HE much-awaited visit of concerned? And how close have over. President Clinton has between them? gone back, keeping the three South Asian nations - President's Clinton's visit was a

Bangladesh, India and Pakistan breaking out of the existing - busy, with more intensity, on mindsets of the region and its their foreign policy issues. After winning a few hearts in Dhaka, the US President's days in India and a brief stopover in Islamabad were certainly meaningful in South Asia's troubled context. The visit has also stirred ton, however, in his speeches, up many minds to predicate the 'US factor' in South Asia, especially amid perennial Indo-Pak rivalry.

America, both India and Pakistan seemed serious about Joint Session of Parliament he their relations with the world's lone superpower and initiated their diplomatic manoevres, although in separate ways, to gain confidence of Washington. Although it would take some time to understand who gained from Clinton's visit, some immediate fall-outs are distinct. And both India and Pakistan have lessons to learn from it.

US President's visit has given rise to some questions: How much has India has succeeded to align itself with the US? Given the present situation, what are the avenues through which Pakistan can again gain confidence of the US? What are the significant "future" aspects on Indo-US "multidimensional" relationship? Is the US approach towards CTBT vis-à-vis India and Pakistan different or discriminatory? Given the present situation in South Asia, how evenhanded is the US approach as far as India and Pakistan are

US President Bill Clinton the two rivals come in holding in the subcontinent is now talks in mitigating the tension

> For South Asia at large. peoples; for India, it was a new course in hammering a new chapter in bilateral relations with the US; and for Pakistan, it was holding on to its business with the old ally. President Clindid not seem to "impose"; rather he tried to "influence".

He made his position quite In exploring their ties with clear on some of the issues.

While speaking at the Indian said: "You have liberated your markets and now you have one of the 10 fastest growing economies in the world...You embraced information technology and now, when American and other big software companies call for consumer and customer support, they are just as likely to find themselves talking to an expert in Bangalore as one in Seattle."

This is for the first time that America has broken the trend and shifted the focus from "only political issues" to economic and scientific fields as well. President Clinton has tried to find "common grounds" for nurturing Indo-US friendship which can be beneficial for both the countries.

So, was it only trade that the US was interested in? On nuclear nonproliferation, he said: "...India's nuclear policies, inevitably, have consequences beyond your borders - eroding the

Remains of the Visit

Did President Bill Clinton's visit bring about any change in the political contour of the sub-continent? Ekram Kabir questions

barriers against the spread of nuclear weapons, discouraging nations that have chosen to foreswear these weapons, encouraging others to keep their options open. But if India's nuclear test shook the world, India's leadership for nonproliferation can certainly move the

Nuclear nonproliferation is, indeed, a difficult subject in bilateral relations, as he put forward some questions to the Pakistani people via television: "Are you really more secure today than you were before you tested nuclear weapons? Will these weapons make war with India less likely, or, simply more deadly? Will a costly arms race help you to achieve any economic development? Will it bring closer to your friends around the world, closer to the partnerships you need to build your dreams?

Whether he was convincing or not, both India and Pakistan can ask: "how does signing and not signing Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) affect our security?" In fact, it does not. In either case, they remain as insecure as they are today. If both India and Pakistan sign the CTBT, or even if one signs and the other does not, their vulnerability will keep increasing just as before. The US understood that public opinions



two countries.

last couple of years to "narrow turn away from the world". their nuclear differences".

It was perhaps on Kashmir that he offered what appeared to be a fundamental shift in the American approach to the South Asian security problems. Ending American tilt towards Pakistan on Kashmir, the US President put across a new framework for peace in the troubled valley and between New Delhi and Islamabad.

Respect for the line of control and an end to violence are at the heart of Clinton's package. India seemed pleased with this suggestion. Clinton, however, also insisted that India must find a way to address the grievances of the Kashmiris.

