

Vibhasha

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Ommission of Tamil from Currency notes is Wrong : Central Bank agrees to correct error

A complaint was lodged by the Centre for Policy Alternatives with the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission regarding the non – inclusion of some essential

phrases in Tamil language recently issued currency notes When the complaint was taken up for inquiry the Central Bank accepted the mistake that has occurred in general and gave an

undertaking to give equal space to all three languages when currency notes are printed again.

Whilst Tamil Language has been accepted as an official language as well as a National Language, the phrase “This currency note which is issued on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka is valid for any monetary transaction within Sri Lanka “ is not included in the Tamil Language in the currency notes issued even recently. The complaint made was based on this drawback.

In the complaint it was stated that it amounts to discrimination against those citizens using Tamil Language and that the Governor of Central Bank as the Head of the Institution has to take the responsibility.

Accordingly, the Centre for Policy Alternatives appealed to the Human Rights Commission to recommend to the Governor of the Central Bank to include the above mentioned phrase in Tamil in currency notes which are to be printed in future.

The inquiry regarding the complaint held on the 16th of July. It was attended by the Controller of Exchange, Deputy Controller of Exchange and the Legal Officer of the Central Bank on behalf of the Governor of Central Bank. Mr. Lionel Guruge and Mr. S G Punchihewa, Attorney – at – Law, the lawyer on behalf of the complainant also attended the inquiry.

The Central Bank agreed to issue currency notes under a new model which does not violate language rights, in the event of printing currency notes again and to issue a statement explaining the facts to the complainant.



Language is Common Property

The picture above is of a name board exhibited on land controlled by the Army situated at Mullivaikkal Road in the Mullaitivu District.

The Army tries to emphasise that this property is owned by the Army. It is clearly expressed in Sinhala. But it is completely distorted in the Tamil Language. What is written can be pronounced as “Idu ranu wakku urpa iriki kani”. But the correct version is as follows:

“Iru ranu wattatiku uriya kaniagum”

On earlier occasions Vibhasha Newsletter highlighted the details of similar name boards exhibited in North and East regions which distort the Tamil Language. But this has not yet gained the attention of those concerned.

This photo was published in the front page of Yaal Osai newspaper on 6th August 2012.

Photograph : M Newton
From Yaal Osai Newspaper
2012.08.06

Report of LLRC not yet available in Sinhala and Tamil Languages

Although eight months have passed since the publication of the report of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission, it has not been published in Sinhala or Tamil languages.

Various community organizations and academics have brought this issue to the notice of those responsible in the Government. Even though it was the Sinhala and Tamil people who suffered from the thirty years of war, it is such an unfortunate situation, they say, the above report is not published so far in the Sinhala and Tamil Languages.

National Plan for implementation of LRRC recommendations, now ready

The Cabinet has granted approval for the National Action Plan with the aim of implementing the recommendations made by Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission. Also, the responsibility of such implementation has been delegated to relevant institutions including Ministries.

Of these, the implementation of recommendations pertaining to the spheres of Languages and culture have been basically delegated to the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration and its institutions. Apart from this, The University Grants Commission, Ministry of Justice, Police Department, President's Office, Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs have also been delegated the responsibility of implementing certain recommendations of LLRC.

The Action Plan has been formulated by the Task Force chaired by Mr. Lalith Weeratunga, Secretary to H E the President.

According to this Action Plan, as well as naming the relevant key institution for implementing the recommendations, a precise time frame has also been declared.

At a special media briefing arranged for this purpose, Mr. Lalith Weeratunga, Secretary to President stated that this Action Plan encompasses those recommendations specially selected and all the main spheres of concern.

Recommendations pertaining to the spheres of languages and culture, the key institutions which are delegated with the responsibility of implementation and the time frame fixed for such implementation which are all included in the Action Plan, appear on page 5 of this issue of Vibhasha.

Special award for native books translated into Sinhala and Tamil

According to a proposal put forth at an informal meeting arranged by Sinhala – Tamil Journalists forum for Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim journalists, Deshabandhu Sirisumana Godage has decided to offer a Special Award for Sinhala and Tamil translations of native books. Mr. Godage stated that the award will be presented at the Godage Annual Literary Award ceremonies commencing from 2012.

This proposal was put forth by Mr. Madulugiriye Wijeratna who is a veteran journalist and a translator. The proposal was commended by all present at the get-together. Mr Wijeratna pointed out that granting continuous awards to Tamil literary

works of India and other countries has in fact obstructed the progress of the native literature.

He further highlighted that initiating the grant of such a special award in the field of literature will be very beneficial in promoting cordial relationships among Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities. The journalists present on the occasion who expressed their ideas were of the view that this proposal should gain the attention of the state literary awards sub committee and other organizations which are involved in granting literary awards.

Technology is highly influential in the sustenance of language

Prof J B Dissanayake

Whether we like it or not, today, most surprisingly, technology influences language, according to Prof J B Dissanayake.

The professor aired these views at a press conference held on 2nd July at JAIC Hilton, Colombo. The objective of the press conference was to introduce new programmes that have been launched to propagate information and communication technology in native languages.

Standardisation is the means of resolving conflicts which have arisen due to various incompatible methods. According to the Sri Lanka Information and Communication Technological Agency, International Standardisation termed UNICODE designates an approved number to every single subcode in spite of whatever the language is, whatever the mode is, and whatever the background under which they are operated.

Under the International UNICODE standardization, the Sri Lanka Information and Communication Technology Agency, Sri Lanka Institute of Standardisation, Institute for Computer Studies in Colombo University, University of Moratuwa, Science Land and Microsoft have all collaborated to prepare two standards for coding and planning of keyboards.

According to the above scheme, the Sri Lanka standards for Sinhala Letters Code for transfer of information is Sri Lanka standard 1134 (2004). Similarly the Sri Lanka standard for the Tamil Letters Code for transfer of information is Sri Lanka standard 1326 (2008). Both these are compatible with UNICODE standard. These standards instruct on how to store letters in Computers. Accordingly Sinhala, Tamil and English letters can be included in the same document. The Agency states that already keyboard drives have been designed for use with computers according to Sri Lanka Standards.

Professor P. W. Epasinghe, Chairman of the Sri Lanka Information and Communication Technology Agency, Mr Reshan Devapura, Chief Executive of the same Agency and a large number of academics in the field of Information Technology participated at this press conference.

Literacy in Tamil Language for State Officers and Citizens of Dehiwela

Under the programme of imparting bilingual literacy to state officers of the Dehiwela, Divisional Secretary Division, a Tamil language training course was held recently for nearly 400 nursing staff attached to Colombo South Teaching Hospital. It was chaired by Hon. Vasudeva Nanyakkara, Minister of National Languages and Social integration.

This course is conducted under the Bi-lingual Education programme of the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration under the supervision of Mrs Champa N Perera, Divisional Secretary of Dehiwela. It is organised by Mr. A N Sarath Thilakasiri, National Integration Promotion Officer.

Night classes in Tamil Language have already commenced for language societies in the Dehiwela Divisional Secretary Division.

Victories in Languages Beyond just Words



**Announcements in train services in all three languages –
Circulars have been issued
Another Victory for languages -
Name boards of buses to be in all three languages.**

The above are a few headlines that appeared in earlier editions of Vibhasha Newsletter.

However after a few days of seeing such encouraging headlines, the reports we hear are not so promising.

