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Page 7 **Introduction of tea to Sri Lanka**

Page 10 **Twenty one killed in Southern Philippines political clan war**

Page 12 **SL can earn valuable forex from her natural resources**

Mano's support for Fonseka in the balance

by Norman Paliawadena

The Democratic People's Front would decide whether or not to support the common candidate when the party's working committee met on Thursday, its president Mano Ganesan, MP, said.

Ganesan said he was scheduled to have a meeting with the UNF's common candidate Sarath Fonseka on Tuesday evening to spell out the DPF's conditions for supporting him.

However the party's official stand would be made known only by Wednesday.

JVP against Ranil being made PM

by Dasun Edirisirisinghe

The JVP yesterday said that it would oppose the appointment of UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe as Prime Minister of a caretaker government in the event of the Opposition common presidential candidate's victory.

JVP Parliamentary Group Leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake said so at a press briefing at Battaramulla.

He said the JVP would support the common candidate, General (ret'd) Sarath Fonseka.

The final round of discussion between the JVP and the General was held on Monday night, when Fonseka agreed to JVP proposals.

Dissanayake said Fonseka had agreed to abolish the executive presidency within six months of assuming office.

"We had a lengthy discussion on our proposals on the abolition of the executive presidency, implementation of the 17th Amendment," Dissanayake said.

He said the JVP would not hold discussions with other political parties including the UNP, but welcomed other parties' support for Fonseka. However, Fonseka would not contest on the UNP or JVP ticket.

Dissanayake said the JVP had supported former President Chandrika Kumarathunga in 1994 and present President Mahinda Rajapaksa in 2005 to abolish the executive presidency. But, both leaders had disappointed them, he said.

President Rajapaksa tells the media:

'I alone can abolish executive presidency; I alone need to do so'

Constitution could be changed either by democratic govt. or military regime

- 'I wanted to let N&E people elect President'
- Govt. contemplates constitutional reforms
- President should be responsible to Parliament
- Report on attacks on media expected
- 'Pistol gangs' on the prowl will be tracked down
- Action taken to curb election violence



by The Island News Desk

President Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday told heads of media institutions and newspaper editors that he alone could abolish the executive presidency and he alone had a genuine desire to do so during his second term. His government was contemplating constitutional reforms and he personally believed the Executive President should be responsible to Parliament, the President said.

People of the northern and eastern parts of the country had been prevented from exercising their franchise at the last presidential election in 2005 by the LTTE and he wanted to give them an opportunity to elect their leader, President Rajapaksa said. "Therefore, I came forward to face an election two years before the expiry of my first term," he said, "that is something not even the president of a Death Donation Society is willing to do."

Senior Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa, MP, who was among the government politicians and officials flanking President Rajapaksa at yesterday's media briefing at Temple Trees, said that IDPs would be eligible for voting at the next presidential election.

Pointing out that the making of a new Constitution required a two thirds majority in Parliament, a smiling President firing a broadside at his rivals without naming names; he said a Constitution could be changed either by a democratic government or by a military government.

The country needed political stability to achieve progress and politicians must not succumb to external pressure or the lure of money.

Continued on page 4



JVP parliamentarian Anura Kumara Dissanayake flanked by fellow MPs Vijitha Herath and K. D. Lal Kantha at yesterday's press briefing at Battaramulla headquarters to announce the party's decision on the common Presidential candidate. (Photo-Karnal Bogoda)

Aussie bound boat people arrested

Forty Sri Lankan boat people were arrested on Monday in the seas off Mirissa when they were heading towards Australia.

Police with the assistance of the Navy and Air Force made the arrests and initial investigations revealed that they had come from Batticaloa.

Gen. Fonseka goes to Court

General (Ret'd) Sarath Fonseka yesterday filed an application in the Supreme Court seeking sufficient security and protection of his right to continue in the official residence after retirement.

He said that the earlier commanders had been provided with better security and allowed

to occupy the official residence after retirement.

