



Sri Lanka has been known for its tea, cricket, and terrorism. Sooner or later, it is going to be world famous for its special breed of jumping politicians.

Parliamentarians in Sri Lanka are crossing over to the government at a rate. This time, the process began when Mahinda Samarasinghe-UNP's frontliner who hammered Mahinda Rajapakse out of shape during the Presidential Elections suddenly did a patriotic u-turn "for the sake of the country". Then followed Keheliya who is now the spokesman for the Rajapakse government's Defence matters. Ranil's Nilame followed suite picking up his bag and baggage and his court case along with him. At the time of writing this, it is reported that Navin Dissanayake, who was once regarded as a promising star in the UNP, is waiting for his astrologers to give the green light. It is also reported that three more are soon to arrive at the President's door from Rajarata and yet more are to follow the patriotic leap.

At this rate, President Rajapakse will have no need to dissolve parliament to find his numbers. The only restricting factor is the inelasticity in the quantum of ministerial positions awaiting these jumpers. Already, government members

are said to be getting restive at a growing threat to their rights for promotion. However, Lankan political leaders are resourceful when it comes to matters other than winning the war with the Tiger. Hence, some new formula to greet the new converts to Mahinda Chinthanaya may be devised. How about Ministers without Portfolio? Or bringing back the Premadasa-style State Ministers?

In this way, it has become a way of political life in Lanka that the task of ministerial allocation has little relation to the goal of effective governance on the part of the executive. All parties have been guilty of



Shyamon Jayasinghe

this. Along with the Ministers, come the cars, the personnel, and the perks for themselves and their satellites. Right now, there is a proposal for enhanced salaries to these polities. What a Paradise! Can one find another country in the wide world, which pays its politicians to ruin it?

To see this phenomenon as an exhibition of greed on the part of our politicians is only a part of the explanation and a facile one at that. It is well known that polities anywhere in the world do not enjoy being long in opposition. These political athletics are also related to the current JR constitu-

tion. This constitution gives such a huge leverage to the executive President that parliamentarians are simply drawn to his/her gravitational orbit. It is another way to state that the great institution of Parliament has got decimated. On the other hand, the proportional representation feature of the constitution has compounded the problem by denying the government of a comfortable working majority. Therefore, while Parliament as an institution has been devalued, individual MPs have increased their own bargaining power with the chief executive.

There is a social explanation for this namely that political cross-overs are not looked at with much disfavour by the Lankan electorate unlike is the case with electorates in Australia or England. In most cases, the jumper would be able to grant positive favours to his electoral supporters if he gets into government ranks. The practice of granting electoral favours to supporters of the governing party is also not looked down upon in Lanka. The system of proportional representation

has worked in another way to add to the lack of social disapproval for political summersaulters: Unlike the pre-1972 (JR) constitution, MPs of today are not personally identified with their electorate and therefore accountable to it; each of them is one MP among many such MPs belonging to a District. Hence, an MP is not as sensitive to his electorate as in the days of the old.

I remember the days when the UNP bigwigs like Ranil and the rank and file heralded the JR constitution with such optimism as was expressed in their bragging that the sun can never set on their great party!

What an ironic turn of events for such shortsighted moves. Their constitutional creation has denied their party power for nearly two decades!

Ranil now charges that the current President is acting unethical. That is not a fair comment. Pressured on the one hand by the insecurity of support from his major coalition partner the JVP, and the growing danger of possible defeat if a General Election is

Billions of people build around themselves mental and emotional prisons and prefer to live their lives within these bars. I am not one of them. I like to try and set my mind free and roam to discover the truth rather than allow myself to be conditioned by systems of belief that I have inherited.

held the President has no alternative but to get his numbers by luring MPs from the other side of the divide. Besides, those MPs are coming of their own will so that part of the problem may be Ranil himself.

While all these monkeying goes on in the South, Prabhakaran is honing his instruments of state power very smartly and efficiently in the North. It is reported that government business in Tiger-controlled areas is cost-effective and productive. I do not know about it being less corrupt. The LTTE rogue

To page 21

CALL MENU NOW ON

(07) 3818 1007 or 0411 792 455



BASHERI HOMES

"QUALITY CUSTOM BUILDERS OF DISTINCTION"

P.O BOX 4230 FOREST LAKE QLD 4078

PHONE: (07) 3818 1007

MOBILE: 0413 860 794

E-MAIL: BASHERIHOMES@BIGFOOT.COM

WEB: WWW.BASHERIHOMES.COM

GRAND MASTERS AWARD WINNER-2006

QUALITY BUILDER

IMMEDIATE START

BUILD ON ANY BLOCK OF LAND

SINGLE STOREY OR DOUBLE STORES
SPLIT LEVEL OR POLE HOMES

PERSONALIZED SERVICE ON SITE DESIGN

ARCHITECT SERVICE AVAILABLE
YOUR PLAN OR OURS
CHOICE OF FACADES

