



Security at the Sacred Bo Tree

As a resident of Anuradhapura, I am grateful to K. Godage, a former resident here, for having drawn attention to serious problems we Buddhists in Anuradhapura face as a result of the security arrangements at the 'Maha Maluwa'.

As stated in Godage's letter, the LTTE attacked Anuradhapura in 1985 and 14 years have elapsed since then.

It must not however be forgotten that the LTTE killed over one hundred people at the bus stand before proceeding to the 'Bo Maluwa' where they killed a further one hundred pilgrims who were praying; this horrific act of the LTTE should never be forgotten. There should be memorial plaques at our bus stand and at the 'Bo Maluwa'. That being said, this horrific attack took place 15 years ago (the killers escaped despite the presence of the so-called security forces both in Anuradhapura itself and along the Puttalam road which they used both to come and to escape), there is no reason to have the security set up we have today, as the LTTE has been annihilated. We in Anuradhapura are aware that these security arrangements are to please one person and his ego, not to protect the 'Bodhiya'. It is indeed a scandalous situation, which is known not only by the Maha Nayakes of Asgiriya and Malwatte, but also the president and his ministers, who visit here regularly.

It is indeed time that politicians of all parties unite to save Buddhism from such situations.

To conclude, I do hope that the police will remove themselves from the temple precincts and not desecrate this holy place by their presence. It is the responsibility of the president and the IGP to ensure that this is done, for we, the Buddhists of Anuradhapura in particular and the Buddhists of this country, have had to endure this unnecessary nuisance and undergone much inconvenience for much too long.

S. B. Galgamuwa
Colombo.



Relaxation of restrictions on A9 route

I was glad to read in the newspapers that the government had removed restrictions on travel on the A9 highway.

Prior to the war, passengers to Jaffna and back were picked up almost at their doorstep and dropped at their destinations and vice versa, of course for a fee. This is what the people ask for.

It will also facilitate the free movement of goods and help reduce prices. For example, if more onions and bananas are sent to Colombo from Jaffna, the prices of those commodities will drop.

Most people, for no fault of theirs, suffered. Now, gradually, they are enjoying freedom.

Thunnaali S. A. Masilamany

Some credit to the Opposition?

A few weeks ago the political opposition in this country was "written off" by even their most die-hard supporters. Ranil continued to be branded a loser and other assorted plaudits that have become hackneyed now and the likes of Mangala were maintaining a deafening silence.

Things have changed now haven't they? Albeit for a few days or even weeks, who knows but there is some hope on the horizon for those who crave for good governance.

The family bandyism, even the deployment of thugs we can think of tolerating in a war situation where literally no one could be trusted. Now since it is over we do not see any abatement. The mindless thuggery continues with opposition procession being attacked, strikers being intimidated and even the ultimate war hero being hooted at. No detractions or reprimands issued from the top means that all this is condoned and even fostered by the highest in the land...doesn't it?



Ranil



Mangala

Now the opposition has pulled one out of the hat! Give the devil his due (be it Ranil, Mangala, the JVP or a combination of same) they have stunned the Government to a certain extent and have at least temporarily put a spanner in the works of the Rajapaksa juggernaut.

Of course all this could peter out into nothing but at least we who are clutching at straws have another one to hang onto and postpone the inevitable watery grave!

R. A. Ratwatte
Kandy

Abolishing the presidency: Whom are they trying to fool?

Opposition, UNP and the newly formed UNF Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, (RW) wants to create another first, in addition to the over one-and-a-half dozen electoral defeats suffered in a row.

The whole country expects that as Opposition Leader RW must confront President MR at a Presidential Election (PE) widely expected to be held early next year. Instead, the UNF wants to put forward retired Army Commander and CDS Sarath Fonseka (SF), to contest the PE and if he wins, to make RW the interim PM and also abolish the executive presidency.

If, as expected, the PE is held first and hopefully SF wins, he will then have to hold the General Election (GE) which, in any case, is due next April. This election will have to be held under the PR system and no party will get a two thirds majority needed to change the constitution and the government will have to be formed by the party that commands the



JRJ

majority in the House. It can be the UNF or the UPFA, most probably the latter and if the UPFA forms the government, RW will lose the expected premiership.

If, on the other hand, the GE is held first, MR will still remain president and SF will not come into the picture at all till Nov. 2011 and RW becoming the PM and abolishing the presidency will remain dreams like Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream'!

Is the UNF leader as well as others in the alliance unaware

of this situation? No, not at all!

They are well aware of it, but in their desire and hurry to defeat MR, they are trying to hoodwink the public into believing that abolishing the executive presidency is child's play.

JRJ was the shrewdest politician that Sri Lanka has ever had and he saw to it that nobody could easily undo what he had done.

The Punchisingsho's and Babynona's are not worried about the finer points of democracy; they have more burning problems, like coping with the cost of living. So, instead of trying to fool the people all the time the UNF must come out with solutions to the problems that the people are really grappling with.

Now, the UNF is demanding the holding of either election. Why are they in a hurry? We have four months for the GE and two years for the PE. So why not wait patiently for the D-Day?

S. Abeywickrama,
Nugegoda.

Dehiwela flyover no remedy

The Dehiwela flyover, which was meant to solve the problem of congestion at Dehiwela junction, has not achieved its objective and what is more, from the looks of it, the remedy may become worse than the malady.

