

Vibhasha

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Centre for Policy Alternatives lodges 185 complaints to safeguard Bilingual language Policy

There have been 185 complaints made to the Official Language Commission and to the Human Rights Commission by the Centre for Policy Alternatives against the violation of the language rights, between the period 2011 – 2013. While the majority of these have been won by the Center for Policy Alternatives, under the program Promoting Language Rights of Minorities, it is continuing to be active in this regard.

A course conducted by the

Colombo University Human Resource Institute in the year 2011, was held only in English and Sinhala mediums, thereby violating the language rights of the Tamil citizens. Therefore, it was decided to take court action by Centre for Policy Alternatives against the University Grant Commission. Besides this, a decision has been made to take court action, by the Centre for Policy Alternatives with regards to notices of the railways and trains not appearing in all three languages, bus destination

names not appearing in all three languages and for not implementing the tri lingual policy for drug (pharmaceutical) labels as well. The Centre for Policy Alternatives, by complaining to the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission against the lack of certain imperative text on the most recently issued currency notes and for government banks, private banks and finance companies presenting most of their loan agreements only in English language, has won many

victories in this area.

When the law protected by the 12(1) of the Constitution is being solved and activated, the protection offered by the law should be impartial. These complaints have been made based on the fact that this basic right has been broken.

Besides the direct victory achieved as result of presenting this complaint, the activists for language rights say that the enthusiasm and the awareness created in citizens about their language rights is also a great victory.

Development in the trilingual policy in the Dayata Kirula Exhibition 2013

At the Dayata Kirula exhibition site held in the Ampara district, in order to activate the trilingual policy, the Official language commission has decided this time to have an awards presentation. As a result of this, it was noted that the trilingual policy being activated on every stall in the exhibition site, was very successful. Yet, some of the trilingual notices appearing in the stalls were found to be defective. In some of the stalls, the fact that there was no translation done also raised question marks. In order to make certain that all work related to trilingual functions successfully, several groups, each comprising of 10 persons were also appointed. Around this time, the best stall to display the language policy in a very effective manner at the Dayata Kirula exhibition site was that of the National Rupavahini Corporation.

The winners of the Student Essay contest on "Language rights and Humanity"– turn to page 15.



The Iranamaduwa tank flows only in Sinhala

The Iranamadu tank located in the Kilinochichi district has a historical heritage connected with the lives of the Tamil speaking people in the North. But yet the Tamil people who visit this tank have nothing to read written in any notice board in the language of their mother tongue. Even the name of the tank is written in Sinhala language as shown by this

photograph. All other notices and statements connected to this are of the same nature. This is one example to understand the sensitiveness towards the language rights, by those responsible in the administration of the Northern Province of this country.

More information and photographs regarding this appear on page 16.

A society that deals with languages gets ready in the Western Province

Establishing Language Societies is being done successfully in the Western Province. Language Societies that have already completed their registrations are now ready to start on a lot of programs. While work for the registration of more Language Societies is being done even at this very moment, the department that conducts workshops at

community level of the Center for Policy Alternatives, states that they hope to create an increase in the awareness of the study of languages and the right to languages among the various categories of society. Accordingly, at this moment Peter Keneman Language Societies at Maligawatte in the Colombo District, Vadulla multi language institution, Kolonnawa, Suhada Tamil Language

Institute, Walpola, Galwala Language society, Dehiwela and the United Friendly Language society at Bauddhaloka Mawatha have been established. An agent from the Language society told Vibasha that there is a great interest shown in these areas to join up with these Language societies and the latter have expanded in these areas and have already registered themselves.

Translation work done on the day of convocation and appointments of Graduates were not successful.

The translation work done at the convocation held at the Sugathadasa Stadium to hand over appointments to 50,000 graduates with the president attending as the Head of State was reportedly a total failure. This was stated by those who participated in this award presentation. Since most of the participants were from the North and East as well as from all parts of the Island, the majority of them felt the need for a translation in Tamil. But, those who participated alleged that the translation done was not accurate and it was incomplete. As a result of this, they said they were put into a very difficult situation and after the award presentation ended, they had to return home with them not being aware at all of the statements made. Furthermore, they added that in future, when such presentation ceremonies are organized at the national level, if due consideration is given to have the translation in all languages in a good manner, it would be a great example for the country.

21st of February – International Mother Language Day

The 21st of February has been set aside as International Mother Language Day. The objective here is to widen the awareness of society with regards to the mother tongue. In connection with this, a number of programs were conducted throughout the country. Of all these programs conducted, the commemoration program held by official language department with the Embassy of Bangladesh had a greater

importance. At the event, held at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, the Chief Guest was the Minister for National Languages and Social Integration, Hon. Vasudeva Nanayakkara. The Adhivasi Chief, Uruvarige Vannila Aththo, the High Commissioner for Bangladesh, the Commissioner of Official languages Mr. K. N. Jayasinghe, and Professor A. N. O. Dharmadasa participated in this program. The certificates and

awards of the writing contest held in conjunction with this program, were also presented to the winners. A similar program was organized by the popular Sinhala Teacher, Mr. Upul Shantha Sanasgala in conjunction with International Mother Tongue's Day. A new Sinhala alphabet with 64 characters was also planned to be introduced on this day by him at an event at the Rotary Club of Nugegoda.

One day workshop of Tamil drama in Jaffna.

A one day workshop on Tamil drama was held at the Vaithithvara Hindu College yesterday. This was for directors, producers from the North, and for teachers who were interested in drama. One objective of this workshop was to exchange experiences between the Sinhala and Tamil drama artists. The Ministry of Culture and Arts, Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration, and the Department of Cultural Affairs, the division of the government Drama of the Department of Sri Lanka Arts came together to conduct this workshop.

Third stage starts, of English as a Life Skill

Titled, Skills for Life, the third stage of English education programme started last February. DVDs and a handbook on tools required for teachers were distributed among schools. The objective was to develop skills in the English language. Almost three and a half years since the

program "English Language as a Life Skill" was started, the Convener of the Presidents Welfare Force, Mr. Sunimal Fernando said that the motive of this program was to generate a young generation of people who can communicate with the world.

Some government officials do not give the Tamil Language the position it deserves.

Deputy Minister, Muththusivalingam

The Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Mr. Muththusivlingam says that in buses belonging to the Sri Lanka Transport Board and some private buses, the destination name is still not displayed in Tamil. This is more clearly seen in the Nuwara Eliya District. Issuing a special notice

with regards to this situation, Mr. Muththusivlingam says that the reason for this is that some government officials are not willing to accept Tamil Language according to the terms of the new official language policy. At the same time he, condemned this action very strongly.

A tri lingual school for Vavuniya.

On the 11th of February, a foundation stone was laid by Minister of Parliament for Hambantota, Namal Rajapakse in Bogasweva, Vavuniya to build a school which is complete in all aspects and which can conduct lessons in all three languages. It has been planned to build this school in such a way where facilities will be available for three thousand children to have their education. 20 acres of land have been set aside for this project.

Lets unite to safeguard our Language Rights

Panama Experience



We will never forget the pleasant night we spent at the residence of a Sinhalese family. This is more valuable to us than being treated at a five star hotel.

When celebrating Human Rights Day in this country, what happens at most times is that, either a conference will take place or there'll be a notice in the newspaper, an announcement in the media or a media celebration takes place.

The aim was to be different this time and try to make today a day where a person will experience something that is connected to his day to day happenings. This sort of an attempt is very rare. In conjunction with Human Rights Day, this type of a rare program was held at Panama village in the Eastern Province. This program was held on 11th, 12th and 13th of December at the Panama village. People both from the Muslim and Tamil communities from the Panama village as well as from Vavuniya, Akkaraipattu, Mannar and Jaffna attended this program. This was a program where the minority communities of this country came together to promote their language rights and to share their experiences with each other.

