

Feature Spotlight on Politics

Premadasa Focuses on Issues Facing his Island State and the Region

Shri Lanka is Searching for Political Solution Fair to All Communities

George Magala of Malawi: Mr President a few days ago the leader of the Tamil separatist group fighting for a separate state stated that his group might agree to a federal constitution. I am wondering what your government's reaction to this is?

BBC Moderator (BBC-M): May I just add to that. The leader of Tamil Tigers Prabhakaran said in an interview over BBC Tamil Service that was broadcast in the World Service that the on-going conflict between his group and the government forces, now on for more than ten years, could end if some acceptable solution, a federal solution, could be found.



Ranasinghe Premadasa

During a recent phone-in interview with the BBC, President Ranasinghe Premadasa dealt with a set of wide ranging questions relating to his troubled island state and the South Asian region. The following is the text of the interview made available to us, and published with the courtesy of BBC.

President Ranasinghe Premadasa (RP): The LTTE, the Liberation Tigers movement of which Mr. Prabhakaran is the leader, are aware that a select committee of parliament is presently examining ways and means of resolving what is referred to as the Tamil problem. I think you are aware of the endeavours made by my government to reach a political solution to the problem.

RP: Yes, I am very hopeful, and I must tell you the moment I became president I unilaterally extended an invitation to the LTTE. As I said earlier, we were discussing this matter. They only demanded elections to the North and East. But by the time we were getting ready for it they again started this war.

KM: Correct, you have done it very well. We prefer to resolve our problems among ourselves. In fact why should we bother the United Nations.

RP: It is true that the majority of our people are Buddhists and we do have the Hindus, Christians and Muslims. We assist these religions. We are a tolerant nation. We are not, as I said earlier, aiming at a military solution. When a war starts, various methods of war come into play. It is the responsibility of the armed services and the police to protect the innocent people.

East. They are well aware of the humanitarian services that are being provided at great cost. So our government's policy is to resolve the problem through a political solution.

RP: Yes, I am very hopeful, and I must tell you the moment I became president I unilaterally extended an invitation to the LTTE. As I said earlier, we were discussing this matter. They only demanded elections to the North and East.

RP: What is the position when terrorist activities are unleashed on common people, innocent people? You can't expect the armed services. People to just look on. They will have to protect the people.

lines that are followed by the electronic media.

RP: It has in fact gone up BBC Moderator: You feel that is justified? President Premadasa: No it is a wastage of resource. These resource are for the well being of our people. That is why we are doing our best to resolve this problem through the process of consultation, through the process of compromise and through the process of you consensus, must say that all parties are co-operating, not only the parties in parliament but also the militant groups that have given up militancy the other Tamil parties.

RP: What is necessary is not just expressing desire but actual performance. He must co-operate with those who are trying to find a political solution. Why can't he submit his proposals to select committee? The select committee is to consider all aspects of it. They have not ruled out anything provided any solution is within the unitary system of government this because our people cannot survive in separation. We are a small country we must live together as we have been living together.

RP: That purpose can be achieved through the process of the select committee. It will be a very considered recommendation from the select committee where all parties can sit together as this is a very complex problem. It is best that we consider the problem in all its aspects.

RP: We are keeping Mrs. Wijeweera and her children safely for their own safety, if I may say so, because there are a large number of people who have suffered at the hands of the JVP. We feel it is nothing but correct for the government to protect the family of Rohana Wijeweera. They are being provided with all their needs.

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At that time an elected provincial council was in office. But under the provincial councils law the government was not in a position to dissolve the council. But later due to certain actions taken by the council, which were against the constitution, we were able to dissolve the council and make it possible for elections.

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being held without trial. In fact there is one who has filed suit against the government for damages, for being held after he was acquitted after trial.

RP: Mrs. Wijeweera's case is different from the others. Others are those who had taken part in terrorist activities. They are not political prisoners. They have surrendered themselves. Some have been arrested for illegal action. And they are at liberty to take these matters to court.

RP: I am inspired by his great tolerance. His method of government, where he treated all people equally giving them equal opportunities and treating not only human beings but all beings with compassion.

RP: It was very interesting. You as moderator I hope you would have enjoyed this programme. I am pleased that I got this opportunity because I have been able to clarify certain very important issues on which there had been a lot of misinformation.

RP: All the modern precautionary measures are being taken by my gov. and the Ministry of Health we are in touch with the World Health Organisation and other institutions. We are doing every thing possible to arrest this situation.