The main causes for congestion at Dehiwela junction were the buses plying on Galle Road, stopping right at the junction to pickup/drop off passengers and buses waiting for long periods at the top of Station Road to pick up passengers. The first has not stopped even after the opening of the flyover. The buses continue to stop at the junction under the very noses of the traffic cops and now it looks as if this is going to be the norm. Traffic congestion at the junction has not eased, especially during rush hours. The pavements at the junction are being narrowed, the width being reduced to about two feet in some places to accommodate the buses. Whoever sanctioned this needs his/her head examined. Buses should



not be allowed to stop at the junction.

They did a similar thing to Station Road and wiped out the pavement with the result that it has now become a stinking mess with fish, meat, dry fish, vegetables etc., being sold where pavements used to be and the pedestrians, including a large number of school children are forced to walk on the middle of the road. Why can't they restore the pavements and get the buses to arrive at the bus halt at the top of Station Road according to a time table?

A Resident,
Dehiwela.

Stamp duty is a source of income for the government and non-supervision of this procedure has resulted in loss of revenue for the state. Most of the ordinary people and small companies always honour this piece of legislation. But there are instances where wealthy people and large companies avoid this levy by way of various manipulations.

I have episode to relate. When I purchased a piece of land from a reputed finance company in Colombo, I was not subjected to stamp duty. The company is a large one which deals with deposits, loans, leasing, pawning and real estate. The work load of the company is so heavy that it is a difficult task to check whether they adhere to government regulations. They just affix a rupee stamp and sign over it and hand it over to the customer as standard procedure. If questioned, they tell the customer; "why are you worried? You are up on the deal!"

Monitoring of stamp duty collections and VAT

Customers have no time to check whether they charge the correct stamp duty. They want the transaction to be handled quickly. Therefore, this type of malpractice goes on.

In the newspapers, we see advertisements about various pawning auctions. All collections of such auctions are liable for VAT. But companies do not hold auctions and sell the articles to

private dealers to avoid VAT. They are aware that the Income Tax Department is not having a proper control over such auctions. If the department assigns someone with the task of monitoring such newspaper

advertisements, the department will be able to collect large a large sum of money.

In all these instances, it stresses the need for the Income Tax Department to keep a tab on these transactions. Such vigilance on the part of the tax people may help the government to collect more revenue.

I hope that Deputy Minister of Finance Ranjith Siyambalapitiye will take note of these facts. **Mathota Abeyratne, Hattton.**

About Gen. Fonseka with affection

Retired CDS General Sarath Fonseka, like President Mahinda Rajapakse, is a colossus of our times. The two of them proved their mettle in their respective fields, the one in the political, and the other in the military, something that would not have been possible had it not been for their strategic partnership in the most crucial final phase of the country's struggle against terrorism. The president's political astuteness found an ally in the army commander's military acumen: either would not have been such a brilliantly effective leader in the absence of the other in that situation. Sarath's military genius matched Mahinda's political adroitness; they complemented each other's effectiveness in the performance of their respective jobs.

Since different parameters of excellence apply in the two domains, military and political, no comparison between the two is possible or necessary. In terms of efficient performance both excelled themselves.

However, in the final analysis, the political leadership eclipses the military, for the simple reason that the former possesses all the executive power in a democracy. The military is only an instrument at the disposal of the political head. Political authority entails accountability to the nation. The President, naturally, had to fight on many fronts, whereas the Army Commander had to do so only on one. The President found himself pitted

against both internal opposition and external pressure, economic hardships, embarrassments frequently caused by some of his own 'supporters' and sycophants, and so on. If everything aborted, Sarath Fonseka would have quietly taken a back seat with little blame, but Mahinda Rajapakse would have had to face the music. This is a self-evident fact that hardly needs any reiteration.

To assert that the General should be satisfied with his due share of credit, which the country has not denied him, even if apparently the political leadership were a little remiss in not extending it in an unambiguous way for some unknown (personal?) reason, is not to belittle the importance of

Lanka cries

When General Fonseka was seriously injured in an LTTE bomb attack the entire nation (with few exceptions) cried. Bodhi poojas were held. Vows were made. Prayers were said for his speedy recovery.

When the General is about to abandon the cause he espoused, now is the time for Sri Lanka to cry again.

C. B. Punchibandara



Sarath Fonseka

the role that he played, or the invaluable contribution he made as a key player in the defence establishment including both the high brass and the rank and file.

The liberated people instantly started singing the praises of the President when the terrorist leaders were done to death, calling him the "Maha Rajano" (Great King), not because they are ignorant about the non-existence of any monarchical rule in our country, but because they correctly understood

who was the foremost architect of that outcome; otherwise they would have honoured some other person or persons with the title of "Maha Rajano".

The confirmation of the rumour about Sarath Fonseka going to take to politics challenging his erstwhile commander-in-chief has now been confirmed. This was dreadful news to none other than the public who had, at long last, breathed a sigh of relief after nearly thirty years of terrorist persecution. In any case, now the die is cast: the country has lost one of its greatest heroes to that abominable incubus of party politics; we are condemned merely to wait with bated breath, praying and hoping:

1. that Sarath Fonseka be blessed with the circumspection that will spare him the fate of Janake Perera, another great hero (of being sacrificed to mindless political opportunism),

2. that he desist from further deepening his (unintended) betrayal of the country's recent victory over the anti-national forces that he himself made a big contribution to the achieving of, and

3. that he eventually join forces with Mahinda Rajapakse, and patch up differences for the sake of the country, which his proven magnanimity of character makes us confident of, and enhance the incumbent's inevitable victory at a future presidential election.

Wasantha Rohana
Kandy