

Humiliating challenge to the government. (1993, July 29). *The Island*.

Humiliating challenge to the government

President Wijetunge was prevented last week from attending the Presidential Mobile Service at Batticaloa. Earlier, last month, he had to abandon his visit to Anuradhapura, where he was scheduled to inaugurate the 2300th anniversary celebrations of the advent of Arahata Mahinda to Sri Lanka.

On both occasions, the visits had to be cancelled at the eleventh hour owing to threats by the LTTE. This clearly shows that the security situation in the country is worsening itself rapidly.

Article 5 of the Constitution of Sri Lanka has stipulated that the territory of Sri Lanka shall consist of 24 administrative districts. They are Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Galle, Matara, Hambantota, Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Batticaloa, Ampara, Trincomalee, Kurunegala, Puttalam, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Badulla, Monaragala, Ratnapura and Kegalla.

The writ of the Government of President Wijetunge does not run effectively in 7 of these districts, namely Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee. In the Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Vavuniya districts there is a semblance of governmental authority within the town limits of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Vavuniya during the day.

The normal civilian life in other parts of the seven districts is either severely restricted or non-existent. In some, travel between two points is safe or permitted only during 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the security forces of the Government are patrolling the highways.

Jaffna, for all practical purposes, is a separate entity, where the LTTE is in complete control of both military and civilian affairs including the collection of tax. Government officials on duty

persons, identity cards issued by the LTTE.

These officials have to take instructions from the LTTE. Even the slightest suspicion of unfriendliness by these officials towards the LTTE is enough to bring them their death.

International opinion

Recently, an officer who had to travel to her departmental headquarters in Colombo to present herself before an interview board related the harrowing story of how she had to pay as much as Rs. 2000 to the LTTE, besides going through a tedious procedure in order to obtain clearance for the trip. Yet, the freedom of movement and of choosing one's residence within the country is a fundamental right guaranteed by Article 14 (h) of the Constitution.

It will be interesting to know what the outcome is going to be if she goes before the Supreme Court and prays for redress for the violation of her fundamental rights! Moreover, tens of thousands of Sinhala and Muslim citizens have had to leave their homes and even their belongings in the Jaffna peninsula at the behest of the LTTE, despite this Constitutional guarantee. They have not the slightest hope of ever returning to Jaffna.

At an international seminar held recently in New Zealand, an American academic presented the LTTE's case for a separate state. He pointed out that the LTTE had been in de facto control of the territory which they claim as their 'homeland' continuously for fifteen years with only occasional resistance from the Colombo Government.

He cited several Articles of the Sri Lankan Constitution in furtherance of his argument. Referring to Article 5, he discussed at length how the Sri Lankan Government had gradually lost

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BY SENA

territory described in paragraphs 2 and 3 above. Although the Article 6 stipulated the Lion Flag as the country's National Flag, it is the Eelam flag with the Tiger emblem that flies over nearly a third of the territory.

In defiance of Articles 7 and 8 relating to the National Anthem and the National Day respectively, the LTTE has adopted its own National Anthem and celebrate Prabhakaran's birthday as the National Day of Eelam.

He went on to point out that since the LTTE has violated these entrenched clauses of the Constitution with complete impunity for such a long period of time, it could be argued that the Colombo Government had abandoned its sovereignty over the 'homeland' of the Tigers and added that the Colombo Government was reluctant to concede this fact because it feared that the southern parts of the country might react violently.

Against this background, he asserted, the LTTE had a strong case to urge the international community to extend diplomatic recognition to the state of Eelam.

Government Helpless

Obviously, there are regular exchanges of visits between the LTTE high-ups and their foreign collaborators. The LTTE also get their stocks of arms and ammunition replenished regularly. The Government that succeeded the Premadasa regime appears to be totally indifferent to these illegal and provocative transactions. However, any other sovereign government would have treated them as a humiliat-

thority.

Apparently the Wijetunga Government has no option but to look on helplessly!

Meanwhile the exodus of people in large numbers from the Tiger country to Colombo and its suburbs, in order to escape LTTE atrocities, is likely to create an acute shortage of housing and other related amenities and, thus pose a severe threat to its already unsatisfactory environment.

Anura's campaign fizzling out

The crisis in the SLFP took a turn for the worse with Mrs. Bandaranaike virtually slamming the door on conciliatory moves by two senior members of the Party. According to informed sources, she saw no new grounds to vary her stand on Anura.

Further, she is deeply hurt by the unruly behaviour and offensive slogan-shouting by the Anura loyalists in front of her house; she was more or less under house arrest for several hours. In response to a question by the press, Mrs. Bandaranaike has said that she was not prepared to react to the various statements that Anura had made earlier in the week.

Anura Bandaranaike is now convinced perhaps that he may not get all that support that he expected from his 'loyalists' among the SLFP Members of Parliament. The poor attendance at his BMICH meeting was a clear indication that they were not prepared to go along with him in the present context, particularly when he was fighting a losing battle. After all a weakened

career.

The turn out at the much publicized 'satyagraha' at the Bandaranaike Samadhi in Horagolle was not impressive considering the venue and the context in which it took place.

On top of all that the UNP has decided to withhold its support to Dr. Neville Fernando's motion to amend the Constitution, now before the House. It would have come as a rude shock to the Anura faction, because their whole strategy depended on the outcome of the motion, which if passed, would permit MPs to cross over from one party to another without losing their seats in Parliament.

Current indications are that the amendment may not pass through the house. In the circumstance the prospect of their breaking away from the SLFP and then joining the UNP in a coalition government is very bleak indeed.

Election Law Reforms

In spite of the keen interest generated before and during the Provincial Council elections about the urgent need to reform election law, not much headway has since been made in that direction. Although a Select Committee of Parliament was appointed some weeks ago for the purpose, there is no positive indication of actual deliberation by the Committee yet.

It might be recalled that the Election Commission itself had pointed out glaring defects in the existing law. There was unanimity on both sides