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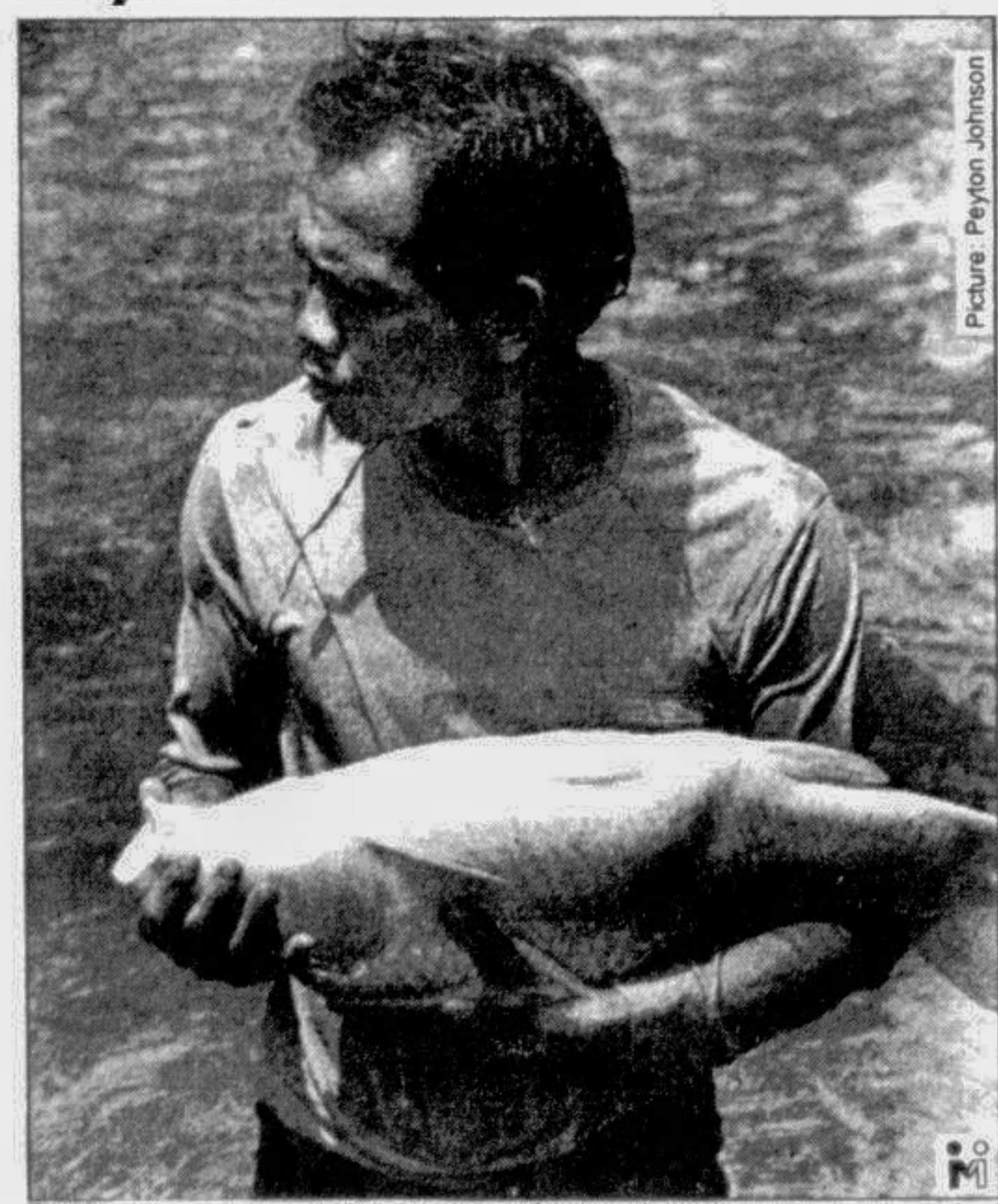
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HEAVY fishing in Southeast Asian seas has decreased catches in some coastal and inshore waters.

Development Over-fishing Decreases Catch in Southeast Asian Coastal, Inshore Waters

by A Special Correspondent

The catches of the main species - including mackerels, round scads, sardines and anchovies - had probably reached the upper limit in most areas.



shrimp contributed close to one-half of the total shrimp production in the region.

Thai Workers Now Have Social Security Fund

by Philip Gorton

THAILAND's new Social Security Act, implemented this March marks the first major attempt by the government of provide medical care and other benefits to Thai workers.