By the afternoon of the 11th, the community playground and the community hall of Panama were filled with people who came from Vavuniya, Akkaraipattu, Mannar and Jaffna.

After the welcome ceremony, the people of Panama selected all

into small groups and invited them to come and stay with them in their homes.

The next day began with all of them meeting together and sharing their experience of the previous day.

Gadhadheeran from Jaffna, after sharing his experience of the previous day said, "from yesterday evening until now, we were accommodated at a house belonging to a Sinhalese householder in Panama. They treated us very well. This is the first time we experienced such a thing. To see the relationships, which were torn apart as result of the war, now being restored is a joyous thing."

Ahmed, who came from Mannar shared his thoughts in this manner. "We were given transport facilities, Food, lodging and everything else was provided for us. We will never forget the pleasant night we spent at the residence of a Sinhalese householder. This is more valuable to us than being treated at a five star hotel."

Senvakumar Sundaramalar, who came from Vavuniya is a secretary of a Language Society.

These were his thoughts. "As a secretary of a Language Society while working with both Sinhala and Tamil communities by understanding their needs, I was overjoyed to share their experiences. The relationship that was created between us is something that is moving forward. We are also ready to show them our gratitude."

Jayantha Seneviratne, representing the Sinhalese living in Vavuniya said this, "In Vavuniya, we live as minority community. Yet, the Tamil people live with us as if they were our own relations. In Panama, we experienced humanity devoid of religious or language barriers. This

has to be carried forward."

Mr. Lionel Guruge, Coordinator for the community outreach programs of the Centre for Policy Alternatives which paved the way for this program, while wishing this program the very best, shared his thoughts in this way. "A day like today dawns very rarely. Therefore, this is a historical day for a number of reasons. A few Societies to have got together and using Panama as the base, to start this exchange program between the communities of Tamil and Sinhala, is something that has been timed to perfection.

You came from the North and the East and spent a historical day with the Sinhalese people in Panama. In the future, the Sinhalese people will visit your homes.



The Tamil people live with us as if they were our own relations. In

Panama, we experienced humanity devoid of religious or language barriers. This has to be carried forward.

By sharing awareness, friendship and humanity between us, I believe that in the future we will be able to work without any conflicts.

Mr. David from the British High Commission, who participated in this program as an observer, shared his thoughts in this manner. "though I am a British citizen, I am in the process of learning Sinhala. You too may be learning English and Sinhala in this same way. We

have come here to make an on field observation of the language rights of the people living in the North and Eastern Provinces. We saw here both areas of conflict and other things that made us happy and as well. The Sri Lankan government is following a tri language policy. All ordinary citizens should benefit from this. In order to make this successful, there is a responsibility that you as citizens should bear. After these ideas were exchanged, the people did a field tour of the area. By visiting the Lahugala Magul Maha Viharaya, Pottuvil Pradeshhiya Sabha and the Pottuvil Police Station and by using the information provided by police, the people were able to gain a lot of experiences.

Mr. M. S. Abdul Wasir, Chairman of the Pottuvil Provincial Council, addressing the gathering, explained the work of their council this way. "The population living within our provincial Council limits consists of 9% Sinhalese and 73% Tamils. But our duties are performed in all three languages. We have the facilities to serve all people who come here for our services, in a language that they prefer to be served. All who have visited our premises today can see that all name boards and all notices are displayed in all three languages. Because of this, there is no delay in attending to the needs of the people and they will not face any difficulties. It is our policy to use a language which is understood by our community when sending letters and addressing meetings. Not only that, all our name boards within our council limits are worded in all three languages. In order to make the language policy of the government successful, the support needed at ground level is provided by us."

When the people visited the Pottuvil police station, the situation there was explained by the acting Officer in charge I.P. Mr. Riyas. "About 90% of the complaints we receive are from the Tamil people. A few are received from Sinhala. The complaints are examined by me. Without leaving room for any injustice to the complainant, both human and physical resource needed to write the complaint in a language preferred by the complainant is available. Since this is an area where the majority of the population is Tamil speaking people, a unit which functions in Tamil has also been created.

Continue to Next Issue

Dr Devanesan Nesiah is a reputed former civil servant and a senior officer in the Sri Lankan public administration who has gained a lot of experiences by working as a Government Agent in the districts of Jaffna, Mannar and Batticaloa.

In the early years of 80's he served as the GA in Jaffna and later became the secretary of the Ministry of Environment. He was in that position until retirement.

At present, he is contributing to society as a reputed intellectual and a civil social activist.

In this article he focuses on several long term and short term measures that should be followed to assure Tamil language rights.

In this article the emphasis is given to the short term measures.

It is suggested that in any province in which the language of administration and public record is Sinhala, Tamil is declared as an additional language of administration and public record in those A.G.A. Divisions of the province in which the proportion of Tamil speaking persons is not less than 12 1/2 percent and, likewise, in any province in which the language of administration and public record is Tamil, Sinhala is declared as an additional language of administration and public record in those A.G.A. Divisions of the province in which the proportion of Sinhalese is not less than 12 1/2 percent.

Long Term Measures

The team has not visited any offices in the North East or in the Central, North Central or Southern Provinces, and is not in a position to report in respect of these regions. Our survey has covered many offices in the Western, North Western, Uva and Sabaragamuwa

Part three of an article series on Tamil Language Rights in Sri Lanka

Some long term solutions to Language problems

provinces. A consistent pattern has emerged of a glaring lack of Tamil language proficiency in virtually every office audited at all levels, although many of those offices serve populations of which very substantial proportions are Tamil speaking.

The highest priority should be given to correcting oral, reading and writing language deficiencies. Unless this is done, the legal requirements in respect of using the Tamil language in administration cannot be met. It is essential that the specific language capacity of each unit of the public services must be such as to meet the needs of the population in the language medium they are most comfortable with.

While all citizens have the same rights in all parts of the Island, it may not be pragmatic to seek to ensure that every office in every A.G.A. Division has the same level of competency in all three languages. Most offices may have Sinhala or Tamil as the language of official record; many may have both; a few may have English too. But all offices need to have minimum competency to transact office business in all three languages. We therefore make certain proposals below to ensure that these requirements could be met.

It is suggested that the various A.G.A. Divisions may be categorized in terms of the language composition of the population as follows:

- (i) Not less than 87 1/2 % Sinhala speaking
- (ii) Not less than 87 1/2 % Tamil speaking
- (iii) Not less than 50 % Sinhala speaking and not less than 12 1/2 % Tamil speaking
- (iv) Not less than 50 % Tamil speaking and not less than 12 1/2 % Sinhala speaking



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Norms may be prescribed in respect of each A.G.A. Division above to determine the minimum requirement of cadres classified in terms of language proficiency as follows:

- (1) Officers fully proficient and who can correspond in Sinhala (this will comprise mostly but not exclusively those whose mother tongue is Sinhala; a special high level proficiency examination could be prescribed for those whose mother tongue is not Sinhala)
- (2) Officers fully proficient and who can correspond in Tamil (this will comprise mostly but not exclusively those whose mother tongue is Tamil; a special high level proficiency examination could be prescribed for those whose mother tongue is not Tamil)
- (3) Officers fully proficient and who can correspond in English (a high level proficiency examination could be prescribed for this purpose)
- (4) Officers who have passed the prescribed proficiency examinations in Sinhala other than the special high level examination referred to in (1) above. (this will comprise mostly those whose mother



Dr Devanesan Nesiah

tongue is Tamil)

- (5) Officers who have passed the prescribed proficiency examinations in Tamil other than the special high level examination referred to in (2) above. (this will comprise mostly those whose mother tongue is Sinhala)
- (6) Officers not included in (3) above but with minimum proficiency in English (Proficiency examinations could be prescribed for this purpose)

It is suggested that every A.G.A. Division classified under (i) should have staff in all cadre grades of at least 50% of (1), 10% of (2), 10% of (3) and 15% of (5). All the Divisions of Colombo District excluding the Colombo A.G.A. Division would fall into this category, and would require a minimum 10% Tamil speaking staff to meet the recommended norm.

