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President promptly accepts Fonseka's resignation

by Shamindra Ferdinando and Norman Paliawadana

President Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday accepted Chief of Defence Staff General Sarath Fonseka's resignation letter. Accordingly, Gen. Fonseka will cease to be CDS with effect from Dec. 01, 2009.

Gen. Fonseka informed the President of his desire to resign at a one-to-one meeting on Wednesday, where they were expected to iron out their differences. Cordial as the meeting was, President Rajapaksa said he had no objections to Gen. Fonseka's resignation or his decision to enter politics. "I have instructed my Secretary to accept your resignation letter immediately, should you tender it," the President told Gen. Fonseka.

After the meeting while Gen. Fonseka was walking

towards the door, according to highly placed sources, a smiling President Rajapaksa said, "Sarath, you can always come back to me after your defeat in politics."

Sources said Gen. Fonseka had smiled and proceeded.

Gen. Fonseka's resignation came hot on the heels of the UNP-led Opposition's call that the CDS should wait till the President announced a snap presidential election at the SLFP Convention on Sunday (Nov. 15), to resign.

Gen. Fonseka's letter is said to contain 17 reasons for his decision to call it quits.

A senior spokesman for the President's Office confirmed that the President had accepted General Fonseka's resignation. He told *The Island* that General had indicated that he would like to leave his uniform within the next few weeks.

General Fonseka told *The Island* yesterday evening

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President Mahinda Rajapaksa, military commanders, top bureaucrats and political leaders at the Bandaranaike International Airport on Thursday afternoon (Nov. 12) to welcome Myanmar leader Senior General Than Shwe. Pic Sudath Silva

CPC labourers draw over Rs. 43,000 per month

Swarnavahini, in its main news bulletin last night said that a labourer at the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation received a monthly salary of at least Rs. 43,000 including several allowances.

Although, CPC workers had joined electricity, water and port employees on a three-day 'work-to-rule' campaign, demanding an immediate salary increase with back wages with effect from January 2009, they are believed to be better off than other public servants, sources said.

Media Minister Lakshman Yapa Abeywardene recently told a press conference that he knew of an employee who received Rs. 183,000 a month. According to him, this had come to light during a previous strike at one of the institutions, now engaged in 'work-to-rule' campaign.

Public sector received over Rs. 10 bn in duty concessions to import vehicles

by Shamindra Ferdinando

The UPFA granted the public sector duty concessions in excess of Rs. 10 billion in 2008 though the government had experienced severe economic difficulties due to global financial crisis, escalating defence costs and unprecedented oil bill.

The move to appease the public sector had caused a revenue loss more than double the losses incurred by the government due to illegal refunds of VAT (Value Added Tax) during the previous UNP-led UNP administration.

The Auditor General S. Swarnajothi, in his 2007 annual

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Outgoing Chief of Defence Staff General Sarath Fonseka arrives at the Kelaniya Raja Maha Viharaya. Pic Nishan S. Priyantha

Sarath won't talk politics while in uniform

After offering flowers at the Kelaniya Raja Maha Viharaya yesterday evening, General Sarath Fonseka said that he would not talk politics as long as he remained in uniform.

Responding to journalists at the Viharaya, a smiling Fonseka said that he had so far not received

an invitation to enter politics.

He said that he expected the government to accept his resignation as it was his right to quit the army.

He added that he had served the people while being in uniform and would do the same once he shed it.

Woman cop victim of snatch thief

by S. K. Kaluarachi and Lalith Chaminda, Galle Corr.

A Woman Police Sergeant (WPS), attached to the Tangalle Police Superintendent's office was waylaid and her handbag containing cash and mobile phone worth Rs 27,750 robbed, she has complained to the Walasmulla Police.

She has said in her complaint that a man who came on a motorcycle snatched her handbag at lonely spot at Modarawana.

Yapa unable to explain Gen Fonseka's 'decision to run for Presidency'

'No war can be won without political backing'

by Zacki Jabbar

Media Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa said yesterday that he was not in a position to explain why General Sarath Fonseka, having worked with President Mahinda Rajapaksa to defeat the LTTE, was now said to be his opponent at a future Presidential Poll.

"I don't know the reasons for his purported decision. That is something only General Fonseka can answer", Yapa said when asked, at the Cabinet Press Briefing, why he thought the General, was challenging Rajapaksa, after having cooperated with him, through thick and thin.

Minister Yapa said that it was only the Media that spoke about Fonseka's candidature. But when pointed out that Media reports had not been denied, Yapa replied, "You will have to ask him. I don't know."

Asked if Fonseka had tendered his resignation as Chief of Defence Staff, since Rajapaksa had said that it would be accepted within half an hour, he said "I do not know, nor am I interested. Anybody is free to resign." Yapa, said that the victory over the LTTE had been possible, because of the political leadership provided by President Rajapaksa and it was not correct to bestow all the credit on Fonseka. "No military man can win a war without political backing," he said.



Anura



Ranjan Ramanayake addresses the press at Hotel Nippon yesterday. (Photo-Siripala Halwala)

Lankans stranded in Jeddah cry for help

by Norman Paliawadana

A Sri Lankan maid stranded in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia cried her heart out at a press conference held by Uva Provincial Council Opposition leader Ranjan Ramanayake via a teleconferencing facility at Hotel

Nippon yesterday. She told the press that there were about 350 Lankans stranded and leading a miserable life under a bridge without proper food, sanitary facilities. "I don't want to reveal my identity. There are five other pregnant women like me. The bandages on our hands and

legs are an indication that we were subject to torture by our Saudi employers. We came here to escape these unscrupulous employers. Please take us back to Sri Lanka," she cried during a tele-conference.

Another recruited as a

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South Africa applauds President's efforts to resettle war displaced

by Shamindra Ferdinando

Visiting South African Foreign Minister Malite Nkoana Mashabane yesterday praised Sri Lanka's efforts to resettle Tamil civilians accommodated at government-run welfare camps in the Vavuniya region at the end of war



President Rajapaksa greets South African FM Mashabane

against the LTTE.

After visiting IDP facilities with her Tamil Deputy Minister Roy Padayachie, Mashabane told President Mahinda Rajapaksa that the situation on the ground could not have been better. An authoritative government official quoted her as saying, "What we saw at Vavuniya

camps were overwhelming."

She recalled a meeting between President Rajapaksa and the South African leader last July in Egypt at the NAM summit where an assurance was given regarding resettlement of the displaced in a 'safe environment.'

Sri Lanka is engaged in a massive mine clearing opera-

tion in the Vanni to facilitate the resettlement programme. The international community, too, is backing Sri Lanka's efforts with men, material and funds.

Mashabane acknowledged that earlier South Africa was not convinced but their visit to

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