Clinton's article made available by the US Information Agency read: "Pakistan is also important to the United States. The Pakistani people are our longtime friends. We want them to enjoy the benefits of democracy, to build a strong economy, to be free of terrorism and live in peace. Some say I should not

count, and that is why Presi- go to Pakistan because of the dent Clinton put forward the is- military coup that overthrew sue before the people of these the democratically elected prime minister, Nawaz Sharif. However, conceding their Yet engagement with Pakistan sovereign right to decide their does not represent endorseown course, the US President ment. Staying away only would said both sides must press strengthen hard-liners in Pakahead with the dialogue of the istan who want their country to

> That was, indeed, a warning to Pakistani leadership to restore democracy in the country. He sounded more blunt when he said at the Indian capital while praising Indian democracy that "I know it is difficult to be a democracy bordered by nations whose governments reject democracy.

Even before Clinton came to Pakistan, the US had spelt out its agenda of concern. These issues, ranging from getting Osama bin Laden to return to democracy and maintaining regional peace, have now been directly brought home to General Parvez Musharraf and his col-

The statement of US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, is worth considering in this respect: "We are going to istan, fighting terrorism, pre- tions. "For India and Pakistan.

venting proliferation, and doing what we can to help create an environment of regional peace and security, and reaching out to a people whose history is one of friendship with the United

Earlier, while announcing Clinton's visit to Pakistan, on March 7, a White House statement said: "President Clinton has accepted an invitation to visit Pakistan as part of his upcoming visit to South Asia. The President expects to address a number of issues of common concerns with Pakistan's leaders. These include a return to civilian rule, the need to fight terrorism, and measures to avoid a nuclear and a missile arms race and prevent conflict in the region ...

Washington has been imparting messages that it was keen on moving away from "estranged democracies" to "engaged democracies". It has clearly indicated its policy shift in the subcontinent during President Clinton's visit. The pattern of interaction has now changed. Interaction between India and the US seems to have moved away from compulsiveness to one of cool-headed thinking keeping in mind the larger picture.

However, by saying that he has "certainly not come to South Asia to mediate the dispute over Kashmir", Clinton Pakistan because the United may have been successful in States has interests there which silencing some politically obare important - and urgent. Our sessed minds, but as he went interests include avoiding the on, he sent serious messages to threat of conflict in South Asia, both capitals as he asked for fostering democracy in Pak- dialogue between the two na-

this must be a time for restraint, for respect for the line of control and renewed lines of communications," he said to the Pakistani public. "I have listened to General

Musharraf and others," President Clinton continued, "I understand your concerns' about Kashmir. I share your conviction that Human Rights of all its people must be respected. But a stark truth must also be faced - there is no military solution to Kashmir. International sympathy, support, and intervention cannot be won by provoking bigger, bloodier conflict. On the contrary, sympathy and support will be lost and no matter how great the grievance, it is wrong to support attracts against civilians across the line of control."

On the other hand, Clinton told the Indian Joint Session Parliament that he hoped progress could also be made in overcoming the source of tension in this region, including, the tensions between India and Pakistan. "I share many of your government's concerns about the course Pakistan is taking".

Circumstances show that the US Presdient has left a clea suggestion to Pakistan: adopt softer position. That may we be Pakistan's only option.

Questions remain as to the benefits of his trip. How close are the two rivals going to be as a result of the visit? Are talks in mitigating the tension between them on the cards? Will it be the Musharraf regime to start the process? If so, then how would India respond?

The Nepalese Deserve Better

Nine governments in ten years are indicative of instability in Nepal. The Nepalese people might have got back their democratic rights after many years of sacrifice but not the desired stability to take the country forward, says Mansoor Mamoon