Similarly every A.G.A. Division classified under (ii) should have staff in all cadre grades of at least 50% of (2), 10% of (1), 10% of (3) and 15% of (4). All the divisions of Batticaloa district would fall into the category and would require a minimum of 10% Sinhala speaking staff to meet the recommended norm.

It is proposed that every A.G.A. Division classified under (iii) should have staff in all cadre grades of at least 50% of (1), 25% of (2) and 10% of (3). Colombo A.G.A. Division would fall into this category and would require a minimum of 25% Tamil speaking staff to meet the recommended norm.

Continue to Next Issue

Tamil spectator viewing auditoriums are empty

K. Mithuran

By name he is K. Mithuran. He makes this plea from all society, to help build relationships between all nationalities of this country and to help respect each other's language. He is of the opinion that drama and art can be used for this purpose. Building up a new story for the government drama festival, K. Mithuran shared his ideas with the Vibasha newspaper.

His life as a dramatist began in 1976. This is through the drama 'Ran Kumari' which he produced. Later on at the Youth Drama Festival held in the year 1982, Mr. Mithuran won the best actors award and 14 other titles for the drama named "Aluth Lovak". He continued to win many honors in the field of drama up to the year 2011.

His main objective is to give the right place for Tamil drama as well, through the State children's drama festival. He expects that through this, the interest for drama for theater goes and spectators who fill up the auditoriums will increase.

"From 1996, the children's drama festival comprised only of Sinhala dramas. There was no provision for Tamil dramas. Though the officials were made aware of this, no one got involved to do anything directly. Since we felt that there was no other solution for this, we started an association called, 'the project to win over the rights to have a drama festival for Tamils.'

As a result of this, in the year 2011, for the first time, a State Tamil drama festival was held. But yet, we did not have a drama to be presented at this festival. Since I had a very big interest and a need to do so, we somehow managed to present a drama in Tamil. During that time as well as now, there was no auditorium available for Tamil

dramas. I am still searching the reason for this. Actually, there is no coming together of the Sinhalese and Tamils in Colombo. There are more than one lakh of both Tamils and Muslims in the Colombo District alone. Yet, even among them, there has been no proper place given for a Tamil drama. This is a serious tragedy.

In the Tamil drama history, the most number of awards were presented to Muniyadas Kalidas's "Kakeikudu" drama. This was in the year 2011. They won the most number of awards in the open event. Accordingly, they won 11 awards. Today, there are so many drama producers who have come up from the North, East and Central Provinces. There are good producers of children's drama as well. It has to be mentioned specially that in the State children's drama festival held in 2012, Sinhala / Tamil dramas were presented. A big crowd was present in the auditorium for the Sinhala drama. There was a big crowd to encourage and cheer them. But there was no one in the auditorium even to clap during the time of the Tamil drama. It was only an empty auditorium that greeted the Tamil drama. They brought these dramas to Colombo from the North, East and from the Central Province with great joy, interest and hope. But due to the response they received from Colombo in the form of an empty auditorium and the resulting silence, their interests, hopes and joys were shattered. To rescue the Tamil dramatist from this situation, I have been in this struggle for the last 14 years. Even today, I am sacrificing more on behalf of the Tamil dramatist than the Sinhala dramatist. My next hope and target is Colombo. The auditoriums which are not available for the Tamil children's dramas, I will go and approach the important and popular schools in Colombo and



then try to rebuild the schools which have lesser facilities. I want to build something that will help the Tamil children's drama immensely in the future.

Actually, there is a good communication taking place within the Sinhala dramatist. This situation is not there to be seen within the Tamil dramatist. They find it difficult even to put up a poster. I feel that if the Education Ministry and The National Languages and Social Integration Ministry gets involved directly, it would serve as an immense strength to gain what has been lost.

In the recent past, we held discussions with popular drama actors like, Sriyantha Mendis and Palitha Silva. They gave their cooperation in a way more than that was expected. They assured us of their direct support for Tamil dramas.

It has been decided to select ten English and Tamil dramas and 22 Sinhala dramas for the children's drama festival which is to be held in September next year. This time, unlike the last time, it has been decided to present award certificates as well. It is hoped to present a certificate to every actor who is selected for the final round besides another 18 awards.

In the past though the Tamil dramas won award after award, there was no media coverage given for these. Though photographs and descriptions were handed over to chiefs of leading Tamil newspapers, there was still no coverage given. If the situation is still the same, there are

no significant changes to be seen.

In this type of a situation, I feel that we definitely need the support of the President. He has given a fine example to all nationalities of this country.

Very good auditoriums have been built for popular creative director, Ms. Somalatha Subasinghe's children's creations in the future. I hope to select a few of these creations by well-known creative directors, have them translated in to Tamil and then take them to show the Tamil audiences. My objective through this is to build up a new Tamil spectator population.

I will not give up on my attempts to have a satisfactory auditorium at the John De Silva Theater, Colombo where the government function for the 2013 Sinhala/Tamil/English Children's drama and specially the Tamil children's drama will take place.

These days I am gradually working to create a new interest among the Colombo Tamil Central Schools in this regard. I was personally assured of the support of Minister Vasudeva Nanayakkara and the Ministry of Social Integration for all this.

At the same time, I expect everyone in this country who respect Art & Drama and different cultures to come forward and support this.

If anyone is interested in this regard, Mr. Mithurathna's contact number is given below. 0112893798

Interview by
Sandamali Seneviratne

Two Languages, same voice for the same country

Thimbiriyagama Bandara



"All the work done in Trincomalee and at the Kadawatha Provincial Council is done in the Tamil Language. When all mails, advice and conferences are done in Tamil, how can we Sinhalese understand? Because of the language problem just as much as the Tamils, we too suffer. We even wrote to the president about this."

This was stated by Mr. Sarath Kothalawala, who is a Minister of the Trincomalee town and Kadawatha Provincial Council. He alleges that even the Provincial Council name board does not have a Sinhala name. Here within these Council city limits, there are about 5000 Muslim and Tamil families and around 1200 Sinhalese families.

The Sinhalese majority living in an area where the Tamils are a minority, the Tamil majority living in an area where the Sinhalese are a minority are both faced with the same common ethnic problem. The name board of the Thambalagamuwa Village Medical Center, in the Trincomalee District, is only in English, instead of Sinhala or Tamil. U. G. Koyiemanikk of Thambalagamuwa says: "we don't know a word of English".

There are about 1400 families of Muslim, Tamil and Sinhalese living in the villages of Sirimapura, Jamliya & Pallithottam, which belongs to the Murugapura Grama Seva Division. Yet, in this Division, the Grama Seva Niladhari conducts all his official work in the English language. This problem has affected the Sinhalese living in this village more than the Tamils and Muslims.

Kumara Bandara from Agbopura states that though, the officials have been informed regarding this, a result is yet to be found.

Mr. Asad Mohamed, the Chairman of the primary coconut development society has faced a far worse situation in the capital.

"The International Coconut Distribution Day was held at Temple Trees with the Minister for Coconut Development, Mr. Jagath Pushpakumara in attendance. About 6000 coconut society agents participated. All the work was done in the Sinhala Language. The language translation equipment also did not work. All areas were named in the Sinhala language. Only the day's program was available in the Tamil language. The papers on which we wrote down our complaints were also taken by the security divisions. A grave injustice was done to all the Muslims and Tamils who participated."

Couple of days ago, we had the opportunity to listen to a multitude of similar problems faced by those settled in the Trincomalee district.