According to the information and reports, the pledges made by some state institutions which say that they will implement the language policy are confined only to words and news.

Same charge could be made against the Police too. Their usual statements indicate that they implement the language policy properly, and that normal duties including acceptance of complaints are carried out in both languages.

But if citizens who come to the police to lodge a complaint, experience quite a different situation, it cannot be avoided that they will harbor a feeling that they are deprived of the opportunity to use their own language and that they are being cheated. This is a very grave situation.

“Sri Lanka has a long history of cheating people in the language issues. There is no need to re-emphasise the bitterness experienced in the final outcome. Hence the Heads of these institutions should pay more attention to this problems.”

It may be that they have adopted certain fruitful means to honestly resolve these problems. But it is their duty to scrutinize the situation and identify reasons for not continuing such fruitful methods.

It is not sufficient to adopt only one step to resolve the problems. It is a long journey which should be continued step by step. If the journey has stopped with one step, they should understand that the problem lies therein.

This is why a monitoring method is necessary in the resolving process. It should be discerned how and where the process has stopped and the reasons for such discontinuation, through a monitoring mechanism. The reasons have to be understood clearly. Then only sound solutions could be continued

It has become quite normal to say that

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Sri Lanka has a long history of cheating the people in the language issues. There is no need to re-emphasise the bitterness experienced in the final outcome. Hence the Heads of these institutions should pay more attention to this problems.”

these solutions could not be continued due to lack of necessary resources and especially that the lack of human resources has hindered the process.

But in a recent statement made by Mr. S Sridharan of TNA, it was pointed out that even when there are Tamil police officers in Police Stations, people are not allowed to make complaints in Tamil.

If this accusation is true, it is the responsibility of the authorities to explain the reason for it.

Mr. Sridharan vehemently denies the statement that 80% of the police Stations in the North use Tamil language for their activities. He challenges to prove such statement if possible. It is certainly a very serious challenge.

If Tamil people living in the areas with a majority of Tamil citizens cannot lodge a complaint in the police in their mother tongue, it is definitely a serious situation. This problem is now prevalent not only with the police, but also in fields like health services, transport sector, and the defence sector. In the meantime, the government also claims regularly through media that it has taken a number of steps to solve such problems.

The headlines highlighted at the beginning of this article which were published by us in previous editions, suggest such steps taken by government. It may be that the government is genuinely concerned with commencing certain procedures to solve the problems.

But the question to be raised is, why such

process does not continue further in a regular manner.

Minister Wimal Weerawansa voiced his own experiences in this regard recently. He states as follows :

“Very recently when letters of appointment was given by a certain state institution, two Tamil comrades from the North were given the letters in Sinhala language. This is wrong. The letters of appointments to those two comrades should have been issued in the Tamil language. I issued immediate instructions to remedy this error. Language is a very important factor for national reconciliation. Also, language is a very sensitive issue. If one cannot receive a letter of appointment one's own mother tongue, it is a problem. For some it may not seem to be a problem. But it should not be forgotten that serious problems could emerge due to such sensitive problems. The reason for this is the lack of concern shown by some officials.”

Accordingly, the Minister points his finger at the officials.

As a major part of the responsibility to implement the decisions taken lies with the officials, such accusations cannot be ignored completely. But we should not forget that there are many more factors that influence the implementation of the decisions.

Of these, one major factor is the attitudinal factor. It is unavoidable that the attitudinal attachments and commitments harboured by a person, will influence decisively in implementing language policies. Such attitude overrides the existing Laws, Acts and Regulations.

This attitudinal background is not nurtured by officials alone. It is political.

Hence it is not at all logical to declare that it is only the officials who are responsible for non implementation of existing Acts, Laws, regulations and pledges made from time to time.

In brief, this means that it is essential that there should also be an attitudinal change in this country for the Laws, Regulations, Acts and Pledges to be implemented.

However, it is pertinent to say that the country needs a formal monitoring procedure for successful implementation of the ways and means already adopted for solving the problems.



First part of a series of articles on Tamil language rights in Sri Lanka

There is a long history of dialogue on Language Rights in Sri Lanka. In that history various angles of analysis have been published on this matter.

This analysis that complements them is submitted by a reputed former civil servant in Sri Lanka, Dr. Devanesan Nesiah.

Dr. Devanesan Nesiah is a former senior officer in the administrative service in Sri Lanka who has acquired a wealth of experience through working as the government agent in the districts of Jaffna, Mannar and Batticalloa.

He worked as the government agent in Jaffna at the beginning of the 1980s and later retired as the permanent secretary to the Ministry of Environmental Affairs.

Presently he is continuing his social mission as an academic and a civil society activist. In this article he mainly focuses attention on Tamil Language rights.

Sinhala Language rights have been largely secured since the Official Language Act of 1956. I will therefore focus mainly on Tamil Language rights and, to a lesser extent, on English Language rights. It would be useful to begin with a brief historical outline.

English was the Official Language through the British period and into the first decade after independence. The agitation for the use of National Languages in the administration and Education was led by the Jaffna Youth Congress (JYC), prominent among whose leadership was the late Handy Perinbanayagam. The Gandhi-inspired JYC, comprising almost entirely of young school teachers and senior students, established cordial relationship with all the political leaders

outside Jaffna (Kandyian and Low Country Sinhalese, Moor and Malay, Hill Country, Vanni and Eastern Tamil) as well as with major Indian leaders including Gandhi, Nehru and Rajagopalachari. The JYC peaked in the 1920s and early 30s, but gradually faded thereafter.

In keeping with JYC policy, leading schools in Jaffna taught Sinhala, Tamil and English as compulsory languages. They wanted independence immediately and, for this reason, opposed the Donoughmore reforms as too little too late and boycotted the 1931 State Council elections under the Donoughmore reforms. In 1931, the boycott was a 100% success in the Jaffna Peninsula and even the Tamil nationalists who did not approve of the boycott contested outside the Peninsula

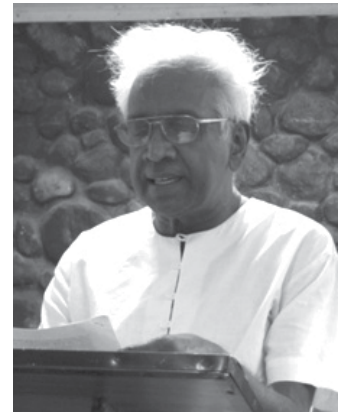
Invalidated Ideals of Jaffna Youth

Dr. Devanesan Nesiah

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The 1956 elections in which the two major Sinhalese led parties, viz. the SLFP (part of a coalition termed MEP) and the UNP campaigned for Sinhala as the only Official Language, widened the ethnic divide.