IRIJA Prasad Koirala has Tbecome the new prime minister of Nepal. Earlier his Party, the Nepalese Congress, elected him as the new prime minister to lead the country in place of Krishna Prasad Battarai. The changeover was not unexpected. Bhattarai also belonged to the Nepalese Comgress. But his supporters in Parliament revolted against him and asked him to tender his resignation paving the way for a new prime minister. He reportedly incurred their wrath for his failure to what has been described

ty's election pledges. His fate

was sealed when a number of

his colleagues tendered their

resignation leaving him in the

lurch. A timetable was set for

him by the party members to

expiry of the deadline and made

a desperate bid to muster

enough support to continue in

party prepared for a final

showdown Bhattarai preferred

to quit without facing the party

vote. The party caucus then

elected Koirala as the new

prime minister. Sixty-nine of

the 115 Nepalese Congress MPs

voted in his favour. Koirala is

now the new prime minister but

as a 'prime minister' he is not

new. It is his third term in of-

prime minister in May 1991 af-

GP Koirala first became

When the dissidents in the

as his failure to redeem the par- time in exile. After the intro-

quit. He stayed on even after the struggle for the restoration of

ter registering a comfortable victory in the country's second general elections. His elder brother was also Nepal's prime minister in 1960. Koirala was born in the Indian state of Bihar some seventy-six years ago where his parents were living in exile to escape the wrath of the tyrannical Rana dynastic rule. He played his part both in the freedom struggle of India and democracy movement of Nepal, particularly in the revolution of 1950-51. In the Revolution the despotic Rana rule came to an end. Koirala spent about ten years in prison and quite a long

duction of the party-less Pan-

chayet system in 1960 he along

with his party colleagues and

followers took refuge in Bihar

and from there spearheaded the

democracy. Finally in 1990

King Birendra Bikram Shah

Deva promulgated the new con-

stitution providing for multi-

party parliamentary democ-

years are indicative of instabil-

ity in Nepal. The Nepalese peo-

ple might have got back their

democratic rights after many

years of sacrifice but not the de-

sired stability to push the

in an area of 147,181 kilome-

tres of land, most of which is

rugged and mountainous.

About 25 million people live

country ahead.

Nine governments in ten

movement and at times armed

neighbours - India and China -Nepal has no outlet to the sea. This has made it highly dependent on India for its sea trade. Most of the people are poor and illiteracy is still high. According to the recent Asian Development Bank Report, Nepal claims that its per annum growth rate is 6 per cent. But nobody outside the government gives credence to this figure. Many projects are either stalled or shelved due to dearth of funding. Whatever development projects are being initiated are

March this year the United I lems.

States Energy Department and

oil companies organised the

South Asia Energy Conference

in Kathmandu where Washing-

ton proposed for huge invest-

ment for development of power

and electricity in the region.

Nepal is the headquarters of

SAARC. A South Asian sub-re-

gional grouping comprising

Nepal, Bhutan, northeastern

region of India and Bangladesh

has already been initiated but is

Bhattarai was that he failed to

contain Maoist insurgency,

particularly in the northern re-

gion of Nepal. During the last

four years of its inception

Maoist guerrillas have made

several inroads and held sway

in quite a large chunk of land.

Sandwiched between two giant The insurgents are for turning

The main allegation against

yet to be formally launched.

party monolithic republic and for abolishing monarchy. So far over 1000 people have been killed. The Maoists blew up a helicopter sometime back. Recently they killed a large number of police officials and villagers. The Maoists have their links with various Marxists-Leninists underground groups in Bihar and use their connecfor arms supply. Nepal has sought India's help in dismantling its Maoists' bases in the Indian territory and flush out

Nepal into a Communist one-

tions for sanctuary as well as But Nepal has tremendous the insurgents. But then India is

The Nepalese people might have got back their democratic rights after many years of sacrifice but not the desired stability to push the country ahead.

hydro-water potential. In early also has its insurgency prob-

Koirala has said if the Maoists are not curbed right now it will greatly destabilise his country's fledgling democracy. He said for the sake of democracy countering insurgency will be at the top of his government's agenda. But Communism and insurgency thrive where poverty is endemic. Seeking military solution only lingers insurgency. The only panacea is the political solution. It is to be seen in which way the new prime minister moves. Nepal was once the tranquil Himalayan Sangri La. A large part of the country is now simmering and festering with insurgency which is likely to further impoverish Nepal, officially the only Hindu Kingdom in the world. How long Koirala can himself survive in power is also to be observed.

