



Click to enable Adobe Flash Player

Monday, 20 April 2009

NEWS BAR >>

Political: No major polls violence complaints ...

Business: Recovery st

- HOME
- DAILYNEWS ONLINE
- News
- Editorial
- Business
- Features
- Political
- Security
- Sport
- World
- Letters
- Obituaries

| SHARE MARKET | EXCHANGE RATE | TRADING | PICTURE GALLERY | ARCHIVES | Google

## An opportunity for a new beginning

Ravi Perera

All indications are that Sri Lanka's protracted war against the LTTE, the once formidable terrorist outfit, would soon come to an end. Hemmed in by powerful army units in a fast shrinking area north of Mullaitivu, the LTTE's remaining cadre are either preparing for a hopeless last-stand or hurriedly deserting its depleted ranks.

Its besieged leaders who stalked and killed so many, will sooner or later find themselves in the cross hairs of an army sharp shooter. Whichever way they go the writings on the wall for the shadowy organization, the end is nigh.



North is treading towards a new era. Picture by Rukmal Gamage

It is often forgotten, particularly by the so-called foreign analyst, that Sri Lanka is a democracy. We have regular elections to elect our chief executive, the legislature and provincial/municipal authorities. There is a clear division of power between the Executive, Legislature, and the Judiciary.

In addition, in the preceding decades administrative powers have been further devolved on

a regional basis by various constitutional methods. We have a well educated population and a vibrant media.

Even in the midst of a clash of arms we see segments of the mass media highlighting various allegations of impropriety against sections of the defence establishment. Not so long ago a certain newspaper downplayed the LTTE battlefield casualty figures provided by the defence establishment suggesting that the LTTE form of terrorism was virtually unbeatable.

In the midst of a huge national war effort such brazen casuistry is unthinkable even in the self proclaimed democracies of the West. In addition, in social development as measured by accepted indicators, in comparison to many other third world countries, Sri Lanka scores very well.

These are vital considerations when assessing the LTTE which managed to hold sway over a considerable area of land in the North and East of this country for about two decades.

### Darkest chapter

It is obvious that there is nothing even remotely democratic about the LTTE. Where its writ ran a truly dark reign of sheer arbitrariness prevailed with intolerance, extortion and murder, the preferred methods of governance. The word of Prabhakaran, LTTE's sole leader, was the only law that mattered.

Those victimized by it mostly were the Tamils in whose name the LTTE supposedly acted. It is over such an organization that the Government Forces are gradually prevailing now.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

OTHER LINKS

- Marriage Proposals
- Classifieds
- GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

| News | Editorial | Business | Features | Political | Security | Sport | World | Letters | Obituaries |

Produced and Published by the Sri Lanka Newspapers Union Ltd. 10, Colpetty Road, Colombo 05, Sri Lanka. Tel: 011 253 1234. Fax: 011 253 1235. Email: [info@slnu.lk](mailto:info@slnu.lk)

But this is no time for triumphalism. Any sober-minded person will agree that the LTTE's period of ascendancy in the national arena has been the darkest chapter of our post independence history.

The depressing impact of the bloody organization was such that at various times the then Governments were compelled to consider devolution of powers which tantamount to a near separate State to these wielders of terror.

Some denigrators declared that we were a failed State, arguing that its division would somehow correct the situation. Certain countries, particularly those from the West, generally considered friends of Sri Lanka, became strange advocates for the LTTE, displaying a deep-seated inability to assess other races by their own professed yardsticks.

The simple truth is that in Sri Lanka, a democratic Government is fighting an oppressive organization threatening its existence. A legitimate State is grappling with a force which has not only killed thousands in this country but also citizens of other countries, particularly in India.

While indulging in various international crimes such as drug pushing, human/arms smuggling, piracy and other serious crimes the LTTE and its supporters have mastered the art of misusing and abusing every law and loop-hole in democratic societies to their advantage.

If the West were to spend a little time examining the veracity of various visa applications of LTTE supporters to their countries with the supporting documents handed over, they will soon realize the true nature of the persons whose cause they are espousing now. Recently, LTTE supporters in some Western countries went on a rampage vandalizing Sri Lankan consular offices and properties of Sri Lankan immigrants.

#### **Moot point**

One can be sure that these marauding criminals have fully exploited the privileges, opportunities and comforts that the host country has generously offered them. They are in all probability even citizens of these countries now. It is a moot point for the unfortunate countries which have opened their doors to such persons to consider whether these new citizens from an alien culture are an asset or a perennial embarrassment to them.

While we may forgive these misguided foreign supporters of a rabid terrorist organization for their habitual prejudiced reaction to events in non-white societies, there is no excuse for us as a nation if we fail to learn the lessons from the harrowing experiences of the previous decades.

A country which held great promise at the time of Independence, sixty years ago has become a troubled mediocre country. The Government is not responsible for the fateful trends and events which brought about the existing situation.

It inherited a country which has witnessed since Independence, two destructive insurrections in the South, several race riots and finally a secessionist movement led by a fearsome terrorist group. Poor economic achievements, wide spread corruption, a self absorbed run of the mill private sector and a demoralized public service add to the woeful conditions that prevail. None of these problems are of recent origin.

To say that the various races and faiths in this island must learn to strengthen the common bonds that bind them rather than emphasize the differences that divide may sound like a tired platitude. But the horrible events of the recent past show the folly of the latter path. From this terrible war must emerge a united nation. Every community calling this country home should realize the consequences of politics of exclusion.

The Tamil people have lived in this island for centuries. By their reputed industry and commitment to learning they have contributed much to build this country. It

was most unfortunate that from about the 1970s a good number of Tamils began to support extremist groups hell-bent on violent solutions to problems they perceived as impositions of the centre.

Inevitably it led to coarse unlettered men like Prabhakaran.

In politics, as history has shown repeatedly, to acquiesce with dark forces is as bad as participation in their crimes. Tamil people have paid a huge price in lives, economy, culture and even in spirit for that terrible error of judgment.

It is said the nation that returns is different to the one that went to war. In facing the harrowing challenge that was posed by the LTTE this nation also has strengthened and matured. Nowhere is this clearer than in the defence forces which have come many miles from the untrained and untested force that the LTTE challenged early in their campaign. At that time there was an air of confusion in the manner in which it faced the unfamiliar tactics of the LTTE.

Fighting a resourceful enemy who had no compunction is breaking every rule in the book, with obsolescent weapons and methods, they suffered several setbacks at the hands of the terrorists. Adding to the woes of the defence forces, many in Colombo thought of the war only as a way of making easy money from commissions and kickbacks liberally offered by manufacturers of arms, with tragic results for the soldiers at the front. In recent times we have seen a much more disciplined and able fighting force fully supported by a purposeful administration.

For sure, all consequential developments of the war have not been wholesome. Our defence budget is extremely high, a huge burden to carry, particularly for a poor country. In responding to the various challenges posed by the LTTE this nation has become extremely security conscious with security guards at almost every doorstep.

Inevitably those manning our security are young and able-bodied. With the end of the LTTE we will hopefully see all these young hands turning to economic activity which will contribute towards increased national production and better services.

This New Year our Defence Forces have given this nation a chance at a new beginning, an invaluable gift.

 [EMAIL](#) |  [PRINTABLE VIEW](#) |  [FEEDBACK](#)