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the medium of instruction in schools. Before it was put to the vote an amendment was moved by V. Nalliah to substitute Sinhala and Tamil for Sinhala only. The amendment was accepted and adopted. But some communal ill will and a feeling of insecurity among Tamils and Muslims had been created. The Tamil Congress won nearly all the seats in the Northern electorates in the 1947 election to the new House of Representatives. The UNP co-opted the Tamil Congress into supporting legislation excluding the Hill Country Tamils from citizenship and voting rights. S.J.V. Chelvanayakam quit the Tamil Congress and formed the Federal Party (ITAK) on this issue but the Federal Party was overshadowed by the Tamil Congress in Jaffna in the 1952 Parliamentary elections. From 1956 onwards in the wake of Sinhala only, Tamil leadership was taken over by the Federal Party led by S.J.V. Chelvanayakam and sustained for over two decades till he passed away in the late 70s. The Federal Party campaigned vigorously and successfully against secession

(eg, G G Ponnambalam who contested and lost in Mannar). The boycott obviously could not be sustained and there was no boycott when the 1936 State Council election came around. Unfortunately, the boycott call by the JYC in 1931 backfired in that the young anti-imperialist intellectuals of the JYC were dismissed as romantic idealists. This gave the Tamil Congress a head start over the Youth Congress and G.G. Ponnambalam maintained his dominance so gained over Tamil politics for two decades since 1936. Over this period the interethnic goodwill built up by the JYC gradually eroded.

In the mean time J. R. Jayawardene moved a resolution in the State Council in 1944 to make Sinhala the only Official Language and

Continued on page 12

The plan for implementing the recommendations of the LLRC report on Languages and Culture

The National Action Plan prepared for implementing the recommendations of the LLRC report has been published. The following is the plan coming under that for implementing recommendations relevant to the fields of languages and cultures.

Recommendation	Activity	Key Responsible Agency	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Time frame
9.245 - Make necessary budgetary provisions available on a priority basis for teacher training and staffing for a trilingual nation by the year 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formulate an Action Plan to ensure effective implementation of the Language policy. 2. Examine the role of the Official Languages Commission and identify areas that need strengthening. Include remedial steps to be taken, in the Action Plan. 3. Implement recommendations of the "Presidential Task Force on Trilingual Society by 2020." 4. Design a monitoring and evaluation Plan to assess whether the programmes implemented are effective and whether there is compliance with policy. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration 2. Presidential Task Force on Trilingual Society 	Effective Monitoring of the implementation of the Trilingual Initiative	Ongoing
9.246, 247, 249 - Make it compulsory that all Government offices have Tamil-speaking officers at all times. No district or province should be categorized in terms of language. Police stations should have bi-lingual officers on a 24 hour basis. A complainant should have the right to have his/her statement taken down in the language of their choice. As a temporary measure, software programs can be used for translation until long term policies and measures take effect				
9.248 - Ensure that the Language Commission is an authority with effective powers of implementation and branches in every province.				
9.250 - Implement Interim Recommendation regarding language. Station interpreters at Police Stations using retired police officers with bilingual fluency				
Use interpreters in public offices as appropriate to facilitate communication until long term programmes are put in place.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Monitor observance of language rights recognized in the Constitution 2) Identify additional remedial measures required to ensure observance of language rights 	Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Monitoring activity completed 2) Additional remedial measures identified and implemented 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 12 months 2) 24 months
9.251 - Select a committee of experts in education to review the quota system with a view to introduce a merit based admission system. (Admission to Universities?)	Examine the current admission policy with a view to recommending any changes that would improve the criteria for admissions.	UGC / Ministry of Higher Education	Expert Committees Established.	12 months
9.252 - Reduce and eventually eliminate the inequality in the availability of educational facilities in different areas of the country	Implement the current programmes in keeping with the "Mahinda Chintana" to upgrade facilities in schools islandwide	Ministry of Education	Upgrading of educational facilities in schools	36 months
9.253, 254 - Develop a proactive policy to encourage mixed schools serving children from different ethnic and religious backgrounds and greater interaction among students [e.g. twinning schools, student exchange programs, Reconciliation Clubs, National Youth Council exchange programmes]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formulate a policy that would encourage ethnically mixed schools 2. Ensure that schools include programmes to promote inter-community interactions. 	Ministry of Education	The establishment of a policy encouraging ethnically mixed schools	24 months
9.257 - Ensure public Universities have ethnically mixed student populations with a choice of courses offered in all three languages.	The present policy caters to this requirement in an appropriate manner. However a group of experts can be mobilized to consider the present system and recommend any changes that would promote the trilingual process	UGC/ Ministry of Higher Education	Identification of a group of experts	12 months

Recommendation	Activity	Key Responsible Agency	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Time frame
9.258 - Conduct inter-provincial and national sports competitions.	Presently, national competitions ensure Islandwide participation. However, a programme could be implemented to actively promote sports in the former conflict areas.	Ministry of Sports	No. of such competitions successfully conducted.	Ongoing
9.261, 263 - Constitute a Multi-Disciplinary Task Force that includes representatives from the Presidential Secretariat, External Affairs, Defense, Foreign Employment, the Private Sector, and Academia, to propose a programme of action to harness the untapped potential of the expatriate community, and to respond to the concerns of the so-called 'hostile diaspora groups,' and to engage them constructively with the Government and other stakeholders involved in the reconciliation process.	1. Formulate programme to harness the untapped potential of the expatriate community, through Sri Lankan overseas Missions.	M/External Affairs	1. Programme formulated.	3 months
	2. Implement programme through Overseas Missions		2. Programme implemented	3 months
9.270 - In consultation with inter-faith groups, facilitate the establishment of a mechanism that serves as an early warning and early diffusing system to ensure that communal or religious tension or friction does not lead to conflict	1. Continue implementation of the Civil Defence Committee programme of the Police and Community Policing programme. 2. Implement capacity building programmes for the Police officers in the CDC's	Dept of Police	Implementation of such programmes and wide publicity of such programmes	6 months
9.274, 275 - Create greater awareness of linguistic and cultural affinities. Translate and publish major literary works from Tamil into Sinhala and Sinhala into Tamil and disseminate them among school children and youth. Encourage cinema, TV and stage drama productions that highlight commonalities and mutual understanding between communities.	1. Examine and introduce appropriate measures that could be adopted to create awareness of cultural affinities including through translation of literary works	1. M/Cultural Affairs	Programmes that would promote cultural affinities and commonalities between communities	12 months
	2. Engage the cultural sector to highlight commonalities and mutual understanding between communities.	2. M/Cultural Affairs		
9.277 - Maintain and support current practice of the National Anthem being sung simultaneously in two languages	Examine the implementation of this recommendation vis a vis the current Constitutional provisions, at the PSC.	Presidential Secretariat	The implementation of the recommendations of the PSC	1 year
9.283 - Enact and strictly enforce deterrent laws to deal with 'hate speech' relating to ethnicity, religion, and literature	1. Examine the adequacy of penal legislation to deal with hate speech. 2. Introduce law reform if necessary.	M/Justice	Submission of draft legislation to Parliament.	1 year
9.285 - Set aside a separate event on National Day to express solidarity and empathy with all victims of the tragic conflict and pledge our collective commitment to ensure that there should never be such blood-letting in the country again	Continue the present practice of expressing solidarity as one nation and one people and of pledging a collective commitment to non-violence and peace so as to ensure a non-recurrence of the past events that led to the internecine conflict	1. Presidential Secretariat 2. Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration 3. Ministry of Public Administration & Home Affairs	Sustainable peace and harmony amongst all people	---

Cordial relations among nationalities should be inculcated from the school days

President Mahinda Rajapaksa

emphasises at the inaugural ceremony of the Social Integration Week.



“Cordial relations among the nationalities is something to be inculcated from childhood. But we establish Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim schools separately and teach them to live separately since their childhood. Equality among nationalities has to commence from the schools. Cordial feelings can be instituted during the childhood in the schools itself”, said President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

The President expressed these views at an inaugural ceremony held at Temple Trees to declare Social Integration Week.