Redstar over Nepal

M Abdul Hafiz elaborates the reasons behind Maoist insurgency in Nepal and how it is harming the country's growth

EMOCRACY means great thing when it works and deliver. Unfortunately it does not always do so and as a result aberrations are often noticed. In much of South Asia, democracy was already a ruling etho and in rest of it democracy sprouted fast in last one decade. But there also grew in tandem pockets of resistance intent upon capturing power in extra constitutional way and preaching violence. The naxalites once created havoc in West Bengal and Bihar states of India and the people's war group in Andhra Pradesh still rocks its countryside. The JVP (Janatha Vimukti Perurima), it may be recalled, almost captured power in Sri Lanka in early seventies. The so-called Sarbahara Party in South West Bangladesh often disrupted the country's fragile democratic process.

Now the Nepalese know with some trepidation the presence of a Maoist guerilla group in their country. If unchecked, Maoist violence in Nepal threatens to plunge the Himalayan Kingdom into a wider conflict and can be disastrous to the stability of a nation strategically wedged between Asia's two wary giants - China and India.

Centered in remote western region of Nepal the terrorist outfit styled 'Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist' (CPN-M) waged its 'people's war' since 1996 to establish what it called 'the new democracy' in the country by making Nepal a 'people's republic'. The Marxist-Leninist Party, one of the parent organisation of the UML (United Marxist Leninist) had resorted to similar violent activities in eastern district of

Jhapa some three decades ago. However the Maoists' origin is still shrouded in mystery. The UML, Nepal's premier leftist outfit which also shared power in a coalition government dismissed the Maoists' revolutionary claim while the analysts suspect that those terrorist elements serve the interests of the forces thrown out of power by 1990 popular movements. Whatever could be their motive no one — including the government - could any more ignore their potential.

The Maoists hit the news headlines early last year when they intensified their terrorist activities with a view to disrupting Nepal's general election due in May 1999. They spread fear and sensations by stabbing to death Gautam, a UML candidate from the western district of Rukum. Only a day earlier they also killed seven policemen in Dang district. A group of police team on way to the site of incident survived ambush laid down by Maoist guerillas. A chopper carrying the police team to mountainous region was also destroyed by them Later even if the election went off peacefully the guerillas grew in strength throughout the year. They became stronger in number and weapon. Earlier they operated with 10 or 12 men but now they come to the objective in groups of 60, 100 or even 200. They started with 'Khukri' to attack others. Now they have automatics which they handle

with skill. The assault on a police station of Rolpa district in western Nepal on February 19 last had however been the bloodiest strike yet in an ever escalating campaign of violence. In the

single operation the guerillas killed 15 policemen while injuring 20 others. The latest Maoist attack at Rolpa is, in fact, a wakeup call to the Kingdom's perennially bickering political establishment which is totally non-plussed at the audacity and impunity of the attackers. Yet the last month's massacre in western hills was hardly reflected in the capital where the ruling Nepali Congress remained bitterly locked in an infighting leading to the change of the prime minister. Even for the new government which would be embroiled in the parliament's number game for its survival, the Maoist orgy in a far-off hill is

hardly a priority. The coalition governments prior to the NC's coming to power during last election neither take the Maoist situation seriously nor was it in a position to take a bold decision on it. But even when the NC got a solid mandate last year it dithered for long on the issue because of its preoccupation with internal squabbling. At long last when the government reacted to the deteriorating situation with regards to Maoist violence it was curiously a typical law and order approach. It thought the problem to be within the jurisdiction and capability of the police and left the matter to be tackled by lawenforcing agencies. Overstretched, ill equipped and untrained for counter-insurgency Nepal's present police force has however been no match for the complexity and enormity of the problem posed by the highly motivated guerillas. Their usual reaction has been the summary rounding up, torture

and the execution of suspects drawn from among the ordinary and most often innocent village folk. There are evidences of human right excesses which have new repercussion and will beyond Nepal. According to Amnesty International Secretary General Pierre Sone 'more and more civilians are being caught in the crossfire' by the way the authorities are tackling the problem. It is, however, not hard to

