services rendered by the late President Premadasa "who loved the common people and understood their suffering". He attacked the UNP leader of having "deviously and cunningly" placed restrictions on those who intended to attend the ceremony.

In the meanwhile, a fresh row seems to be developing within the UNP over the current political role being played by the President's brother, Anura Bandaranaike. Some unconfirmed reports have focused on a secret meeting between Justice Minister Peiris and Mr. Bandaranaike. A ceremony to felicitate Mr. Bandaranaike on the completion of 20 years in politics is scheduled for July 25. There is already a rumour that top-ranking UNPers will boycott the event.

Tigers Offer to Swap Muslims Captured in Retaliation

Tamil Tigers said in a statement on 15 July that they would release Muslim villagers they had abducted last month in the eastern district of Trincomalee on condition that the military freed rebels captured in the same area.

The LTTE captured 35 Muslim and 4 Sinhalese fishermen from the village of Erakkandi in Trincomalee district on 29 June after the villagers handed over to the military six LTTE cadres who had escaped in a sea battle. The abduction of the Muslim villagers had produced a climate of tension between the Tamil and Muslim communities in the area. Some Muslim political leaders have condemned the LTTE's action.

The abduction of the villagers followed an attack by the Sri Lankan navy on 28 June against a flotilla of six LTTE boats travelling from Vakarai in the Batticaloa district to Mullaitivu. It was reported that the naval attack resulted in the sinking of the boats and the death of 24 LTTE cadres and the arrest of six others. It was further reported that the head of the LTTE's medical unit, a third year medical student "Dr. Desmond" was killed in this attack and he was accompanied by two female doctors believed to be of Indian nationality. It was during the interrogation of the six arrested LTTE cadres that the presence of the two lady doctors from India had surfaced.

Seven of the villagers were released by the LTTE on 14 July following intervention by the International Committee of the Red Cross. According to a LTTE statement issued on 16 July, "Those released are a priest - Moulavi Abdul Rahman - and six students, including Nauparniyaz, Nilamdeen, Niroz, Irshad and Sarjakhan. They were handed over to ICRC's representative Mr. Johan Paul by the LTTE's head of administration (political sector) Mr. Thangan. Thirty-two more from the same village remain in LTTE custody.

The LTTE statement added, "They are suspected of being agents of the Sri Lankan army and were involved in an incident which took place on June 28, as recounted below:

"Some LTTE members met with an accident at sea and were forced to swim many miles to shore. They finally reached Irakandy (in Trincomalee) in an exhausted state and requested assistance from the local people. Though the LTTE members carried no weapons of defence and were not carrying cyanide capsules some of the villagers there severely assaulted them and later handed over the defenceless fighters to Sinhala armed forces, in whose custody they remain.

"The LTTE was compelled to arrest a number of villagers suspected of these acts of gross inhumanity. We understand our fighters are now undergoing horrendous forms of torture at the hands of the Sinhala army. Indeed, their lives remain in grave danger. The LTTE cannot reasonably tolerate such a situation and this is why we continue to hold these suspected agents who were involved in the assault and handing over of our fighters.

"We assure concerned individuals and organisations that all those detained are being treated humanely. We also stress that they are not "hostages" but people held in custody.

"However, we are willing to show leniency in this instance and to release all those held if the freedom of our own fighters is secured. We appeal to Muslim political leaders to work earnestly towards this end and to use all their influence to ensure the speedy release of our fighters.

"We further stress that the arrests of these mainly Muslim villagers was not enacted on ethnic grounds. We have always viewed Muslims as our brothers, and will continue to do so. Indeed, Mr. Prabakaran's decision to release 7 suspects on humanitarian grounds is a gesture of goodwill intended to promote and consolidate existing Tamil-Muslim amity.

"However, the Irakandy incident still causes us deep pain and sorrow. We not only condemn the assault upon our defenceless fighters, we strongly urge everybody to ensure that no repetition of such incidents occurs in the future. Our fighters put their own dear lives on the line for the sake of national freedom and we cannot allow them to be betrayed in this manner to the Sinhala army."

Plight of Tamils - A Silent Tragedy

A survivor of the Jewish holocaust during World War II, Mr. Erna Gans, President of the Holocaust Foundation of Illinois, USA, appealed to the world community "to break its silence" over the atrocities committed on innocent Tamil men, women and children in Sri Lanka at a public meeting in Chicago held recently on the topic, "Plight of the Tamils in Sri Lanka - A Silent Tragedy". Several scholars, human rights activists and representatives of NGOs participated at the meeting.

Mr. Wasantha Raja, formerly of the Sinhala Service of the BBC radio and later took up the Chairmanship of Sri Lanka's Rupavahini (TV) Corporation and resigned following differences with the government, laid part of the blame for the Tamil-Sinhala strife in Sri Lanka at what he called the invalidity of the 1972 and 1978 Constitutions. He claimed that most Sinhalese had a "Sinhala-Buddhist psyche" which made them "believe that the island belongs only

to the Sinhala Buddhist".

Prof. Peter Schaik of the University of Uppsala, Sweden said that Sinhala Buddhist fundamentalism did not recognise the human and political rights of others. "The Tamils had been wrongfully denied recognition as a people with a right to self-determination. The Sinhalese can only think of a unitary state under one umbrella," he said.

Ms. Kate Hope of the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR), who co-authored the USCR report titled "Conflict and Displacement in Sri Lanka", spoke about the "terrible conditions" of refugee camps in Sri Lanka and India. She said that the strife had left more than 50,000 Tamils dead, over 1.2 million uprooted from their homes and 900,000 "internally displaced.

A resolution passed at the meeting urged world governments to "proactively engage and pressurise" the Sri Lankan government to stop the "indiscriminate bombing and strafing of Tamil areas, arrests, torture, rape and killing of innocent Tamil civilians, lift the embargo on food, medicine and other necessities of life to Tamil areas, allow journalists - both local and foreign - to visit Tamil areas, withdraw the Prevention of Terrorism Act and solve the national problem politically rather than pursue a military solution."

The meeting was organised by the Midwest Tamil Sangam, International Tamil Language Foundation, Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America and the World Tamil Organisation.

Presidential Direction on use Tamil Language

President Chandrika Kumaratunga on 11 July berated her ministers over the lack of use of the Tamil language in government departments and ministries. She has directed all her ministers to ensure the implementation of the official languages policy without any hindrance within the next two months. In a letter addressed to her ministers, the President said that they should take immediate steps to ensure that all government correspondence was in the three official languages.

Reminding her ministers that the Sri Lankan constitution recognises three languages - Sinhala, Tamil and English, the President told the ministers that several instances of failure by government departments and institutions to comply with constitutional provisions relating to languages had been brought to her attention. Such failure would amount to a violation of the law and a denial of fundamental rights. "These are serious omissions as they cause immense inconvenience and hardship to members of the public who are not conversant with Sinhala. I dread to think

of the plight of citizens who receive letters in a language which they do not understand."

The President has directed the ministers to appoint a senior officer in every department of government to oversee the implementation of the provisions of the law relating to language. She also told them to make available to the public from next month all regulations, legal provisions and information required by the public in all three languages, Sinhala, Tamil and English and that government departments should employ more Tamil typists and translators to ensure that all letters received from people are replied in the language of the writer.

The displaying of all name boards of public institutions and other instructions meant for the public should be in three languages. Listing the regulations, she said that they should be implemented in order to ensure that every citizen is afforded an opportunity to exercise his or her language rights without hindrance:

(a) All regulations, legal provisions and information be available to the public in all three languages;

(b) All printed forms must be available in all three languages. Where any institu-

tion has a large stock of forms already printed, it may print a reasonable number afresh in the Tamil language only to be attached to the Sinhala/English version;

(c) All letters received from members of the public should be replied in the language in which they were received. Where there is a difficulty, at least a translation in English should be attached;

(d) All name boards of public institutions and other instructions or directives meant for the public must be displayed in all three languages;

(e) Action be taken to fill immediately all vacancies in the Sinhala/Tamil translators service and Tamil typists service. Institutions that do not have a cadre should make use of persons on contract basis; and

(f) A senior officer must be identified in every institution and charged with the responsibility for implementing the provisions of the law relating to language.

Giving her ministers a period of two months, the President has asked them to "personally supervise and ensure that officers in your ministry implement these instructions within the time-frame." She also has asked her ministers to submit her a report on the action they had taken by 31 July 1997.

Jaffna district with participation of a school-going population of 107,000 children." Saying that furniture and educational equipment to the value of Rs.72 million were distributed to schools in the region in November 1996, he added "Government is in the process of rebuilding the Jaffna Library which, before it was destroyed in the 80s, functioned as the main repository of knowledge."

Many educationists and Members of Parliament, including D.Sidharthan, Dr.Neelan Tiruchelvam, Douglas Devananda, Jeyaraj Fernandopulle, participated at the ceremony marking the donation of the books.

Sri Lankan Boatpeople in Australia

15 Sri Lankan "boatpeople", all men aged between 18 and 42, were found 3 July wandering on the coast near Coral Bay, about 1,100 kilometres north of Perth in Australia and the Australian Customs Service (ACS) aircraft were searching waters off Western Australia's north-west coast for a Taiwanese fishing vessel in which the Sri Lankans illegally entered the country.

They told police and State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers they had paid \$1,000 each for passage to Australia aboard a Taiwanese fishing boat. ACS WA regional border manager Craig Sommerville said an ACS-run P3 Orion and another fixed-wing aircraft were sweeping the area in an attempt to find the boat the men arrived in.

"We want to see what type of vessel it is; it's a matter of building up a picture for profiling in future exercises," Mr Sommerville said. "You can't stop every vessel entering Australian waters. Some are quite legitimate in their business so it would help to know what it looks like for future reference."

The men, most of whom were aged in their late teens and early 20s, told SES Coral Bay co-ordinator Grant Shane they were fleeing political unrest in Sri Lanka. "We couldn't make it out. It was either that they were going to be drafted, or that guerrillas were causing trouble, something like that," Mr Shane said.

The Sri Lankans will be interviewed by immigration officials at the Port Hedland detention centre, Department of Immigration spokeswoman Karen Jones said. They spent the night in a naval base at Exmouth, and boarded a bus for the 12-hour ride to Port Hedland with officials from customs 4 July morning.

She said the group had not asked for refugee status, and had not yet had the chance to tell their story to the officials. "We're not going to push them today, we'll give them a rest and something to eat be-

US Donates 5000 Books to Jaffna University

The government of the United States, through the Asia Foundation, donated on 26 June 5000 books to the University of Jaffna at a ceremony held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombo.

US Ambassador, Peter Burleigh, said that this donation to the Jaffna University was a "reflection of the fact that normalcy is returning to the Jaffna peninsula and that the University of Jaffna is able to function fruitfully, and we are happy to be associated with this evolution". Recalling the relationship of the American people with the Jaffna peninsula, Ambassador Burleigh said, "there is a long and very important historical relationship between the American people and educational and medical institutions in the Jaffna peninsula", and added that "the first American arrived in Jaffna in 1816, and he and those who followed, very generously was instrumental in founding several of the premier institutions in the peninsula including Jaffna College and the Hospital there."

Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar emphasising the significance of the US gesture said, "Jaffna was an area of Sri Lanka which was noted for its culture, its scholarship, its learning, its educational institutions and therefore for its libraries. The Jaffna Library was justifiably famous

as one of the best libraries in Asia....Jaffna today is a land largely bereft of books, but its educational institutions are still alive. Some of them are over century old". He added that "the books that are being presented to the University of Jaffna today by the United States of America come ultimately from the people of that great and generous nation", and "once again the American people have demonstrated their concern for building up the educational institutions of Jaffna."

Mr Edward Anderson of the Asia Foundation, who handed over a token selection of books said that "the 5000 books that we are going to send to the University of Jaffna, we believe come at a particularly appropriate time" and "the donation should and will stand as a symbol of goodwill of the United States to the people of Sri Lanka."

The Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Wisva Warnapala, who received the books on behalf of the government of Sri Lanka said that since April last year, the University of Jaffna was able to commence its academic programme and added that "the government seeing the need to improve the facilities at the University provided the necessary financial assistance to replenish the immediate needs which it needed." Observing that nearly 90 per cent of the students were back at the University, he said "as at June 1997, 409 schools were functioning in the

fore we start the formal interview process tomorrow morning," she said.

Mr Shane said the group did not realise how vast the spaces were between towns and settlements in WA's north-west, and had thought they could easily reach Perth from Coral Bay. "They'd been told it was populated here, and they could walk inland from Coral Bay and catch a train or a bus to Perth," Mr Shane said. "They looked as though they'd just stepped off a tourist bus - their clothes were all new looking, pressed and tidy, and they looked like tourists."

Govt MPs Discuss Devolution

Members of Parliament from Sri Lanka's ruling People's Alliance coalition have given their backing to President Chandrika Kumaratunga's proposed constitutional reforms aimed at ending the protracted ethnic war.

The government's devolution package to be included in the proposed constitutional reforms was the main subject to be discussed when Alliance MPs met at a resort southern Sri Lanka, Hotel Tangere in Kalutara, on 14 and 15 this month.

PA parliamentarians...unanimously endorsed the draft constitution for Sri Lanka, which seeks to devolve part of the authority of the central government as the basis of a solution to the complex ethnic issue, a statement issued on 16 July by the Alliance said. The MPs also supported the government's strategy that the offensive against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) should continue parallel to the implementation of the devolution proposals.

The constitutional reform proposals are presently being debated in a parliamentary select committee, but the process has slowed down due to disagreements between Tamil and Muslim parties, and between the main opposition United National Party (UNP) and the government. The disagreements centre around key issues such as the extent of the powers to be devolved to the regions and demarcation of proposed new councils.

Alliance sources said that the MPs also discussed the possibility of a national referendum on the constitution reform proposals if the government felt it could not get the proposals through parliament with the necessary two-thirds majority.

The Democratic United National (Lalith) Front (DUNLF), which is a constituent of the Peoples Alliance, officially boycotted the two-day event, but two of its Members of Parliament, Monty Gopallawa and P B G Kalugalle defied the party leadership and attended the seminar. The party's leader, Mrs. Srimani Athulathmudali, was dropped from President Kumaratunga's cabinet in the recent reshuffle of ministers.

News Digest

Jaffna Medical Faculty Facing Closure: Closure of the Jaffna Medical Faculty is reported to be imminent due to lack of lecturers in several subjects. As even instructors are not available to teach subjects such as pathology and pharmacology, the academic staff are unable to conduct examinations for the third year students.

This situation could lead the Jaffna University authorities to close down the faculty, Dr. Sivagnanasunderam, former Dean of the Medical Faculty said recently.

Dr. Sivagnanasunderam, presently attached to the World Health Organisation (WHO), said, "We cannot put the blame on the Government in this case. It has been doing everything possible for the Jaffna Medical Faculty. The entire fault lies with Tamil society," he said.

"Thirteen groups of students have passed so far from the Jaffna Medical Faculty. Most of them had obtained first and second classes. They could have become lecturers in their special subjects. But what they have done is to seek jobs with scholarships abroad and settle down their with their families.

"We expected they would help our people and would serve our country. But we have been let down," Dr Sivagnanasunderam said and appealed to the professionals who are well and qualified in the medical field to come forward for the betterment of their motherland.

100,000 DRUG ADDICTS IN SRI LANKA: Sri Lanka has more than 100,000 heroin and 40,000 cannabis users, and the number is rising, according to a recent survey by the Sri Lanka Anti-Narcotics Association.

The survey said that Sri Lankan drug users spend a staggering 8.3 billion rupees (\$143 million) each year to keep themselves "high." It said the Police Narcotics Bureau seized 27 kg of heroin and 51,538 kg of cannabis in 1994. In 1996 the seizures rose to 40 kg of heroin and 85,342 kg of cannabis.

But 1997 was likely to be record year as police had already confiscated 46 kg of heroin and 62,338 kg of cannabis in the first few months. According to the survey, drug-related arrests increased to 14,800 last year from 12,352 in 1994. Over 60 percent of those arrested are under 30 years of age.

The Prisons Department records show that 35 percent of all prisoners in Sri Lankan jails have been convicted of drugs

related offences.

Amnesty for Army Deserters: Military authorities in Sri Lanka, who announced a crackdown on army deserters during the first week of July, said that they was declaring an amnesty for them to return to their regiments. Military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe told a news conference in Colombo on 10 July that the army, which is hunting for some 10,000 deserters, would pardon those who returned within the following two weeks.

He said the amnesty was being declared at the request of several parents who had written asking that their children be pardoned for deserting their posts on the battlefield. "The amnesty period starts immediately and will continue until midnight of July 21," Munasinghe said. Soldiers who report back to duty will keep their ranks and will not be court-martialled, he added. Only two weeks earlier, the army court-martialled four soldiers who had deserted and jailed them for three years in one of the first examples of stricter penalties.

Munasinghe told pressmen that some 30,000 soldiers had deserted from the army, of which 20,000 had returned after an amnesty offer last year. Of the 10,000 still missing, 200 were officers, he added. The armed forces recently launched advertising campaigns on television and other media to attract recruits to fill depleted ranks.

Six Percent GDP Growth Expected: Sri Lanka's economy has already shown that it has the potential to achieve a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 6 percent by the end of 1997, compared with a 3.8-percent growth in 1996, according to the Bank of Ceylon. The bank's Economic Research Division, in a latest report on "Trends and Prospects 1997," predicted a 3.5-percent growth in agriculture, forestry and fishery on the basis of a rebound in the paddy sector from the slump experienced in 1996. The manufacturing sector is forecast to grow by nearly 10 percent in 1997 compared with 8.9 percent in 1996 while the construction sector is projected to increase by 5.5 percent as against 3.4 percent.

The report quoted the latest Colombo Consumer Price Index for May 1997 as saying that compared with May last year, this year has recorded a continuing moderate inflation rate, which declined from 16.8 percent in December 1996 to 7.8 percent in May 1997. The government estimated average annual inflation for 1997 at around 9 percent, saying it is determined to continue with its anti-inflation policies. However, according to the report, with possible increases in the prices of utilities such as electricity and telecommunication,

the possible introduction of value-added tax and the depreciation of the rupee, inflation will average 10 percent this year.