The aims of Social Integration Week is to re-socialise our own brothers and sisters who have become marginalised or excluded from society due to disappearances, natural disasters, harmful incidents or any other causes, to restore their lost rights, privileges and social status and to harness the concern of the whole country and the nation towards this purpose.

Expressing his views, President Mahinda Rajapaksa further stated as follows.

“It is now three years since we have achieved the great victory and the whole country has been brought under one flag. You have to concede the fact that it is a very difficult task to protect this great victory in the same way that it was so very difficult to achieve it. This victory can be protected and sustained only by ensuring that such destructive acts like terrorism or any other kind, do not occur in this country again. Hence, I like to emphasise that this event is organized to take a step forward to protect that great victory achieved by our country.

During the time that terrorism prevailed, the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs and National Integration was established

Compiled in association with a keynote speech at Temple Trees, by H. E. President Mahinda Rajapaksa on the event of the inaugural ceremony of Social Integration week, held July 16-22nd 2012 organized by the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration.

to harness cordial relations and understanding among the nationalities.

Now we have changed the name to the Ministry of National Integration which evolved as the Ministry of Social Integration. This profound responsibility is now delegated to this Ministry which is handled by a suitable Minister. Now the responsibility of this Ministry is to build equality not only among the nationalities, but also among the citizens of this country. We have to build a great personality with a broad accommodative heart. You will see that it is a great and important task.

There were conflicts and differences among people for thousands of years. But the solutions to these problems came along during the same period. Thousands of years ago Lord Buddha in his sermons preached that though differences among animals existed as limbless, biped and quadruped, no such differentiation is seen among humans. There is no difference as higher or lower among nationalities. You have to understand how important these preachings are to the world and to our country. This is the common preaching of all the religious leaders. Hence, it is not only that we accept such teachings. We believe that we have to follow and abide by these principles. The difficult task is to

abide by these principles.

During Presidential Elections some used the caste problems in a very biased manner. These problems which were brought up at the Parliamentary Elections held during that year, and were extended in to Parliament when some of them who were elected stooped down to the level that such issues were brought up continuously.

I remember those days when D M Rajapaksha and D A Rajapaksa fought against such caste issues. It was my father, D A Rajapaksa who brought up the proposal before the Parliament that those who do not wear any garments to cover the upper part of the body above the waist due to suppression by caste system, should be allowed to wear such garments. It was a Tamil member of Parliament who seconded this motion.

So it is evident that both our nationalities have enough problems to be solved within ourselves than problems between the two nationalities. Both our groups can get together as nationalities that have solved internal problems. Both our nationalities can get together to solve problems within and to defeat the narrow-mindedness that prevails, among us.

In 1970 I entered the Parliament as the youngest M P. During those times, there were villages which were named signifying the

occupation of the villages aligned to the caste systems. I brought up a private proposal before the Parliament seeking to change such names of villages and to change the names and surnames which depict the caste classification. This is an example to show that we, the government has a great concern to build equality among all people. That concern to build equality among all people was there within us then and it still continues to be with us to date.

We have got used to a narrow minded concept to think that our Universities are for us only and no others can join them. We cannot achieve national unity through such narrow minded ideas. The honour we have towards religions is very important. Our society is diverse not only with regard to nationality, but due to many more other factors.

Since childhood we have to adapt to living with others of various religions, nationalities and also with handicapped persons. In our young age itself we have to learn that all are equal and hence to live in harmony. The attitudinal changes could be changed only with such environment.

I have gathered vast experience, after working in a society which ridicules and insults rural villages. When I launched ‘Mahinda Chinthanaya’. It was nicknamed ‘Medamulana Chinthanaya’. What is Medamulana? It is a rural village where innocent village folk reside.

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A number of font types are introduced to surf the Internet in Sinhala – Tamil languages

(2012/05/13 – Silumina)

A number of software and contents designed to facilitate working with computers and Internet through Sinhala and Tamil languages was introduced at a function held recently at JAIC Hilton Hotel, Colombo.

These software and contents have been designed under the direction of Sri Lanka Information and Communication Technology Agency. Sinhala language fonts designed under UNICODE standards were introduced on this occasion in accordance with Sri Lanka Standards

1134:2011.

6 types of stylistic and artistically designed Sinhala and Tamil fonts were also introduced simultaneously.

These font types are designed in such a manner that they can be used in preparing computer documents and to design websites with highly creative and artistic aspects.

Professor J B Dissanayake who addressed the gathering said that the Sinhala Language which is already an alluring language became more polished due to information and communication technology.

A new standardised certificate for Sinhala and Tamil letters

Pathum Wickramaratne
Achala Dharmasena
(2012/05/07 Lakbima)

The Sri Lanka Information and Communication Technological Agency (ICTA) along with The Sri Lanka Standards Institute has taken steps to issue a new standardisation certificate for Sinhala and Tamil letters.

With the aim of empowering the Information Technology sector with Sinhala and Tamil

languages the twelve new styles of Sinhala and Tamil fonts were introduced recently.

The ICTA Institute has also introduced an international Unicode keyboard which could be used for Sinhala and Tamil languages after developing the software.

By this new system, a single document could be computerized in Sinhala, Tamil and English Languages from anywhere in the world.

Bilingual Counters for 76 Divisional Secretary Offices

Anura Balasuriya
(2012/06/02 Divaina)

The Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration has taken steps to establish bilingual relief counters at all the Divisional Secretary offices situated in the areas where Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people live together.

These bilingual relief counters are to be established on the advice of Mr Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Minister of National Languages and Social Integration.

The objectives of this programme is to make it easy for people to get their requirements attended to in the language they speak (either Sinhala or Tamil language)

The Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration states that 76 relief counters will be established in Divisional Secretary Offices situated in the areas where more Sinhala / Tamil language speaking mixed populations reside. Areas like Mawanella, Wellawatte, Beruwala and Wattala will be declared as bilingual areas. During the first phase such relief counters will be opened in 46 Divisional Secretary Offices. According to the Ministry, these counters are now functioning at 14 Divisional Secretary Offices.

The Ministry says that these areas will be declared as Bilingual Divisions by the Government shortly.

Training in Sinhala and Tamil languages has been imparted to more than one lakh of State Officers

Minister Vasudeva Nanayakkara

(2012/05/22 – Dinamina)

Anura Premalal

Mr Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Minister of National Languages and Social Integration points out that training in Sinhala and Tamil Languages has been given to more than one lakh of State Officers during the period following the end of the conflict.

He also emphasized that in addition a number of programmes have now been activated to implement the official language policy with the aim of safeguarding the language rights of all nationalities in the country.

Mr Vasudeva Nanayakkara expressed these ideas at a press

conference held at the auditorium of the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration on 21st May 2012. He further stated that this huge task is undertaken by the Department of Official Languages, National Institute of Language Education and Training and Official Languages Commission, the three institutions which come under his Ministry.

He said that imparting Sinhala and Tamil languages training to state officials and others is a continuing process.

In addition language societies are established. By now one thousand such societies have been registered. 478 language societies are now functional. The remaining societies will commence their activities before

the end of this year.