trace the reasons for the insurgency. At the root of the Maoist uprising are rural poverty, unemployment, political neglect and growing disillusionment with the country's decade-long dismal experiment with multiparty democracy. In the wake of democratic movement of 1990 the ordinary people were inflated with high hopes a promises only to be forgot after the electoral games we over. Not only the elected governments could not deliver, a new wave of corruption swamped the country fanning popular discontent. A gradual loss of faith in electoral process has led many to side with CPN-M - which models itself on Peru's Shining Path movement to ultimately size power by force. Yet the authorities in Kath-

mandu tend to cast a blind eye to the underlying causes of the uprising and treat it only as a law and order problem. They do not seem to have taken any lesson from the many similar insurgencies of the region. It may still not be too late to pull back its potentially disasters escalation provided the government recognises the real dynamics which are essentially solid economic - behind the Maoist violences in the country.

LTTE Funding and Propaganda in the West

by Dushe Ranetunge

have emerged over the last 20 years from a "hit and run" operation to gaining conventional battlefield capabilities armed with tanks, artillery, mortars, multiple rocket launchers, its own navy, lethal suicide technology and the ability to mobilise thousands of trained cadres capable of taking on a conventional state army and defeating them in set piece battles. This military revolution of the LTTE has created a huge logistical requirement. and a need for continuous funding to maintain and feed the thrust of the liberation movement committed to gaining a separate state for Tamils. This level of funding is unprecedented in comparison to other liberation movements world-

With the Sri Lankan state, raising the stakes, every year in its annual budget, by increasing its annual military expenditure towards \$1 billion and beyond, the LTTE is under continuous pressure to increase and protect its funding base to maintain and enhance its military position on the island. Purchase of hi-tech weaponry by the Sri Lankan state will increase funding pressure on the LTTE and give the Sri Lankan army an overwhelming advantage in the battlefield.

match the resources at the disposal of the Sri Lankan state, it matches the military presence the LTTE. of the Sri Lankan state, by its highly trained and motivated cadres and with the use of suicide technology, to destabilise and weaken the Sri Lankan state by assassinating able political leaders who can rally the nation, and by carefully selectmotive of maximising propaimpact.

Until recently a high propor-

N military terms, the LTTE tion of its funding came in the form of monthly donations by the Tamil diaspora. This source of funding, while being satisfactory during the early stages of the liberation struggle with relatively low funding requirements, has increasingly proved to be unreliable and cyclical in nature, with increased funding requirements to finance and maintain the current level of logistics. The cyclical element of dias-

pora funding is dependent on the battlefield performance of the LTTE. When the Sri Lankan army is advancing, diaspora funding for the LTTE tends to fall. When the LTTE scores spectacular battlefield successes such as Mullaithivu, the Vanni debacle etc. diaspora funding for the LTTE instantly increases and then tapers off. There is also an increase in funding as a result of human rights catastrophes such as the exodus from Jaffna, Navaly church bombing, assassination of Kumar Ponnambalam etc. as such incidents are seen as "oppression of Tamils by the Sinhala Buddhist state".

The unreliable element of diaspora funding originates from natural wastage of the diaspora support base which erodes as Tamils move away from the movement/struggle and gets absorbed into the host popula-While the LTTE can never tion. Almost none of the second generation Tamils of active diaspora supporters contribute to

The LTTE organisations worldwide have attempted to introduce some stability to the flow of funding, by trying to counter this erosion and the cyclical nature. This is done by trying to impress upon the diaspora, of the need to maintain ing its military targets with the "Tamil" identity in a foreign land and by introducing and ganda and military/political controlling "Tamil" cultural activity. Beginning from the

1980as the LTTE mimicked the

(Palestinian Liberation Organisation) and the PKK (Kurdish separatists attempting to establish Kurdistan in Eastern Turkey and Northern Iraq) in staging Tamil cultural shows, sports events, movies, videos etc. catering "entertainment" to the diaspora population and ensuring control over such "entertainment" in order to raise funds. This was the first stage of a greater evolution which was to take place.

