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THURSDAY - 27 APRIL 2017

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ISSUE 1325

OPINION

In close rapport with reconciliation

By **Dr. S. W. Premaratne**

(DailyNews.lk) - The National Unity Government, formed in the year 2015, has already taken many progressive steps within the course of last two years for alleviating the hardships of the war affected Tamil community in the North and East of Sri Lanka. Restoration of democratic governance is one important dimension of the reconciliation process. In this direction, several important legislative enactments have been made by Parliament. Out of them, passing the 19th Amendment of the Constitution which provided for the appointment of independent Commissions is a very important step taken by the government. By a resolution, Parliament has constituted itself as a Constituent Assembly and also as a Steering Committee comprising of representatives of all political parties in Parliament. The Constituent Assembly and the Steering Committee were empowered to deliberate and draft a Constitution. The Constituent Assembly has already received the reports of the six sub-committees who dealt with different aspects of the constitutional reforms. The Public Representations Committee also has submitted its report. The National Unity Government is an alliance of the two main political parties in the country, the UNP and the SLFP. The joining of these two political parties to form a government is a power sharing arrangement between the two main political parties, marking a very significant and

positive change in the political culture of this country. The main feature of the political culture of this country has been the perennial struggle or



competition between these two political parties for capturing and retaining political power representing themselves as two rival parties. National Unity Government The forming of the National Unity Government marked the end of a state of rivalry between these two political parties whose power base was the Sinhalese community in the South. The objective

of the alliance of the two main political parties was to form a strong government for achieving the objective of accelerated economic development and achieving reconciliation among the ethnic communities and permanent peace. The government has made commendable progress in implementing the measures undertaken by co-sponsoring the UNHRC Resolution No.30/1 in October 2015 and a further period of two years has been granted for

completing the tasks undertaken by the Sri Lankan government. This resolution deals with the issues such as the Transitional Justice Process, missing persons, detainees in prisons and constitutional reforms.

When we consider the highly controversial and sensitive nature of the issues that the government has undertaken to deal with, there will certainly be all sorts of obstructions preventing the speedy attention to such issues. For example, legislation is now in place for the establishment of the Office of Missing Persons authorized to ascertain what happened to the missing persons. But the victims of disappearances and their families are still impatiently waiting for the implementation of the law.

The role played by extremist nationalist political parties and civil society organisations in politics of Sri Lanka is the most significant factor that has

contributed to the slow progress of the reconciliation process. In this article I attempt to discuss the obstructionist role played by such 'spoilers'.

The main Tamil political alliance in Parliament, the Tamil National Alliance under the leadership of R. Sampanthan representing the majority of the Tamils in the North and East has expressed its willingness to extend all possible support to the government for going ahead with the constitution making process aimed at bringing about a political solution 'within the framework of a single undivided and indivisible Sri Lanka'. Sampanthan has very clearly stated that what the Tamil community needs is to live as equal citizens in dignity with other

communities enjoying the same political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The Tamil National Alliance cooperating with the Sri Lankan government in formulating constitutional proposals is a very desirable and positive development. However, it is very unfortunate that there is a formidable section of parliamentarians who oppose all steps and initiatives taken by the government for achieving reconciliation and a durable political settlement. Most of them are a section of MPs from the SLFP who preferred to remain in the Opposition. Constitutional reforms

This anti-government political formation led by the former President Mahinda Rajapaksa is strictly opposed to the policy of cooperating with the UNP. They cannot just tolerate a section of the SLFP led by President Maithripala Sirisena working together with the UNP under a power-sharing arrangement. This ideological position of a section of the Opposition in Parliament poses a serious threat to achieving the goal of formulating a constitution acceptable to all communities in Sri Lanka. For amending or changing some provisions of the present Constitution, not only the approval of a two-third majority in Parliament but ... **SEE P12**

Murali to be inducted into ICC Hall of Fame

Legendary spinner Muttiah Muralitharan will be inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame during the Champions Trophy tournament in England, SLC announced.

Murali became the first Sri Lankan to be voted into the ICC Hall of Fame last year and will be formally inducted in June.

"It gives us immense sense of pride that Murali is receiving this highest honour. We are proud of him and the glory he has brought to cricket in Sri Lanka. His illustrious career demonstrates that he belongs to this highly prestigious group," said CEO of SLC, Ashley de Silva in a statement.



SL bags 3 medals as Indunil wins 800m gold

(DailyNews.lk) - Sri Lankan athletes won a gold, silver and a bronze medal at the first leg of the Asian Grand Prix continued

at the Jinhua Sports Centre in East China. Indunil Herath took 1:50.69 minutes to win the men's 800m gold while India's Jinson

Jhonson (1:50.71 minutes) and Kuwait's Al Sofari (1:51.23 minutes) secured the silver and bronze medals respectively.

Himasha Eshan bagged the men's 100m silver medal with a timing of 10.43 seconds as China's Me Gong (10.37 seconds) and Shu Heyang (10.48 seconds) won the gold and bronze medals. Gayanthika Abeyratne won the bronze medal in women's 800m clocking 2:03.78 minutes. China won the gold as Wang Chin Yu crossed the finish line in 2:03.25 minutes while India's Tintu Luka won the bronze medal (2:03.59 minutes). Indunil is an old boy of Walala A. Rathnayaka Vidyalaya and represents SL Army SC. Indunil won the 800m gold at the last South Asian Games and secured the bronze medals at all three legs of the 2016 Asian Grand Prix. Indunil was very happy about his performance and said that it is a great thing to win the silver, despite not having a proper track in Sri Lanka to practice.

"I had to compete just after a day I arrived in China with no proper preparation to this cool climatic conditions. I could have done better with good preparation. I hope that I

can better my performance at the second leg," he said.

Himasha was trained in Jamaica and



Indunil Herath (188) winning the gold medal of men's 800m at the Asian Grand Prix in China. Pictures by Prince Gunasekara



Men's 100m silver medalist Himasha Eshan



Women's 800m bronze medalist Gayanthika Abeyratne

recorded a better timing of 10.25 seconds at a competition few days ago. But his late start cost him the gold here in China. Himasha told that he is determined to win the gold at the second leg. The second leg of the Asian Grand Prix 2017 will commence on April 27.



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