The process of declaring bilingual areas has now started depending on the statistics of the population in the relevant areas. Already more than 30 areas have been declared as bilingual. Another 43 are to be declared shortly. Mobile Services were held in North and East regions to provide and issue documents such as National Identity cards, Birth Certificates, Marriage Certificates and Death Certificates which people need daily so that the fundamental rights of all the people including those from the North and East are safeguarded. This has brought relief to lakhs of people.

Birth Certificates are issued to the children born to parents

who have fled to India due to the conflict. Further a scheme has now been devised to institute judicial action against those institutions who defy the official language policy or do not conform to the provisions of the policy. Such places will be investigated. There will be a monitoring technique established for review of the above activities.

Mr. Nimal R Ranawaka, Attorney-at-law, Chairman of Official Languages Commission, Mrs Seetha Withanachchi, Chairman, National Institute of Language Education and Training and Mrs Ratna Ranasinghe, Assistant Commissioner of Department of Official languages also participated at this media conference.

மும்மொழியில் விண்ணப்பங்கள் விநியோகிக்கப்படுவது கட்டாயம்

It is a deliberate lie to say that 80% of complaints to Police from North are recorded in the Tamil Language

Thinakkural 13/05/2012

Mr S Sridharan of Tamil National Alliance states that it is a deliberate lie to say that usage of Tamil in Police stations in North is 80%. He challenges to bring forth the books of complaints of the Police stations and show if the complaints are recorded in the Tamil language.

He was expressing his views on the statement made by the Senior Superintendent of Police of the North Province who said that Police Stations in the North have achieved 80% on the usage of Tamil language.

He further stressed that it is very rarely that complaints are recorded in Tamil in the Police Stations in the North. He said that he is ready to explain the real situation if summoned. Complaints are recorded only in Sinhala language. Any accident or incident is recorded only in Sinhala. Thereafter it is translated to Tamil.

"Even if present, Tamil police officers do not get the chance to enter the complaints in Tamil language. Tamil officers get rebuffed. Under these conditions it is a complete lie that the usage of Tamil is 80%. If the entries are made in Tamil, I challenge them to show those log books openly.

"Earlier, a Sinhala Government Agent was appointed to Mannar. Now a Sinhala Government Agent is appointed to Vavuniya. With a false statement of using Tamil up to 80% and with such recent appointments he asks how reconciliation in the country could be expected. He further says that the government is appointing a Parliamentary Select Committee to solve the national problem under these conditions. According to him, if the government is concerned with reconciliation, they have to find solutions for the basic problems of the Tamil people.

The Government should implement the Recommendations the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission regarding the official language as soon as possible.

Language Rights are violated by Politicians themselves - *Lionel Guruge*

Sudar Oli 01/05/2012

K Bharathirajah

The Government is acting in an inconsiderate manner regarding Language Rights and language policies which are bound by human emotions. The Centre for Policy Alternatives emphasizes that the evaluating recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission should be implemented by the Government so as to grant freedom of languages and its value to that society. Mr Lionel Guruge, Coordinator of the Community Participation unit of the Centre for Policy Alternatives poses a question as to why the Government which could provide vast allocations of money for defence expenditure during the period of war, cannot allocate financial provisions from the Budget to implement the language policy which is closely bounded by humane emotions. This idea was expressed at a Media discussion regarding promotion of Sri Lanka Language Rights held recently at the auditorium of the National Library Services Board. He further observed that Tamil language has been accepted as a national language and as an official language in Sri Lanka in 1988. Though it

was accepted during that era, rulers are very slow in taking action to implement it. The government should take well planned courses of action to implement the National Language Policy. Present day politicians of Sri Lanka do not pay any attention to language rights. Due to the mode of their actions, there is an acute danger of breakdown of the relationship among the various nationalities. Hence, government officials should act very attentively. We are engaged in various activities aimed at ensuring language rights and language policy for every society. Up to now, our projects have been implemented in a number of districts in Sri Lanka. Even with the present situation of accepting Sinhala and Tamil languages as national languages, the official language activities performed in Tamil language is very sparse. Accordingly, the government should pay attention to this matter and take steps to grant the language freedom to minority nationalities who speak their own language. Mr Guruge explained that in an instance where a person violates language rights and language policy of a certain society, complaints could be made against him to the the Official Languages Commission, the Human Rights Commission, Ombudsman and the Supreme Court.

Chief Minister's public apology for exclusion of Tamil Language

Promise made to protect Tamil language

Weerakesari 07.04.2012

Badulla

'It is a wrongful act to reject Tamil language in the proceedings of the Uva Provincial Council. I publicly apologise for this matter at this Council. Similar mistakes will not happen in the future, said Mr Shashindra Rajapakshe, Chief Minister of Uva Provincial Council. At the Uva Provincial Council sessions held recently, Mr K Velayutham of United National Party said that Tamil Language gets overlooked at the Uva Provincial Council. He submitted facts regarding the non-inclusion of Tamil language in the invitation card for Uva Vasantha Festival.

Replying to this charge, Chief Minister Shashindra Rajapakshe stated as follows: "I plead pardon openly for the wrong that has been done. Hereafter, I will not allow the Tamil language to get rejected at any instance". He added that he will implement the use of Tamil language on an urgent basis and that invitation cards to various functions will include a Tamil version too. He said he is sorry that the invitation cards to Uva Vasantha Festival were not in the Tamil language also. Mr. Velayutham expressing his views said that there is no need for the Chief Minister to plead pardon openly. "I am sorry that happened. It is quite enough, if all the documents are published in Tamil language too. I quite appreciate the quick action taken by the Chief Minister."

Memoirs of facing the challenge

Minister D E W Gunasekara

When we pay attention to the subject of Official Languages, it is pertinent to pay attention to the efforts made up to now to solve the problems which are aligned to it.

Here are a few excerpts from a speech made by Mr. D E W Gunasekara highlighting his experiences regarding this issue at the time when he was functioning as the Minister of Constitutional Affairs and National Integration. Mr. Gunasekara now functions as a Senior Minister.

He explains the various experiences and problems he had to face and also the actions taken to solve those problems during the period he was functioning as the Minister of Constitutional Affairs and National Integration.

These issues were highlighted by him when he addressed a consultative council organized by the Law and Social Trust on the subject of "Strengthening Tamil Language as an Official Language". These excerpts were taken from the book titled, "Language Rights of Sri Lanka, Empowering Tamil Language as an official Language".

These past experiences will be useful to win over the present and future challenges.

One of the basic reasons for the problems that have sprung up within the country at present could be attributed to the Official Languages Act not being implemented properly.

I wish to say a few words regarding the initiatives that I tried to do during the past two years as the Minister who

“

Accordingly the first Cabinet memorandum submitted by me to H E The President, Mahinda Rajapaksa was the establishment of an amendment to the section 13 of the Official Languages Act.

was in charge of the subject of Official languages. It is not the language problem that looms large as the National Problem. It is a problem aligned to politics.

Tamil Language has been accepted as an Official Language by the Official Languages Act. It is declared as an Official Language of the Sri Lanka Democratic Socialist Republic. But it could be observed that the Official Language Act is not implemented properly.

Accordingly the first Cabinet memorandum submitted by me to H E the President, Mahinda Rajapaksa was the establishment of an amendment to the section 13 of the Official Languages Act.

Thereafter a cabinet sub-committee comprising myself, Hon. Minister Sarath Amunugama (then Minister of Public Administration and Home Affairs) and Hon. Minister Janaka Bandara Thennekoon (then Minister of Local Government and Provincial Councils) was appointed to report to the Cabinet on how the Official languages Act is implemented in the state sector.