KEUNEMAN'S BOOK COLLECTION FOR JAFFNA: The entire collection of books and documents of the much respected late veteran leader of the Ceylon Communist Party, Pieter Keuneman was handed over to the Jaffna Public Library by his wife, Onida Keuneman and daughter Khema. Media, Posts and Telecommunications Minister and Chairman of the Sudu Nelum Movement (White Lotus Movement), Mangala Samaraweera, accepted the invaluable book collection on behalf of the government's project team engaged in the reconstruction of the Jaffna Public Library. "A Book and a Brick" project was set up by the government under the auspices of the Sudu Nelum Movement in order to ensure community participation as well as promote ethnic harmony in the process of rebuilding the Jaffna Public Library.

The Jaffna Public Library, internationally recognised as a symbol of Tamil culture and learning was set on fire and destroyed by the security forces on 31 May 1981 following the violence unleashed during the election for the Jaffna District Development Council.

CITIZENSHIP FOR MONEY: If the Sri Lankan parliament were to enact into law a bill recently presented to it, one could buy a Sri Lankan citizenship for \$25,000. One does not have to marry a Sri Lankan woman to gain citizenship any more. One's spouse and dependent children will only cost \$10,000 each. The only qualification, other than making the stipulated sum, is that one must have been resident in island for five years before qualifying for citizenship. The proposed law is designed for investors and professionals and the scheme will be administered by the country's Board of Investment and Ministry of Finance.

LTTE CADRES FROM TAMIL NADU: The LTTE leadership is reported to have asked about one hundred of their cadres who have recently completed a special training course in Tamil Nadu, South India, to return to the Vanni jungles immediately, the "Weekend Express" from Colombo reported quoting Sri Lanka's National Intelligence Bureau (NIB) sources. It is said that these cadres trained in suicide attacks along with members of their ally in Tamil Nadu, the Tamil Retrieval Force are being summoned urgently to join in resisting the advancing troop columns of Operation Jayasikuru.

DOCTOR TO THE NORTH: Nimal Sripatha De Silva, the newly appointed Minister

of Health, announced at a recent press conference in Colombo that arrangements were being made to send 175 doctors to the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The decision was taken following discussions with the Government Medical Officers Association (GMOA) as well as health authorities of these provinces. Of the 175 doctors, 36 would be sent to the Jaffna district, 19 to Vavuniya, 25 to Mannar, 14 to Trincomalee, 41 to Batticaloa and 40 to Amparai.

ARRESTS IN TAMIL NADU: The Indian Home Ministry authorities have sent to the Sri Lankan police the names of four allegedly LTTE members recently arrested by the Tamil Nadu police. They are Mohan (24), Thomas (24), Kittu (26) and Vinayagamurthy (40). It has been alleged that these men, at the time of their arrest, were in possession of 1,700,000 Sri Lankan rupees, two revolvers, walkie-talkies, LTTE propaganda literature including video cassettes and posters. It is also claimed that they were sent to India to purchase badly needed medical supplies for treating hundreds of LTTE cadres injured in the recent fighting.

ELECTORAL LAW REFORMS: On July 3, the Ministry of Justice released its proposals for reforms to electoral law. This step had become imperative in the light of many inconsistencies and injustices in the present law, which came to public attention during the recent local government elections.

The reforms envisage a Parliament of 198 persons, of whom 99 will be appointed on a territorial basis on the first-past-the-post principle, while 95 will be appointed on the basis of proportional representation, and 4 from National Lists.

The UNP and the TULF have said that they will bring some amendments to these proposals at the meeting of the Parliamentary Select Committee on July 22, where the draft is due to be discussed.

The UNP has suggested the setting up of an independent Elections Commission, on the lines of the Indian one. Controls on campaign contributions, restriction of campaign spending and a requirement that all candidates declare their assets, are among other amendments that may be proposed.

MUSLIM SOLDIERS DETAINED: Eight Sri Lankan Muslim soldiers have been detained by military authorities for allegedly supplying information to the Tamil Tigers, military sources said 27 June. The initial arrest was of one Muslim soldier on the Jaffna Peninsula, who had earlier been attached to the intelligence wing of the LTTE. The sources claimed that he joined the government forces in 1988 and it is

believed that since then he has been supplying the LTTE information about military movements. The others were arrested following information gathered after the first arrest, the sources said adding that they had also given information about the locations of fresh supplies of arms and ammunition, as a result of which attacks were launched by the LTTE on these locations and large quantities of arms and ammunition were lost.

GERMAN AID TO SRI LANKA: The German government is to grant 1 million US dollars for Sri Lanka's social and economic development in 1997-98. An agreement was signed between the two countries following bilateral negotiations on development co-operation between Sri Lanka and Germany held in Colombo recently. Under the agreement, the German government will provide 23.36 million US dollars for financial cooperation (soft loans) and 19.74 million US dollars for technical co-operation projects (grants).

JAPAN FUNDS FOR WATER SUPPLY SCHEME: Sri Lanka has launched a national water supply scheme costing 95 million US dollars to be funded by the Japanese government, according to Housing Ministry sources in Colombo. The main objective of this program is to provide safe drinking water for rural areas in the country by the year 2010. Under the program, The National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB) has already begun digging 7,500 tube wells and will construct 1,000 deep wells per year in the rural areas of Sri Lanka. Under the aid package, Japan will also provide equipment worth 13 million US dollars for the water supply development projects in the country, the sources added.

PROTEST AGAINST FOOD SHORTAGE: According to a LTTE statement issued on 4 July, civilians Tamils in the northern Vanni region held marches to protest against the "food siege" imposed by the government. Foreign and local aid agencies had criticised the government for disrupting food supplies at a meeting held in north-eastern Mullaitivu, which was also attended by representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the statement said.

"Most NGO (non-governmental organisations) representatives in attendance openly stated that despite repeatedly presenting the government with facts and figures relating to the desperate food shortage among the Vanni displaced, they had met with deliberate government obstructions to carrying out relief work," the LTTE statement said.

UNHCR CREATES SAFE ZONE: The LTTE in a statement dated 4 July said that, in a belated recognition of the seriousness of the onslaught against Tamils by Sri Lanka's armed forces, UNHCR has hoisted the UN's flag at Puthur (Puthuvilankulam) in the Vanni region, declaring the area of 2.5 sq. kilometres a safe haven under its control. The move comes at a time when the indiscriminate blasting of Tamil homes, public buildings and temporary shelters by the troops has reached fever-pitch. 10,000 people are staying in Puthur, Puthuvilankulam at present. Water is scarce, however, and the region is largely shrub jungle, the statement said welcoming the UNHCR's intervention.

UN FUND AIDS HEALTH PROGRAM: The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) has granted Sri Lanka 750,000 U.S. dollars to upgrade health education in primary and secondary schools in Sri Lanka.

The UNFPA-aided program is expected to help 1.8 million students between grades 6 and 11 to cope with the changes of adolescence, according to education ministry sources. Students will be educated on nutrition, AIDS prevention, population and environment, male responsibilities in family and gender equality. It is expected that when they grow up these children would be endowed with the knowledge and attitudes for responsible sexual behaviour and planned families, thereby leading to responsible citizenship.

ARMY ADVANCE HALTED: Sri Lankan military forces trying to advance eastwards from Paranthan to Vaddakachchi were driven back by LTTE forces. The army began its operation at 8.15 am on 6 July accompanied by artillery, mortar shells and gunfire. But the entire army contingent was forced to beat a retreat in the face of an LTTE counter-attack. Troop casualties are not known. The LTTE suffered one loss, Manikkarasa Sivakumar of Amparai, according to a LTTE statement issued on 6 July.

BATTICALOA LAGOON-FISHING BANNED: Tamil fishing families in Puthungar, Valaiyiravu and Thimilathuvu (all in Batticaloa) have been barred by Sri Lanka's occupying army from fishing in the district's lagoon. The families here depend on fishing for their survival. Technically, food relief is supposed to be given to such families who are deprived of their livelihood but the Sri Lankan government has not compensated them at all, according to a LTTE statement issued on 6 July.

OVERSEAS WORKERS RISE TO 35 PERCENT: The number of Sri Lankans working overseas has increased by 35 percent

FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Protests Against HRTF Abolition

The government's decision to shut down the Human Rights Task Force (HRTF) has met with strong protests by human rights organisations in Sri Lanka. The HRTF is to be wound up on 30 June, and the welfare of detainees, one of its main functions, is set to be taken over by the newly established National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on 1 July.

A press release issued by Mrs. Suriya Wickremasinghe, General Secretary of the Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka (CRM) said "the decision to close down the HRTF when the new Human Rights Commission is not geared to take over its functions is as perplexing as it is appalling.

"Special laws relating to arrest and detention such as we have now under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the emergency regulations need, as a basic minimum, both certain safeguards and a specific mechanism by which they are monitored. Many of the legal safeguards, and only current effective monitoring mechanism, are now provided by the emergency regulations creating the HRTF and the presidential directions made thereunder.

in the first six months of this year compared to the same period of last year, according to sources of the Foreign Employment Bureau in Colombo.

The sources said that about 73,230 Sri Lankans have registered with the bureau for jobs abroad so far this year. Of this, about 70 percent reportedly went through licensed agents. The major demand abroad is still for Sri Lankan housemaids and 65 percent of those who went to work overseas between January and June this year were housemaids.

The government is continuing to improve and expand facilities for people leaving for overseas employment as it has become a major source of foreign exchange earnings and has reduced unemployment at home. Sri Lanka earned over 950 million US dollars last year from more than 500,000 workers who were employed abroad, according to local press reports.

"It is by virtue of these provisions that a person making an arrest may be required to identify himself by name and rank, that the person arrested must be afforded a reasonable means of communicating with a friend or relative, and that when a child under 12 years of age or a woman is arrested a person of their choice should be allowed to accompany them.

"It is also by virtue of these provisions that the HRTF has been set up with its nine regional offices in addition to its Colombo office and its staff of 80.

"The services it provides include, by way of example:

- * Monitoring arrests and detentions under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and the emergency regulations through regular visits to police stations, army camps and prisons; this is done by nine regional centres and the Head Office staff, with the latter covering 136 police stations on 13 rounds every month. In the course of this round of visits "missing persons" are sometimes located and their families informed. This work requires familiarity with police procedures and practices as the registers have to be examined to check on persons detained and the legality of their detention;
- * Investigating complaints of disappearances and abductions by the security forces;
- * Maintaining a round-the-clock facility at the Head Office and most regional centres for entertaining complaints;
- * Taking remedial action when irregular detention or inhuman treatment is observed;
- * Inquiring into complaints made against police officers;
- * Advising the government in cases of non-compliance with HRTF regulations or Presidential directions so that human rights violations can be minimised.

"The rescinding, with effect from June 30 of the emergency regulations creating the HRTF, will dismantle this specialised service which has been built up over the years leaving a most grievous gap in the mechanism available for the protection of life, liberty and security of our people.

"The CRM is aware that some of the functions discharged by the HRTF have also been written into the Act establishing the Human Rights Commission. The discharge of these functions will therefore ultimately become the responsibility of the Commission. However to best of CRM's knowledge, the Commission has not yet become operative and has not built up the institutional capacity for this purpose.

"Sri Lanka has had more than its fair share of "disappearances", extra judicial executions and torture in custody. We must not ignore the lessons of experience.

We just cannot afford any gap in the protection of the life and liberty of persons liable to arrest and detention. There is also the question of fair and proper treatment of its staff. It is not too late for the government to rescind the regulation which would make the HRTF disappear in a few days time, or take other remedial action to ensure its services continue uninterrupted and undiminished," the CRM's statement said.

Amnesty International Protests

In a statement dated 27 June AI said that the decision to wind up Human Rights Task Force could jeopardise welfare of detainees.

AI said that the decision to wind up the Human Rights Task Force (HRTF) could result in the welfare of detainees in more than 374 authorised places of detention in Sri Lanka being put into jeopardy. "We fear that the NHRC has not as yet become operational and may not be in a position to take on the vital task of monitoring the welfare of detainees." "At all costs a vacuum in the monitoring the welfare of hundreds of detainees should be avoided." The life, liberty and security of those detained at these often very remote places should be a primary consideration when considering any transitional arrangements for the handing over of functions from the HRTF to the NHRC, AI said.

In a letter to President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Amnesty International's Secretary General, Pierre Sane, urged that the heads of the security forces be informed within the next four days of the need to report all arrests and detention - under the emergency regulations and Prevention of Terrorism Act - to the NHRC and in any case no later than 48 hours from the time of arrest or detention.

"It is imperative that safeguards for the welfare of detainees set out in Presidential Directions issued in July 1995 be reissued to avoid lapses which could result in new waves of arbitrary arrests and detention, torture and 'disappearances'," the letter said.

These safeguards included the issuing of arrest receipts to the relatives of people taken into custody, the informing of relatives, the granting of the right to detainees to inform a relative or friend of his or her whereabouts, the recording of statements of detainees in a language of their choice and the putting in place of specific protective measures when arresting or detaining women and children.

Amnesty International is also concerned that the expertise built over the years in the HRTF both at the national and local level be safeguarded during this transition. The government should ensure that the new structure makes the best use

of the existing experience of HRTF officials. Furthermore, the organisation urges that new procedures are put into place for the handing over of complaints pending with the HRTF to other authorities with the power and personnel to handle them.

Many human rights organisations in Sri Lanka are of the view that the HRTF had played a critical role, in Colombo and in many of its regional offices, in safeguarding the rights of those arrested and detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Emergency Regulations. Thus, at present, human rights activists have genuine fears of a vacuum in which the HRTF would cease to exist before the NCHR is equipped to undertake the tasks the HRTF has been performing up to now.

Civilians Captured by LTTE - AI Expresses Concern

Amnesty International in an urgent appeal dated 14 July expressed fears about the safety of many civilians taken prisoner in the recent past by the LTTE. The AI statement said:

A number of civilians are reported to have been taken prisoner in recent days by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Reports that some who have since been released were ill-treated in custody have heightened fears for the safety of those still held.

Nine crew of the Misen ship were taken prisoner by members of the LTTE on 1 July 1997 off the coast of Pesalal, Mannar district. Two Indonesian nationals were released after a few days, but seven Sri Lankan nationals - one Muslim, one Tamil and five Sinhalese - remain in the custody of the LTTE. They are T A D J Thenuwara, L Sunil Perera, M H R Pushpakumara, Mahinda Dias, J A J Jayakody, A W M Mustapha and R Yugathanathan. According to unconfirmed reports, they may be held at Vidattaltivu, Mannar district. In a statement issued on 5 July, the LTTE said that these civilians had been taken into custody because "the vessel they were employed on was found trespassing within Tamil Eelam's maritime limits".

On the night of 2 July, 35 Muslim and four Sinhalese villagers of Irakkakandy, Trincomalee district, were taken prisoner by members of the LTTE. The latter reportedly went from house to house and called out individual villagers by name. Witnesses saw them being tied with rope and taken away. Among those taken were Imam (religious leader) Maulavi J Abdul Rahman, the Grama Sevaka (village headman), A R Nisam Deen, and eight students, including a 13-year-old boy, A

S Niros. Most of the people taken are fishermen.

Apparently they were taken prisoner after five members of the LTTE were handed over to the army by the villagers. Representatives of the Muslim and Tamil community in the area have appealed for their release to the LTTE leader of the area, but the latter reportedly refused to release them. He has reportedly told the community leaders to negotiate with the army for the release of the five LTTE members in return for the release of the Muslim and Sinhalese villagers. The prisoners are said to be held at an LTTE camp in Thiraya jungle, north of Trincomalee town.

On 8 July, 38 crew of a cargo ship taking goods to Jaffna peninsula from Colombo were taken prisoner by members of the LTTE off the coast at Point Pedro, Jaffna district. All of them were reported to be nationals of North Korea. Late on 8 July, the LTTE radio announced that one of the crew had been killed when he put up resistance. His body was handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) a few days later. The rest of the crew were handed over to the ICRC on 12 July. According to a report by the Agence France Press agency of 13 July, the doctor among the crew of the ship reported that they had been treated badly for four days by the LTTE. A coroner also reportedly ruled that the seaman whose body had been handed over was deliberately killed with a shot in the head.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about recent reports of the civilian prisoners described above being taken by the LTTE. Amnesty urges that the prisoners be treated humanely and given immediate access to the ICRC. It should be noted, particularly in the case of the Irakkakandy villagers, that the taking of hostages is forbidden under Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. Amnesty International calls for the release of any prisoners who are being held by the LTTE solely on the basis of their ethnicity.

In a further follow-up statement dated 16 July, AI stated:

Following the release of seven Muslims from the group of 39 civilians who appear to have been taken hostage by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on 2 July 1997, Amnesty International is calling for the immediate release of those still held. The organisation reiterates its unequivocal opposition to hostage-taking.

Concern remains for the safety of the seven crew members of the Misen ship taken prisoner by the LTTE on 1 July.

On 14 July, the seven Muslims, including Maulavi J Abdul Rahman and 13-year-old school pupil A S Niros, were handed

over to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) by the LTTE. Their release was reported by the LTTE as a humanitarian gesture. Among those still held are the grama sevaka (village headman), A R Nisam Deen and 45-year-old Abdul Cader. Two students, 16-year-old F M Siraj and 19-year-old F M Sajith Khan, also continue to be held.

Those released have reported that they were transferred blindfolded by sea from the village of Irakkakandy to a house thought to be situated in Mullaitivu district. They have also stated that they were treated well throughout their time in LTTE custody.

Reportedly the LTTE asked the seven men to convey a message to the government of their offer to swap the remaining 32 detainees in exchange for five of their members apparently handed over to the army by villagers.

In another development, on 15 July, the LTTE stated that it would regard as legitimate military targets any merchant vessel taking supplies to the Jaffna peninsula in the north of the country. In their statement the LTTE accused the government of 'shipping war materials to Jaffna under the pretext of supplying food and necessities for the people'.

