

PREPARING FOR PEACE AND WAR

President Chandrika Kumaratunga received a certificate of commendation from the European Union last week about her peace initiatives although the Europeans were rather silent about the economy. Sri Lankan observers abroad too are watching the progress of the peace initiative but so far there has been no positive sign apart from letters being exchanged between the LTTE and the Government through the International Red Cross.

The LTTE leader Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran, speaking on the Great Heroes Day (November 27) — the day after his birthday — was equivocal about peace negotiations. The Sinhalese government was now willing to negotiate with the LTTE because of the 40 year struggle launched by the Tamils and for what has been achieved, he said. The government, he believed, was still being dictated by the armed forces. He was prepared to consider a package for autonomy the LTTE leader said but in ending his speech he called upon all to take the Oath of the Tamil Tigers: The Thirst of the Tigers is the homeland for Tamil Eelam.

Some political analysts also saw a silver lining on this birthday of Mr. Prabhakaran because there was no mass

murder of Sinhalese as has been the usual practice. Security forces were on the alert days before in Colombo and the provinces days before and after the birthday of the LTTE leader.

Meanwhile political observers were watching the LTTE reaction to Colombo's dealings with New Delhi. Foreign Minister Mr. Lakshman Kadirgama was scheduled to leave for Bangladesh and India this week. Some government sources said that LTTE had indicated that they would have no objections to dealing with India. Others however doubted this very much taking into consideration the antipathy of the Tigers towards New Delhi.

Meanwhile the indications are that the armed forces are not taking any chances with the LTTE. Sources say that the armed forces strongly believe that the LTTE is going ahead with its re-armament plans and as evidence cite reports of an arms ship which was reported to be coming in from a CIS country across the Mediterranean. However apart from unconfirmed reports, there is no hard proof of such a ship being sighted.

Tenders

The army in the meanwhile is breaking up the massive tender for arms (72 million

(US) dollars) cancelled by the UNP government and calling for fresh tenders in parts.

Tender affairs

There is however much heartburn among arms dealers about the conditionalities attached to the two tenders called so far. They point out that one tender calls for the supply of a specific kind of plane — AN 32B Antonovs. There are other makes which could perform the same functions but the tenderer who has previously won the tender at a specific advantage. The time limit is just two weeks to put the package together which includes even specified pliers and screw drivers, wrenches etc having Russian number parts rules out any who had not tendered previously they point out. Besides the bid bond to be put up is Dollars (US) 75,000. This narrows down the successful Sri Lankan bidders to just one or two they say. The delivery period has been specified for 30 days and if this is not kept the 75,000 dollars bid bond could be forfeited. The credit line too is tailored for Russian-Singapore financing — 25 pc down and the balance to be paid in five years commencing 1996.

Arms dealers were also pointing out to the second tender for 32 armoured personnel carriers (APCs). Here too the period of time for submitting the tenders has been

Island politics

by Suminda

limited to 16 days and the time is too short to arrange spare packages called for. Although no particular type of APC had been specified the specifications called for have been exactly the same as those for the BMP 2 variety which was in the 72 million dollar deal which had been cancelled. The spares too called for are exactly those for the BMP 2. The going price of each APC is less than USD 60,000 with a factory guarantee while some of the APCs which had been already purchased had cost USD 150,000.

Sources said that there were other makes such as the Bulgarian OT 62 which is the equivalent of the BMP 2 with a factory guarantee going at USD 60,000.

It is rather strange that specifications, the time limits and financial restrictions will be advantageous to one particular tenderer, sources in the armaments trade said.

What will happen to Mr. Thondaman and his fellow CWC MPs who voted with the government on the Vote on Account last week? As we reported last week, the

UNP leadership is taking up this issue quite seriously, the CWC having contested under the UNP party symbol. The issue was to have been taken up at the party convention and a committee has been appointed to decide on the necessary course of action. Sources however said that the committee decision would be known only after the party convention that is scheduled for this month.

Meanwhile the UNP has also appointed another committee to decide on the course of action for violation of party discipline by some other members such as Messrs A. J. Ranasinghe and the Presidential Candidate Mr. Hudson Samarasinghe.

The UNP leadership has also squashed attempts by some young members to form a ginger group. Those who attempted to form this group were Dr. Rajitha Senaratne, Mr. Mervyn de Silva and

Dr. Jayalath Jayawardene.

Sources said that Dr. Senaratne had told party leader Mr. Ranil Wickremesingha that the party executive committee comprised of senior members and that junior members had little opportunity to voice their opinion. It was in such circumstances that the group had been formed. Mr. Wickremesingha is reported to have referred Dr. Senaratne to party President Mr. A. C. S. Hameed. Mr. Hameed had told him that if there were any views to be forwarded by junior members he could be informed and he would convey such opinion to the executive committee.

Sources also said that the party had handed over the task of presenting its views on proposed changes in the constitution to the Select Committee

to Mr. Wickremesingha. The party has also given authority to Mr. Wickremesingha to fill up the vacancies in parliament following the death of UNP MPs. Earlier Mrs. Srimala Disanayake and Mrs. Hema Premadasa had been tipped to be MPs but now Dr. Wimal Wickremesinghe and Mr. Paul Perera were staking their claims, sources said. Brisk canvassing is now on within the UNP for these posts.

Mums the word

President Chandrika Kumaratunga has warned her Cabinet colleagues against leaking out information of what happens in Government Parliamentary Group and the Cabinet to the press. This matter had been raised by the Minister of Telecommunications Mr. Mangala Samaraweera who had com-

plained bitterly that there had been a newspaper report about him making an anti American speech at a Government Parliamentary Group meeting.

President Kumaratunga had said that she was aware of those who were leaking information to the press and she would not hesitate to throw their names out of the government. Last Wednesday Cabinet meeting by calling upon which commenced at 10 a.m. went on till 1.15 p.m. with the

President's Cabinet papers being extended its "The ministers lasey grasped it with week also discussed the labour unrest notwithstanding a solution to on and the spiralling inflation. The opinion was expressed that the rise in prices was the result of hoarding by traders and that institutions should take an umbrella porting essential items.

to their immediate problems and create an atmosphere for peace and normalcy in the homeland of the Tamils," Prabhakaran said. Prabhakaran commenced his broadcast on a pious note. He said: "We celebrate this day as the holy day on which we worship in the temples of our heart our dear fighters who gave up their lives, sacrificed their lives for the noble ideal that our people should achieve freedom and live in freedom with dignity and honour and the right of self government.

Our country has paid an incalculable price for the sake of liberation. This land has turned into a battlefield and a river of blood has flowed on this soil. Our warriors are dying even today for the sake of liberation. All those thousands upon thousands of tombstones on this soil stand demanding liberation as their goal. The figures of the great warriors whom we encounter on roads, street corners, and walls

ERERA — JUSTIN BENNET (M.J.B.) Former Customs Officer. Dearly beloved husband of Colilla, ever loving father of Marie (Canada), Nihal (USA), Lal Jayana and Jude, father-in-law of Janani Senaviratne (Canada), Janaki Marian, daughter of Ravindra Sando (Canada), Shyara newspaper report about him making an anti American speech at a Government Parliamentary Group meeting. Cortège leaving residence 167/6, Modera at a Government Parliamentary Group meeting. Madampitiya Cemetery.

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Films

LIBERTY
6th & Final Month!
10.30, 3.15, 6.30

ARENA —
Katugastota
3rd Month
10.45, 3.00 & 6.00

JURASSIC PARK

My Dear
We are a
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group which star
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Our goal is to
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