

**THE SUNDAY
TIMES**

PLUS

'94 in perspective

By Wasu Jayasinghe and Raushen Akbar

At the beginning of 1994 with D. B. Wijetunge doing bloody well very few analysts or observers would have predicted the scenario we have in Sri Lanka today as the nation enters a new year. Indeed 1994 was a year of dramatic and historic change.

From 1978 the SLFP has failed to win any national election but in 1994 the wheel turned full circle. An untried and inexperienced Chandrika Kumaratunga, rising to satellite heights, unreachd even by her father or mother, spearheaded the SLFP led People's Alliance to victory first in the Southern Province, and later in the August general elections. The charismatic Ms. Kumaratunga's crowning glory was a historic landslide victory in the November 09 Presidential election where she got a 62.4 percent majority - unparalleled in democratic elections anywhere in recent times. Despite indecisiveness and the apparent lack of direction and responsibility Chandrika Kumaratunga is undoubtedly Sri Lanka's

personality of the year.

By the end of 1994 she had taken her second holiday overseas in five months - though this time her departure was leaked to the press. She is still facing a major upheaval on the labour front, economic instability mainly because there has been no comprehensive policy statement, a delay or deadlock in her initiative to find a political solution to the North East conflict.

While Chandrika Kumaratunga and the SLFP rose to their greatest heights, the UNP suffered its worst defeat, being reduced to just a seat at Bintanne in the Presidential elections. First D. B. Wijetunge blundered badly by calling for a snap Parliamentary election on August 16. Narrowly defeated there the UNP was taken over by Gamini Disanayake who promised a dynamic new leadership and vision but the Thotalanga bomb blast in which Mr. Disanayake and several UNP top rankers were killed blasted all hopes of revival.



The event of the year: Chandrika being sworn in as the Prime Minister after the August general elections

January

1 - The high drama in the Southern Provincial Council that began with the alleged disappearance of PEP member Wimal Francisu ends as Provincial Governor L.M. Jayaratne dissolves the Council.

2 - At a crucial meeting of Ceylon Workers Congress National Council at Hatton, its General Secretary, M.S. Sellasamy is suspended. CWC President S. Thondaman takes office as the General Secretary as well.

7 - An explosion at Fireworks Palace in Pettah.

15 - The United States calls for a complete investigation into the death of over 20 people whose bodies were discovered at Sooriyakande mass graves in Ratnapura.

17 - Colombo District Judge Mahanama Tillakeratne holds that Prof. Priyani Soysa, Consultant Paediatrician was professionally negligent as a medical practitioner in the first ever law suit of its kind in the country. Senior State Counsel Rienzie Arsecularatne, the plaintiff claimed Rs. 5 million as damages, for the death of his four year old daughter.

26 - DUNF leader Gamini Disanayake joins the UNP.

February

4 - Sri Lanka celebrates its 46th Independence Day, at Independence Square.

7 - Badrapala Wickrematunge, a former ambassador and brother of Mrs. Hema Premadasa is found murdered at his residence in Bambalapitiya.

13 - The LTTE sends peace proposals to President D.B. Wijetunge through Sarvodaya leader A.T. Aniyaratne.

20 - Sri Lanka's relations with World Bank hit a low point leading to an indefinite postponement of aid group meeting on June 8th. The controversial Airbus deal and loosening of budgetary and fiscal restraints in the run up to the year's elections are cited as possible reasons.

21 - Velupillai Prabhakaran temporarily suspends the death sentence of his former deputy Mahattaya due to widespread international and national opposition against the execution order. The principal charge against Mahattaya was that he had supplied information to RAW.



...and the sad event of the year: Gamini Disanayake the Opposition Leader was assassinated by a suicide bomber at an election rally in Colombo.

March

6 - For the first time after being elected President in 1978, J.R. Jayewardene gives evidence on behalf of ex-Mayor Ratnasiri Rajapakse at the one-member inquiry commission chaired by Supreme Court Judge O.S.M. Seneviratne.

24 - Mrs. Kumaratunga and the PA emerge victorious in elections in the Southern Province dealing the government its biggest electoral setback since 1977.

31 - Amarasiri Dodangoda is sworn in as the Chief Minister of the Southern Provincial Council.

April

8 - In an alleged warning to the government the LTTE sets off a series of bomb blasts at some of Colombo's leading hotels. The travel trade however expressed confidence that tourist inflow would not be affected by this.

17 - Ships carrying deadly chemicals for the manufacture of nerve gas are detained at Colombo Port on an order from the Defence Ministry. Questions are raised whether Colombo was used as a base to send such chemicals to Israel for military purposes.

22 - Sri Lanka is unanimously elected to the UN Commission on Human Rights gathering the highest number of votes.

May

20 - Former DUNF Leader Gamini Disanayake and one-time UNP rebel returns to the government ranks as a National List MP on the resignation of UNP National List MP M.S. Amit.

11 - A.D. Upali Ranjith alias Soththi Upali is arrested at Katugasthota in connection with the May 3rd shooting of Chinthaka Ranasinghe, a suspect at Negombo Magistrates Court.

Cont. on pg 18