Amnesty International welcomes the news that seven of the villagers of Irakkakandy have been released, and continues to call for the unconditional and immediate release of all those still held hostage by the LTTE. Amnesty is also still deeply concerned about the safety of the crew of the Misen, and urges that they be treated humanely and given immediate access to the ICRC.

Nine Soldiers in Krishanthi Rape and Murder Case

Indictments have been served in the High Court of Colombo on nine soldiers in connection with the Krishanthi Kumarasamy case. The prosecution case is that Krishanthi Kumarasamy, an 18-year-old student, was returning home from her school last September when she was stopped at a military checkpoint near the village of Chemmani in Jaffna. She was raped and strangled by soldiers. Her mother, Rasammah Kumarasamy, 16-year-old brother Pranavan and neighbour Kiruba Moorthy, who reached the checkpoint looking for her, also disappeared. The military at first denied any knowledge of the incident. But four bodies were found 11 days later buried in an old salt mine near the checkpoint.

The Attorney-General sought and obtained a "Trial-At-Bar" for the hearing of this case. Normally murder cases are tried by a single judge before a jury of

laymen, but in highly complex or sensitive cases, or in cases where the evidence is largely circumstantial, a "Trial-at-Bar" comprising a bench of three judges can be held. The Krishanthi case will be heard before three judges Judges Nimal Dissanayake, Andrew Somawansa and Gamini Abeyratna.

Human rights activists see the Krishanthi case as a test of the government's commitment to protect human rights and bring to book members of the security forces who commit criminal acts and engage in violation of such rights.

"Disappearances" Commissions Wind Up

The three Commissions appointed by the President to look into disappearances throughout the island, came to the end of their term in May 1997. They are, at the moment, in the process of finalising their reports, which are due to be handed over to the President shortly.

According to the terms under which these Presidential Commissions are set up, the reports must be submitted directly to the President, who must then table

them in Parliament as Sessional Papers. It is only then that the information contained in the reports will become public.

Former President Premadasa set up the first Commission to look into the 'involuntary removal' of persons in 1991. The three Commissions appointed by President Kumaratunga bring the total number of Presidential Commissions that have investigated the disappearance of over 20,000 people in Sri Lanka in the past years, to five.

However, not one of the reports of these Commission has ever been tabled in Parliament. Thus, the information contained in these reports, which is for the most part based on the testimony of the thousands of family members of the disappeared who came before the Commissions, remains inaccessible to the public. Groups working with the families of the disappeared hope to launch a public campaign soon to call on the President to bring this information before the public. Their aim is to begin a process of ensuring justice and redress for those who have suffered as a consequence of the disappearance of their family members and colleagues.

Friends for Peace

Concerned persons of Australian Sinhalese and Tamil communities in Canberra, Australia have formed an association called "Friends for Peace in Sri Lanka" to work for lasting peace in Sri Lanka. This association has been incorporated in the Australia in May 1997 with the objectives of:

- creating awareness and understanding amongst concerned persons about all facets of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka;
- promoting a durable peaceful settlement of the ethnic conflict recognising the aspirations and the security of all peoples in Sri Lanka;
- promoting respect for fundamental rights as defined in the United Nations Charter and with special reference to the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and
- seeking the support of as many people and organisations as possible who subscribe to the aforesaid objectives.

In a press release, the organisation said, "We are glad that the two major political parties in Sri Lanka have now agreed to adapt a bi-partisan approach towards solving the current ethnic conflict in the country. Following the independence of Sri Lanka in 1948 this is the very first time where such an agreement of a bi-partisan nature has been entered into. We hope that this new understanding will make the government in con-

sultation with the main opposition party, to take constructive steps to achieve a just and fair solution to this unfortunate problem. We also urge that the other political parties and organisations should follow this lead and support moves for peace.

"We hope that this understanding would bring a just end to the conflict through a negotiated settlement. This can only be achieved by allowing all peoples of Sri Lanka to enjoy equal rights and privileges.

"We, however, hope that on the contrary, this understanding may not be used to launch a massive war effort, prolonging the war situation and bringing more devastating consequences to the country and its peoples. Thousands of Sinhalese and Tamils have been killed and maimed in this senseless war. Billions of Rupees have been spent in destroying each other's war capabilities, civilian infrastructure and personal properties resulting in immense suffering to many. Both the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) should come to the understanding that this is an unwinnable war. Recent world events have shown that negotiated settlements have led to the end of long drawn out wars. Without sitting together as equals around a table there could be no solution to the conflict. We should not insist on impracticable pre-conditions that will not help in moving towards this goal.

"While we strongly appreciate the positive role a bi-partisan approach could play in bringing about a just peace in Sri Lanka, we earnestly appeal to all parties to this conflict to immediately get together and negotiate a just and lasting peace."

"GOLDEN LORD" A THANGATHURAI: AN EASTERN MAN FOR ALL SEASONS!

By D B S Jeyaraj

In the not so distant days of energetic electioneering in the North-Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka, an indispensable feature in propaganda campaigns was shouting slogans and chanting cheers by enthusiastic supporters extolling the virtues of political parties and candidates. Some of these would be coined or "punned" around the names of the politicians themselves. Tamil Congress admirers for example would cheer G G Ponnambalam saying "Engal Palam Ponnambalam" (Our strength is Ponnambalam) while Federal Party adherents of SJV C would chant "Engal Nayakam Chelvanayakam" (Our leader is Chelvanayakam).

In the remote Mutur area of the Trincomalee District in the Eastern Province Arunasalam Thangathurai of the FP and later the TULF was a towering political figure. The name Thangathurai or "Golden Lord" facilitated slogan chanting easily. "Engal Thangam Thangathurai" (Our gold is Thangathurai) and "Engal Thurai Thangathurai" (Our Lord is Thangathurai) were the popular slogans. The golden lord of the eastern province is no more.

The 61 year old TULF member of parliament for the Trincomalee District was the victim of a ruthless grenade cum bullet attack in the heart of Trincomalee Town on 5 July which incidently is the annual black tigers day of the LTTE. Thangathurai was assassinated at the premises of Sri Shanmuga Hindu Ladies College in Rajavorathayam Street, Trincomalee by three trouser-clad youths who lobbed a grenade first and then fired 9mm pistols at close range.

He was bidding farewell to a group of teachers and students after declaring open a new three storeyed building block for the school that evening. Thangathurai had allocated funds extensively from the de-centralised budget for this project. Although the primary target Thangathurai was not the only victim of the grenade cum bullet attack.

Five others were killed and fifteen wounded in the attack described as "cowardly and reprehensible" by TULF President and former Parliamentarian M Sivathamparam. Most of these victims were students and teachers of Sri Shanmuga including Principal Rajeswari Thanabalingham who was killed and Vice Principal Amirithini Kulasingham who was in-

jured.

Arunasalam Thangathurai's funeral was held on 9 July. It was delayed to enable his eldest daughter from London and wife, daughter and son from Chennai to be present. His family had relocated to Tamil Nadu since 1985. His daughter was married only a few months ago in Chennai. The funeral week was a period of sorrow for the people of Trincomalee.

Thangathurai was a much-loved man of the people. Elders called him "Thangathambi"; To those of his age group he was "Thanga". To those younger he was "Thangannaa". The FP organ "Suthanthiran" used to refer to him as the "Muttur Muthu" or "Pearl of Mutur". Thangathurai's body lay in state at the Trincomalee Urban Council Hall for the public to pay their respects. Massive crowds paid homage. The final procession and last rites at the Villoondry Crematorium too was well attended. A large contingent of government ministers as well as the speaker K B Ratnayake were in Trincomalee to pay their final respects.

The gruesome murder of Thangathurai also marked the end of a vibrant brand of politics in the Tamil arena. The life and time of Thangathurai were quite turbulent and tempestuous. He was the long-standing leader of the federal party youth league and was at times considered a militant rebel. Thangathurai was an extremist militant when it came to safeguarding Tamil rights in the Trincomalee District. This embroiled him in many controversies and placed him at loggerheads with the powers that be on many an occasion.

Thangathurai was a colourful personality and controversial figure who retained a fierce political independence. This again caused resentment in his party hierarchy which expected a certain degree of conformity. Moreover Thangathurai would attempt to reconcile attachment to principles with affection for personalities. Combined to this was an admirable trait in his political approach. He was a rare blend of the idealist and pragmatist which in turn inculcated a flexibility that was at times hard to comprehend. His political approach enabled him to associate with different hues of the Tamil political spectrum at various stages. In that sense he was a political enigma.

Arunasalam Thangathurai was born in Kiliveddy an agrarian village in the Mutur Division of the Trincomalee District. His father and kinsmen though not of patrician lineage were comfortably well off land-owning cultivators. After preliminary schooling in Mutur, Thangathurai studied further at Government College Batticaloa. Thereafter he went to Stanley College (Canagaretnam MMV now) in Ariyalai, Jaffna on a scholarship. There he was a contemporary of two other TULF Ex-Parliamentarians, Alalasundaram of Kopay and Soosaitasam of Mannar.

After secondary studies Alalasundaram proceeded to Madras to obtain a degree and then went on to become a lawyer. Soosaitasam went to Colombo for higher studies and proceeded from there to London to do chartered accountancy. Thangathurai, hampered by financial constraints, forsook higher studies and opted for the clerical service. He was for the greater part of his clerical career attached to the Irrigation Department.

While in the clerical service he participated with gusto in trade union activities of the Trotskyite Government Clerical Services Union. He was also involved in non-political social service aimed at uplifting the people of Kiliveddy in particular and the Mutur area in general. He was somewhat left-oriented in those days and did not identify himself openly with the Tamil nationalist politics of the Federal Party of Tamil Congress in the fifties and sixties.

In the meantime along with his relatives, Thangathurai also concentrated on agricultural activities. The family purchased and leased lots of land and pursued productive agricultural activity. They also farmed lands belonging to temples on a contractual basis. Through these agricultural activities Thangathurai and his relatives acquired a remarkable amount of wealth and soon became a family of consequence in the region. Moreover, Thangathurai after years of government service also passed the Ceylon Administrative Service Examination and became Divisional Revenue Officer. The combination of agrarian wealth and administrative office made Thangathurai one of the brightest stars in the Mutur firmament.

The Mutur Constituency had roughly 60-65% Muslims and 30-35% Tamils. In 1956 the Federal Party had backed the independent sitting member for Mutur MEH Mohammed Ali as independent candidate. He won. In 1960 Mutur was made a double member constituency to provide for a Tamil member also. The FP in the March and July elections of 1960 fielded T Ahambaram who won both times as first member.

March 1960 saw Mohammed Ali winning as Independent while July 1960 saw

A L Abdul Majeed of the SLFP win. Incidentally Mohammed Ali's younger brother, M E H Maharoo and Abdul Majeed's son A M M Najeeb are currently representing the Trincomalee District in Parliament. T Ahambaram died in office and a by-election was held on 28 June 1962. The FP candidate was Mohammed Ali who won handsomely with a majority of 7312. In 1965 Mohammed Ali of the FP and Abdul Majeed of the SLFP were re-elected again. One consequence of this was that there was no Tamil member for Mutur from 1962-1970 although it was made a multi-member constituency for that purpose.

In 1969 the FP left the UNP Government of Dudley Senanayake and reverted back to opposition benches. Mohammed Ali however continued to remain with the UNP Government. This compelled the FP to look for a new face to contend Mutur. The branch members in the electorate wanted a Tamil candidate and not a Muslim candidate this time. Former Paddiruppu MP and FP President Rasamanickam was in charge of selecting a suitable candidate for Mutur. His eyes fell on Thangathurai, a distant relative of his. The local branches in Mutur wanted a man called Kumaraswamy but Thangathurai was selected as candidate for Mutur. It is said that Chelvanayakam, Rasamanickam and Naganathan endorsed his candidacy after a series of meetings with Thangathurai.

The Federal Party candidate had to mobilise a large number of votes as the presence of two powerful Muslim candidates, Mohammed Ali and Abdul Majeed may have resulted in both of them being elected. Two factors helped Thangathurai. The first was the community consciousness of the Tamil voter who voted en bloc for the FP. The second was HDL Leelaratne contesting as independent. Rapid Sinhala colonisation in the late fifties and sixties had resulted in a substantial Sinhala population evolve in Mutur. Leelaratne, a Sinhala candidate weaned away these votes from the UNP and SLFP Muslim candidates. This in turn reduced their votes enabling Thangathurai with a solid chunk of Tamil votes to become second to Abdul Majeed. Thangathurai was elected as second member of Mutur with 19,787 votes. He was the youngest FP member in that Parliament.

Thangathurai's tenure in that Parliament was generally uneventful. He was elected President of the FP Youth League. Beyond that he was not given much prominence in the party and was generally treated as a "Podiyan" MP, Thangathurai, however, concentrated on developing his backward electorate. To do this he had to establish close rapport with the leaders of the government. Assiduously cultivating the SLFP members Thangathurai suc-

ceeded in obtaining many benefits for the Mutur people. The chief areas of development were in the sectors of transport, roads, ferry services, electricity, agriculture, irriyation, fisheries and education.

Thangathurai's greatest enthusiasm however was for Education and developing educational infrastructure. He was firmly of the opinion that the way to upward social mobility for the down-trodden Eastern Province Tamil was mainly through education. Thangathurai felt that the eastern Tamil had to emulate his or her northern counterpart and utilise education as the path to progress. In fact even his final address at the Sri Shanmuga College ceremony emphasised the need for upgrading education. He evoked thundering applause when he reiterated his commitment to the opening of the "educational eye" (Kalvikkann) in the east.

So Thangathurai during 1970-1977 utilised all his political skills to extract concessions from Dr Badiuddin Mahmud, Tudawe and Abdul Majeed to promote the educational infrastructure in Mutur. Opening of schools, upgrading and enhancement of facilities for schools along with recruitment of teachers etc were some of the benefits obtained.

In this process of gaining maximum development benefits for his constituency, Thangathurai incurred the displeasure of many partymen from the north who objected to his perceived links with the SLFP Government. Thangathurai with his fierce streak of independence and his commitment to the upliftment of his people continued undeterred.

The demise of veterans like Rasamanickam and Naganathan along with the declining health of Chelvanayakam in the 1970-1977 period saw newcomers like bereft of firm moorings in the party. Thangathurai moved closer to Rajadurai of Batticaloa who in turn was becoming increasingly isolated in the party. The ascending personality was Appapillai Amirthalingam whose differences with Rajadurai were now getting widened. Amirthalingam was now viewing Thangathurai as being of the Rajadurai camp and turning hostile towards him. This was the beginning of the deteriorating relationship between Amirthalingam and Rajadurai.

Meanwhile the FP and the TC sank their differences and came together first as the Tamil United Front and later as the Tamil United Liberation Front. The introduction of standardisation in higher education had galvanised sections of the Tamil youths into adopting violent militant tactics. Tamil politics itself became radicalised with the demand for a separate state gathering momentum. Amirthalingam was at the crest of this rising tide of Tamil extreme nationalism that threatened to engulf the whole nation.

Again Thangathurai was not wholly in favour of the emerging political trend among Tamils. He felt that the concept of increasing opportunities for higher education for backward areas through modified schemes of standardisation would tremendously benefit the Tamils of Vanni and the Eastern province. As such there would be greater equity within the Tamil community itself in the higher education sphere. Also this would help improve the overall condition of the east. This went against the grain of the Jaffna-centred dominant line of thought in the party.

The second was about separation itself. Thangathurai was one of the few within the TULF who were opposed to the demand for separation. Again Thangathurai's opinion was shaped from the particular perspective of the eastern province. He felt that such a radical demand was unattainable and would only cause immeasurable hardship to the Tamil people living in the ethnically heterogeneous eastern province. These are views that could be termed prophetic in the light of recent history. Thangathurai however did not have the political stature then to make his voice heard in the party structure reverberating to the thunderous rhetoric of secession. In fact Thangathurai was literally shouted down when he raised the issue with Amirthalingam a few times.

Thangathurai's differing viewpoints, his affinity towards certain members of the SLFP Government, his cordial relations with Rajadurai etc caused a rupture in the relationship he had with Amirthalingam. With the death of Chelvanayakam Amirthalingam became the supremo of the TULF. At this point elections were also announced. Thangathurai found himself without an electorate to contest at the hustings.

The De-limitation Commission led by Noel Tittawela had divided the existing double-member Mutur constituency in two. Predominantly Sinhala areas were carved into the Seruwila electorate where the ethnic ratio was roughly Sinhala-67%; Tamil-19% and Muslim-13%. The re-demarcated Mutur was now only a single member seat. The ethnic ratio in Mutur was now roughly Muslim-66%; Tamil-30% and Sinhala-3%. Only the Trincomalee electorate had a Tamil majority with a rough ethnic ratio of Tamil-57%; Sinhala-23% and Muslim-18%. Despite the Tamils being the single largest community in the Trincomalee District they had only one member in Parliament. While the Muslims retained the earlier level of one the Tamil representation of two had been reduced to one while the Sinhalese now had one. Tamil fears about Sinhala colonisation had come true again. The Sinhalese had gained electorally at the expense of the Tamils. The number.

This again was a contentious issue between Thangathurai and the TULF leadership. Hard as it may be to believe the TULF had not objected to Tamil representation decreasing in THE Trincomalee District. Worse still the TULF itself had recommended the creation of the Sinhala majority Seruwila. There was a very self-ish logic that motivated the TULF in this. The TULF wanted a new electorate Mullaitheevu to be carved out of Vavuniya. This was to enable T Sivasithambaram of the Tamil Congress to contest Vavuniya and for the sitting member X M Sellathambu of the Federal Party to contest from Mullaitheevu.

Sivasithambaram who was the victor in 1960 and 1965 had lost to Sellathambu in 1970. The rivalry between both was very intense. Both wanted to contest in Vavuniya in 1977 also. The fragile unity between the FP and TC was threatened because of this dispute. So the way out seemed the creation of Mullaitheevu. Also the TULF wanted representation for the Tamils of the Amparai District. So Pottuvil was made a double-member seat. Since these two recommendations were prioritised by the TULF it failed to assert itself in the Trincomalee District. So the Sinhala seat of Seruwila was almost a quid pro quo for Mullaitheevu and Pottuvil. The sacrifice in this case was the Tamil seat of Mutur.