The respondents are Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Secretary to the Ministry of Defence, the present Commander of the Army and the Attorney General. (CW)



Carlo receives death threat

Prof. Carlo Fonseka, Chairman National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol, received a death threat last Sunday (22) evening. An anonymous caller, who phoned the Professor at home, threatened him to stop meddling with their businesses or face the consequences. Since taking charge of the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol Prof. Fonseka has initiated a number of activities, islandwide aimed at reducing tobacco and alcohol consumption. Amendments to strengthen the existing legislation too have been formulated and are expected to be presented to Parliament shortly. Prof. Fonseka has informed the police of the threat.

France jails 20 Tigers for extortion

A Court in France yesterday sentenced 20 out of 21 LTTE members accused of extorting millions of Euros from the Tamil community in France, to prison, agency reports said.

Leader of the group Nadaraja Matinithiran has been sentenced to 7 years in prison for extorting US\$7.4 million (5 million Euros) as 'taxes' from the Tamil community living in Paris and surrounding areas to finance the LTTE

terrorist activities in Sri Lanka.

The other 19 defendants were sentenced to six year or less while one was acquitted.

The court also ordered that the Coordinating Committee of Tamils-France be dismantled after ruling that it was a front for the LTTE.

Most of the suspects were arrested in April 2007 and

Continued on page 4

Private bus strike hits Colombo bound workers

by Don Asoka Wijewardena

Private bus operators in Gampaha have launched a strike since Monday inconveniencing thousands of Colombo bound office workers from Gampaha, Nittambuwa and Kirilawella to Colombo.

They are protesting against long distance buses picking up

passengers at Nittambuwa and between Nittambuwa and Colombo.

The Lanka Private Bus Owners Association, (LPBOA) which operate buses mainly in and around Colombo, said the dispute had been brought to the notice of the National Transport Commission.



Continued on page 4

No candidate could pose a challenge to MR - UPFA

by Shamindra Ferdinando

The SLFP-led ruling coalition yesterday said that fielding of Sarath Fonseka at the forthcoming presidential election would not jeopardise incumbent President Mahinda Rajapaksa's re-election bid.

The UPFA said that there was absolutely no dispute over General Fonseka's leading role in the war against LTTE terrorism though it could not have been achieved without President Rajapaksa's leadership.

Addressing the media at the Mahaweli Centre, SLFP General Secretary Maithripala Sirisena recalled international efforts to

MR to lose over one year of his first term

Responding to The Island queries, SLFP General Secretary Maithripala Sirisena said that President Mahinda Rajapaksa would have to forgo over a year of his first term due to early presidential elections.

Although some have suggested that President Rajapaksa could seek opinion of the Supreme Court regarding this, Minister Sirisena said that the President was ready to sacrifice that period.

throw a lifeline to the sinking Tigers during the nearly three-year-old offensive (Eelam war IV) spearheaded by the army.

He said that all constituent parties of the UPFA would stand by President Rajapaksa. The Opposition had failed to realise or had conveniently forgotten that many political parties

which supported Ranil Wickremesinghe at the last presidential election in November 2005 had now switched their allegiance to President Rajapaksa.

Apart from them, the LTTE break-away faction, too, had pledged their support to President Rajapaksa along with a section of the JVP parliamentary group. Minister Sirisena and Minister Dew Gunasekera said that the anti-nationalist forces would turn against President Rajapaksa as they did at the last presidential election in 2005.

Minister Sirisena said that at the last election, the SLFP leadership had even denied the SLFP headquarters to the then Prime Minister Rajapaksa. The State media, too, had been prevented from backing Rajapaksa, the Minister said.

Continued on page 4

Fonseka's campaign to be spearheaded by combined UNF committee

by Piyasena Dissanayake and Ajith Alhakoon

Opposition common candidate Sarath Fonseka's election propaganda would be spearheaded by a committee comprising all United National Front constituent parties.

The UNF would conduct the propaganda at national level while the JVP would conduct it at the village level, sources said.

Though all constituent parties of the UNF had reached an agreement to project Fonseka as the common candidate to contest the Presidency, the proposal would be forwarded to the parties' working committees within the next few days and official approval obtained.

The proposal would be presented to the UNP working committee on Friday and an official announcement made by the UNP on the same day. According to a senior UNP official it had been decided to celebrate the announcement by lighting fire crackers and thereafter commence election propaganda.

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