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Gen. Fonseka permitted to avoid 'interview', leave US

by Shamindra Ferdinando and Saman Indrajith

Following high level talks between the governments of Sri Lanka and the US over a move by the US Department of Homeland Security to 'interview' Chief of Defence Staff General Sarath Fonseka, the US dropped its controversial plan. The war veteran, who had commanded the army during Sri Lanka's successful war against the LTTE, was airborne at the time this edition went to press.

Government sources told *The Island* that on a presidential directive, the Foreign Ministry vehemently protested against the move, emphasising that the General could not be interviewed, interrogated or even asked to provide a voluntary statement.

Sources said that the government had also discussed with the State Department modalities of arranging for the General to leave the US before the scheduled 'interview' sought by authorities.

Responding to *The Island* queries, sources said that the State Department had been informed of the General's travel from Oklahoma, where he was staying with his family, to Washington. Sources said that Sri Lanka's Washington mission had facilitated the General's departure. He is expected back in Colombo today.

Earlier in the day, Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama said that the government's timely intervention had prevented an attempt by the US Homeland Security Department to question the General and facilitate his return home.

He was responding to a question raised by JVP Parliamentary Group Leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

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Two Lankans beheaded

Two Sri Lankans, including a woman, and an Indian were beheaded in Jeddah on Wednesday for theft and murder, the Saudi interior ministry said.

Mohammed Barmil from India and Sri Lankan Bandar Nikar entered the home of Mariam Hussein, a Saudi woman, suffocated her and stole money and jewellery, according to agency reports.

They had entered with the help of Hussein's Sri Lankan maid, Halima Abdelkader, the ministry said.

The beheadings took to 59 the number of executions in Saudi Arabia this year. Last year, Saudi Arabia put 102 people to death.

Lanka moves in on India's Andaman Island

by Saman Indrajith

India's Andaman Islands will come within the area which Sri Lanka is hoping to claim in keeping with its sea bed rights from the UN Commission on the limits

of the continental shelf. Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama yesterday told parliament that Sri Lanka's claim would be discussed with India before making final submissions to



the UN Commission. He was responding to a query raised by UNP MP Ravi Karunanayake.

He said that Sri Lanka had a right to claim approximately around 25 times

the size of the country's land mass (1,725,800 square kilometres of the sea bed).

But the precise outer limit would be determined on the basis of technical and scientific data

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LTTE arms moved overland from China to NK for almost a decade

by Shamindra Ferdinando

Chinese arms consignments for the LTTE had been moved overland to North Korea across the China-North Korea border before being transferred to the terrorist group's 'floating' warehouses on the high seas close to Indonesia, for about a decade, *The Island* learns.

The LTTE had obtained its first Chinese arms consignment way back in 1994/1995 during the then People's Alliance (PA) administration. On-going inquiries, well informed sources said, revealed that the China-North Korea overland transport of arms for the LTTE had operated for almost a decade before President Mahinda Rajapaksa's government intervened about two years ago.

Sources said that Sri Lanka's much delayed intervention came as the LTTE moved to collect weapons directly from China once Sri Lanka received information regarding its clandestine overland route.

Sources said that the LTTE had deployed several small vessels to move arms from North Korea to 'floating' warehouses. The Navy in four separate operations destroyed eight 'floating' warehouses on the high seas.



Anti-aircraft gun of Chinese origin captured by SLA

three of them in one operation.

An authoritative official source told *The Island* that there was no doubt that the vessel seized by the Canadians in their waters carrying 76 Sri Lankan Tamils had been one of the vessels which operated between North Korea and 'floating' arsenals.

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The President in Vanni



President Mahinda Rajapaksa being garlanded by a child when he visited Thunukkai, west of the A9 yesterday morning. The president visited both east and west of the A9 to meet officers and men and thanked them for ending LTTE terrorism.

Now, 'commission' on empty mortar shells

Kilo of brass to go for Rs. 150, half the market price - JVP

by Saman Indrajith

The Defence Ministry had planned to sell 41,000 tonnes of spent mortar shells as scrap brass to Singapore for Rs. 150 a kilo despite the normal market price being as high as Rs. 350 a kilo, Parliament was told yesterday.

JVP Kurunegala District MP Bimal Ratnayake said that there appeared to be a huge racket behind the deal.

"Traders who visit our houses to collect scrap metal pay at least



Bimal

Rs. 250 for one kilo of brass. But in this case, somebody must be making a massive commission. It seems at least Rs. 150 had been taken from the sale of one kilo of spent mortar shells by way of commission," Ratnayake said.

MP Ratnayake tabled a document which had details of the proposed deal.

He invited government ministers to get a copy of a document tabled from the Hansard Department and to read it so that they could understand how some politicians were making money.

SL HC told to look into asylum seekers problem

The Sri Lanka High Commissioner in Australia has been instructed to take all necessary steps to address the issue of illegal Sri Lankan asylum seekers detained in Australia, Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama

told Parliament yesterday.

The Minister said Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had telephoned President Mahinda Rajapaksa over this issue and steps were being taken to address the issue. (SI)

Party in new alliance will join Govt soon

by Shamindra Ferdinando

Media Minister Lakshman Yapa Abeywardena yesterday said that one of the main constituent parties of the recently formed United National Alliance (UNA) would soon switch its allegiance to President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Addressing the press at the Information Department, Minister Abeywardena said that this would take place before the next election.



Yapa

Although parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place by April next year, the government would explore other options, he said. The possibility of a presidential election preceding parliamentary polls or both big elections being held on the same day could not be ruled out, the Minister said.

Led by the UNP, the UNA comprises several political parties, including the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and the Democratic People's Front, led by Rauff Hakeem and Mano Ganeshan, respectively.

Emphasising that the UNA posed no threat and therefore caused no anxiety to the ruling coalition, Minister Abeywardena said that the so-called alliance was nothing but a group of saboteurs bent on disrupting normalcy ahead of the coming elections and had even failed to attract a single new ally.

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Consumers pay Rs 426 as tax on 12.5 Kg LP gas

by Saman Indrajith

By way of special tax, the government receives Rs. 426/56 from each 12.5kg domestic LP gas cylinder, Parliament was told yesterday.

An answer, tabled by the Finance Minister to a query raised by JVP MP Pemasiri Manage, revealed that as at September 30, 2009, the consumers had been levied an excise duty of Rs. 382.50, social responsibility by of Rs. 5.74, and a Port and Airport Development levy of Rs. 38/32, totalling a sum of Rs. 426/56.

The minister said that the government had received Rs. 126 million in 2008 by way of taxes imposed on 12.5 kg gas cylinders.

JVP wants Basil, Gota to give up US citizenship

by Saman Indrajith

The JVP yesterday warned Presidential Advisor MP Basil Rajapaksa and Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa that they would not be able to avoid being prosecuted by the United States unless they gave up US citizenship.

JVP Kurunegala MP Bimal Ratnayake yesterday told Parliament that the United States

could not prosecute any Sri Lankan official or Statesman or any citizen. He said that the Rajapaksa brothers would be vulnerable to US action as long as they held on to their US citizenship.

"There is no point in President Mahinda Rajapaksa claiming that he was being targeted by the US



Basil



Gota

for liberating the country while his brothers remained US citizens," MP Ratnayake said, participating in an adjournment debate which sought to move a resolution against the US move to frame Sri Lankan

"The President goes all over the country telling public that US is trying to nab him for liberating this country from the clutches of terrorism. If his own brother is under threat from the US, we ask why Basil and Gotabhaya Rajapaksa remain US citizens. They should give up the US citizenship so that they would be safe from the threat of being prosecuted," he said.

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