Thangathurai the sitting member of Mutur was naturally angry and hurt at this development. These feelings were aggravated by the fact that he had not been consulted on this matter. The damage was done. Thangathurai and his supporters now pressed for nomination to the Trincomalee electorate. Since it was the only avenue for Tamil representation in the Trincomalee District the stakes were naturally high. The sitting TULF member for Trinco was Neminathan. Before him Manickarasa represented it from 1963 to 1970. Both were considered weak and ineffective in the context of rising Sinhala chauvinism propped up by the state in the district. There was a view that Trincomalee had been deprived of a strong Tamil leader since the days of Rajavarotheiam. So a new strong candidate was deemed necessary.

Despite the claim put forward by Thangathurai the party hierarchy favoured R Sambandandan. He was a successful lawyer and belonged to the Tamil elite of the town. He was a nephew of Tamil stalwart Rajavarotheiam. He was a long standing party member and had been detained in Panagoda for the Satyagraha of 1961. It was felt that Sambandandan was the better candidate of the two. Sambandandan, a lawyer was considered "strong" as compared to Thangathurai a non-lawyer. Besides the TULF party branches in Trinco-

malee Town preferred the "Urban" Sambandandan to the "rural" Thangathurai. Since the electorate was Trinco and not Mutur their voice carried much clout. Also Amirthalingam threw his weight behind Sambandandan. Thangathurai was left out in the cold.

Amirthalingam's justification that he was helpless in the wake of opposition from Trincomalee branches was unacceptable to Thangathurai's supporters who felt that the only remedy for the loss of Tamil representation was to make Thangathurai MP for Trincomalee. The argument that the electorate branches wanted Sambandandan rang hollow because in Batticaloa the TULF had nominated Kasi Anandan on the FP ticket against the official TULF candidate Rajadurai. This was in spite of the party machinery in Batticaloa solidly supporting Rajadurai. The supporters of Thangathurai created quite a ruckus in Colombo protesting against Sambandandan's nomination. Thangathurai himself told confidantes that Amir had "cut his throat".

Nevertheless in the ensuing election campaign Thangathurai did participate. Yet his heart was not in it. In Batticaloa he supported Rajadurai with great vigour. The elections saw the TULF sweep the polls in the north-east on a mandate for Eelam.

Thangathurai was embroiled in a controversy shortly before the elections. Moves were afoot by interested parties to convert an area around an ancient Bo Tree in Kiliveddi into a Buddhist place of worship. The rationale for it was the "myth" that the Bo Tree was of historical value and therefore sacred. The Tamils of Kiliveddi were paranoid. They knew the pattern of Sinhala colonisation where Bo Trees become Places of Worship, a Buddhist priest takes up residence and then gradually a state-aided Sinhala Buddhist population builds up, resulting finally in the demographics of the area being changed.

In Kiliveddi something drastic happened. The Bo Tree was felled and destroyed overnight. Communal conflict on a minor scale occurred as a result of it. Kumaradurai, the younger brother of Thangathurai was among those arrested in connection with it. Thangathurai was considered the mastermind behind this. He was questioned but not arrested because of his MP status. Shortly after the polls communal trouble flared up again and once again Kumaradurai was arrested. Thangathurai himself was detained for some time and later released.

When being denied nomination for Trincomalee one factor that hurt Thangathurai was the remark that he was not a lawyer and therefore not qualified, so he began studying law after 1977. He

studied with a vengeance and progressed quickly and soon became a full-fledged lawyer.

The period of time between 1977 and the rise of Tamil militancy in a big way in 1981 was an interregnum in which the possibility of Sinhala encroachment into Tamil lands in Trincomalee was a constant source of threat. This threat was countered and contained to some extent by a strategy of deterrence adopted by the Tamils. This in essence was the use of limited violence, threats of violence, covert intimidation and sabotage by militant sections of the Tamils. These were not the gun toting youths of a later period but ordinary people determined to resist the loss of their traditional homeland. It was widely believed that the dynamic force behind this force was Thangathurai.

An important figure of this period was the legendary Kandapodi a Robin Hood-like figure who held sway over Trincomalee South and Batticaloa North. He was ultimately shot dead by the Police. Again the belief in the east was that Kandapodi's benefactor and protector was none other than Thangathurai himself.

There soon emerged in the TULF a faction that was opposed to Amirthalingam. This loose coalition hinged around Chelvanayakam's son Chandrasenan. Thangathurai soon became an important member of this caucus. Amirthalingam's decision to accept the District Development Councils as a temporary alternative to the separatist demand was seized upon by this coterie as a means to undermine Amirthalingam. The same Thangathurai who opposed Tamil Eelam was now criticising the DDC's as a sell-out in intra-party meetings.

The seasoned Politician, Amirthalingam deflated this challenge by offering the Jaffna and Trincomalee District Development Council Chairman posts to S Nadarajah and A Thangathurai respectively. Both persons who felt earlier that the DDC's were a sell-out now discovered merits that warranted the experiment of trying to work the DDC's. In Thangathurai's case he genuinely believed that he could curb colonisation and foster education through the DDC's.

The opportunity to contest the DDC in Trincomalee was however a formidable task for the TULF. Since the SLFP was boycotting the DDC polls it was a straight fight between the UNP and the TULF. In multi-ethnic Trincomalee the TULF was likely to get its votes from the Tamil community alone. The UNP with Sinhala, Muslim and some Tamil votes was likely to be the winner. If that happened Thangathurai's political renaissance as DDC Chairman was likely to be ruined.

Thangathurai saw in this challenge an opportunity to display his political acu-



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men. Apart from fully mobilising the Tamil people into supporting the TULF he made deep in-roads into the Muslim and to some extent the Sinhala constituency of the SLFP. He was able to convince the local SLFP figures that it would be better to let the TULF win rather than the UNP in Trincomalee. Thangathurai also got certain SLFP bigwigs to covertly sanction this move. The end result was an upset TULF victory over the fancied UNP.

Jayewardene, however delayed devolving full powers and allocating funds to the DDC's. The whole exercise once looked forward to eagerly by the Tamils as a panacea for their malady became a practical fiasco and was unceremoniously dumped into the dustheap of history. The 1983 pogrom and it's consequent resurgence of Tamil militancy coupled with the role of India changed the situation dramatically.

Although many front line TULF members went abroad Thangathurai continued to remain in Mutur. Many of his relatives and children of friends went into the militant movements. Thangathurai known for his strident opinion and close links with Tamil youths was again suspected of being a powerful force promoting armed militancy. Despite the risks involved Thangathurai remained with his people living in a volatile atmosphere until mid-1985.

He was compelled to leave Sri Lanka as he was once again detained for questioning by the security authorities. Although he was released through high level Indian pressure it was obvious to him that he had been earmarked as someone to be "removed" shortly. With great reluctance he relocated with his wife, son and two daughters to Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Thereafter his family continued to stay in India.

In India Thangathurai found himself to be one of those rare Tamils who had easy access to all shades of Tamil political opinion. He was a welcome guest in all Tamil militant offices. A little known fact is his amiable relationship with LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran. He was one of the few TULF personalities who had easy access to the LTTE leader. Thangathurai maintained this close relationship with Prabhakaran until 1989.

In 1987 he issued a statement to the Press criticising India for the way it handled Prabhakaran at the time of the Indo-Lanka accord. He went against the public position of the TULF and asserted boldly that Prabhakaran's course of action had been right. This again got him into hot water with both New Delhi as well as Amirthalingam.

Thangathurai, during his stay in India, was also very friendly with Chandrasaran. Relations between Amirthalingam and Chandrasaran had deteriorated

considerably and to be friendly with one was to be the enemy of the other. Besides there was always rumours about inner-party intrigues within the TULF regarding the replacement of Amirthalingam with Chandrasaran.

In such an atmosphere Thangathurai's open association with Chandrasaran roused Amirthalingam's ire on more than one occasion. The worst row between both was when Thangathurai went to New Delhi to meet Indian leaders with Chandrasaran without informing Amirthalingam. When questioned Thangathurai maintained that he would do anything in the interests of the Tamil people. Thangathurai's relations with Amirthalingam remained strained even up to the time of the former's death in 1989.

In 1988, Thangathurai returned to Sri Lanka leaving his family behind in Chennai. After Amirthalingam's death he began working actively for the TULF again. Apart from short visits to Chennai Thangathurai would shuttle between Colombo and Trincomalee regularly. In Colombo he stayed at the TULF headquarters and was almost like a full-time party worker. During this period Thangathurai was of yeoman service to the people of Trincomalee. He endeared himself to the people by his selfless service to them in a very difficult situation.

The people of Trincomalee demonstrated their appreciation of Thangathurai at the appropriate moment. In 1994 he contested Trincomalee on the TULF list and was elected as the only Tamil Parliamentarian. He obtained 22,410 preferential votes, the highest number by any candidate in Trincomalee. As a former member of Parliament for seven years (1970-77) he was the seniormost Parliamentarian of the TULF. Yet Batticaloa MP Joseph Pararajasegeram who had been in Parliament since 1990 only staked his claim for Parliamentary group leader status. Thangathurai did not press his rightful claim for the position and gracefully withdrew.

A more serious problem rose with the Trincomalee TULF Branch. Despite the personal popularity of Thangathurai with the masses of Trincomalee the TULF Branch remained very hostile to Thangathurai until. They wanted Mr R Sambandan to be MP. A gentlemen's understanding between Thangathurai and Sambandan prior to the election was used as an instrument to get Thangathurai to relinquish the seat. Apparently Thangathurai had said at that time that he would be willing to resign his seat after some time for Sambandan also to become MP. Continuous pressure was exerted on Thangathurai to resign and pave the way for Sambandan to become MP. Thangathurai's supporters became the countervailing force to these man-

oeuvres and resisted these efforts compelling Thangathurai to resign.

His political rivals in the Trincomalee TULF Branch also generated malicious propaganda against Thangathurai. The most serious charge was that he had now become an agent of the PA Government. Rumours began circulating that he had even joined the Government. Adding grist to the rumour mill was the intimate contacts Thangathurai had with some SLFP leaders. This state of affairs existed because of Thangathurai's personal acquaintance and friendship with them cultivated over the years. He used these links to derive maximum benefits for the people of the Trincomalee District. But to his opponents this in itself was some great sacrilege and so Thangathurai had to suffer these canards.

It is an open secret that the left-oriented non-elitist Thangathurai was more partial to the SLFP than the UNP. He also went on record publicly that it was his considered opinion that it was only the present SLFP-led Government that could resolve the ethnic crisis and not the UNP. He identified with all the good things done by this government. Thangathurai also engrossed himself in the TULF's attempts to help the government resolve the crisis. This stance reinforced the accusation that he was now a lackey of the government.

Thangathurai however continued in his own independent manner. His concerns were primarily about developing the area, a task made more difficult by the war situation. Yet, he strove valiantly to address the needs of the community. Again, he focussed more on enhancing the educational facilities in his district. To Thangathurai that was a mission of paramount importance.

The on going war brought in it's own right a spate of human rights violations. The LTTE's ascendancy in South Trincomalee saw that region being treated as enemy territory by the government. It was almost a superhuman task to ensure basic food being provided to that region. There were also many incidents of human rights violations. The most noteworthy among them being the massacre of innocents in Kiliveddy, Thangathurai's native village last year. He had been exerting pressure on the government to see that justice is done.

The TULF itself according to some observers is now a trifurcated party in practice. Sivasithambaram, Sambandan, Anandasangari and Tiruchelvam etc are seen as one group; Joseph Pararajasegeram and the other Batticaloa MP's are seen as another faction. Thangathurai, Mavai Senathirajah and others are seen as the third grouping in this configuration. Despite these internal differences

the TULF maintains its semblance of unity to the outside world and marches on regardless of criticism. Given Thangathurai's non-alignment to both the dominant groups and his amiable disposition there are some who felt that Thangathurai would have been the ideal person to take over the TULF after its septuagenarian President Sivasithambaram. All this speculation has come to naught with his tragic demise.

Thangathurai according to associates had never felt that he was in any danger from Tamil militants particularly the LTTE. The reasons for this feeling was both personal and political. On a personal level Thangathurai was well known to the LTTE hierarchy. He was also a familiar figure to the LTTE leadership at the regional level. It is said that Thangathurai's close associates in the district had sounded out the local tigers about Thangathurai continuing to function in Trincomalee. The response had been very positive. In LTTE parlance Thangathurai had been given "clearance" by the LTTE to function in Trincomalee.

The second and more political reason was the political situation of Trincomalee itself. The district is multi-ethnic with all three communities living in near equal numbers. Given the on-going war the position of the Tamils is quite fragile. Their position is very perilous in that context. So Thangathurai had told friends that the LTTE would allow the TULF some political space to function in the district because of the overall interests of the Tamil people. It would not weaken the Tamils by de-stabilising the TULF. As such Thangathurai's contention was that there was no physical threat to him from the LTTE.

The Sri Shanmuga Hindu Ladies College itself is situated in Rajavarotheyyam Street between the main street and Powerhouse Road junctions. This is in the thick of the Tamil quarter in Trincomalee. The house belonging to Thangathurai's wife is on Rajavarotheyyam Street too. So Thangathurai felt totally secure in that neighbourhood. He had even instructed his bodyguard to dispense with firearms before accompanying him. In fact Thangathurai always treated his bodyguards as a necessary evil to be tolerated whenever in "Tamil Trincomalee". This was because he was supremely confident that he was in no danger. That notion has now been shattered tragically.

There has been a tendency on the part of some TULF members as well as Thangathurai's kith and kin to deny alleged LTTE involvement in the killing. This reluctance is caused by (a) the earlier relationship of the LTTE with Thangathurai, (b) the LTTE's denial of responsibility, (c) lack of conclusive evidence, (d) the po-

LEST WE IGNORE THE MURKY SHADOWS OF JULY 1983

A Gruesome Reminder

Oswald B Firth OMI Director, Centre for Society & Religion

Come the month of July and there is always that centre feeling that death and destruction loom over us like some evil omen and that disaster will strike at a place and moment most unexpected and in ways that defy speculation. Despite barricades in the city, prevailing easy access to vital government institutions, and the strategic deployment of Security Forces in enhanced numbers where the public gather to transact routine business, the brutal hand of terror has never failed to strike in July or thereabouts, at a point that shocks us most, the unarmed civilian population. There is perhaps a cynical lesson to be learnt in all this, namely, that the calamitous events of July in any given year since 1983, are a grim reminder that the nation's most destructive crisis is still on and that those in the South are being paid back in their own

currency for the destruction being wrought particularly in the North. Last year it was a blasting of a South-bound train that killed over sixty-five people returning home from a hard day's work.

We cannot resist pointing a finger of accusation at all successive governments for their failure to create an atmosphere within this country where a policy of growth and equity for all, irrespective of creed, cultural differences and ethnicity would serve as an overarching principle of human development. Given the ethnic and cultural diversity of Sri Lanka, this could be best achieved through a polity of decentralisation. But decentralising over-centralised powers, a vestige of colonial governance, was always viewed by certain persons in the South with mistrust and suspicion as a stepping stone to eventual secession.

Would it still be inane to consider the diverse centre - periphery relations within the context of a federal form of government with powers decentralised? Was it not the eminent young political leader, S W R D Bandaranaike himself, who even before our independence in 1948, espoused the concept of federalism as an appropriate form of devolving authority and responsibility for multi-communal Sri Lanka! In the absence of this, what we have thus far experienced is a government by the majority combined with democracy for the majority. Pacts and agreements that were signed were not pursued due mainly to narrow, intolerant and communalist reactions to them originating from a few vociferous elements in the South. Even the most recent agreement between the Opposition Leader, the Hon Ranil Wickramasinghe and Her Excellency the president which revived hopes for a breakthrough in the deadlock promising a peaceful future appears to be floundering. Once again our hopes are being frustrated and the agreement is turning out to be another exercise in rhetoric rather than a sincere commitment to engage in a dialogue to resolve this pain-

litical sensitivity involved in accusing the LTTE and (e) remarks attributed to the TELO Urban Council Chairman, Sooriya-moorthy that a non-LTTE group was responsible. Compounding the situation further is the undue haste shown by the state and its agencies in blaming the LTTE. This has created a situation where theories abound as to who the assassins were.

Counterposed to this is the argument that the LTTE indeed was responsible. The ruthless method of killing with scant regard for innocent lives is described as a hallmark of the LTTE. The proponents of this argument say that the LTTE killed Thangathurai to deliver a signal to the government, the TULF, the Tamil parties and above all the Tamil people. There was nothing personal against Thangathurai but unfortunately for him he happened to be the vulnerable target at the wrong place at the wrong time.

As has been the case in the past the passage of time will soon prove who the assailants were. It will not, however, heal the sorrow caused by the loss of the golden lord of the eastern province. □

ful conflict politically.

Legitimate Grievances

It would be unrealistic to underestimate the strong feelings of certain Sinhala nationalists who consider Sri Lanka to be the only place on earth to which they have a legitimate claim. They have no other place on earth that can be theirs. Sinhala Buddhists feel this even more. They tend to identify the future of Theravada Buddhism with the destiny of the Sinhala people.

The gradual internationalisation of the Sri Lankan "national question", especially after July 1983 has sharpened the consciousness of the Sinhala people of their being a small group of about 112 million in a vast world in which their point of view is heavily under represented and drastically devalued.

Similarly, the Tamil people have equally strong grievances. Not only are they lawful inhabitants of this country, they also possess a distinctive and much respected culture, language and religion, different from those of the Sinhala people. They have been a self-governing sovereign people during different periods of their long history. They have continually maintained their historical memory alive and are alert to the discriminations they have been made to suffer as a distinct ethnic community.