It is a need of this generation to identify the endless problems of the language rights, which have spread from the provincial level to the national level. About 13 years before, a committee led by Mr. Devanesan Nesiha was appointed by the Official Languages Commission to carry out a methodical language audit on the use of the Tamil language in the areas outside of North and East. The recommendation of this report is given below.

If the administration wants to fulfill completely, the needs of the Tamil speaking people, officials who are competent in speaking Tamil should be present in government institutions and cooperation. There should be translators, typists, clerks and police officers and heads of

departments at all levels should be present. Sufficient Tamil speaking staff should be employed. But this cannot be done in one night. The Observer group has understood that urgent, short term and long term steps are required."

The Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Committee which became famous in December 2011, through their report which also discussed on the language policy has emphasized these same points.

According to that report all the governments that came to power, when implementing the Tamil language policy, had caused a lot of injustice to the Tamil people. Although the recruiting of Tamil speaking people has begun, the consideration given to the planning and citizen cooperation at community level is not satisfactory.

Since the Official Languages commission is located in Colombo, people coming from villages face many hardships. (refer - The Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Committee - reference - 9.238, 9.250)

The Ministry of Languages has started many programs to prevent a certain nationality of people being victimized based on the language they speak. An in-house course to teach Tamil language to government servants has been started by The Agalawatte Language Education Unit. An opportunity for citizens to find justice in cases where their language rights have been violated is now available through the support of the Official Languages Commission and the Human Rights Commission. As an example, if in a government institution, an official notice was issued in a language not preferred by the citizen, the injured party can make their complaints to the Human Rights Commission or to the High Courts. At the same time if a consumer item is made available only in one language, the consumer can complain to the official languages commission against the Consumer Affairs Authority for not taking any action against this. The Minister for Language Integration, Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara has told the media on many occasions that it is important that the citizens becoming aware of this and that it is the responsibility of the public to present complains. As the Minister in charge of this subject, the interest shown by him has to be appreciated.

From one end of the shore to the other end, let us be one people. Though we speak two worthy languages, it is of the same sound.



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There are allegations to the effect that he is not receiving the cooperation from the government side to launch a broader work campaign to widen the work programs at community levels. This is in relation to much needed resources not being made available to him. Whether this is true or not, in order for the language policy to become active at ground level, a new agreement has to be created.

According to the arrangements being put in place to activate the Official Language Policy, the requirement to respond to letters received at all government institutions in the language they are received, is progressing at a very slow pace. That is, at most institutions there are hindrances to this being activated. Isn't giving an opportunity to candidates who are suitably qualified to serve in offices close to their place of residence a solution to this?

I would like to close this message with an extraction of a chapter of a thesis written by K. Nesiha which was published in 1983 in Chunnakam.

"If Sri Lanka is to be honest, those who transferred the great privileged duty of writing her constitution, should also initialize the execution and answer the question; what should they be writing about? These two questions should be addressed by focusing the attention on our heritage.

To our children and our children's children, Sri Lanka is our great Motherland. From one end of the shore to the other end, let us be one people. Though we speak two worthy languages, it is of the same sound. The constitution that was created by our fathers will continue to serve as a covenant to our nation, from generation to generation. (K. Nesiha - Educationist Sri Lanka and Human Rights)

This letter appeared in the Ravaya Newspaper on the 09-12-2012

Language is a subject that needs to be learnt from the heart

Prasad R Herath,

Director General,

National Institute of Language Education and Training(NILET).

Mr. Prasad R. Herath, Director General, National Institute of Language Education and Training Spoke with Vibasha Newspaper and shared his thoughts on the services made available by the National Institute of Language Education and Training. With the motive being to create a tri lingual society, training programs have been launched which will help in this area and facilities have also been made available with relevant programs being made active which will also help in us becoming a tri lingual nation.

It can be seen that the demand for bilingual language in this country is on the increase. Do you think that the National Institute of Language Education and Training has sufficient capabilities to meet this requirement?

I cannot say that the present facilities available are sufficient to meet this requirement. But with the available facilities, the National Institute of Language Education and Training, is doing its utmost to carry out its responsibility at all times. The Institution at this present moment of time has trained about 2200 and posted them island wide. At the same time, in order to teach the language, a training course has been started to train government officers at Provincial and Regional levels. In addition to this, in order to teach the general public, a program named National Venture Language Societies, under the guidance of Hon. Vasudeva Nanayakkara is being implemented country wide. Both these programs are active at this moment of time. One is to teach Sinhala and Tamil to the general public. Under this practice and through the language society, annually, we have trained 30,000 general citizens and about 50,000 government officers and

armed them with the knowledge of language. Here, our prime motive is to show the way to help people exchange customary ideas in their day to day lives. A suitable course is prepared for this purpose.

Our institution has started part time and full time training courses. There are three categories of part time courses available for government officers. One is a third level course. (108 hours). The second level course is Tamil Registry work. (This consists of 216 hours). The first level course includes 360 hours. Here the subjects are similar to those that appear in the mother tongue at the G. C. E. (O/L) examination. By using these three levels of courses and having these classes island wide, more than thirteen lakhs of government officers were given a good knowledge of languages. If the government officers show an interest, they can make a request. Then, to all those who made this request, we provide a good knowledge of the language through a teacher. Our institution provides the payments for the teacher who conducts this course. In addition to this, a short term 10 day residential course is also available. All ten days of this course at most times, will be held in a provincial residence. It could be at a place in Agalawatte or any other appropriate place. At the same time, we train teachers to teach in language Societies and provide them with posts through the provincial secretary, at that level. When a request is presented in the correct manner, we consider this request and prepare to appoint a teacher. Around this time, we have received a number of requests from those who are interested in following this course from within the private sector. The majority of them prefer to join the residential course.



Every day, worldwide, we see an advancement of the methods used to teach language. What type of an attention does your institution give to these methods?

To teach languages, we use the most advanced methods that can be used. The reason why many find it difficult to learn Tamil or Sinhala is because grammar is taught from the very beginning. When teaching language to a beginner, its success lies with the interest created within the participants for the subject. Teaching grammar without a basic knowledge will not be successful. The present practice in the country is to teach grammar right through out. We have taken steps to change this practice completely. Accordingly, by providing lessons suited for day to day life, we have prepared a study course to teach language. To make language education popular it is important to develop the word syllabus. At the same time, to teach essential words together in a group is another important step. When teaching language, the method we adopt is to teach it to the heart and to the mind. This is a very popular syllabus. Through this method, we believe that the language will never distance itself from the student.

Is there a specific reason for the 10 day program introduced by you to become popular?

Here we do not use notes. We use the most advanced methods used in the world over in language usage and education. Accordingly, we have trained teachers by using these four methods: artificial account books, the method of integration, the method

of exploring and replicating learning. At the same time, we are making arrangements to widen the language knowledge of the participants by involving them with programs that brings fun and laughter, singing, films, dramas of a short duration, dialogues and video presentations. In a sense, this can be introduced as an opportunity to "dive" in to the language.

Can you give some details about the places where these ten day courses are held and the facilities available for these?

Right now we have only the Agalawatte Training Institute. Here we can provide residential facilities for about 70. With the Hon. Minister, Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara getting involved in this, there are plans to establish 12 more provincial centers. Through this expansion, we got an opportunity to activate the ten day program. Besides this, right now, there are two courses which have been started in the Jaffna District. Under this, there are courses in Sinhala which are held in the districts of Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Vavuniya.

For teaching language to adults, is there a special method that your institution follows?

We have started a special method to teach adults. There are some teachers who teach Tamil in this country today who do not have appropriate qualifications, but yet they teach. They do not have the ability to give basic advice about language education. We do not give such teachers a certificate to teach. Just because one knows words, it does not qualify that person to teach.

