

# LTTE's extra constitutional politics

Wasantha Raja, the prominent producer and presenter of "Sandeshaya" of the BBC World Service, UK, returned from Jaffna to Colombo last week with a response from the LTTE to Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunge.

Before spending 10 days in Jaffna, when Wasantha Raja met Mrs. Kumaratunge, she communicated a message to the LTTE. "I am prepared to invite the LTTE for unconditional talks." She added, "I am willing to expand the northern province to include Tamil areas in the east and make a single unit.

atunge or any politician is invited to visit Jaffna and that they would be happy to provide complete protection.

Persuading the LTTE to discuss the differences leading to the northeastern conflict, Wasantha Raja said that the LTTE must learn from what is happening worldwide. Wasantha Raja drew his attention to the international experience particularly PLO-Israeli talks and the South African episode. Balasingham said that the analogy does not tally — he reiterated that the LTTE cannot trust government or the opposition.

message to the LTTE. Wasantha Raja also made some critical observations. He said that the war strategy adopted by the Government of Sri Lanka is defeating its own purpose.

Commenting on the bombing, Wasantha Raja said: "It has helped to create a situation where ordinary Tamil people lose confidence in the south. There is an entire new generation being brought up entirely with this war experience. The only experience of the South they have are shelling from the camps, bomb-

he added.

His observation of the newly inaugurated Tamil Eela Bank was its popularity. He said that this was primarily because the Tamil Eela Bank could give loans but not the Bank of Ceylon.

Wasantha Raja who was accompanied by his wife Lilani Samarasinghe, a UK based journalist, met Adele Balasingham, the Australian born wife of Anton Balasingham. Adele was working on a book on the dowry system. Wasantha Raja and his wife observed that Mrs. Balasingham was also proficient in Tamil.

Wasantha Raja and his wife Lilani Samarasinghe was accorded the rare privilege of meeting 36 policeman, 4 soldiers from Welioya, 10 soldiers from Pooneryn and 6 civilians from Pooneryn in custody. The 36 policemen were out of 600 policemen the LTTE captured at the outset of Eelam War II and they have been in LTTE custody for 4 years.

Wasantha Raja and his spouse observed that the policemen, the soldiers and the civilians were mentally sound and physically fit. Many of them claimed that they were kept in chains during day and night until they were declared to the ICRC.

The captives confided that they plan to stage a hunger strike to pressurize the Government of Sri Lanka to seek their release from the LTTE. The captives who were not either keen to divulge or were not aware of any other prisoners in custody said that they plan to conduct a hunger strike in the next few weeks. It is unfortunate that the Government of Sri Lanka, particularly the Ministry of Defence under President Wijetunga has made no effort to either rescue or exchange these prisoners.

When Wasantha Raja asked Anton Balasingham what LTTE needs to secure the release of these prisoners he said either a list of LTTE cadres in custody and their release or lifting of the economic embargo will be sufficient for their release. Why not the government take this as a challenge both to free their prisoners and to boost the morale of their services?



Wasantha Raja and his wife Lilani Samarasinghe with the service personnel held in custody by the LTTE

I will redefine the Eastern Province and devolve power."

Mrs. Kumaratunge's statement received wide publicity in Udayan, one of the leading Tamil dailies in Jaffna. The LTTE was visibly unhappy that this news reached the Tamil public. The LTTE line has been that the Sinhala majority political parties are only bent on war and therefore they too have no option but to continue the fighting. This is in many ways their slogan to mobilize resources as well as the ideological basis of their struggle.

Probably, LTTE's position in the eyes of the Tamil public was weakened with Mrs. Kumaratunge's statement becoming public in Jaffna.

The LTTE ideologue Anton Balasingham, reiterated LTTE's position with regard to the offer from Mrs. Kumaratunge. He said that the LTTE does not trust the government nor the parliamentary opposition. He added that the LTTE has lost faith in constitutional politics of the south. However Balasingham said that Mrs. Kumar-

Reiterating the necessity for the LTTE to build up links and win the respect of the South, Wasantha Raja said that the best ally of the Tamil people are the Sinhala people of the South. Balasingham, one time part time tutor of the South Bank Polytechnic (now South Bank University London) said, "This is an abstract sociological category." Wasantha Raja responded, "At a time when history is changing so rapidly,

ing from the air and strafing from the helicopters."

Wasantha Raja said that some of the institutions of Eelam are already in its place and the others are being developed. He cited the judiciary, the police, the banking and the postal systems.

Commenting of the Tamil Eelam Police he said that every person who enters their stations are greeted with the traditional Wanak-

by Agni

these abstract sociological categories can derive greater prominence than individual politicians on either side."

In the continuing debate Balasingham said that Wasantha Raja was looking at the problem from a southern perspective and this was different from the northern perspective of the Tamils. Balasingham added that "the LTTE does not wish to have any pact with the Government or the Opposition. But we are willing to have a dialogue."

Except for couriering Mrs. Kumaratunge's