Conceiving a New Identity

The devolution of power alone may not necessarily diffuse the ethnic crisis. What remains ambiguous and calls for professional attention is the very nature of Sri Lanka's national identity. While governance by the majority has been the order of the day, the prominence given to the language, culture and religion of the majority community have undoubtedly exacerbated ethnic tensions and devalued the concept of a truly plural society which provided identity and a fundamental sense of belonging to minority groups. Perhaps the most appropriate way to resolve the contentious issue of Sri Lanka being a state of the majority is to work out a Constitution that would separate religion from political institutions, and politically set in motion the sharing of power at the Centre through a modified form of a Parliamentary Regional Executive Committee system (advocated by Social Justice vide No. 113) that would ensure optimum participation of the diverse communities in local state governance as well. The role and responsibility of religion should be to motivate people to challenge whatever passes off as political skulduggery and to promote human values rather than to let itself be used, or rather abused, as a cover to justify the rule of the majority.

A Time to Rebuild

There is no gainsaying the fact that

civilians on both sides of the ethnic divide are anxious to see an end to the ravages of war. Promises to terminate the war at the end of a specific year have faded away, or "waging the war for the sake of peace", are but emotionally charged phrases that sound hollow leading people into a quagmire of deception where the powerless and the voiceless have been forced to sacrifice life, limb and precious resources for their survival.

Promises have also been blurted out that the government would go to the negotiating table once the security forces found themselves at a position of advantage vis-a-vis the Tigers. Are we to conclude from the fact that no negotiations have been called that the security forces have still not gained that edge over the Tigers! For what purpose then are we investing fifty-two billion Rupees for instruments of destruction when less than half of this amount is being earmarked for both education and health? For a poor country like ours, where nearly 50% of the population is struggling to barely survive, can an armoured car plough a paddy field like a tractor? Can military planes carry commuters to their destinations instead of passenger trains? Are hospitals, schools and village roadways less important than rocket launches? It is time that the government seriously reviewed its priorities more even-handedly.

There is however consolation in the fact that certain foreign governments have already provided financial assistance to commence the restoration of infrastructure in the North, while the "Book and Brick" initiative to reconstruct the renowned Jaffna Library needs to be commended despite its shortcomings of not being able to fully mobilise the civilian population. There are people's initiatives to restore peace to a war torn nation where the political leaders have failed to clearly formulate a programme for peace. The same must be said of the North as well.


Activating the Economy

It has often been said that Sri Lanka is a country with an economy that bases

itself on agriculture. This is true whether it be in the South, the North or the East of Sri Lanka. Today, as a result of a persistent war, large stretches of land have remained fallow. Seeds, water, fertiliser and fuel items which are basic to agriculture, have been scarce. Most of the farmers in these regions produced, beside rice, subsidiary food crops comprising of cereals, pulses, oil seeds, condiments and spices, yams and a variety of vegetables. These farmers engaged in agriculture as a livelihood made a positive contribution to the economy of the South, with their agricultural produce. What is being said here of the North and the East is equally valid for those villagers in the North-Central Province where farmers today have to constantly grapple with the threat of death and displacement.

The longer this war persists, the greater will be Sri Lanka's dependency on imported food crops, thus bleeding the nation of its scarce economic resources not merely for the purchase of war weapons, but also to ensure the subsistence of our people at the barest minimum level. An end to the war, and a climate of peace, will, on the contrary, activate our Northern and Eastern farms into large-scale food production, scale down overall food prices and absorb a dispirited and displaced youth labour force which would otherwise be drawn into militant forces that have become deadly engines of destruction. Is it in anyway surprising that those who really profit from this war are neither the Sinhalese, nor the Tamils, but purveyors of the open economy who scuttle the creative efforts of our farmers by importing large stocks of food while the war persists, and merchants of the most sophisticated war weapons for whom the life of the Sri Lankan is an expendable commodity as long as the blood of our youth is up for sale?

These are some of the crucial lessons that should be borne in mind by one and all, lest we forget the catastrophe of July 1983 and its horrendous consequences, for which the entire nation is still paying so unbearable a price. □

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JAFFNA: A VISION SKEWED

[Text of Special Report No 9 dated 7 June 1997
by the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna)]

SUMMARY

Despite continuing promises made by the Government, any sense of normalcy has not come to the communities of Jaffna. The refusal to initiate institutional reform from within the Army, combined with a deliberate and concerted attempt to evade credible and transparent investigations into cases of missing persons, has created an environment where a variety of human rights violations committed by the Security Forces and the LTTE have increased. Reprisal action by the Army and disappearances following arrest or detention have risen. "Hunting" expeditions, where masked informants point out LTTE suspects who are immediately gunned down by the Army even while being unarmed, have resulted in some innocent civilians being killed and claimed as LTTE. Beatings during round ups, especially if detained for questioning, and sometimes at check points, have only further ingrained a sense of insecurity, especially among rural villages. Arbitrary execution of civilians by the LTTE continues! to take hold and threatens anyone who might be seen merely speaking with a member of the Security Forces. In a brutal display of the mentality existing today, both the LTTE and the Army have on occasion publicly displayed the bodies of their victims as a terrifying warning. The need for independent inquiries into questionable deaths of civilians both during and after battles, is desperately needed if the people are to believe that any type of honest rehabilitation is to occur in the future.

Recent incidents involving the Army which are detailed in this Report include the killing of an unarmed man having mental disorders, as well as the shooting of a young woman in an empty street long after a grenade throwing incident had subsided. In one incident parents had been beaten while taking vigil outside a detention centre where their children were held after a round up. Cases presented include labourers killed while returning home from work and men taken from their home and shot on the beach by the Navy with no explanation given to family mem-

bers. Land mines set by the LTTE and grenades thrown have frequently injured and killed civilians in a continuing demonstration of their absence of concern for the people. One of the most disturbing features of many of these deaths is the habits surrounding cover ups by the Army. Victims were in a number of instances claimed to have been carrying grenades or involved in offensive action, in an attempt to cast a veil over! foul play. In several cases, such claims have been denied by witnesses or family members. Civilian deaths due to military operations are further difficult to investigate due to the lack of proper post-mortem facilities and experienced personnel in Jaffna. An investigation of the medical situation in Jaffna as it stands today is found in the Addendum at the end of this Report.

LTTE killings serve as a reminder that any talk of critical evaluation or constructive solutions from within the Jaffna community could be followed by strict and repressive silencing. The methods remain the same. Unarmed civilians are executed in or around their family home, after which the body is publicly displayed with a written warning to all "traitors". In several cases, friends and relatives of victims have given reliable accounts as to why LTTE claims are utter and dangerous nonsense. Those killed may have been seen speaking to a soldier at a checkpoint, may have been frankly honest in their opinion of the LTTE while talking with neighbours or may have simply been a victim of local rumours. After the killing of one man well-known to be openly critical of the LTTE for many years, the community of Point Pedro was left devastated and terrified. Though reprisal killings by the Army have been viewed as on the increase, they remain the exception rather than the norm. But this fact has by no means curtailed the killing and injury of civilians due to grenades and mines detonated by the LTTE.

Vadamaratchy stands out as an example of better discipline and responsibility on behalf of the Security Forces. There has been a genuine concern for the safety of civilians during attacks, sensitivity to their rights and feelings, and

greater accessibility. Colonel Wijeratne, the brigade commander, has spent time visiting families and getting to know the community. Unfortunately, this newly found discipline has for the most part, not taken hold within the Army as an institution. Terror continues to be the most visible face of the Army for many of the communities in Jaffna.

So why does the Government remain silent on disappearances? It is suggested here, with good reason, that it is because a significant number of those arrested in Jaffna had died in detention due to torture and indiscriminate assault.

The determination of the people and their courage to stand up and speak their mind alone has the power to bring any sense of stability to Jaffna. Unfortunately, their voice is not often heard. LTTE propaganda abroad has implicitly asserted the view that the people who struggle to hold on to their lives in Jaffna are no longer to be cared for, and that the area today is merely a place where the LTTE can practice its military moves without any regard for the civilian population. But if the Government continues in its failure to implement drastically needed institutional changes within the Army and the Ministry of Defence, Jaffna will remain to be this "free-fire zone" for all parties to the War. The LTTE will continue its suicidal attempts to provoke reprisals. The Army will continue to see disappearances as an acceptable feature of conflict. Statistical data put forth by the Government describing decreases in violations are meaningless or at best of seasonal significance, in the absence of matching institutional change. If a serious commitment to human rights is to be implemented, then the practices of the past and the present must be stopped immediately before they become the norm of the future. A start needs to be made by a policy of providing recognition and positive support for officers who have demonstrated a capacity for benignant transformation.

JAFFNA: A VISION SKEWED Introduction

In its recent statement on the human rights situation in Jaffna, Amnesty International had placed the number of persons missing after being detained by the armed forces at 676. Interestingly, this figure has been implicitly substantiated in Sri Lankan Ambassador Janaka Nakawita's statement at the 53rd Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights on 27th March 1997. He said that of the 1652 complaints received up to 28th February 1997 from sources including the ICRC, UNWG on Disappearances and MPs, 857 were found to be duplications and of the remainder 72 have been traced. Even if 80% of the 676 could be traced, it

would still place Sri Lanka in the top league for missing persons. In the face of this it is surprising to find the Government doing little that is tangible beyond making statements of good intention. For example the ambassador told UNCHR that the Human Rights Task Force that reports to the president was in the process of establishing its tenth regional office in Jaffna. This talk had been in the air since September last year and the HRTF did make a preliminary visit to Jaffna. But nothing happened. Talk then was around that the HRTF is to be superseded by a Human Rights Commission and the list of names of commissioners was made public. To date there has been a complete blank with regard to the commission's activities. Legal proceedings into violations by service personnel remain a story of promises and anticlimaxes in the same tradition.

This lack of headway on the part of the Government's effort on reversing the trend can be partly explained by sheer inefficiency and the lack of support it gives to officers who have demonstrated a capacity take independent initiatives towards improvement. For one thing the political establishment or the cabinet of ministers hardly seem to think about the ramifications of this problem. Far too much initiative has already been surrendered to the Defence Ministry, which is still controlled by the old guard whose general approach is to cover up rather than seriously investigate violations and take firm action against the offenders. Not knowing what government policy is, if there is indeed one, officialdom moves only on definite orders from the president ahead of each step, on what ought to be routine matters. These small token steps too come usually on the heels of concerted local and international pressure following a major incident that gets into the news.

Another aspect of it stems from practices long associated with the Army that ultimately relies on terror to the detriment of any fresh political initiative. The actions of the Army in different parts of the Jaffna peninsula, and its relations with civilians have a revealing continuity with practices that took shape during the early months following the Army's take-over of Jaffna. Relations in Vadamaratchy remain exemplary. Even with current disappearances at a low ebb, relations in Thenmaratchy are a matter for no little concern. The lack of information about missing persons is, as we have argued, deliberate and purposeful. We shall return to this after shifting our focus to other related matters. Disturbingly, the recent record indicates an increasing tendency towards reprisal action against civilians. At the same time, in a continuing demonstration of its ab-

sence of concern for the people, the LTTE continues throwing grenades and detonating land mines in the hope of provoking such reprisals. Where civilians are not killed or injured in reprisals, they most certainly become casualties due to these initial explosions. The routine manner in which acts of homicide and murder by the security forces is covered up bodes ill for future developments. The families of victims are too vulnerable to pursue the matter further and Defence Ministry press releases are fated to be the last word in these instances.

1. The general situation

The fact that the Army has made significant efforts at certain levels to distance itself from the past has been recently acknowledged by two prominent citizens in Jaffna as quoted in the press. They had spoken to the effect that 'the Army is doing a difficult job very well'. The Roman Catholic Bishop is also quoted as having said that there had been no major violations since last November when two cases involving rape and murder by soldiers were publicised. This perception is widely held at one level. We record below one known instance of reprisals involving the death of two civilians and injury to several others on 29th January. The Major General commanding the 51st Division later apologised to the people and promised to punish the offenders. Certain practices have also been adopted to make the Army more disciplined in its dealings with civilians. It seems the general pattern that soldiers wanting to search civilian houses after nightfall do so only in the company of a civilian official - the local headman (GS). Alternatively they surround the house and wait until daybreak. In Jaffna town itself the situation is considered quite normal. The Town Commandant, Brigadier Jayasundera, is readily accessible on the phone to civilian officials and is said to at least investigate complaints. Receipts are also issued for arrests under his command. (Elsewhere, we have reports that it is followed in some areas.) In other areas too army commands have been known to be responsive, even if belatedly. Early this year a pregnant woman in Thenmaratchy facing a medical emergency died on the way to Jaffna hospital owing to delays at checkpoints. Following representations to the authorities, one could now travel about 7 miles from Chavakacheri to Mamapalam Junction near the town with minimum delay.

Yet at many other levels a certain passive resentment is building up which owes to the lack of improvement, stagnation or even deterioration in aspects of the general outlook. Often the dominance of security considerations has ceased to have meaning. The Defence Ministry, the ef-

fective ruling power in Jaffna, is seen as having ceased to think or as being simply cussed. Every activity from the transportation of medicines to small village level programmes need clearance from this Ministry. Someone carrying a 4 months supply of pressure tablets (not always readily available in Jaffna) for personal use would be asked to leave these behind at Ratmalana Airport. Visitors to Jaffna are still allowed only in a controlled and selective manner. Some international human rights groups who wanted to visit Jaffna had been told that 'it is not convenient'.

Approval for the MSF which was already in Point Pedro to send medical specialists to Jaffna Hospital was delayed for nine months and approved only recently. We understood on good authority that the main reason was the MoD seeing foreign doctors from organisations of this kind as meddling too much in human rights matters. (See addendum on Jaffna hospital.)

The Jaipur Foot manufactory under the Friends in Need Society, Jaffna, was sent materials after USAID had spent 6 months obtaining approval from the MoH and MoD in Colombo. Upon reaching Jaffna the military authorities there returned to Colombo some of the materials including cylinders, that are used in making new legs for the war-maimed. (The society continues to improvise cylinders by stripping aluminium bodies of the abandoned buses.) Such procrastination on basic things run entirely counter to flowery promises about revitalising Jaffna. The resulting uncertainties about the Government's attitude to Jaffna, combined with a hostility towards Jaffna coming alive under Government control on the part of an influential section of Tamils outside, help to perpetuate an air of pessimism among the residents.

To the residents and users of Jaffna town the frequency and manner in which checkpoints are operated has become a sore point. Civilians need to dismount, remove their hat if they were wearing one, and roll their bicycles or motor-cycles past the soldiers - a practice observed by oppressed castes in the past when passing high caste persons. The effect of doing this day after day even on very balanced minds should not be underestimated. An intellectual who had been a consistent opponent of the LTTE and politically a Leftist, as distinct from a nationalist, observed, "At least once in twenty days I cannot help wondering if after all the Tigers are right!"

The main reason for the high frequency of check-points as one approaches town seems to be that the army high-command has taken over buildings in the town-centre to site its head-quar-

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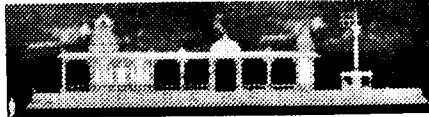
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BOOK REVIEWS

Vamsa Viruthi – Mithra Publications, 375/8-10 Arcot Road, Madras 600024. Price Rs.80.

My generation of the 'Ceylonese' born in the 30s and 40s are indeed fortunate. Beginning life in the era of Kuthuvilaku and Thulakodi, we have catapulted to E-Mail and the Internet. Along the way we were enriched by Thirukural and Kambaramayana, Parathi and Puthumaipithan and thanks to the British and the free education, Shakespeare, Bernard Shaw to John Le Carre. What's this got to do with Muttulingam's third anthology of Tamil short stories, **Vamsa Viruthi**? Fair question. Knowing the man first and the author later, I can honestly say Muttu's stories give expression to this incredible adventurous journey of the Jaffna man as no one else has done before. In fact, the author adds a global perspective (having been a World Bank/UN official for a good part of his career) to his writings without losing the core values coming from his village – Kokuvil. He also has this unshakeable commitment to environment and human values and makes no apologies and offers no concessions for more entertainment.

Thuri, the central character, is a dog in

the opening story. A playful, happy puppy, Thuri steals its way into the hearts of the Jaffna expatriate family in Los Angeles. In short order he is a loved member of the household and the bonds built between the family and Thuri are more binding than with some humans. Thuri's struggle with a local skunk and raccoon and its final stages in life shakes the family with genuine tragedy. The nobility of the relationship is briefly touched with the backdrop reference to Thuriyothanan's friendship to Karnan.

The final story, Partuthi Poo's unlikely hero Kunasingam is an 'Asal Yarpanam'. What makes Kunasingam special? It is his passion for water conservation down to a single drop. Conserving water also becomes his life's mission as an expert with the United Nations in barren Sudan. What elevates Kunasingam as a noble human being, is his simple act of decency in slightly diverting a canal to give water to a desperate old woman. The resulting trivial cost overrun becomes a serious crime for which Kunasingam pays with his job. The exposure of the so called experts and fat cat bureaucrats in ivory towers who sit in judgement of hapless Kunasingams all over the world is devastating.

Each story is set in a different part of the globe; Los Angeles, Toronto, London,

West Africa, India, Pakistan and so on. It subtly reflects the exile of the Jaffna man in the second half of the 20th century. Only one story is set in Colombo, the locale is the Chummary, an oasis for 'married bachelors' from Jaffna. Typically it has a disparate but familiar cast of characters who cluster in three groups. Not surprisingly the author finds himself in the literary group. The central character is 'Chilambu Chellappa' a true scholar on Chilapthikaram. The scholarly discourses on our rich culture is punctuated with gentle humour and the story weaves effortlessly between growing up in rustic villages to life in the big city. This story more than any other, evokes nostalgia.

The centrepiece of the eleven stories is 'Muluvilakku', an immature romance of Ganesanathan and Sengeetha that budded in Vembadi and which hits the road blocks when the lovelorn husband takes a job in a faraway African country. The story then develops in a new direction and ends with a delicately sketched menopause episode.

Painfully I realize that I am not doing justice to the true flavour of Muttu's stories. Even when there is no strong storyline in the traditional sense, it is the narrative

Continued on page 30

ters. This is not the case in Vadamaratchy and Thenmaratchy where the brigade command centres are away from the commercial areas. By May, there was a significant easing of the tedium of check points, notably outside Jaffna town. Some of them had also been closed owing to a transfer of troops to support the ongoing operations in the Vanni.