40% of Private Companies violate language rights

South Correspondent
Sudar Oli - 02-02-2013

It has been revealed through survey reports that among the private companies, about 40% violate the rights of Tamil language speakers. This study was initiated by the Centre for Policy Alternatives, which started to investigate violations of the language right of the general public.

It has been revealed through investigations carried out by

groups throughout the country that while around 60% of private companies do safeguard Tamil language rights, about 40% of the private companies violate them.

Both the Sinhala and Tamil languages are state languages. Accordingly, it is the right of the Tamil people to carry out their work in their own language.

According to the information obtained by the members of the language Societies of the Centre for Policy Alternatives, it is clear that the private sector too

violates language rights.

In areas where Tamil people live, people who do not know Tamil hold high posts in private sector institutions, while officers who work are Tamils. As a result of this, the Sinhala language cannot be properly understood by them.

Because of this, they cannot make any progress on a professional level and it has been reported that they cannot receive any promotions as well.

The Centre for Policy Alternatives has decided to take court action based on

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information received by the language society agents about the language rights violations taking place.

Due to a lack of Tamil speaking policemen in the North the people of that area face many hardships

Sudar Oli-07-02-2013(2nd page)

Due to the lack of Tamil speaking policemen for official duties in the North, the people in the North are facing many hardships. Several women's organizations in the North have stated that there is a serious lack of police officers who can take down a complaint in Tamil and investigate. As a result of this, women are facing serious difficulties. Some women who have been subjected to sexual abuse have to allow the male police officers to take down their complaint. Jani

Parameshvari, who is a member of a society to safeguard women who have been abused, says the following. "Women who have been abused do not like to state their complaint to men. As a result of this, a situation has arisen where complaints about incidents of sexual abuse cannot be made properly. Since the complaint has not been done in a methodical manner, the accused is able to escape from court prosecution. Therefore, she says that more female police officers have to be provided for police stations in the North."

Phone and complain about Language problems

Minister Vasudeva Nanayakkara

Sudar Oli - 21-02-2013 (11th page)

When the language translators are not in duty at government departments, you can dial 1956 and complain about your language problems says the Minister of National Languages and Social Integration, Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara. He made this statement when he met with civil social agents at the government agent's office in Jaffna. He further said that officers who speak in all three languages should be present in government departments. The Presidential Task Force has

already started working with this objective in mind. Whether it is Tamil or Sinhala, government officers should work in a way where they can understand the needs of the general public and also work in manner where there is no room for problems to arise. Therefore, the right staff should be employed for this purpose. If there are no translators to understand the language of the people in government departments, then the general public could call to this hotline number, 1956. People could call this same number regarding complaints relating to the language problem.

Since the Tamil language did not receive its due position, a rift appeared between the ethnic groups

Thinakkural 22-02-2013 (Page 14)

"A rift appeared between the ethnic groups, since the Tamil language did not receive its due position and acceptance. It is a sad state of affairs that no government who came to power after independence and no government in power accepted any of these points. This was stated by Presidential advisor, Nath Gamage, who is also the organizer for the Matara District for the Minister of National Languages and Social Integration. At a media meeting held last Sunday at the Matara Provincial Secretary's office he further shared his thoughts in this manner. "We will change this situation and work towards giving Tamil language its due position in the South."

"In order to develop an awareness and unity among nationalities, singing also could be used as a medium." Based on this, and with the help of bilingual societies, **about 1700 classes have been started island wide.** Training is being done in the Tamil language as well. In Matara alone, there are 72 Tamil classes that are being conducted."

"Singing and song is a wonderful art. The Minister in charge of the subject, Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara says that

through this, the interest that the Sinhala people have for the Tamil language can be spread. Based on his recommendation on the 24th of February at the Matara Cultural Hall, a CD titled, "We will sing" was launched for the people. Here, at this wonderful program it was a great experience to hear Tamil songs being sung according to Sinhala tunes and Sinhala songs being sung according to Tamil tunes. This programme was completed successfully with the full sponsorship of the Matara Provincial Secretary and with the attendance of the Ministers and parliamentarians of the Matara district.

National unity was given first place in this programme which included Tamil literature, culture, drama and cultural programs from Jaffna. Kalabhushana M. H. M. Nihimathullaj of Dickwella, had beautifully compiled some Tamil songs and M. R. Rasi Mohammed, a song writer from Matara had compiled some beautiful songs according to Karnataka music. The song about Jaffna is a fine example of this. Mr. Gamage said that it has been decided to distribute these CDs free of charge to all Sinhala and Tamil classes Island wide.



A struggle between Sinhalese and Tamils at the Colombo University.

Today, communication technology is in a very developed state. The most commonly used tool here is language. There are a number of languages used in the world today. For communication purposes, it is not practical to learn all languages. Even in Sri Lanka, it is only a handful who know all three languages. The majority of the Sinhala people do not know Tamil. The Tamil people do not know Sinhala. Professor Ruwan Weerasinghe of the Colombo University, who knew the gravity of this Sinhala, Tamil language conflict, is now looking for a successful solution with his research team.

As a result of this, they are getting ready to bring out a speech translating tool based on data, for Sinhala and English languages. This means, when something is spoken in Sinhala, immediate translation is available in Tamil and when spoken in Tamil, the immediate translation is available in Sinhala through this tool.

"In a world where violence is prevalent, to create a peaceful society, economic and political background, correct communication is of utmost importance. Simply because of that, to expect everyone to learn all languages is not practical. Therefore, we thought of combining technology to make it easy for you to speak the language you know."

Professor Ruwan Weerasinghe shared his ideas about the research in this manner. This study was

started last year. The research team comprises of graduates of the Colombo University and six post graduate students. The leader of this team is Viraj Welgama with others being Randil Pushpananda, Thilini Nadungodage, Namal Udalamatte, Chamila Liyanage and Dilhani Samaranayake. This team comprises of students who specialize in computer science, linguistic and Sinhala language and other relevant subjects. They worked together in harmony as a team. Turning this in to speech was a three phase procedure. They expect to take forward the research under this, on a step by step by basis. To carry out a study like this is not an easy thing, because we are dealing with two languages. The words and sentences of these two languages have to be fed in to the computer system. Not only that, since this tool is activated in correspondence to sound, the computer system has to become familiar with the pronunciation and the pronunciation pattern of each sentence and word. Though it is the same island, the pronunciation varies from province to province, based on whether male or female and the age limit. Therefore, to bring out this type of a creation successfully, one needs an enormous amount of data and it is always best to have done much research previously.

We have created a data base with Sinhala words and sentences and named it as linguistic code. This is being done simultaneously to our



"In a world where violence is prevalent,

to create a peaceful society, economic and political background, correct communication is of utmost importance. Simply because of that, to expect everyone to learn all languages is not practical. Therefore, we thought of combining technology to make it easy for you to speak the language you know."

research. This is a massive data base that contains up to about 10 million Sinhala words and sentences which can be used in the future. In order to do this, we had to study the Sinhala writing, written after 1947 creations, the work of Godage Publishers and the writings of the Martin Wickramasinghe foundation and other similar good quality writings. At the same time, we had to create the Sinhala web site, Subasha. It and make available in that, for anyone to see all our previous creations for anyone interested in studying Sinhala. English to

Sinhala converting software, Sinhala language databases and anything that goes with Sinhala words are available in this. This was stated by Viraj Welgama, who is a post graduate computer science student. At the same time, the Tamil words and sentences needed for the ongoing research were brought down from a University in South India. But though, the writing in Tamil is somewhat similar both in India and Sri Lanka, there is a big difference in the manner of speaking and the words used. Therefore, Viraj further said that they will have to do a separate study on the Tamil language of Sri Lanka here in Sri Lanka itself. At the same time they said that since they do not have Tamil students to carry out their research, it research program has now become complicated. Several language translating tools have been created with this research. Plans are under way to handover a software which will assist in converting, to the government language translating division, which can be used at professional level.