Since then, the word has got around and all those who organise such events make a handsome payment to the LTTE and in return they get "protection" by the LTTE security firm. The LTTE security firm in London is called the UTO (United Tamil Organisation) and the organisation has its offices in Eelam House, 202 Long Lane, which also is the LTTE's main office in the UK where both Anton Rajah and AC Shanthan operate from.

The armed forces, with Sri Lanka's many intelligence agencies engage in an investigative, data gathering, party political and paper pushing exercise, rather than engaging in offensive anti-LTTE operations in Sri Lanka and abroad.

the LTTE have been both directly and indirectly controlled and administered by the LTTE. The musical event planned for April 21st is indirect, with a show and handing over a payment to the LTTE. The sports festival in London last year in trolled and administered by the LTTE and AC Shanthan was physically present with his UTO

evolution was the setting up of world-wide on a commercial radio and TV stations. It began basis. This would give the Sri with the weekly hiring of a one' Lankan state instant and direct hour Tamil language slot in access to the Tamil diaspora Sunrise radio, a community world-wide and opportunities

radio station owned by an In- not only in terms of generating dian. Dr Lith, who has recently set up a station in Sri Lanka. It is now broadcasting in Tamil from 10-11pm Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays to a London based Tamil audience. Similar stations are broadcasting in Tamil in Paris and Toronto. The next step in LTTE broadcasting was the setting up of IBC (International Broadcasting Corporation), a satellite based 24 hour Radio station broadcasting in Tamil via the Astra satellite and cable channels into Europe(Astra satellite & from 1st March MW in the UK), North America(SW), Middle-east(SW), Sri Lanka(SW), India(SW), South Africa(SW) etc. The LTTE have a controlling interest in IBC and broadcast heavy LTTE content from time to time. Operating from a small office with a staff of 15, today IBC boasts that it reaches a world wide Tamil audience of over 600,000.

The significance the LTTE attaches to all this radio and TV activity can be gauged by a recent LTTE appointment to CTBC as its new production officer. He is Kathiravel Selvakumar alias "Raff" who is a wellknown LTTE intelligence leader who originates from Prabakaran's hometown, Val-The fund-raising activities of \vettithurai in Jaffna. He is noted for killing many innocent has been re-positioning itself, in

Lankan Tamil language broadcasts of the SLBC in competi-The second stage of this tion to the IBC broadcasts

commercial revenue in foreign exchange, eroding the LTTE fund-raising potential, but also the opportunity to carry out

The second threat to the LTTE diaspora funding base comes from the devolution package in Sri Lanka. "Mr Pink" while chatting to me at the sushi bar, with tears in his eyes over a pinch of "wasabi" (Japanese horseradish) explained to me, that in his opinion, the LTTE will never accept Chandrika's package. "Mr Pink" believes that the LTTE will blow away the Chandrika peace

The passing of a credible peace package is seen as a major threat to the LTTE, as a significant proportion of the Tamil diaspora and Tamils in Sri Lanka, including church groups, will no longer see the need to go on fighting and will withdraw their funding and other support from the LTTE. This would have a significant impact on total diaspora funding and would dent the LTTE's military presence in the battlefield and its ability to carry on fighting for Eelam.

In the light of these threats to the LTTE diaspora funding base, in recent years, the LTTE Tamil people and for hanging an attempt to reduce its rethem on lampposts in Jaffna. liance on diaspora funding, and The Sri Lankan political es- is directing resources towards tablishment is yet to awaken to becoming a self reliant organi-Tamil businessman running the these many LTTE strategies sation. There is an increasing abroad and respond to them in trend towards business acquisiany way. No attempt has yet tions and participation's by the been made to hire channels of LTTE, attempting to break out comparison was directly con- the Astra satellite, or to secure of servicing a predominantly other means of broadcasting, in Tamil client base, and reaching order to transmit the Sri out to the host population to raise funds.

