

## NEWS

# Calls for TNA to enunciate policy as alliance splits

AT a time when the future of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), an amalgamation of 4 Tamil political parties is in doubt, several organisations, academics and intellectuals from within Sri Lanka and from the Diaspora have called upon the TNA to maintain unity, enunciate its policies clearly and to be the true voice and champions of Tamil aspirations.

According to Colombo reports, the TNA denying nominations for 9 former members of parliament has led to some of these members joining the United People Freedom Alliance (UPFA), the ruling party and others, the Left Liberation Front led by Dr. Wickramabahu Karunaratne.

The members who were left out of nomination are said to be Thangeswari Kathiraman, Pathmini Sithamparanathan, M.K. Sivajilingam, N. Sri Kantha, S. Kajendran, S. Jeyanandamurthy, Sivanathan Kishor and T. Kanagasabai, S. Sathasivam.

According to state controlled Daily News newspaper, Thangeswari Kathiraman will be contesting under the UPFA, whilst M.K. Sivajilingam and N. Sri Kantha will be contesting with the Left Liberation Front.

TNA member Suresh Premachandran speaking to Daily Mirror newspaper explained the party position on exclusions stating former MPs S. Kajendran and Pathmini Sithamparanathan failed to live up to expectations of the Tamil people during their period in Parliament, and as a result, they were not given a chance.

"We were not happy with the political performance of Ms. Kathiraman. Her political intentions were clear to us. She failed to remain committed to the TNA policies. So, how can we give her nomination for the second time?" Premachandran questioned.

Former MPs N. Sri Kantha and M. K. Sivajilingam too had not received nominations because they defected from the party at the Presidential election, according to Premachandran.

According to Premachandran, former MP for the Batticaloa district, T. Kanagasabai has declined to contest this time citing health concerns whilst S. Jeyanandamurthy had been out of the country for the last three years, and therefore the TNA had no logical basis to accommodate him on board again.

He also accused Kishor of 'dilly-dallying' with the govern-

ment instead of sticking to the TNA policies in the interest of Tamil people.

Tamil political observers expressed their frustration at the development and noted the importance for Tamil National Alliance to provide strong political leadership and to champion the Tamils' aspirations for a separate state at this crucial juncture in the history of the island.

The importance of strong Tamil leadership was reinforced by comments made by Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse during an interview with the Hindu newspaper on Friday, February 19.

"Soon after these parliamentary elections, I will call all the leaders of the political parties and start talking to them. They must understand that there is no option for them but to talk. I'm the President of the country...they must come and negotiate with me, have a dialogue with me. If they think they can't cope with me, new leaders will come up and I will have to deal with them."

Citing Rajapakse's comments, one Tamil political observer stated that divisions within the Tamil political leaders now would allow Rajapakse to talk to puppets he installs as Tamil leaders and deny any meaningful political solution to the Tamil people.

Realising the importance standing united, several organisations in Jaffna including those of the students and intellectuals have called upon Tamil National



**Tamil National Alliance members, who were united during the Jaffna Municipal Council polls, have been split by a failure of the alliance leadership to take a stance on the Tamil political question**

Alliance (TNA) to make public its proposed solution for the ethnic issue well before the forthcoming parliamentary election, sources in Jaffna said. The call comes in the wake of rumours that TNA stands divided.

Meanwhile, TNA is also being urged to state their policy clearly as it was done in 1976 in the first National Convention of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) where the Vaddukoddai Resolution was proclaimed, the sources added.

Most of the TNA parliamentarians are now in Jaffna actively engaged in the selection of candidates and other matters related to the parliamentary election.

TNA parliamentary leader R. Sampanthan and parliamentarian Suresh Premachandran are said to be busy drawing up a solution for the ethnic issue and the organiza-

tions want them to reveal the proposed solution before the election, they added. Some prominent persons among the intellectual community in Jaffna who have intentions of contesting the parliamentary elections are said to be willing to reconsider their decisions if TNA comes out with its proposal for a solution for the ethnic issue, they further said.

TNA is being strongly urged to act on the lines of Vaddukoddai Resolution by all factions in Jaffna peninsula, the sources said.

Meanwhile, in an open letter to TNA leaders, Rev. Prof. Dr. S.J. Emmanuel, the former Vicar General of the Catholic diocese of Jaffna urged the TNA to maintain its unity in being the true voice and champions of Tamil aspirations.

"At a time when Colombo and its collaborators try their best to

erase out the national aspirations of Tamils, the Tamil National Alliance has the noble responsibility to maintain its unity in being the true voice and champions of Tamil aspirations", Rev. Prof. Dr. S.J. Emmanuel, urged an open letter addressed to TNA leaders Sampanthan, Mavai Senathirajah, Suresh Premachandran, Selvam Adaikalanathan and Gajendrakumar Ponnampalam.

Eelam Tamils have been consistent in expressing their genuine desire for independence ever since 1976 and even now it remains the underlying goal despite constitutional sanction on speaking it out openly in the island of Sri Lanka. But, their kith and kin in the free diaspora have voiced on their behalf, overwhelmingly re-confirming that desire as the standing-aspiration, he said in the appeal.

## Tamil Eelam dream still raging - SLA Chief

DESPITE the killings of top LTTE leaders, including its chief Velupillai Pirapakaran, and the decimation of the organisation, the concept of Tamil Eelam has not died out amongst those harbouring it, the Sri Lankan Army Chief warned.

"Even at present those who had connections with terrorists and the Tamil Diaspora overseas are still discussing the possibility of establishing a state of Eelam according to information we received," Lt Gen Jagath Jayasuriya was quoted by Zee News as saying.

During his separate interactions with troops at Kallady, Thoppigala, Vakarai and Punani

in eastern Sri Lanka, Lt Gen Jayasuriya recalled the numerous sacrifices that continue to be made by the Sri Lankan soldiers - "war heroes" as he called them - at the risk of their own "lives, blood, sweat, legs and limbs", the Army said in a statement.

This is despite the fact that the Tigers' military wing was defeated in May last year, Jayasuriya said during his maiden visits to the Brigades in the Eastern Province.

Stating that the Army has the responsibility to protect the country, Jayasuriya said a large number of troops in Northern and Eastern areas were deployed not for offensive duties but for obser-

vations or intelligence duties.

"Specially, if any group takes up arms again as terrorists we must be ready to face such a situation," Jayasuriya said.

He said the Army has the duty to help the police maintaining law and order during election time. "I believe that the Army troops would continue their normal duties better in the North and East establishing security in the area during election times," he said.

Jayasuriya said that for the convenience of the armed forces, the authorities are planning to establish holiday resorts in the areas where they are not available at present.

He said the land has already

been allocated in Nilaveli (East) and Yala (South-east) areas for this purpose. Tamil analysts questioned whether the land for these 'resorts' had been properly acquired or had been appropriated by the Army from Tamil civilians.

Jayasuriya said the salaries and perks for the Army had been increased recently, even as Sri Lanka comes under increasing pressure to curtail its debt and better manage its economy.

The Army Chief said special attention would be given to training in 2010 since the newly recruited soldiers during the last two years did not get proper training as they were engaged in active operations against the LTTE.