Taking further action in this regard, a Secretaries

Committee comprising Secretaries of the Ministries of Finance and Planning, Public Administration, Constitutional Affairs and National Integration was appointed to introduce the necessary amendments.

After considering the recommendations made by both the above Committees and conditions recommended by Official Languages Commission, I submitted a bill to Cabinet requiring that bilingual status is necessary for state service. It received Cabinet approval in 2006.

Accordingly, the following decisions are now been implemented.

- A payment of Rs. 15000/- or Rs. 20000/- or Rs. 25000/- as relevant for three levels to be paid as a once and for all payment to state officers who become proficient in the second language
- An additional increment
- A condition for the new entrants to state service that they should obtain proficiency in the second language during the first five years.

If the State service is to be bilingual in an efficient manner, the 60000 strong state officers



have to be trained properly. However, lack of teachers is a great problem for the schools as well as for the language training institutions. Also, the teaching capability of teachers should be improved.

The institute of National Education and Training was established by the Act No. 26 of 2007 to take action on the above mentioned issues.

When I was delegated with the responsibility to implement the 13th Amendment, I obtained a clear understanding of the challenges that have to be faced and the reasons why such implementation has failed so far.

The first reason is the lack of political will on the part of the government. The second is the lack of political leadership who could accept the Tamil Language as an official language and continue to work accordingly. The third reason is the lackadaisical approach to implementing the laws regarding Official languages. The fourth reason is the lack of concern in the civil society towards paying attention to the minority with a different language.

There were varied responses for the cooperation extended by the government to implement the 13th amendment. However the majority of the members of the All Party Conference gave a favourable response. I was able to harness the necessary

cooperation politically.

I commenced a programme to organize district-wise workshops and conferences for Secretaries to Ministries, Heads of Departments and other senior state officers.

Awareness programmes were held in all the Ministries on a District-wise basis, I received blessings of all religious dignitaries in this regard.

I took action to implement two important Cabinet decisions.

They are –

1. To make the second Official Language compulsory for new entrants to Public Service commencing January, 2007.
2. To grant incentive allowances for those who are already in service.

State service can be grouped into three main categories. They are the Management level, Middle level and Lower level. The first proficiency examination was held in April 2008 and there were more than 5000 applicants sitting for Tamil Language proficiency. Nearly 1700 applicants from the North and East sat for Sinhala language proficiency tests.

An institution with residential facilities for training public officers in all three languages to gain trilingual proficiency is now established at Agalawatta.

According to the 16th Amendment, 29 additional District Secretary Divisions have been gazetted as trilingual areas. Another 29 will be gazetted shortly. These figures do not include the bilingual areas declared on the basis of Nationality ratio of population. A complete language audit has been performed in the bilingual areas in the Districts with minorities, except for Hambantota.

The Ministry of Higher Education has agreed to conduct courses in Sinhala and Tamil in the Universities. These include courses in translation too.

In addition, the UNDP had introduced a Polytechnical Distant Education System and it is anticipated that it will be beneficial in providing solutions to the requirements of a large number of

people.

Favourable responses are being received for the following new steps taken by the government

- Tamil language has been introduced as a subject in the Sinhala medium Schools.
- There are institutions being established to teach Tamil language in South.
- Computer Training Courses have commenced in the private sector.
- Tamil Language courses are conducted at Universities of Kelaniya and Peradeniya and also at the Open University.
- Tamil Language is taught at 59 Pirivena institutions including those of Malwathu and Asgiri Sects.

I am awaiting cabinet approval to appoint Tamil speaking public officers to all the institutions to offer service to the Tamil speaking population.

I am aware that it is a great challenge that I face. There are endless practical problems. This is a task that had to be done in either 1957 or in 1987. But now it is 2007, when we try to handle this task.

It took fifty years for us to create a Sri Lankan Civil servant since English language was introduced as the official language of Sri Lanka by Colebrook – Cameron Reforms in 1833.

175 years have elapsed since introduction of English language to our country. But it is only 10% of the population who are proficient in English. It is not a acute factor that Sinhala language was declared as the Official language or that it continues to be the language of the majority. When scrutinizing the previous records, what I understood was that it took 14 years from 1956 to 1970 to establish the Sinhala language as the official language and it was done in four stages.

When I consider the present state of the country. I am very happy in a humble manner to have searched for solutions, even in a small way, to a problem which had been neglected for so long.

A leaflet published to educate the people on the Language Rights (No. 1)

The Human being, Language and the Right

Being human is equal among various nationalities. But humanity can be expressed in various languages.

if we could accept the common nature of the languages we have to have another king of humanity. That is respecting of the language of the other nationality. Because ones humanity cannot be alienated from his language.

In a country with several languages, honoring another's language is that person's right. Peace dawns in such an environment. When a person is deprived of this right he feels that he is not treated as a human being. He then feels great pain of mind. Then anger and hatred will emerge. The problem created by subjecting a certain group of the population to language related pain is handed over to be solved through the use of gun powder. That is how thirty years of war was begun.

It is true that the war is now over . But no one has won. If such discrimination continues to exist, collection of gun powder will happen. That is how an administrative or executive action or acts of neglect will turn into explosive over time.

Question

1 How does the use of a language become a right?

2.How does such a right become violated?

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Invalidated Ideals of Jaffna Youth

from page 4

at every election till 1977. During this time the Federal Party enjoyed the support of the Muslims of the North and East. Muslim representatives of the region voted against Sinhala Only whereas the Muslim leaders based outside the North and East voted for Sinhala Only with the sole exception of Senator A.M.A. Azeez (originally from Jaffna) who quit the UNP on this issue and voted against the Sinhala Only Bill.

The 1956 elections in which the two major Sinhalese led parties, viz. the SLFP (part of a coalition termed MEP) and the UNP campaigned for Sinhala as the only Official Language widened the ethnic divide. The Marxist LSSP and CP campaigned for Sinhala and Tamil as official languages and, having earlier signed a no-contest pact with the SLFP, secured a significant number of seats outside the North and East, but made little impact in the North or East. The CP won one seat in the North and, countrywide, the LSSP ended up as the second largest party in Parliament. Neither they nor the Tamil parties sought to forge an effective political alliance. Such an alliance, also incorporating the parties representing the Hill Country Tamils and the non-Left liberal Sinhalese, may well have been able to form a government after the 1947 elections and changed the course of our history, avoiding the loss of citizenship and voting rights of Hill Country Tamils, the exclusion of Tamil as an official language, and the succession of riots, pogroms and the civil war that followed. In the event the communal rift widened over the years. The Federal Party swept the 1956 polls in the North and East and the MEP in the rest of the country. The ethnic polarization that began even

“Another significant feature in India is that it is federal with many Linguistic States, each governed predominantly in the Indian National Language of that State with provision for numerically significant linguistic minorities within each State to use their languages. For example, Tamil is the Official Language of the State of Tamilnadu but there is provision for pockets of those speaking Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu within the boundaries of Tamilnadu to use their respective languages.”

before independence hardened, thawed from time to time, but is now firmly set and again hardening.

