

Four political widows try for Sri Lankan parliament. (1994, August 28). *Lanka news*.

## FOUR POLITICAL WIDOWS TRY FOR SRI LANKAN PARLIAMENT

**F**our women widowed by political violence in Sri Lanka, including a former prime minister, have registered for political battle this month, when an anxious nation goes to the polls.

The four were among hundreds of election candidates registered for the August 16 elections when nominations closed.

They all represent opposition political parties and have one other thing in common: their husbands met with violent deaths in a country where political opponents are wiped out by the bullet nearly as often as the ballot.

Former prime minister and opposition leader Sirima Bandaranaike, 78, whose husband was gunned down while prime minister in 1959, hopes to enter Sri Lanka's 10th parliament without a personal contest. She is nominated on the

People's Alliance (PA) national list of candidates, which means she will be automatically given a seat

stunning win in a southern regional poll last May. Srimani Athulathmudali had no intention of entering



*Chandrika Kumaranatunga,*

if her party wins enough votes. She is also PA candidate for the presidential election due next November.

Her daughter, Chandrika Kumaranatunga, 49, whose actor-politician husband was assassinated in 1988 by suspected left-wing rebels, is the PA's main hope. She led the PA to a



*Srimani Athulathmudali*

politics when her husband was shot dead in April last year, but joined the fray after seeing her husband's party, the Democratic United National Front, torn apart by in-fighting.

The front was founded in 1991 by former ruling party ministers Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake who

were disenchanted with former president Ranasinghe Premadasa, himself assassinated last year.

"Lalith has certain policies and dreams for the country and I will try to carry them on," Srimani, who is siding with the PA, told reporters.

The fourth widow, Sarojini Yogeswaran; is representing the minority Tamil community in

Colombo. Her husband, leader of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front, was killed in 1989 by Tamil rebels fighting for a separate state in the north and east. "My husband died for the Tamil people and my heart breaks to think he may have died in vain. That is why I

am continuing his work to fight for the rights of the Tamils," Yogeswaran said. Tamil rebels have vowed to disrupt polls in northern and eastern areas. Premadasa's widow, Hema, had wanted to contest the elections on the ruling United National Party ticket. But the party hierarchy decided to leave her out.