This type of software can be made best use of where a language is used at professional level.

The main objective in our research is to help the general public. Which means, questions and answers that are discussed in their day to day life. For example, statements such as, "what is the time?" "Where is the bus stop?", "I am going to the shop". These are the basic statements that have been included up to now. Right now, we don't expect it to translate literature poems, prose and poetry and long sentences. Professor Ruwan shared his thoughts in this above mentioned manner about the ongoing study.

To create something of this magnitude without any flaws will require an enormous amount of data and this will take years to collect. At the same time, what is done at the research level is to look for solutions for this present moment of time and to study and suggest ways of how to get them working. For the final product to come to the market, the support of the manufacturer is essentially required. The finances needed for this study is provided by the National Research Society.

This is a letter which appeared in the Rivira newspaper on the 23-08-2012

Continued from Page 7.....

We tell them to learn Tamil well. Once they receive the ability to give advice, we will choose them. During our ten day course we will check on their ability to teach, and the language capabilities of all government teachers. We will check on their speaking abilities as well. There are around 300 adult officers who came to our language training center, yet did not get an opportunity. Though most of them had language capabilities, but if they do not have the ability to deliver the language, which is the technical side of this, then they don't have the ability to teach. When teaching adults, you specially need teaching techniques. We do not give an opportunity to those who do not possess this.

When training for communications related to railways how much of experiences did you gain?

When the Railways Department sends us the names of the officers who need training in language, we provide them with the training through our teachers. At this point it must be said that we receive the sponsorship of the Official Language Commission for this purpose.

If the civilian population needs knowledge of the language, what can they do to obtain this?

If any member of the civilian population establishes a Society, we provide language training for that Society. It consists of a 150 hour training course.

As of now, there are 160 language Societies registered with the Ministry. Among this, we provide 150 hours for each language course. There are more than 30,000 who are following this course.

What is the interest shown to government officers and officers of private companies to study dual languages?

We see a great interest for this among the government officers. We notice that there are those who think that they can learn and speak Tamil in one night. This type of people cannot

proceed much further. Then we also notice that there are those who feel that learning the Tamil language is essential. Gaining all this experience, we continue with the course. However, it must be said that the majority of them want to learn the Tamil language.

Would you say that government officers are trying to gain proficiency in language only to gain salary increases and promotions?

According to the 7/2007 circular it has been made compulsory for government servants to have knowledge of both languages. Accordingly a large number of people are trying to obtain proficiency in languages. It has been noted, especially among those who are joining government services newly to have an attitude problem in this area.

The President himself has given a very good example for this.

But if you look at a country like Canada, it can be seen that the entire government sector is fully committed towards this. But we cannot see that kind of commitment in our country. This is not a responsibility that a single Ministry can bear. All ministries, departments, including all companies of the private sector have to give their attention to this. If that happens, the feelings of the public could be changed within a short period of time. Up to now we have trained more than 80,000 people. Among them, around 20,000 can understand and speak a certain amount of Tamil.

What are the qualifications required to teach language? How are the teachers selected for this?

In the past, we selected only Tamils and Muslims to teach Tamil. This was because they were the only people who had the necessary qualifications. But now we have Sinhala teachers with us as well. They have a credit Pass at the G. C. E. O/L and they teach Tamil having about 5% of proficiency in the Tamil language. It is a good sign to have gained 5% of proficiency within this short period of time.

How do you implement the dual language education within the school circuit?

There is a great desire in school children to study languages. At the same time there is a great responsibility with the Education Ministry to look in to this. The problem right now is that there is no formal training given to teachers who teach Tamil.

Besides training to be a teacher, there should be training on the language as well. In the future, there should be a program to overcome this at National level. We feel that the method used for language training could be successfully used for training teachers as well.

What are the new study projects started by the National Institute of Language Education and Training?

In partnership with a foreign institute, right now, we are carrying out a survey to check the fruitfulness of our training course. Besides this we have started a project to teach Sinhala language to Tamil Ministers and Tamil language to Sinhala Ministers. This is done in conjunction with parliament. This has become very popular.

Can you give a brief description of the fun filled methods and the type of activities used to popularize language usage at every given opportunity?

The objective here is to use fun filled experiences to teach grammar. Through this method it makes the ability to retain the grammar being thought, that much easier. The desire to learn in a group is greater than the desire to study alone.

Here what we provide them is the knowledge required for day to day usage. Due to allocation restrictions, we had to impose certain limitations. Last year, we conducted 49 residential courses. This year, we cannot have more than 60. We hope to conduct more 10 day courses. We need to get allocations for this. Right now, courses of a half yearly duration are being conducted at about 1400 government institutions. We hope to increase on this number in the future. Based on this, we can say that there is a fast development of language studies in this country.

Discussion notes – Sandamali Seneviratne.



When discussing language rights in this country, it is necessary to focus on the work of civil society which is relevant to it. The well-known scholar Mr. Kumar Rupasinghe, through this letter focuses his attention on the ethnic problem of this country. Mr. Rupasinghe emphasizes the fact that when your people make known to them their rights, the civil organization cannot walk away from this responsibility that is theirs. Specially, when considering using the language right issue in a multi-linguistic society like ours, there is a need to use several languages. Therefore he says that it is important to keep the public aware of the rules and regulations relating to the language policy and the position held by both the Sinhala and Tamil languages.

This letter is an extract from the article on language rights of Sri Lanka, "To enforce to make the Tamil language the language of the government". The various attempts made to establish within Sri Lanka, the Official Language act in the proper manner and new suggestions which will help in this process are discussed here.

Though like clear water, it is clear to those who are accomplishing basic rights like human rights, it is not clear to others. Therefore, if a person does not have a clear understanding about his rights, then international proclamations and agreements amount to nothing. When a person does not have an understanding about his rights in relation to another person, this carelessness about this right is a clear violation of rights. There could be many more opportunities of such violations taking place. The basic requirement of civil society is human rights; these are those things which have been agreed upon by resolution, such as, education, housing, food, security, to maintain your confidence and the right to a language among other things. When the civil population



The function of Civil Society when giving authority to language rights

Kumar Rupasinghe

makes known their rights to the civil organization, the civil organization cannot walk away from the responsibility that is theirs. Specially, when considering using the language right issue in our multi language society, there is a need to use several languages. Therefore that it is important to keep the public aware of the rules and regulations relating to the language policy and the position held by both the Sinhala and Tamil languages.

When safeguarding language rights of the minority community in a multinational and multi-cultural society, ignoring the difference caused by their nationality, cultural and religion, their acceptance is explained. Establishing an appropriate language policy in a fruitful manner and establishing the requirement for such a thing, for all Sri Lankans, it is necessary to get a clear understanding as to why a conflict for two decades took place which almost pushed the country to an abyss. To understand the contribution that the language problems made to frustrate and create feelings of

conflicts within the Tamil minority community, we need to take a look at the Sinhala government language policy of 1956. A limitation of rights of the Tamil speaking people took place as a result of this. When only Sinhala language was made the language of the government through this policy, it affected the areas of public service, education, law and the administration in a very big manner.

Towards a dual language policy

Until 1988, neither the Sinhala language nor the Tamil language was accepted as the official language. During this time, Sinhala was accepted as the administrative language in all areas outside of North-East and Tamil was the administrative language in the North-East.

As a result of the Indo-Lanka accord in 1987, there was an amendment made to the 18th clause of the constitution. After escaping with the mistake of dividing the country geographically language wise, Tamil language was also brought

to the same level as the Sinhala language as it was made the official language. As a result of this, there will be an increase of Tamil government servants. It is expected that through the 13th amendment, their frustrations will be addressed. Further, it is expected that through this, the minority communities will be able to do their work without any feelings of frustration and without their rights being violated. Yet, it is an unfortunate thing that even after 20 years, there are no signs of the number of language violations being reduced.