> The LTTE is now operating an international shipping fleet (Balasingham's trip to London involved using an LTTE ship.), is involved in the construction business, Security companies,

TRO (Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation, a UK and Sri Lanka registered charity), real estate, investments, operating printing presses. Jewellery shops. International money transfers, controlling interest in the International Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), screening of Tamil movies all over Europe and north America, Tamil TV and radio broadcasting world-wide, organising various sports festivals, legal and pirated Video and Audio productions and now a control ling interest in Gnanam Telecom, operating from Paris, with branches in the UK, Germany, India and Bangladesh. The LTTE controls Gnanam Telecom in partnership with two young French Tamils and a north American. They visit London periodically to administer their UK business interests. This year, on 9th and 10th February, the Daily News newspaper in Sri Lanka ran two news items regarding a million dollar telecommunications swindle. The company mentioned was Gnanam Telecom based in

Paris in which the LTTE have a controlling interest. In March this year, a Sri Lankan newspaper, the Midweek Mirror reported that the LTTE have 11 ships. This information is several years old as the LTTE now have a far more formidable shipping fleet, several even having foreign crews. The printing press mentioned above is Vasan printers of 45c Crusoe Road, Mitcham, Surrey, which was purchased by the LTTE a few years back for an estimated £ 90,000. It is now used, not only to print LTTE material, but even the Kurdish terrorist group the PKK, uses it to print their propaganda and fund-raising material in London. The LTTE is known to have links will many of the terrorist organisations around the world.

Courtesy: The Island of Sri

Charges against Loyalist

Sugeeswara Senadhira writes

from Colombo

HREE opposition lawmakers have filed a contempt L of court application against Sri Lankan Sports Minister SB Dissanayake in the Supreme Court for his remark that the courts would be closed down if the constitutional bill is blocked and the judges who did not accept the bill could "go

home" Rajitha Senaratne and Segu Issadeen, Members of Parliament (MPs) of the main opposition United National Party (UNP), and P. Chandrasekaran of the Upcountry People's Front moved the Supreme Court. They have called for affidavits from all newspapers that published the minister's controversial statement and asked that a show-cause notice be issued to Dissanayake as to why he should not be charged for contempt of court for making such disparaging remarks.

opposition members, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jeyaraj Fernandopulle also remarked that the courts should be closed down if they unduly question the conduct of parlia-

mentarians. Rauff Hakeem, Chairman of maratunga government. Committees who was in the would be sealed if the judges ship."

tional package. The minister allege called on the judges to ei fall in line with the governi or leave their posts. He also parently said that Parliame too would be closed if the cons tutional bill failed to get the r

quired two-thirds majority. Chief Justice Sarath Silva instructed the Supreme Court registrar to call for affidavits from the editors and journalists of the three newspapers that published news items on Dissanayake's speech. Silva took this action when 11 judges of the t apex court urged him to ascertain whether Dissanayake's statement could be considered as contempt of court and whether the minister could be charged with contempt of court. Fernandopulle pointed out that in 1976, when a contempt of court issue was raised regarding a comment made by then Prime When Dissanayake's speech Minister Sirimavo Banwas criticised in Parliament by daranaike, the Supreme Court ignored the matter. "As it had set a precedent, the Supreme Court should have ignored the current controversy involving minister Dissanayake," he said

in Parliament. Opposition leader Ranil Fernandopulle clashed with Wickremesinghe said Disthe Speaker when he urged Dis- sanayake's speech was a clear sanayake to refrain from criti- indication of the dictatorial cising the apex court. However, path adopted by the Ku-

"It is very clear that the gov-Speaker's chair, ruled that the ernment is leading towards a minister's references to the state similar to that of Ger-Supreme Court should be ex- many in 1934," Wickpunged from the hansard. Dis- remesinghe, the UNP chief, sanayake, one of the most said. "We will fight against trusted lieutenants of President these anti-democratic practices Chandrika Kumaratunga, is al- and we ask the people to rally leged to have remarked at two around us for the sake of public functions that the courts democracy against the dictator-

tried to block the new constitu- -- India Abroad News Service