A consequence of the Muslim MPs representing electorates outside the North and East voting for Sinhala Only in line with the dictates of their political parties (UNP and SLFP) was the emergence of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress under the leadership of M.H. M. Ashraff to safeguard the interests of the Muslims of the North and East. This party has since secured some electorates outside the North and East and emerged as the leading party of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. Till his untimely death in a tragic accident Ashraff's relationship

with the Federal Party remained good.

The 1981 census (the last published all island census) indicated that the Tamil speaking communities (Sri Lankan Tamils, Muslims/Moors and Upcountry Tamils), then constituted 30% of the population, the Sinhalese (Kandyan and Low Country) 69% and the others less than one percent. Since 1981 the ethnic proportions have changed significantly on account of emigration (disproportionately high among Tamils). In terms of language use, a small section of Tamil speakers, especially Muslims, have gained Sinhala literacy. However, Sri Lankans remain predominantly monolingual. The manner in which Sinhala was made the Official Language and the accompanying and consequent violence has impeded the spread of Sinhala literacy among Tamils. Sri Lanka's education system also has not been conducive to the spread of bilingualism and trilingualism. This is in sharp contrast to the situation in India where, despite much lower literacy levels, the education system is geared to promoting multilingualism, which has been a major factor in building national unity in that country.

Another significant feature in India is that it is federal with many Linguistic States, each governed predominantly in the Indian National Language of that State with provision for numerically significant linguistic minorities within each State to use their languages. For example, Tamil is the Official Language of the State of Tamilnadu but there is provision for pockets of those speaking Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu within the boundaries of Tamilnadu to use their respective languages. In turn, significant pockets of Tamil speakers within the borders of Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra are able to use Tamil in education and in

dealing with the State. All these contribute to nation building. In contrast Sri Lankans remain predominantly monolingual and the administration does not cater adequately to the national minorities (mostly Tamil speakers) or to the regional minorities (whether Sinhala or Tamil speakers). In consequence the Sri Lankan Nation is now ethnically more fractured than ever before.

It is likely that the proportion of Sinhala speakers now is over 75% and that of Tamil speakers less than 25%. On the other hand the laws in respect of language use have changed. Sinhala was made the only Official Language in 1956 and this was embedded in to the 1972 and 1978 Constitutions. The Thirteenth Amendment of 1987, in some convoluted text introduced Tamil also as an Official Language (without undermining the historical status of Sinhala as the Official Language) and English as the Link Language. The relevant article 18 of the Constitution now reads as follows:

- 18 (1) The official language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala.
- (2) Tamil shall also be an official language.
- (3) English shall be the link language.
- (4) Parliament shall by law provide for the implementation of the provisions of this Chapter.

By virtue of the 16th Amendment of 1988 Tamil was affirmed as a language of administration throughout Sri Lanka, and its new status spelt out in greater detail, though again in convoluted text. Tamil too is now an Official, Administrative and Court Language and English is the Link Language, but also used in administration to a less extent. The revised articles 22 (1), (2) and (3) of the Constitution now read as follows:

(To be continued)

Cordial relations among... from page 7

By naming 'Mahinda Chinthanaya' as 'Medamalana Chinthanaya', what they did was to ridicule the village. That is how the people of Cinnamon Gardens ridicule a rural village.

Through the lessons learnt by us, there is no discrimination as to whether some are poor, rural or handicapped. Now we have opened the door for anyone to rise up to a higher level. We have taken education, science and technology to the villages. We have opened the doors for development and nullified the feeling that the village cannot. We have opened the doors for the handicapped people to achieve higher levels in the fields of Sports, Arts and Education and for

them to engage in Sports festivals, Arts festivals and finally enter Universities.

Today, we have granted a special concession to children from districts like Mullaitivu to enter Universities. Furthermore, the government decided to hold examinations in Tamil medium only to those residing in these areas to recruit officers for administration, accountancy and agriculture, so that they will be able to serve in the areas that suffered through terrorism in the North and East. The Administrative Service Examination will be held shortly. The Accountants Service Examination has been gazetted. We are ready to

recruit Agriculture Officers too.

Even before the LLRC report was published we have implemented the recommendations, But please remember, even the LLRC report did not propose these actions in their recommendations. When these proposals are implemented, one could comprehend the changes that have taken place in society.

Sinhala people do participate at Tamil festivals and Tamil people participate at Sinhala festivals. Then they work together. We have opened up avenues for these activities. We commemorate not only Buddhist festivals, but festivals of all other religions. The purpose is to let these cordial feelings to seep through into society. People of this country should benefit from

this solidarity and amity. Accordingly, we have to build up our motherland where we were born.

Establishing equality in the society is our victory".

The President addressing the gathering in Tamil, stated as follows,

"I like to speak in Tamil also, which is my brother language, I warmly welcome all of you who have gathered here today. Everybody in this country should be able to speak in all three languages, Sinhala, Tamil and English. We fervently need that dignified society. We can all live together without any differences in nationality, religion or region. That is what I need. That is my ambition for the future".

Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Minister for National Languages and Social Intergration, Mrs Malkanthi Wickramasinghe, Secretary to the Ministry, Madam Maria Aidek, Deputy Ambassador of the German Embassy in Sri Lanka also aired their views at this function.

We will build a bridge

At a cordial get together organized by the Sinhala – Tamil Writers Guild held recently, nearly fifty Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim writers representing the whole Island including the North and East, participated. Among the large number of issues discussed at this meeting, were the better formalization of the scheme to translate books in to the Sinhala and Tamil languages, to coordinate and build relationships with the literary persons in the plantation sector, to encourage writers who write books with the theme of ethnic harmony and to publish the 'Deepa' magazine which is the publication of the guild, continuously, giving a meaningful touch to the cordial get together, the poems sung by the writer, Denagama Siriwardhana were the cynosure of all at the meeting. Translating these poems into Tamil Language at the same instance, poet Maimoon sang them in a very emotional manner. The poet emphasises that the common man who toils hard to make a living does not have any difference whether he is in South or North. According to the poet, unity is the only solution for the oppressed wherever he is.

This is the poem sung by both the poets Denagama Siriwardhana and Meimoon.

The Bridge

My Village is in South
Your village is in deep North
Dear Comrade, Does any difference
Exist between these two villages?

Under the same sun and moon
We toil hard to sow the seeds in the fields
And to bring the harvest to our homes
Isn't it the same, the sufferings we had

Adorned with degrees
Learned but without any job
We would meet many a youth
Anywhere in North and in the South

Due to those cruel and ignorant men
Bloated with power and excessive wealth
People in South do suffer enough
Isn't it true that it is the same in the North

When there is no difference
In deep sighs with streaming down tears,
We, the human beings from North and South
Are just the same within this world

How did the hatred emerge
From there that love should be born
I witnessed the scorching of our motherland
Through that feeling of deep frustration.

Extinguishing those vicious sparks
Expressing our brotherly affection
May we bring both sides together
By building a bridge across
Which shall be undestructible,
forever and ever.

- Denagama Siriwardena

Protecting your Language Rights

If there are no officers in the Police station to record your statement you can request them to allow you to write the statement in your own language and to paste that paper on to their log entry book.

Any person whose Language Rights are violated, can complain to the Official Languages Commission seeking redress.

Direct Telephone Nos for Complaints and Investigation

0112878687

Official Languages Commission

Chairman / Secretary

4th Floor, Bhasha Mandiraya

341, Kotte Road

Rajagiriya

E – mail : olc@slt.net.lk

Information regarding the Country in Eight Languages

Currently, a scheme is in operation to install a computerized system at the arrival points of foreign tourists to the country so that they will be able to get information regarding Sri Lanka in eight different languages.

