



MAKING SENSE

By Shyamon Jayasinghe

Ekeeya Rajyaya

The current debate in Sri Lanka over the national question has sparked off a lot of confusion over the use of words like 'federalism' 'unitary state', and 'united state' (ekeeya rajyaya). Political leaders, most of whom jolly well know what they are talking about, have deliberately created the confusion. They succeeded in their enterprise and Ranil Wickremasinghe had a great fall. The latter had consistently called out for a federal solution and never detracted from this stance. His opponents railed against him for "trying to divide the country" (rata bedanna). One Sri Lankan journalist living in Australia wrote that "Ranil's sleeping partner" was Prabhakaran. When the LTTE boycotted the election and when Balasingham castigating Ranil as a "dangerous fox" the lid was taken off this kind of polemic. People living in countries like Australia know fully well that federalism does not imply the division of the country. Many great states of the world are federal and this particular constitutional model is favoured for countries with deep divisions in society. The model, however, is not a unitary one and this has raised the eyebrows of those who identify the "unitary state" with a "united state". The identity is false. Australia is non-unitary but is a united entity. Ranil's opposing coalition, which tied down their candidate, Mahinda Rajapakse, to a "unitary promise", will now be in a muddle because the latter has publicly extolled the Indian model of federalism. Of course, he and his partners might pretend it's not federalism but 'ekeeya'!

Melbourne's Candle in the Wind

As a parent, the execution of Nguyen Tuong Van is something I would like to push out of my mind as though it did not happen in the first place. Here was a young man in the prime of his life taken to the scaffold, a rope tied round his neck, and hanged and throttled to death by the state of Singapore! The vision is

deeply traumatic. Was it because Nguyen was so young? Was it because of the barbaric nature of hanging? I think it were both. On the other hand, if one were to try and mentally extract these factors away, the emotional wave that erupted in Melbourne seems out of touch with reality. Nguyen had been caught in the act of deliberate drug smuggling. The drugs he had tied around his waist

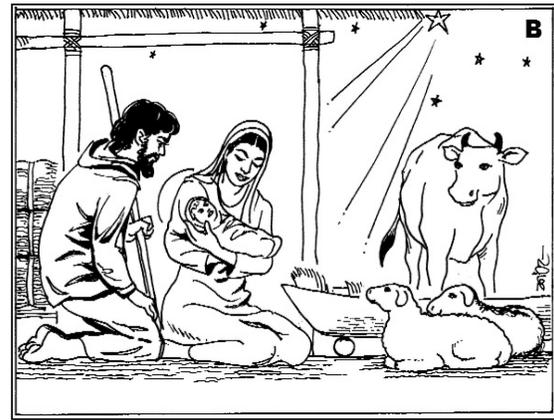
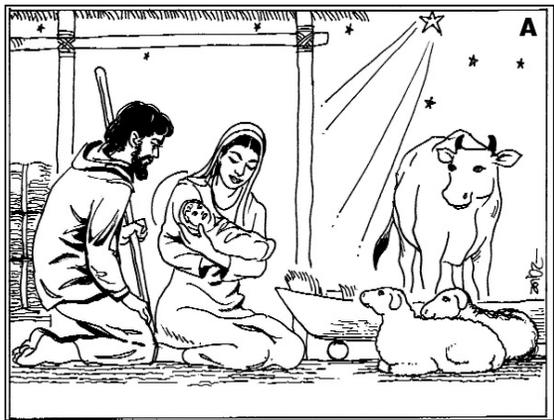
were the equivalent of 26,000 hits and the street value was \$ 1 million. He obviously knew what he was in for and probably gambled against being caught. A pure act of greed it was! The material he was carrying was lethal to its potential users, most of them young as he was or even younger. The lives of these potential victims would have been destroyed and their parents' lives, too, would have been ruined. The offender, therefore,

qualified for the most severe punishment that society could mete out. All such considerations seem to have been set aside by a sweeping emotion. The Church hall where his funeral took place was overflowed with a crowd of about 4,000 (a huge figure for Melbourne churchgoers!). The priest required all participants to hug each other in place of shaking hands. There were 23 priests dressed in white robes and there was a bishop. In addition, many politicians, too. Lex Lasry, Nguyen's lawyer, eulogised: "In the last two years selfishness (in Nguuyen) gave way to selflessness, lies gave way to truth and indulgence gave way to spiritualism". How on earth could one know that of a man during his years in jail? How emotions fail us in making assessments of this nature has been brought home to us, once again. Remember how Diana who only a few days before here death had been accused of cavorting with a dodgy playboy on Mohamed Fayed's yacht? How at death she was glorified as the 'peoples princess'? I like to rephrase the famous opening lines of the great English poet, Pope: "Two principles in human nature reign; Passion, to urge, and Reason to restrain" Nor was the widespread yell against capital punishment itself convincing because the Australian government and media has been clamouring for capital punishment of the Bali bombers. ■



The Challenge

ඔබේ විවේකය විනෝදයෙන් ගත කරන්නට සන්නිවේදන වග විශේෂාංගයයි මේ. බැඳු බැඳුමට මේ රූ සටහන් දෙකම එක සේ ය. නමුත් B රූ සටහන හා A රූ සටහන අතර වෙනස් කම් 10 ක් ඇත. ඔබ කළ යුත්තේ B රූ සටහනේ මේ වෙනස්කම් ලකුණු කර අප වෙත විමසයි. ජයගන්නා දෙදෙනෙකුට සන්නිවේදන තනා තිබේවයි.



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ලිපිනය (ඉංග්‍රීසියෙන් ලියන්න)

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