Several new changes have been introduced to the language policy through the 16th amendment of the 1978 constitution. While the 22nd clause of the 13th amendment has been reconsidered, it has been stated through the 16th amendment, that both the Sinhala and Tamil languages will be the languages used in administrative work in Sri Lanka.

Continued on page 14

Language Societies that identify problems of society are a good platform for us

Navaratna Samaratunge – Media Reporter



For the last couple of days, the Centre for Policy Alternatives has been making various attempts continuously to bring about a dialogue between the provincial language Society agents and the provincial media. At the end of last year, another important aspect of this attempt became active. The date was the 15th of October. The discussion was held at the auditorium of the Monty Hotel in Ampara. While the ideas presented here by the agents of the language society and the citizens were published and presented in the last volume of Vibasha, the ideas presented by journalists will be published in this volume of Vibasha newspaper. 18 provincial journalists participated at this function. The main objective of this program was to build a coordinating network between the agents of language societies and the provincial journalists of the Ampara district, thereby, bringing to the attention of the journalists the problems experienced as result of the language rights violations of the minority community living in this area and to inspire them to raise their voice against this injustice. The commitment and preparation towards this among the journalists was clearly visible. At the same time, the interest among the agents of the language societies to present their questions to the media was also clearly evident.

The reason for this was clear. There was no room for them to present their questions among the traditional journalists.

Of the many questions presented were the complexities of the problems of language in society and the injustices of the society connected with it. The worthiness of this news which was suitably edited was complete by itself. The following is an idea of a journalist who understood this situation well. He is Journalist, Mr. Navaratne Samarathunga, the reporter for Hingurana in Ampara. He says this about the program "The language society concept is a really a new thing to this society. You need to involve more partners for this. There should be a representation through this from the "fish on the table of the village fish vendor to the doctor". Actually, I see this workshop as something that coordinates humans together. Among the language society members present here, there are people belonging to the three communities of Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim. At the same time, journalists from all three communities are also present here. I see that a big hindrance has been removed. This type of workshop must be held in the future as well. These are very important for the progress of society. Discordant things like politics only split society. A close

relationship is built up through this type of workshop. I think that language right should be trained from the beginning of childhood.

The media institutions and media chiefs do not give priority in reporting this problem. Many media men see this as a major problem. They feel that the reason for this is that the media mainstream is suppressed by political news and advertisements.

Therefore, a program is needed which will draw

the attention of the media institutions and media chiefs towards this. Besides this, it was also seen that a program is needed to develop the interest and enthusiasm of the media men towards this. If within the mainstream media, there is no sufficient provision for this, then attention should be given to other appropriate alternatives.

Given below are the ideas of the discussion held with Journalist Navaratne Samaratunga to Vibasha newspaper.

Problems of language

Through the eyes of the media



An extract of a discussion held with a Journalist who participated in this workshop.

As a Journalist, how do you see this program?

This is the first time in my life that I participated in this kind of a workshop. To tell you very honestly, we did not know properly even about the LLRC report. A desire was created within me now to look in to this more closely.

What are your thoughts on the language Society concept?

These language societies are very important to create a society devoid of conflict. When racism raises its head, we become strong within our own territories. This is good opportunity for both of us to get close to each other. The building up of relationships between the media men and these societies are very important, for this will be a good platform to identify the problems faced by Civil Society."

Have you previously reported any instances of violations of rules concerning the language rules in the media?

Actually no, I understood the gravity of this problem only today.

What are the challenges you think you will face when reporting incidents of violations of language rules in the media?

We will have to face conflict with this society. Civil society still does not feel the gravity of this problem. It is not good enough for one group of society to be aware of this problem. It is to this type of society that we will have to take this message. It is here that conflicts will take place. This is a great challenge for us. I think that these language societies need to be promoted in the whole of Sri Lanka.

As a Journalist, based on the data you have received from this workshop, what would be your next step?

Our society is filled with misconception. In order to make changes, a change in the attitude must be made. Some people are not aware of what is happening in the country. I am making every effort to bring about this change. It is not only through the media, but we can convey this message when speaking with others daily.

When safeguarding language rights..

..... continued from page 12.

Maintaining of reports in all government institutions in all provinces, except the North and East, should be done in Sinhala. In the case of the North East, it can be seen that the administrative language, ie: all records of government institutions are being done in the Tamil language. Through the 16th amendment, according to the 1958 enactment, the Tamil language was restored back to its previous position. However an acceptable portion has been added to the 22nd (1) clause. Accordingly, any administrative area of a province, based on linguistics value, if a population is a minority, the language used in the present for administrative work in that relevant area could be substituted with another language. If not, the President has the opportunity to decide to use both Sinhala and Tamil languages. Since the value of the percentage has not been made clear, the final decision will be with the President. By taking such a decision, the administrative work in the relevant provinces will be done in dual language. Since there was no proper census done in the Northern Province in 2001, based on the findings of the 1981 census, it was found that the entire Tamil population consisted of Sri Lanka Tamils (13%), Indian Tamils (6%) and Muslim, Tamil and Malay (7%). In a manner where the attention of the official language commission is drawn and though 26% of the total population is Tamil speaking, when you take the percentage of workers in the government sector, it is slightly above 8%.

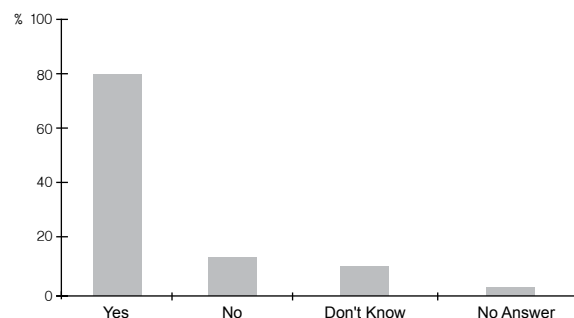
Only 10% of government institutions have taken steps to establish the official language

policy in areas outside of the North and East. As a result of this, there has been a big gap kept open in the needs of the minority's welfare.

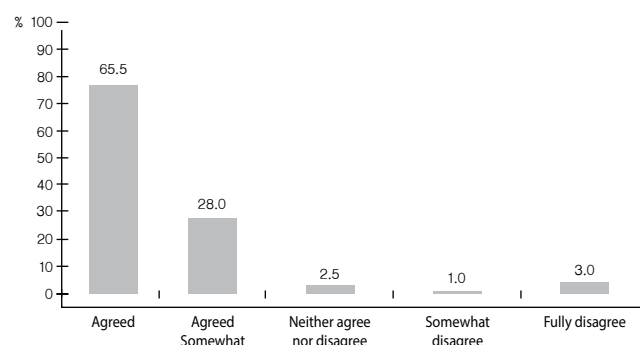
Language Audit

In 2006, a language audit was carried out by the Foundation for Co Existence (FCE), which works parallel to the language and administrative program. This was done with a vision for society. The language program was done in stages 1, 2 & 3 with very basic activities. That is (1) Giving an awareness of the language rights to the public. (2) Giving knowledge to government servants about their duties in establishing connection with the 13th and 16th amendment to the constitution. (3) The government enforcing that the official language policy is activated in all provincial secretarial areas in a fair and justifiable manner. A language audit was carried out in hospitals, schools, courts and police stations and in 7 government institutions, located in areas where the majority is Tamil speaking people. These areas are, selected areas in the Kandy districts, areas belonging to the municipal councils of Badulla, Nuwara Eliya and Ratnapura. These also included areas of town councils belonging to Hatton and Dickoya, the Colombo Municipality areas and in areas belonging to the secretarial division of Thimbirigasyaya. The scarcity of Tamil speaking government workers in institutions where the census was taken was noted and it has been revealed that the number of Sinhala government servants who can perform their duties in Tamil, in meeting the needs of the Tamil

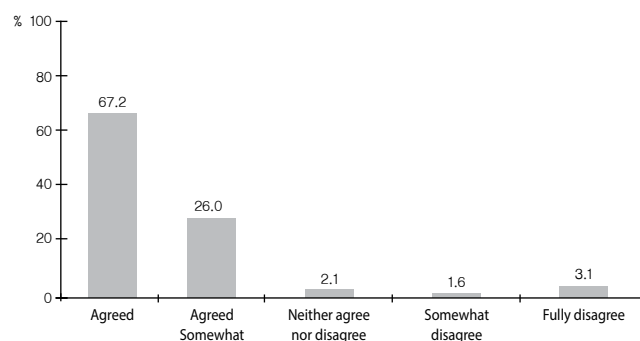
and Muslim people is on the decline. As an example, at Ratnapura courts or the DS Office in Kandy, there wasn't a single person who could work in the Tamil language.