Despite a surface calm, the occasion on which a schoolboy gets assaulted by a soldier at a sentry point or during a round up is enough to set off undercurrents whose course would be unpredictable. For the present these remain unnoticed, and the military authorities are largely oblivious to such matters. This is reflected in the indifferent manner in which civilian dignity is being trodden upon in parts of Thenmaratchy in contrast to the early weeks following the Army's entry in April 1996.

At the time of writing, the army captain in Chavakacheri placed in charge of civil affairs is described as someone who speaks neither Tamil nor English, does not entertain those who cannot speak Sinhalese, and whose use of the latter is

placed as many as eight times during the course of the war.

2. Reports of Incidents

These detailed reports are meant to give a general idea and speak for themselves.

Point Pedro (Vadamaratchy): 27th November 1996 (National Heroes Day): The day was tense as talk had been around that the LTTE would do something to celebrate its leader's birthday. About 6.10 a.m. firing noises and a grenade explosion were heard in the suburb of Thumpalai. The people of the area lay flat on the ground for about 45 minutes. A lady then ventured out cautiously and found Mr. Yogarajah's house full of soldiers. This is what had happened: **Yogarajah** is a seaman who had come home on vacation and was at home with his wife and five daughters. About 5 a.m. there was a knock on the door. Upon opening he encountered LTTE cadre asking to enter the house. Yogarajah protested, since, to begin with, no one with girls likes to entertain strangers at that hour. The LTTE boys

dressed in military uniform is taken on the pillion of a motor cycle or in an armoured vehicle. As soon as the person or persons are pointed out, the soldiers open fire. Few chances are taken and those killed are frequently off-guard, unarmed and in no position to offer resistance. One place where their bodies are regularly displayed is Suthumalai Road junction in Manipay, where William Mather Memorial Church is sited. The people see those killed as ignorant boys who in response to bombing and shelling, or in an unwitting moment, joined the LTTE - who did not deserve such an end, and certainly! not such humiliation in death. The display is also no doubt a warning. The connotations of such actions in an ethnic conflict act as a hindrance to the Tamils believing that the Government seeks political accommodation on terms of equality and mutual respect.

Moreover such counter-insurgency strategies take away from the consideration and respect owed to civilians, even when responding to LTTE attacks. Although the number is still small in relation to the total population...

getting nurtured or killed in Army action following LTTE attacks. The Army puts them all down to cross-fire, whereas, as our reports indicate, in a number of cases this is simply not true. In the case of the school-boy shot dead by the army in Anaikottai on 8th April following an LTTE grenade attack, there was a big turnout at the funeral, indicative of a mood of protest. Passive protest is also in such instances hinted at in condolence notices in the press signed 'School Welfare Society & Old Students Association'.

We have also cases in this report where ordinary civilians had been killed and later claimed as Tigers carrying grenades. In some cases the families had also been placed under pressure to endorse the false claim. It is far too premature to say that normality or civil administration has returned to Jaffna. Many in the rural areas with little interest in politics do say that it is not possible to live with the Army. Round ups are regular and even the old are kept in schools for a good part of the day without food or water. Those taken for questioning are routinely beaten. Frequently different sections of the Army have the same information about a person once connected with the LTTE, resulting in his being continually beaten and released by different units coming in to the area. In such instances the parents are extremely anxious to send their sons abroad because they are always on pins. This makes any kind of planned existence impossible for the people, a number of whom have been dis-

was a second knock and this time it was the Army. The officer asked Yogarajah if there were any LTTE cadre in the house, to which Yogarajah replied in the negative. As the soldiers were moving away, there was a noisy crash through the ceiling and one cadre fell onto the ground. The soldiers came rushing back and the person on the ground was shot dead. The house was then surrounded and the family of the house was asked to come out. Soldiers then climbed the roof and began removing some of the tiles. Firing noises and a grenade explosion were heard and the second Tiger in the ceiling died swallowing cyanide.

It turned out that the two dead Tigers were from the same area. One had his father in Germany and the mother and the rest of the family in the Vanni. The father's brother was later questioned by the Army. The second was a Brahmin and a grandson of **Rathina Iyer**. The new pattern seems to be for the LTTE to send in people of the same area who may find survival easier. Yogarajah was taken by the army and released the same day after questioning. Four days later he was arrested again. **Colonel Larry Wijeratne**, the brigade commander, visited one of the daughters who was in grade 10 at Methodist Girls' School and assured her that the father would be unharmed. Arrangements too were made for the family to exchange letters. At the time of writing his release was said to be imminent.

Mulli Junction (Thunnalai, Vadamaratchy): 18th January 1997: What fol-

Such developments, though relatively isolated they may be, must be seen in the context of procrastination and the absence of meaningful action on the missing persons issue and the rising tendency to reprisal action.

Another practice whose deep significance is not so evident at present is the display of bodies of LTTE cadre killed in public places. This happens in places such as Valikamam West where the LTTE maintains a tenuous, but sizeable, clandestine presence. The Army too receives information quite freely and launches what are described as 'hunting' expeditions. The informant wearing a mask and

lows is the final tragedy that overtook an innocent man. **Krishnalingam (43)** was a valuation officer. Having studied at Maradana Technical College, he followed a course in quantity surveying in the UK, which he had not completed because he had a blackout after which he returned home. He found employment as a government quantity surveyor, married and was stationed in Galle during the 1983 communal violence. His trauma in the wake of the violence was exacerbated owing to his already vulnerable condition. He went to Point Pedro as a refugee. But his wife returned to Colombo with her parents soon after the riots. But he had refused to leave. His marriage was under strain. But a reconciliation was brought about around 1990. Krishnalingam however returned to Point Pedro towards the latter part of last year after the Army took control of the area. He reported to the valuation department in Jaffna. But the authorities in Colombo said that he should report there. He lived with his mother giving tuition in English and Mathematics. He was a short, stout person who also knew Karate. He was a devout Hindu. On occasions when he was mentally disturbed, he would go on a pilgrimage on foot visiting several temples, often staying at the Chella Channanithi temple pilgrim's rest, Thondamanaru, for several days.

On the Thursday before he died, a lady relative who came to visit her mother called Krishnalingam and gave him a message from his wife. The same evening Krishnalingam went to the house of a friend, waited for sometime and left, since the friend was late in coming home. The same night he told his mother, 'mother I want some peace', and went to Puttalai Pillayar Kovil on foot. Such things he had been doing despite the prevailing curfew. On Friday morning he went to Vallipuram temple. On Saturday morning he set off along the Point Pedro - Kodikamam road towards Chuttipuram temple which was one of his favourite haunts. He was only carrying a shoulder bag. At the Mulli junction sentry point (4th mile post) he was shot dead by a soldier. He had received shots in the neck and head. The 'Daily News' quoting the military version reported that the army doing a clearing operation in Thunnalai had fired at an LTTE terrorist who had a grenade in his possession. Krishnalingam's relatives who came for the funeral from Colombo raised the matter with Colonel Larry Wijeratne pointing out that Krishnalingam was certainly not a terrorist but a patient, and would never have carried a grenade in his bag. They also said that had he been difficult at the check point, since there were several soldiers around, they could have easily brought him under control and that

there was no necessity to shoot him. They added that if it had come to the worst, they could have shot him in the legs rather than in the head. Wijeratne promised to look into the matter and had taken a statement from the soldier who shot Krishnalingam. The soldiers' version was that he had refused to show his bag at the check point and had become physically aggressive. According to Colonel Wijeratne, he had issued strict instructions not to shoot at civilians. We shall see that claims about the dead victim having a grenade is a common ruse in cover ups.

Krishnalingam had a problem which many psychiatric patients face. When feeling better, they often stopped taking their pills and consequently become aggressive. Having experienced the 1983 communal violence in the South, Krishnalingam had developed a strong attachment to Vadamaratchy as his home, where he was free as he could never be elsewhere. Friends have often seen him in the market buying supplies for his brother's family on the other side of the bund, while most people are reluctant to cross the bund. Krishnalingam has been heard to remark, "Who are these fellows to stop me from going where I want to go in my own home".

Ponnalai (Vallikamam West): 29th January 1997: In the morning a group of fisherfolk from Moolai were moving towards Ponnalai causeway for their day's work. When they came close to the military post at the junction a mine exploded. In what followed nine civilians and a soldier were killed. Six women were injured. A statement was issued by the Tamil parties presently in Jaffna to the effect that the death of civilians took place because of soldiers firing into them. An army spokesman in Jaffna later told the Tamil parties that their statement which was published in the 'Sunday Observer' was incorrect because the mine which exploded had been suspended from a tree and that the civilians were killed by the mine explosion, which because of its position above the ground, had a wider spread. The soldiers, he claimed, had fired upwards towards the tree and not at the ground towards the fisherfolk. He also said that they could check with the hospital authorities who in the course of the post-mortem had not found bullets. A Tamil party spokesman said that this was possibly true since the survivors who were in a state of shock had heard firing noises and had thought the bullets were fired at them. Since doubts remain, the matter deserves a fuller inquiry. (See addendum on Jaffna hospital.)

Puttur: 10th February 1997: About 9.00 in the morning an army patrol was returning to Puttur along the Kodikamam Road. They were about 300 yards from the

check point which was around a bend. Normally army patrols take the precaution of moving in single file where 20 men would stretch over about 100 yards of the road. Perhaps, being close to home, they had lost their caution and were bunched together like a crowd of boys after a film show. This had evidently been observed by the LTTE a number of times. The soldiers also had a prisoner, **Kandasamy Sasikumaran, a boy of 16**, carrying a helmet in his hands. As the soldiers approached a small bridge an LTTE man who was observing them signalled to three others who while hidden out of sight of the soldiers, pressed the plunger. For sometime there was only a pall of smoke accompanied by firing from the soldiers. When the smoke cleared soldiers who had hidden in neighbouring houses came onto the road and firing noises ceased. Two soldiers lay dead on the road while an injured man signalled with his hand. A vehicle quickly came from the camp and took away the dead and the injured. The young man whom the soldiers had been holding prisoner was also seen by local civilians coming onto the road, holding the helmet. The soldiers then turned nasty and brutally assaulted civilians in the area. One man was pleading on his knees while a soldier held him by the hair and beat him with a thick piece of wood. As five women came out of the house in which they were hiding, they were shot in the legs. (Fortunately these turned out to be only flesh wounds.) Three dead bodies were later brought to Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Two were of civilians. One was a civilian killed by the army in reprisals at the neighbouring camp of Sirupiddy. Another was of the 16 year old boy prisoner. The third was of the LTTE cadre who had given the signal. While escaping he had run into soldiers moving towards the location, and had swallowed cyanide.

The 16 year old boy used to come to Puttur East every day from Watharavattai to purchase bread for some families in his village. On this morning the army had taken him suspecting him of supplying bread to the LTTE. It is understood that the post-mortem report by Jaffna hospital stated that the boy bearing several injuries, had died in the mine blast. **But we have firm testimony that he was seen after the mine explosion.** (See addendum on Jaffna hospital.) The boy had apparently been brutally done to death. The matter was later taken up with Major General Balagalle by the EPDP. The General came and apologised to the people, promised that such incidents will not happen again and that the offenders will be punished. A lady in the village later observed sarcastically, "The big man came and apologised to us. The dead came alive, and it all ended well!"

The other three Tigers who were involved in the operation were later seen in the locality by a civilian. He asked them, "Why do you set off mines where civilians are living, making life impossible for us?" The Tigers replied to the effect that there was nothing else they could do and so they had to do this.

Kokkuvil/Thavady: 24th February 1997: A man was travelling along the Anaikkottai-Kulappiddy road when he was called by a man dressed in a neat shirt and sarong. The latter asked the traveller if he knew him. The traveller recognised him to be **Kulatheepan**, the LTTE's Vanni GA, whose responsibilities had included collecting taxes from vehicles bringing supplies into the Vanni. The traveller told him, "The people are tired of this war, they cannot take any more. Why do you not go for peace talks?" Kulatheepan replied, "You wait two weeks and everything will be made clear." The traveller noticed that Kulatheepan was surrounded by a guard, members of which had taken up positions around him and were on the look out for the army. The traveller then asked him, "Do you know that there is a God above watching everything?" Kulatheepan thought a little and responded, "Yes I believe that there is a superior power above us". The two soon parted company, each going his own way. The traveller had been afraid that had he prolonged his stay someone would have seen them together and informed the army.

The next day however Kulatheepan met his death. Kulatheepan and his superior, **Senthamil**, who was the political leader for Jaffna were ambushed by the army at 6.45 a.m. near Pathirakali Amman temple, Thavady. Also killed in the army firing was **Kandiah Sivashanmuganathan (41)**, a merchant and father of two boys, 15 and 7 years, and a girl of 14. He was passing that way to his shop. The bodies were taken to Jaffna hospital where Sivashanmuganathan's wife and a child identified his body. The Police refused them permission to remove the body saying that it had belonged to a member of the LTTE.

Towards the end of February travellers passing by saw a horrifying sight. A severed head was placed on three stones near Kulappiddy junction. According to local talk, this was the head of a soldier who had fallen into the hands of the LTTE when he went alone to obtain a drink of toddy. Such acts have been perpetrated by both sides. There have been reports that in the same area at least on two occasions heads of LTTE cadre who had fallen into the hands of the Special Forces had been severed and placed in front of their parents' houses.

Thenmaratchy West: Mid-March 1997: Troops rounded up an area about 3 miles

in circumference including parts of Maravanpulavu, Navatkuli, Kaithady & Koilakandy and all - old and young - were taken to a school. Except for 20 young persons, the rest were later asked to go back. The parents and relatives of those detained refused to return, despite some of those refusing to go being beaten by angry soldiers. A masked person was then brought in an auto, who cleared all those detained. The latter were then released in the presence of the local headman.

Jaffna Convent: 3rd May 1997: In the morning at 6.45 a grenade was thrown by two Tigers at the security post by the water tank across Main Street from Holy Family Convent, Jaffna. One policeman was injured, but not too badly. The Tigers who had thrown the grenade ran into an army truck while trying to get away and were shot dead. The streets naturally emptied. **Pathmarajah Sudharshini (20)**, a young girl who had gone to church in the morning when returning home was perhaps the first civilian to venture into that area. This was about 20 minutes after the incident. She was shot at by security personnel, was injured and was taken to the intensive care unit at the Jaffna Teaching Hospital (JTH). Upon investigating the incident the EPDP, EPRLF, & PLOTE discovered that the shooting of the girl took place well after the excitement. They subsequently had a meeting with **Brigadier Jayasundera**, the Town Commandant, and urged him to set up a committee of inquiry into the incident.

3. Instances of civilian death or injury resulting from military action

The following gives a sample of cases: (See also A Note on Military Operations)

Meesalai: 18th December 1996: **Kandiah Vijayanathan (21)** was taken in a round up and detained at Chavakachcheri. He was later found shot dead with an injury at the back of the neck. The Army claimed that he had been shot while attempting to escape.

Karainagar: 11th January 1997: **Thevarajah Vigneswaran (22)** and **Somasundaram Sivakumar (22)** were shot dead by the Navy about 8:30 p.m. The official (navy) version is that the two were walking along the seashore during curfew hours and did not heed a call to stop. The truth is of course very different.

The two had no LTTE connection, were close to the navy, were well known to them, and the second was close to the EPDP if not a member. The first had a shop close to the navy camp that was patronised by its personnel and the families had been pro-security forces in their outlook. The house of the first was supplied with electricity by the navy and other

neighbours came there in the nights to watch TV and videos. Curfew was only formal and people moved about freely inland. The first was married to a charming lady and the second who lived about 200 yards away was to marry a sister of the first.

On the day in question the two men, the ladies and several neighbours, including children, had watched a video and the two men came to the entrance of the home of the first, intending to go to a friend's to dine. To everyone's surprise naval personnel came there, took the men away to the beach and shot them in the head. An inquiry was held but nothing came of it, although the EPDP had said that it would press the matter. The EPDP's **'Thinamurasu'** of Jan. 19th-25th while stating the navy's claim, added that **Mr. Baskaran, MP EPDP**, "brought this [the murders] to the notice of the authorities".

It was speculated locally that some naval personnel had entertained designs on the two women. But on that night the naval personnel had not come into the house although the women were there. The navy now provides rations to the families of the victims. Some who were there have admitted privately that they could identify the navy personnel who committed the crime, but had told the inquiry the contrary - the navy was after all the law in Karainagar. As in many similar cases the official version remains the last word on the matter, and that happens all too easily.

Ponnalai: 17th January 1997: **Ratnasabapathy Vigneswaran (40)** was shot through the back of his head at 1 a.m. No further information other than that the body was found. Needs further investigation.

Kokkuvil: 23rd January 1997: **Rasalingam Ratnasingam (45)**, father of four, was shot dead by the army while returning home in the evening.

Putthur: 10th February 1997: (see above)
Sangaratthai, Valikamam West: 28th February 1997: Troops in ambush at Sinnappu School shot dead two labourers returning home about 6:45 p.m. They were **Nagamutthu Rajendram (40)**, father of three, and **Krishnan Perampalam (32)**, father of four. The families who went to Mavady camp the following day were told that the two were killed because they were carrying grenades. When they visited the scene, they only found a bag with a smashed coconut sprout (pooraan). The latter is normally consumed by poorer folk.

Chankanai, Valikamam West: Mid-March: **Nadarajah**, a car broker past middle age, went to his sister's place in the evening to obtain some curries for dinner. While returning he was shot dead

by soldiers. When relatives, including the sister and her husband, went to the Army regarding this matter, they were asked to sign a declaration that the deceased had been a member of the LTTE.

Nacchimar Kovil, Jaffna: 17th March 1997: Pakianathan Aingaran (18), student of St. Henry's, Illavalai, was killed when troops travelling in an armoured vehicle opened fire upon hearing an explosion. Two others were injured.

