

INDIAN FACTOR AGAIN IN SRI LANKAN POLITICS

The Indian factor is once again entering the politics of Sri Lanka.

Last week, the 'Eelantham' the daily official newspaper of the Tigers, came down hard on the government for its alleged dealings with the Indian government. Some political analysts believe that one reason why the Tigers are adopting a tough stance on peace negotiations with the government is because of their suspicions of links between Colombo and New Delhi, vis-a-vis the LTTE.

Indian Prime Minister. Mr. Kadirgamar assured Indian journalists that it was one of good wishes and nothing more.

Political analysts note that despite the Indian hostility towards the LTTE, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister was not critical of the Tigers during the visit. He even evinced understanding of the LTTE when he spoke of the tragedy of the war and said that the people of Jaffna were the victims of the war. When he commiserated with the Indian soldiers who died on Sri Lankan soil as well as the thousands of Sri Lankan servicemen who were killed he also noted that the LTTE too had fought and were still fighting for a cause they believed in adding that it was another matter whether the means justified the end or whether war itself was the means through which the problem could be resolved. Many observers thought that the Sri Lanka 'foreign minister was sending a message to the Tigers from New Delhi.

Despite the deep scepticism of the Indians on whether the Sri Lankan government would work out a durable peace with the LTTE — India having tried and failed — Mr. Kadirgamar said that there was hope that peace could be achieved.

The Third point made in the journal is that there was clear evidence of collaboration between Colombo and New Delhi on the LTTE. They

cited an instance where a registrar of marriages and deaths from the Batticaloa District being taken in by the CID and then sent to India. The paper alleged that this man had been taken in to help in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination.

During Mr. Kadirgamar's visit to India he was asked by Indian journalists and academics on his opinion in the event of the peace process being successful and the chief Minister of

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the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Besides the LTTE is indirectly becoming a major factor in Indian politics right now.

With the disastrous defeats of the Indian Congress in recent provincial elections, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao is tottering. The Rajiv Gandhi faction with Sonia Gandhi behind the scenes is highly critical of the Congress Government for soft

With the Rajiv Gandhi assassination becoming a major factor in Indian politics there could be pressure being brought on to bring the LTTE leaders wanted for the killing before Indian courts. Thus it could well be that the Gandhi assassination probe will not only have a bearing on Indo-Lanka relations but the negotiations between the LTTE and the Sri Lanka Government.

atunga is expected to be back by January 4 and make the policy statement everyone has been clamouring for when Parliament is ceremonially opened for its next session on January 6.

Meanwhile Mr. Anura Bandaranaike was nursing his fractured ankle at his Rosmead Place residence after returning from hospital. Among those who visited Anura sources said were his mother, Speaker K. B. Ratnayake, Sumadeha Jayasena and Hema Ratnayake from government ranks while those from the opposition were its leader Ranil Wickremasinghe, Pradeep Hapangama, Tilak Karunaratne.

Despite his fractured ankle Mr. Bandaranaike was at the

biography of his uncle who was also his closest political buddy, Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike. SLPers Old Guard and New Guard were there in full strength but more noticeable was the turn out of the old stagers. One newspaper personality who was there noted that it was like a get-together of a SLP drop-out club.

The DUNF (Gamin Faction) now led by Premaratne Gunasekera wants to break away from the UNP and its membership was summoned for a special meeting last week, sources said. The DUNF (Lalith Faction) had requested its membership to keep away from that meeting.

Meanwhile it will be wedding bells this month for Opposition leader Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe when he signs on the dotted line with university don Maithri Wickremasinghe. But the hardworking politician last week was working out the modalities for the proposed seminars on the executive presidency which President UNP J.R.J. Jayewardene will address.

Controversial politician and doyen of the Sinhala screen, Gamin Fonseka who walked out of the UNP stage to the PA stage and lost disastrously is now reported to be considering an offer made by the government; to be Governor Fonseka of the North-East province.

Island politics

by Suminda

Sri Lanka's Northern Province being a wanted fugitive in India. Mr. Kadirgamar dismissed the questions as being hypothetical but there appears to be much rancour in the average Indian of Sri Lanka talking to the LTTE despite Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's categorical assurance to Mr. Kadirgamar that India welcomed the peace process.

Answering questions, Mr. Kadirgamar also said that India had not asked for the extradition of Prabakaran.

The LTTE it is apparent is deeply suspicious of Indian motives. Prabakaran, his intelligence chief Pottu Amman and some other LTTEer's are wanted by the Indian authorities for

pedalling on the assassination probe. Last week a Union Government minister, Minister of Human Resources Mr. Arjun Singh rocked the sinking Congress boat further with his resignation. One chief reason cited for his resignation was the government's attitude towards the probe of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination. He had in his letter of resignation said that the formal proposal had come to the Cabinet to wind up the Jain Commission which was set up to investigate to unravel the conspiracy after the assassination. The cabinet had not approved of it but no proposal could come before the cabinet without the approval of the Prime Minister, he had said.

Holiday Time

It was holiday time last week for many government personalities. President Chandrika Kumaratunga took a break from her hectic routine and went to the Maldives with her two children. Rumour had it that she may fly out elsewhere from the Maldives but government sources strongly denied any such moves. Meanwhile Telecommunications Minister Mangala Samaraweera went to London on a private visit while Mr. Thondaman crossed the Palk Strait for the Nth time and was in Madras. Minister of Transport, Environment and Women's Affairs Mrs. Srimani Athulathmudali went to Singapore on a private visit while Minister of Housing and Construction Mr. Nimal de Silva went on a presidential assignment to Malaysia.

President Kumar-