- 80% Of those who were subjected to an interview, said that they knew about the official language policy.
- More than 46% of those serving in these institutions in a non – managerial level said that they face difficulties in working with Tamil speaking people.
- 65.5% of those who are serving below managerial level agreed that in government institutions, work should be carried out in both Sinhala and English languages.



- This shows that the needs of the participants were not considered nor has there been proper planning when selecting candidates for the official language training program. Before the commencement of such a program, an evaluation of basic rights has to be done.
- Of the 67.2% of those who were subjected to an interview said that more priority should be given to the official language policy within their institutions.



- Though most of these institutions would like to have the services of Tamil translators, since the Tamil translators are not paid a sufficient amount, they are reluctant to serve there.

To the next volume...

Govt Institute	Total No of Employees	Those with capacity in tamil language
Badulla Municipal council	450	1
Colombo Municipal council	12,000	100
Hatton Police Station	250	10 - 20
Kandy Secretariat Office	60	0
Nuwara Eliya main hospital	450	85
Ratnapura High Court	60	0

The winners of the language rights and humanity competition

Students in schools in the North East provinces won the 1st, 2nd, 3rd places and 27 other awards in the writing competition organized at district level by the Center for Policy Alternatives, with the theme being language rights and humanity

This competition was open to G. C. E. O/L and A/L students of the North and East. At the same time, it has been decided by the outreach unit of the Centre for Policy Alternatives to present a valuable certificate and cash awards for the winners of 5 creations at district level. It has also been decided to award Rs. 1000 each and certificates to the winners of the 6th position going up to the 10 position.

Accordingly, given below are the winners at district level.

Winners of two Sinhala Schools representing the District of Ampara

First Place

Vinishiya Deshamani – Bandaranayake Maha Vidyalaya - Ampara

Second Place

Sevvandi Nisansala – Rajagalathanna Maha Vidyalaya - Ampara

Third Place

Dinesha Sandamali - Bandaranayake Maha Vidyalaya - Ampara

Winners from the Trincomalee District

First Place

M. M. Tharuni Piyumika – Nalanda Maha Vidyalaya - Trincomalee

Second Place

Dinusha Gayamali Basnayake – Padavi Jayanthi Maha Vidyalaya - Trincomalee

Third Place

Nadeesha Dilhani - Padavi Jayanthi Maha Vidyalaya - Trincomalee.

Winners from the Vavuniya District

First Place

M. Unayasoda – Saiva Pragasa Kantha Viduhala - Vavuniya

Second Place

M. Swarna – Veerapuram Manikkavasagar Maha Vidyalaya - Vavuniya

Third Place

Panchlingam Mauri – Vipulananda Viduhala – Vavuniya

Winners from the Batticaloa District

First Place

Rasanayagam – Reya Mahajana Vidyalaya

Second Place

P. Unudanjali – Chettipalayam Maha Vidyalaya

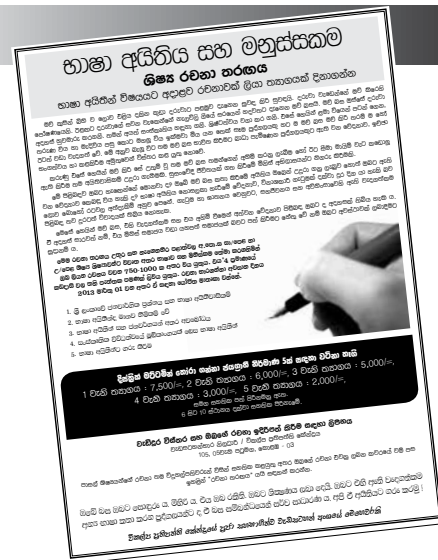
Third Place

M. Fareed Fathima Falisha – Palamunai Alighar Vidyalaya – Batticaloa

Winners from the Ampara District

First Place

G. Himishimek – Al Hamra Maha Vidyalaya - Oluvil



Second Place

Al Fathima Rusaika – Al Massar Ussas Balika Vidyalaya - Nintavur

Third Place

M. Fathima – Nasoma Mohammed Girls School – Kalmunai

Winners from the Jaffna District

First Place

Alagathinam Anusha – Vadamarachchi Kantha Vidyalaya

Second Place

Navishodan Niroshanth – Chavakachcheri Hindu Vidyalaya - Nintavur

Third Place

Dilkshan Paramanandasodhi – Viludumathuwal Shri Ganesha Vidyalaya

Winners from the Trincomalee District

First Place

Samameem Fathima – Nuha Zaheera Vidyalaya

Second Place

V. Refana – K. Fathima Balika Maha Vidyalaya - Trincomalee

Third Place

N. Naseena Banu – K. Fathima Balika Maha Vidyalaya - Trincomalee

Winners from the Mullaitivu & Kilionchchi Districts

First Place

P. Thvaraga – Vemmalai Maha Vidyalaya - Mullaitivu

Second Place

Vittralis Christina – Piramandanaru Maha Vidyalaya – Tharumapuram, Paranthan

Third Place

K. Mahalingam B Vidyananda Vidyalaya - Mullaitivu

Winners from the Mannar District

First Place

Vis Priyadharshani – St. Anthony's Madhya Maha Vidyalaya – Mullaitivu

Second Place

C. Mary Lotus Virgin – St. Aksaveer Kantha Vidyalaya - Mullaitivu

Third Place

M. M. Famina – Panduveli. G. M. M. Vis – Vilachthurai - Mullaitivu

Today, its value is measured not only in terms of its economic contribution. Even in terms of its scenic beauty, it is an invaluable resource. Its value is not only to the North, but to the entire

This tank is located in the Kilinochichi District, close to the Kilinochichi Town in the Northern Province. As you approach the tank, you see military camps and the soldiers in these camps going about their daily duties. It is possible that the café found close to the tank is there to cater to the visitors who come this place. A Buddha statue with a Buddhist Temple along with the statues of many other deities are also found in a separate enclosure here. A few sentences written in only in Sinhala are found near these statues. One such sentence is “protection of all gods”. Another is “may your

The Iranamaduwa Tank flows in Sinhala

journey be successful through the power of gods". The amazing thing here is that all these are written only in Sinhalese. The reason for this to be amazing is that the Iranamadu tank is located in Kilinochichi where the entire population is Tamil speaking, for they have made Tamil their mother tongue. The

Even the name of the tank is found written in Sinhala only. Besides this, the prices and other details of the café which is found close to the Tank operated by the military are written only in Sinhala. This is another example to understand the sensitivity of the language policy and the language ownership of the people living in the Northern Province and those responsible with the administration of the people of this country. If those responsible continue to act in this manner in the future as well, then besides the statements displayed, only one statement may apply to the future of Sri Lanka. Accordingly, we can only say “God help us”