Karainagar: 29th March 1997: A youth, Tharmarajah Janarthanan, was shot dead by the Navy. According to the Navy the youth was shot after he threw a grenade during a search operation conducted by them. The **Thinamurasu** (Apr. 6-12th) quoted the parents as saying that the naval personnel who entered their home just after mid-night had ordered them out and interrogated their son. Gunshots were heard subsequently.

Alaveddy: 7th April 1997: Sivarajah Manivannan of Arunachalam Vidyalyam, Alaveddy, "died under tragic circumstances" - press notice in the **Uthayan** by the School Welfare Society and the Old Students' Association. (The form of the notice indicates that he was killed in a firing incident and we have no further details.)

Anaikottai: 8th April 1997: Kanapathippilai Pratheepan (16, O/Level) of Balasubramaniam Vidyalayam, Anaikottai was shot dead at mid day when the army fired back in response to a grenade thrown by the LTTE. The body was collected from Jaffna Hospital after identification by parents, the school principal and teachers. There was a massive turn out at the funeral. The EPDP called for a judicial inquiry.

Thinnevely East: 20th April 1997: Nithyanantharajah Pushpalatha (31), mother of two, was injured in the stomach and a leg during the shooting incident at 2:30 a.m. Her husband had been killed by the IPKF in 1988.

Malusanthy, between Manthikai & Nelliady, Jaffna Road, Vadamaratchy: **22nd April** (approx.): The LTTE shot dead two soldiers whom they had apparently observed going to drink toddy for some time. Troops then assaulted several civilians in the area. Colonel Wijeratne who was away during the incident is said to be trying to trace those assaulted.

Jaffna Convent: 3rd May 1997: (See report above)

Irupalai: 3rd May 1997: Kandiah Selvaratnam (58), a coconut plucker, lost a leg by treading on a minefield meant to protect an army post in Vithanayar Lane.

Between Chunnakam & Mallakam: Mid-May 1997: An LTTE mine explosion claimed the lives of 4 soldiers travelling in a tractor and a civilian passer-by. In the sequel about 60 civilians were as-

STALIN RISES IN DMK

T N GOPALAN

Yet another son is rising in the Indian political firmament, Muthuvelar Karunanidhi Stalin, son of the 74 year old Tamil Nadu Chief Minister. He has now firmly positioned himself as the heir-apparent, and the three-day special State Convention of the party in June last at Salem seemed to have acknowledged his claims. There was no demurral from any quarter barring ironically the one from the father himself. Reacting to a flurry of speculations and comments in the local and national press on Stalin's elevation to the front ranks, Karunanidhi remarked angrily, "Is the DMK my personal fiefdom that can be passed on to anyone at my sweet will and pleasure? No. This is a democratic set-up". But then he would not categorically deny that his son was being groomed to take over from him.

A relatively reticent Stalin seems genuinely embarrassed. But his father and his elder cousin, Murasoli Maran, have cleverly plotted his career graph over the years. It looks like nothing can prevent him from capturing the party and bringing it totally under his control in a short while from now. Never mind still no formal position has been conferred on him except his secretaryship of the youth wing of the party. The timing and purpose of the convention have remained mysterious. State conventions are a very irregular affair in the DMK, they are held as and when it pleases the high command. So when Karunanidhi announced the meet in early May, many wondered why now and what was going to be its message.

saulted by soldiers. In a statement, **Major General Balagalle**, apologised for the assault and promised appropriate punitive action against those responsible. **Manipay, Anaikottai, Suthumalai, Kokkuvil: 19th, 20th May 1997:** Firing noises and grenade explosions were heard in this area. A civilian **Kathiravelu Suresh (33)** and his wife **Jamuna (24)** were hit by gunfire. The former was killed and the latter was taken to Palaly base to be treated. Four other unidentified bodies were brought to Jaffna hospital. **Inuvil West: 20th May 1997: Kandasamy Rathinamma**, an old woman, was shot dead when she went into her compound holding a lamp at 4:30 a.m. to ease herself. Her body was handed over to Jaffna hospital by the Chunnakam Police with several gunshot injuries in her chest.

(Continued in next issue)

He himself refused to give any hint of his intentions.

In May and early June the ties between the DMK and the Tamil Maanila Congress had come under severe strain following Moopanar's failure to snatch the top job in the country. So many thought that perhaps the convention could mark the beginning of the end of the alliance at the very least a stern warning would be issued at Salem to the ally.

But only when the banners, the hoardings and the wall-writings connected with the convention started appearing, one got a hint of what Karunanidhi was up to. For the first time Stalin's portraits were appearing in a big way. "Kalaigalar calls you over to Salem. We will rally under Stalin's leadership," the walls screamed. Virtually no other portrait including that of the DMK's nominal No. 2 and General Secretary, K Anbazhagan was to be seen anywhere. Though in Salem itself there were a couple of cut-outs of Agricultural Minister and local strongman Veerapandi Arumugam. But he too, more often than not, and interestingly his son as well, were beaming by the side of the rising son in many hoardings. The message was loud and clear. Stalin was arriving on the scene. Now the speculation centred around what form the appointment would take.

He did lead the youth wing in the rally. He also presided over one session which was exclusively devoted to the youth wing and in which speaker after speaker eulogised him as the future hope of the party and implied that the day was not far off when he would take over the leadership.

The speakers also recalled in moving terms the sacrifices he had made for the party, the torture he had undergone in the prison during the Emergency, while still in his early twenties. Suffering at the hands of the police is one of the cherished symbols of the Dravidian movement and that strengthens one's leadership claims. Yet another symbol was that of the golden shawl. Senior ministers queued up right on the dais to honour Stalin with shawls, a gesture generally reserved for those at the very top like Karunanidhi and Anbazhagan. Even otherwise if someone presents a shawl so deferentially as the ministers did at Salem it only means that the presenter acknowledges the superior status of the person so honoured. There was nothing remarkable about Stalin's own speech. It was all platitudes shorn



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi and heir-apparent Stalin

of any substance. While it was refreshingly free of any rancour and vulgar innuendoes, it did not really captivate the huge audience. Several lakhs had been mobilised for the occasion. There was no bite, no force. "Maybe he was playing safe, not wanting to offend anyone at this stage of his career. Still he singularly failed to enthuse the audience and that bodes ill for his plans to step into his father's shoes," commented a senior MP of the party.

But there was one interesting suggestion from him - he wanted his cadres to go about setting up social service associations. He did not exactly specify what kind of service he wanted them to render though he did vaguely talk of social reforms. Significantly he wanted them to emulate non-governmental organisations which incidentally get funds from various sources, both local and foreign.

In his winding up speech Karunanidhi also endorsed the proposal and recalled that when he was young he too had collected money to set up reading rooms which would offer leading Dravidian journals and also organise meetings on social and political issues. He too drew the parallel of the NGO's. Looks like then the

party would launch in a big way its own NGO movement. The service organisations started by the DMK-men would be eligible for governmental grants, he hinted. One does get the feeling that in his eagerness to project a clean image, Karunanidhi has ensured that no party functionary gains any extra leverage in his administration, leading to resentment at the lower levels especially. He has thought up the idea of these NC-O's to please the senior functionaries and help them make some money on the sly without attracting too much of an odium.

Be that as it may, the importance given to Stalin all through and Karunanidhi's own solicitude for the youth clearly showed which way the wind was blowing. However he hotly denied that Stalin

was being deliberately promoted as the crown prince. But what he blurted out while chiding the venerable Hindu for highlighting the Stalin affair was quite significant. "Is not Hindu ruled by one family and the mantle passes from one member to another? When such is the case, why seek to persecute us alone, is it because I am a shudra? Because I have not performed Upanayanam (sacred thread ceremony) for my son?"

Incidentally the anti-Brahmin tilt in the Salem convention was one of the surprises of the occasion. Though most speakers chose to take umbrage at what they said, as was the increasing prominence Jayalalitha was again getting in the Press, both Tamil and English, there was an undercurrent of hostility to the by now thoroughly marginalised Brahmins. They sought to hark back to the beginnings of the Dravidian movement which was launched as a crusade against the Brahmin dominance of the Tamil society during the colonial days and seemed to imply that though they might have been toppled from the throne the Brahmins still had enough potential for mischief.

Once the DMK got into electoral poli-

tics, it had quietly jettisoned the virulent anti-Brahminism of Periyar EVR. And once in power it stopped mouthing anti-Brahmin sentiments altogether. Occasionally whenever he was at the receiving end, Karunanidhi did resurrect anti-Brahminism, in the early seventies when his government was charged with monstrous corruption - a level surpassed only by Jayalalitha - and in 1990 when he was frightened by Jayalalitha's rise in politics, only to discard it post-haste finding the strategy counter-productive. In fact in 1990 in what was billed as the Thiruppunai Maanaadu (the turning point conference) he did seek to whip up anti-Brahmin sentiments and hold up Jaya's rise as an instance of the Brahmin conspiracy to divide the Tamil society.

But unfortunately for him his then friend and a self-proclaimed heir of EVR, K Veeramani sought to queer the pitch by unleashing an attack on innocent Brahmins, cutting their sacred threads and otherwise humiliating them. The incidents created a furore and the Karunanidhi regime had to hastily call off its anti-Brahmin campaign. After that only now he is resorting to an anti-Brahmin campaign to buttress his own position as the guardian of the Tamil interests.

But it is not clear why he should do so? Some believe that the Jayalalitha-Vai Gopalsamy - Subramaniam Swamy axis formed recently coupled with the friction in the tie-up with the TMC could have made Karunanidhi apprehend a possible come-back by Jaya. But then Jayalalitha herself has lost all credibility.

Besides nobody is going to reject her because she is a Brahmin by birth. The much-vaunted Tamil society is so hopelessly divided on the one hand and the CBC's are so firmly entrenched at all levels of the state as also of the civil society on the other, that not many will take seriously the Brahmin bogey. If anything, the on-going clashes between the Dalits and the Thevars in the south are much more immediate and real than any grand Brahmin conspiracy.

Still the anti-Brahmin refrain was there right through, but then no clarion call was given to put the Brahmins in their place, clearly showing that Karunanidhi was content with issuing some snide warning to the Brahmin dominated Press, largely true of the English newspapers and to a much lesser extent of the Tamil newspapers and magazines. But the strategy has boomeranged and he has to go on back-foot to defend himself against charges of intolerance. That he chose to devote hardly a couple of sentences to the Dalit-non-Dalit clashes and did not care to come up with any concrete plan of action to restore communal harmony only went to show his priorities. □

BOOK REVIEWS

HINDUISM TODAY – monthly journal published by Himalayan Academy, 107, Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA. Price £2.00.

Founded in 1979 by Satguru Sivaya Subramaniaswami of Hawaii, this monthly journal proclaims as its mission 'Affirming Sanatana Dharma and recording the modern history of the billion-strong global religion in renaissance'. We thankfully acknowledge receipt of the issues for the months of April, May and June which contain excellently researched articles on topical issues relating to Hindu communities throughout the world.

The April number of **Hinduism Today** devotes entirely to Sri Lanka. Under the heading 'Dispersed by War' the leading article bemoans: 'Fourteen years of bitter civil war between Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus forced 700,000 Tamils to flee Sri Lanka. What began as a temporary diaspora in search of safety has become, for most, a permanent resettlement. Many are asking themselves, will their Hindu religion and culture survive?'

In an exhaustive survey, covering worldwide, the report reveals the experience of Tamil refugees in adjusting themselves to the unfamiliar situations. Those who were able to reach the Commonwealth countries like Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are better favoured by the knowledge of English, but others reaching European countries suffer from lack of easy communication. Yet sheer determination has made them tenacious not only to acquire some working knowledge of the foreign language but also to build Hindu temples for their own worship. But what about the future? 'We are all Jaffna, our children are half Jaffna, half German and our fear is the next generation will be all German' laments a Tamil settled in Berlin for the past twelve years.

This special issue carries an article on the life and mission of the great Rishi of Jaffna, Yogaswami, whose religious influence made an American to become a Hindu Sanyasi, Sivaya Subramaniaswami, who has established a Hindu Ashram and Siva temple in the Pacific island of Hawaii.

In the May issue of **Hinduism Today** there is a thought provoking article on the Hindu custom of Sacred Pilgrimage, and on the most important pilgrim centres in Indian under the title Divine Destinations.

'Playing God' is the title of the leading article in the June issue of **Hinduism Today**, delving deep into the story of cloning, which took the ethical world by surprise and worry. Looking back into Hindu mythology it refers to the ancient Demon Raktabija. It is said that when he is killed, another of him sprung from every drop of his blood spilled on the battlefield. Hindu view of life is that God-created soul inhabits the body, but is not the body. The question arises what kind of soul would take birth in a body created so uniquely. **Hinduism Today** invited views from va-

rious Hindu authorities and has published their thoughts. A very illuminating story with a sketch of the process of cloning.

– Sivapathy Sundaram.

Dictionary of Biography of the Tamils of Ceylon, Compiled by S. Arumugam, B.Sc., (Eng.), Irrigation Deputy Director (Retired).

Price £12.50 plus postage.

This is an unprecedented and unique who's who of the Tamil people of Ceylon. Having read it, I was so delighted that I thought I would write a few words about it. This book is more a history book than a dictionary of biography of the Tamils of Ceylon. It should find a place on the shelf of every Tamil and serve as a reference book of great historical value.

In the words of the compiler 'At the close of the 20th century, history is being enacted in Sri Lanka. The Tamil image, established over centuries is being erased from the Island. Fleeing from the motherland, the Sri Lankan Tamils are seeking refuge overseas and are settling down all over the globe. They are on the verge of fast losing their separate identity and are in fact becoming an 'endangered species'. The next generation, growing up in the environment of their new domicile, would be alien to their own culture and Tamil traditions. They would have scant knowledge of their esteemed ancestors, who were once the pride of their motherland. This publication is for their benefit.'

This publication has entries of over 775 Ceylon Tamils. For example, how many of us of the present generation know that Gate Mudaliyar A. Coomaraswamy, the first Tamil Member of the first Legislative Council acted as the spokesman and interpreter for Sri Vickrama Raja Singha, the last King of Kandy, on the King's voyage to Madras as a captive of the British. The dictionary gives the following information about the scion of the Gate Mudaliyar's family.

'Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy, 1834-1879

Muttu Coomaraswamy, son of the late Gate Mudaliyar Arumugampillai Coomaraswamy, Member of the Ceylon Legislative Council, and Visaladchchi Ammayar, was born on the 23rd of January 1834. He received his early education at the Colombo Academy (now Royal College). He had a distinguished career there, winning the Turnour Prize, awarded to the best student in Greek, Latin and the English Classics.

At the age of 22 years, he was called to the Bar as an advocate; he showed his scholastic brilliance by reading a paper before the Royal Asiatic Society on the Synopsis of Saiva Sidhanda in 1857 and on Hindu Philosophy in 1860. In 1861 when he was 27 years old, he was appointed a member of the Ceylon Legislative Council to represent "Tamil interests". He succeeded Mudaliyar Edirmanasingam and held this position till his demise. In 1862 he made a grand tour of the European Continent and England. While in England he was admitted a

member of Lincoln's Inn, being the first Asiatic to be admitted to the English Bar. His translation of the Tamil play 'Harischandra' (Martyr of Truth) was published in 1863. The play was staged in the presence of Queen Victoria, Muttu taking the lead part.

On his return to Ceylon he took to the study of Oriental lore, and made a tour of India. His valuable works Dathvamsa, being a translation from the Pali text of the story of the Sacred Tooth Relic and Sutti Nipata, being discourses of Lord Buddha, were published in 1874. When he was in England in 1878, he was invested a knight by her Majesty Queen Victoria. The distinguished Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, accompanied him to receive the investiture. In 1879 when he was preparing for another tour of England, he fell ill and passed away. Within a short span of 41 years he had achieved and accomplished so much; his premature demise was a great loss. In the galaxy of great men who shed brilliance his name occupies a unique place.

He married Elizabeth Clay Beebe, daughter of William Beebe of Kent, England and had a son Ananda Kentish, who was to become the world renowned art critic Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. Muttu's sister Sellachchi was the proud mother of Sir P. Ramanathan and Sir P. Arunachalam.'

Mr. Arumugam and his editorial consultants deserve the highest tribute for having undertaken this mammoth task. A venture of this magnitude cannot be without mistakes or omissions. I understand that it is proposed to remedy this by sending an addendum of corrections and additional information every year to those who have purchased the book. At the end of five years a new revised edition will be published.

Orders for the book and enquiries can be made at 816 Garratt Lane, London SW17 0LZ. Tel: 0181 672 7222 or 0181 398 6078.

N. Vamadevan.

Continued from page 24

style, which is authentic Jaffnese that keeps the reader hooked. Malan, editor of Kumutham, in his foreword compares the author's literary style to that of Puthumai Pithan's.

Comparisons are always tricky yet, let me try another. If you have read R.K. Narayan's Malgudi stories you will remember the wholesome feeling that is evoked in your mind about the lives of ordinary people of Malgudi. Muttu's stories do the same for the Jaffna man, whether he is a voluntary expatriate or involuntary exile and they bring out the culture and life of a people which are sadly receding today. Let us hope that in the crucible of time these stories and the others from his other books will help to capture and preserve the priceless culture of Jaffna for posterity. Through these stories the future generations could at least visualize and be proud of the heritage that was ours.

Yogi Tambirajah,

Toronto, Canada.

CLASSIFIED ADS

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MATRIMONIAL

Hindu Tamil brother seeks professional/college educated bride for brother, 36, Ph.D., employed in USA. Direct correspondence to M. Yoga-nathan, 40 Massachusetts Avenue, Lexington, MA 02173 USA.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek fair, professionally qualified bride from North America, England for MBA (Physics Hons), professional son, 34, holding executive post in North America. Send horoscope, photo, details. M 957 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu seeks professional partner for his brother, 35, lecturer in Sri Lanka, Australian citizen, preferably living in Sri Lanka. Send horoscope, photo, details. M 958 c/o Tamil Times.