Already, such a system has been installed at Katunayaka International Airport. It is expected to install such systems at a number of institutions including tourist hotels in the near future.

The report of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission

Recommendations for the of Media

The following is the plan for implementing the recommendations relevant to Media Freedom and the Right to Information in the National Action Plan for implementing the LLRC recommendations.

Recommendation	Activity	Key Responsible Agency	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Time frame
<p>9.115a-c Take all steps to prevent harassment and attacks on media personnel and institutions.</p> <p>Give priority to the investigation, prosecution and disposal of such cases. Properly investigate past incidents of such illegal action.</p>	<p>1. Take appropriate action to ensure media freedom.</p> <p>(a) Pursuit of grievance mechanisms - Complaints to Police, FR Applications to SC, Complaints to Press Council (with a wider jurisdiction and enhanced powers)</p> <p>(b) Complaints to NPC against Police inaction.</p> <p>2. Complete investigations into current cases</p> <p>3. Promote responsible journalism and consider a code of conduct for journalists.</p>	<p>1. Ministry of Mass Media & Information</p> <p>2. Dept of Police</p> <p>3. Press Council.</p>	<p>1. Effective redress to grievances of media personnel</p> <p>2. Investigations completed</p>	12 months
9.115d - Ensure the freedom of movement of media personnel in the North and East	<p>1. Identify impediments to free movement, if any, of media personnel in the North and East</p> <p>2. Take appropriate action to remove impediments, if any</p>	<p>Ministry of Mass Media and Information</p> <p>Dept of Police</p>	<p>1. Impediments identified, if any</p> <p>2. All impediments, if any, removed</p>	6 months
9.115e - Enact legislation to ensure the right to information	Cabinet to decide the suitable time frame for drafting legislation.	Ministry of Mass Media and Information	The Cabinet Office will be the interface for the inter action with the Cabinet of Ministers on the acceptance of such legislation by the legislature.	TBC



Responses

Language Problems cannot be solved through legislation alone

“In Practice, a Constitution will be successful not by the articles included in it, but on the attitudes and the activities of the person who implements it.”

This is a statement once made by a popular legal writer in India regarding a Constitution. If we are to assess how meaningful the above statement is, we have to compare it with the articles on Language, Rights contained in the Constitution of this country.

There is no other statement like the above to understand the problems in the usage of the languages in spite of a large number of laws, regulations and circulars on the subject of Language Rights in Sri Lanka.

On one hand, it is clear that the reason for this situation is attitudinal problems in persons who hold the responsibility to implement the laws and regulations regarding Language Rights.

Hence it is very important that while strengthening laws and regulations regarding Language Rights, there should be attitudinal changes too. A newsletter like ‘Vibhasha’ could perform many a tasks to augur attitudinal changes. However, it is not a responsibility that could be shouldered by ‘Vibhasha’ newsletter alone. All responsible persons and other media institutions in the country should pay attention to this task. Today the country needs a comprehensive plan of action.

I hope that attention will be given to this issue by those responsible including the community organizations who are concerned with Language Rights in this country.

Jyantha Hewage
Athurugiriya.

Teacher shortage is acute in the Hammingford Tamil College, Parakaduwa

The teacher requirement for Hammingford Tamil College, Parakaduwa is 18. But at present there are only 8 teachers. Among them, there are only 3 trained teachers.

The only English teacher who was there at the College received a transfer in year 2008 with the consent of Sabaragamuwa Provincial Council. 5 teachers were transferred during the period 2009 – 2012. But none of them were replaced.

There are no approved teachers for five grades in the primary section. There are about 300 students receiving education in this College from Grade One to Grade Eleven.

540 New English Teacher Appointments

The government has taken steps to recruit 540 English teachers to remedy the English teacher shortage for Advanced Level Classes.

Out of 1000 graduates in Sri Lanka, there are less than 200 English graduates. Hence Mr. Bandula Gunawardene, Minister of Education says that suitable persons from among English Diploma holders will also be recruited for the vacancies.

A Trilingual Electronic Dictionary introduced to the market

SALA Enterprises has taken steps to introduce to the market an electronic dictionary compiled in all three languages, Sinhala, Tamil and English.

This was launched at a function held at Galle face Hotel Colombo on 4th of July. It is anticipated that this will be of significant benefit to the promotion of National Languages.

Language problems worsens in Ukraine

A crisis situation has erupted in Ukraine which was a State that belonged to the Soviet Republic in the past. The reason for the disturbance is a language problem.

After the Perestroika movement that prevailed in the eighties, Ukraine broke away from the Soviet Republic and became an independent state.

The reason for the present disturbances in Ukraine is a bill submitted to Parliament by its current President on the usage of languages. The objective of this bill is to declare the Russian language as an official language in addition to the Ukrainian Language that is used at present. The majority of the country speaks Ukrainian and it is a minority that use the Russian Language. The present President of Ukraine is of the view that

the Russian language should also be an official language. Ukrainian nationalists are against this bill. Their organizations are of the view that if this bill gets approved, the Russian speaking population could cede away from Ukraine in future to join Russia.

Similar an agitation against the language rights of minorities existed in Sri Lanka from the time of gaining independence to the fifties and it led to severe commotion and conflict. The result was a protracted war. However, after two decades, Sri Lanka was able to declare both languages as official languages. But in practice Sri Lanka has not been successful up to now to solve the problems that arise in implementing language rights policy.

Sandun Hewage

Write to us

Language Policy of Sri Lanka is a topic that has been subjected to a lot of discussion. Through the ‘Vibhasha’ Newsletter we try to give more life to this discussion. We believe that the contributions by the readers is very important in building up a healthy discussion. Please write to us of the various view points you harbor, any information or news. ‘Vibhasha’ Newsletter is open to all of you who are concerned with Language Rights of this country,

Please forward to us your ideas, proposals, responses, problems regarding Language Rights.

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Towards language diversity in the North

We have pointed out in our previous 'Vibhasha' publications how state institutions have violated the Official language policy in exhibiting the relevant name boards. We continuously endeavoured to show how Local Government Institutions have violated Language Rights in fixing and exhibiting name boards of streets in Colombo and its suburbs.

Some of our media professionals who recently toured Jaffna area witnessed a similar situation. The difference was that name boards in Colombo are in the Sinhala Language only, while name boards in Jaffna are only in Tamil.

This is a situation which should be changed promptly. In Jaffna as well as in Colombo, name boards of all State Institutions should appear in both Sinhala and Tamil languages.

These few photographs show that a number of State institutions in Jaffna have their name boards exhibited only in Tamil and English languages.

We eagerly await changes occurring in Jaffna too, exhibiting language equality.



Manipay memorial English College
Manipay (In Tamil Only)



Hindu College Manipay



M O H Office



Valigamam South West Pradeshiya Sabha
Sub Office – Manipay Pattinum



Water Works Department



Valigamam South West Pradeshiya Sabha
Head Office – Manipay



Transport Services (Only in Tamil)



No entry to heavy vehicle
Valigamam Pradeshiya Sabha
(Only in Tamil and English)



Divisional Educational Office
Sandilipay



Services of Fire Brigade
Jaffna M C



Public Library of the Valikamam
South West Pradeshiya Sabha