Tamil Hindu parents seek groom below 36 for daughter, 30, British citizen in good employment. Please send photo, horoscope, details. M 959 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek partners for daughters; Engineer, 5'4" and Doctor, 5'2"; employed in USA with visa. M 960 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional partner, preferably doctor for good looking doctor daughter, 28, 5'2" employed in London. Send horoscope, details. M 961 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek pretty, vegetarian bride under 30 for doctor son in UK. Please send horoscope, photo and details. M 962 c/o Tamil Times.

Well-educated, handsome, successful, cultured professional, 34, good East/West mix, Jaffna Hindu background; family seeking bright, ambitious, pretty, UK/US raised female. Send photo, details. M 963 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu seeks professional partner for fair, pretty sister, 27, partly qualified accountant. Send horoscope, details. Religion immaterial. M 964 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu brother seeks partner for attractive sister, 28,

doing accountancy in UK. Send horoscope, details. M 965 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents in USA seek partner, 22-26, professionally qualified, good looking, fair, not below 5'2", for smart son, vegetarian, 28, Computer Software Engineer in internationally reputed corporation in USA with Masters in Software Engineering. Send horoscope, photo, details. M 966 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu seeks partner for his pretty sister, 29, M.Sc., Scientific Office in London. Send horoscope, details. M 967 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Gajendran son of Dr. and Mrs. Vijayasegaram of 64 Welbeck Road, Harrow, Middx. UK and Anushala daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Gnanasuntharam of 32 Rohini Road, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka on 15.6.97 at Sapphire Ball Room, Ceylon International, Sri Lanka.

Perinpanathan son of late Mr. R. Kathiresu & Mrs. T. Kathiresu of Kalasalai Veethi, Thirunelvely, Jaffna and Devambikai daughter of Mr. & Mrs. R. Sathasivam of 287 Hampton Road, Ilford, Essex on 22.6.97 at Caterham High School Hall, Clayhall, Ilford, Essex.

Indrani Anne daughter of Mr. & Mrs. T.R. Tennakoon of 15 Alexandra Court, Maida Vale, London W9 1SZ and Sudhman Thirumal son of Mr. & Dr. T.V. Arumugam of 17 Donnington Road, Kenton, Harrow, Middx., on 2.7.97 at Kadwa Patidar Hall, Harrow and on 5.7.97 at St. Charles Borromeo Church, London W1P 7LZ.

Dr. Mohan son of Mr. & Dr. S. Kanagasundaram of 1 Haling Park Gardens, South Croydon, Surrey and Thanuja daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ratnajothy of 18 Silverdale Gardens, Hayes, Middx., on 5.7.97 at the Archbishop Lanfranc School Hall, Mitcham Road, Croydon, Surrey.

OBITUARIES



Mr. Sinnathamby Apputhural (86), Retired Teacher, Urumpirai Hindu Tamil School; beloved husband of the late Rajalakshmi; loving father of Gnasoathy (Los Angeles), Sugunanathan, Sachithanandan (both of Toronto) and Pathmasothy (Los Angeles); son of late Mr. & Mrs. Sinnathamby of Neervaley; grandfather of Umaharan, Saruka, Pradeepa, Ruban (all of Los Angeles), Suganya, Suneja, Balayogan and Saroruka (all of Toronto); father-in-law of Dr. S. Selvanayagam, Indrani, Bhalini and Selvakumar passed away in Los Angeles on May 27th 1997 and was cremated on May 31st.

The members of the family wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes and assisted them in several ways during the period of great sorrow. - 2810 Vahan Court, Lancaster, California 93536, USA.



Mrs. Rasammah Velupillai (92), formerly of Uduvil, Jaffna; Retired teacher and Inspector of Schools; beloved wife of the late Murugesu Velupillai (Headmaster); loving mother of Satchithanathan (Satchy), Sarathadevi (Saratha), Satkunandan (Satcunam), all of Australia, Sugunasothy (Suguna) of London and Suziladevi (Suzi) of New Zealand; mother-

in-law of Pathmawathy (Pathma), Kathirgamanathan (Kathir), Thanaluxmy (Thanam) all of Australia, late Sivagnanaratnam (Sivam), and Dr. Ganesalingam (Ganesh) of New Zealand, passed away in London on 12.6.97. Funeral took place on 18.6.97.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes, spoke at the funeral and assisted them in several ways during the period of great sorrow. - 161 Worple Road, Wimbledon, London SW20. Tel: 0181 946 0328.



Mrs. Kamalavathy Gnasoorian passed away peacefully in London on 16th June 97. Beloved daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Suppiah of Alaveddy she was educated and also taught later at Saiva Mangayar Kazhagam, Colombo. In UK, she worked in the Inland Revenue Department for some years before early retirement.

She is sadly missed and lovingly remembered by her husband, Mr. K. Gnanasoorian (of Alaveddy); son Jeyaraj; daughters Jeyahini and Shiva-jini; sons-in-law Harindran, Gunasekaram; grandchildren Sanjiv, Aneesa and Archanna; brothers and sisters Vinayagamoorthy (UK), Kanagambigadevi, Balambikai (both of Sri Lanka), Cuganesan (Australia), Ambikaipahan (Sri Lanka), Inbanathan (UK); and all other family members.

The funeral took place at City of London Crematorium, London on 21st June 1997.

The family thanks all those who sent messages of sympathy, attended the funeral and helped in so many ways.

May her soul rest in peace.

- 72 King Edward Road, London E17 6HZ. Phone: 0181 531 6435.



Mrs. Veeraluxmy Sivasubramaniam, beloved wife of late K. Sivasubramaniam (Railways), dearly beloved mother of Ambika Thamotheram (London), Prof. Dr. Gnana Kulendran (Thanjavur University), Prof. Dr. Yoga Rasanayagam (Colombo University), Jayaluxmy Kandiah (Australia), Arunthathy Sriranganathan (Director, Tamil Services, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation); loving mother-in-law of V. Thamotheram, A. Kulendran, M. Rasanayagam, Dr. A. Kandiah, Dr. P. Sriranganathan; loving grandmother of Dr. Nimalraj, Dr. Kanchana, Srikrishna, Srinarayani, Arani, Erakan, Sutharshan, Dharshini, Sarangen, Shyamala, Rangen and Sriharan passed away peacefully on 22.6.97 in Colombo and was cremated on 24th June.

The members of her family wish to express their sincere thanks to all friends and relations who attended the funeral and sent messages. - 187 Camrose Avenue, Edgware, Middlesex, UK. Tel: 0181 381 1792.



Mr. Sayambunather Vyramuttu Rattinam, retired audit officer, Auditor General's Office, Colombo 7, son of late Mr. Sayambunather Vyramuttu and late Paruvathipillai, of Panalai, Tellippalai, Jaffna, beloved husband of Sellam, loving father of Pathmanathan, Ramathan, and Loganathan, father-in-law of Vahsuki, Vijayaladchumy and Thanaledchmi, grandfather of Vi-

jayaluxmi, Thevakumar, Senthooran, Bhavan, Kugan, Asha-Vidhya and Sathian, of U.K., brother of Murugiah (Colombo), and late Mrs. Rasamma Ponnampalam, and brother-in-law of Theivanayagi (Colombo), and Mr. Swaminathar Ponnampalam, the late Mr. V.S. Sangarapillai (Colombo), late Mr. V.S. Chelliah (Sydney), Mr. V.S. Sinnathamby (Vavuniya), and Mr. V.S. Subramaniam (Colombo), uncle of Swaminathar, Sivanathan, Paramanathan of Canada, and Rajasothy Vadivel of Chunnakam, Suthaharan (U.K.), Krishnabhavani and Sathiyadevi of Colombo, passed away peacefully, aged 75, in U.K., on 9th of July 1997. His last respects and final farewell took place on 13th of July 1997 in the U.K. according to Hindu rites.

The members of Mr. Rattinam's family extend their grateful thanks to all friends, relatives, members of Saiva Munnetta Sangam (U.K.), and other organisations, who attended his funeral, sent messages of sympathy, floral tributes, and offered assistance in several ways during this period of great sorrow. - 3 The Orchard, Wickford, Essex SS12 0HB. Tel: (01268) 766624, Fax: (01268) 561805.

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of **Mrs. Man-kay Sivasampu** on the seventh anniversary of her passing away on 2.8.90.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her two sons. - 15 Wolsey Road, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1XG.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

August 1 Feast of St. Alphonsus.

Aug. 3 Aadi Amavasai.

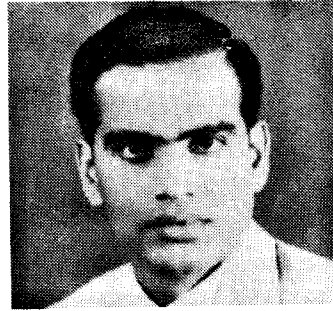
Aug. 5 Aadi Sevvai (3); Nallur Kandasamy Temple Flag hoisting ceremony.

Aug. 6 Aadi Pooram.

Aug. 7 Chathurthi.

Aug. 8 Feast of St. Dominic 11am to 11pm. Mahajana College O.S.A. (U.K.) Open Day

In Loving Memory of Late



Mr. V. Velayuthampillai

On the Twenty Fifth Anniversary of being laid to Rest on August 3rd 1972.

Twenty Five Years! How the years have swiftly gone by!
Just like a streak of lightning across the sky.

And yet it seems like yesterday
That you were holding us, with us in laughter and play
Helping us with our studies and nurturing
And during our teenage years, for adulthood preparing.

Precious memories linger on in us
Photographic glimpses of scenes and events
Skim through our mind's eye
With you as the regal figure to us all.
We cherish those beautiful idyllic memories
Of times gone by, of yesteryear.

Know that all the hard work, dedication and trust
You expended for us and imparted in us
Has not been in vain.

Your three little seedlings that you lovingly nurtured
Have all blossomed and grown
Into mighty banyan trees, firmly rooted and unshakeable.

Standing tall and strong
In the wind, rain and snow.
Never to be buffeted by the storms of life
All thanks to you, dear Appa
Because of the values of life
That you instilled in us from the childhood days.

So, dear Appa, rest in peace
Knowing that we will eternally carry
A part of you in our own lives.

Fondly remembered by
Mrs. Vijayalakshmy Velayuthampillai,
Skandaveri, Vijayaveri and Manjula.

1997 of Cricket, Football and Netball matches with invited teams, barbecue, bar, lunch, dinner, prize giving and live music. Free admission. Wembley High School, East Lane, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 0181 399 7848/692 5240/656 1465.

Aug. 9 Shashti; South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) trip to Bournemouth beach. Tel: 0181 545 3313.

Aug. 11 Feast of St. Clare.

Aug. 12 Aadi Sevvai (4).

Aug. 14 Ekathasi.

Aug. 15 Varaluxmi Poojah.

Aug. 16 Feast of St. Stephen; Pirathosam.

Aug. 17 Aavani Sunday (1); Full Moon.

Aug. 21 Sankadahara Chathurthi.

Aug. 22 Feast of The

Queenship of Mary.

Aug. 24 Kaarthikai; SLTWG trip to Wales Temple. Tel: 0181 545 3313; Aavani Sunday (2).

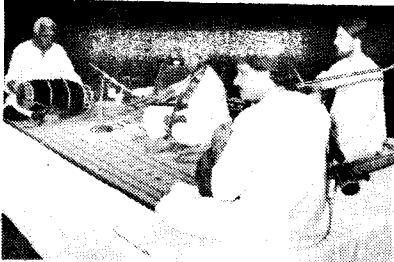
Aug. 25 Krishna Jayanthi; 9a.m. J.S.S.A. (U.K.) Cricket and Netball Festival 1997 at Warren Park Sports Centre, Windmill Lane, Southall, Middx. Tel: 0181 845 0034/01293 407586; 5.30p.m. Ratnam Foundation presents Tamil Carnatic Vocal Recital by **Isai Peroli S. Sowmya** at Winston Churchill Hall, Pinn Way, Ruislip, Middx. Tel: 0181 904 5939.

Aug. 28 Ekathasi; Feast of St. Augustine.

Aug. 30 Pirathosam; SLTWG drop in at John Innes Youth Centre. Tel: 0181 545 3313.

Aug. 31 Aavani Sunday (3); Nallur Kandasamy Temple Car Festival.

A Violinist in the Making



Young Hariharan Sahadevan's Violin Arangetram at the Beck Theatre on 28th June revealed the artistic potential in the student and the tutorial excellence of the Guru. The opening *Ata Tala Varnam, Viriboni*, an acknowledged curtain raiser, was very impressive and drew the immediate attention of the audience. Hari's bowing and fingering as well as his sense of time measures is remarkable. It was also very thoughtful and appropriate on the part of Guru Chandru to have selected compositions like *Giri raja suta, Nagumo mu*, and *Parat para*, which are easy-phrased and ideally suited for initiates. *Theeratha Vilayattu Pillai* was another piece in leap frogging *Kanda Chapu tala* that made Hari, though young in age, show his remarkable understanding of *sruthi* and *laya*. *Karaiyadi Krishnamurthi* displaying his legendary expertise on the *Mridangam* gave deserving support to the violinist along with the inimitable accompaniment on the *Ghatam* by Bangalore R.N. Prakash.

In arranging a repertoire for an Arangetram programme, particularly for students in this country, one feels, it is not advisable to include 'Ragam, Thanam, Pallavi'. Adequate concept of Ragam, and Pallavi exposition requires years of listening and practice, which is not practicable in the case of our students here. Whether it is vocal or instrumental concert, avoiding this 'professional' item from the repertoire of Arangetram students, we believe is prudent. Instead, different compositions in varying *talas* would help the students. Arangetram, we all agree, is not for judging professionalism.

— Sivapatha Sundaram.

Dharshan Kumaran — Newest British Chess Grandmaster

Dharshan Kumaran, 22, of Harrow, North London, has become a chess Grandmaster after a good performance in the recent Drury Lane Tournament at Covent Garden. Dharshan is a medical student at the University of Oxford and he is the son of Dr. and Mrs. Uyirilankumaran, both of whom are medical practitioners.

Dharshan was introduced to chess at the age of 3 and he has won many championships from a young age, notable among which are England Under 10 in 1984, World Under 12 in 1986 and World Under 16 in 1991. In 1993 he tied for first place in the British championship and became an International Master. He has been playing top board for Oxford University since he went there in 1993.

All serious chess players from club level upwards have a national or international grading based on their performance over a period. The title of International Master (IM) is conferred for life by the International Chess Federation when a player attains a given grading and then performs well in a stipulated number of tournaments in which at least a certain proportion of players are already IMs. The title of International Grandmaster (GM) is also conferred for life in a similar way on IMs who improve further and perform well in a stipulated number of tournaments with a certain proportion of participating GMs. Dharshan had won the required number of points in two previous tournaments with several GMs and had to gain 6 out of 9 points (1 for a win, ½ for a draw) in the Drury Lane Tournament. He achieved this in the last round and shared the second prize with a GM from Croatia. There are about 30 GMs in Britain and about 350 worldwide.

It may be recalled that Vishwanathan Anand, from Madras, India, was the challenger in the World Championship in 1995 against Kasparov and he could well be the challenger again, although at the moment his grading has slipped to third place in the world behind the young Russian, Kramnik. Apart from Anand there is only one other GM in India. Dharshan Kumaran is the first person of Sri Lankan origin to become a chess Grandmaster. It is gratifying to note that another Tamil name is going to be heard at the highest levels of world chess and the readers of Tamil Times would want to wish Dharshan further success.

Dr. S. Sriharan.

Sharmini's Brilliant Vocal Arangetram



The common myth that Tamil children growing in an alien culture tend to forget their rich culture, pronunciations, religion and are far inferior to their counterparts in South India, was shattered once again recently by Sharmini Thiruchelvam. Sharmini, a British University graduate, currently employed as a Micro Biologist with an

American firm, had her Vocal Arangetram at the Wandsworth Town Hall on Sunday, 8th June before a distinguished audience of academics, musicians, friends and well-wishers.

A major share for Sharmini's excellence should be attributed to her Guru Sivasakthi Sivanesan. It is commonly known that Sivasakthi is one of the few teachers who refuse to be persuaded by parents to produce a 'halfbaked' Arangetram to suit their child's academic career. This discipline adopted by Sivasakthi may be due to the training she received in her famous Institution in India and followed by her at the Bhavan. We need more Sivasakthis in the field of dance and vocal music so that each Arangetram would be a class of its own. Sharmini's training lasted for more than ten years while she continued with her O Levels, A Levels and University career and her hard training was visible in her performance.

She started with *Vanajakshi Varnam* and after a *kiriti* and a composition on Lord Krishna she went on to Saint Thyagaraja's *Sadinchene* and *Nagumomu* which was the centre piece prior to the intermission. Her choice of *Nagumomu* was a happy one as Dr. John Marr of the London School of Oriental and African studies pointed out, if the Earth faced destruction and if he was allowed to take one item each from the worldly goods, he would take *Nagumomu* from South Indian Carnatic Music. Sharmini's Ragam *Tanam Pallavi* was beautifully accompanied by *Sangeetha Vidusi Thanathevy Mithradeva* on Violin, Sri M. Balachandar on *Mridangam*, Sri R.N. Prakash on *Ghatam* and Sri K. Anandanadesan on *Moresing*. Sharmini's *Thillana Gitadhunuku* was preceded by a *Bhajan* on Saint Ragavendra which was full of devotion and moved some devotees to tears.

Mr. A.T. Moorthy, former High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in Britain and Mrs. Moorthy were the chief guests. Dr. John Marr and Sri Karaiyadi Krishnamoorthy were the guest speakers. Sharmini made the evening extremely enjoyable for all the invitees.

Wimal Sockanathan.

Sri Lankan Railway Past Employees Welfare Association

At the second 'get together' of the above association held at John Innes Youth Centre, Wimbledon on 14.6.97 the following office-bearers were elected. **Patron:** E. Rasakulasooriar; **President:** A. Manikkam; **Vice-President:** M. Balasundram; **Secretary:** S. Ponnudurai; **Asst. Secy:** K. Sarvananthan; **Treasurer:** N.S. Thambyrajah; **Council of Management:** P. Chelathurai, K. Paramanathan, S. Arumugam, N. Seevaratnam and A. Visagaratnam.

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