



# Media and Reconciliation: Press Coverage on The Drafting of a New Constitution during the Tenure of the *Yahapaalanaya* Government

Quarterly Report December 2018 – February 2019

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was produced by Verité Research (VR) for the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). It examines both Sinhala and Tamil language press reports on Transitional Justice and Reconciliation, Women, and Minorities from December 2018 to 15 February 2019. VR, in consultation with IREX, selected coverage on The Drafting of a New Constitution. The need for constitutional reform to re-examine several aspects including, the Executive Presidential system, independent institutions and equal rights, was underscored by the 2015 *yahapaalanaya* government. While the government took measures to facilitate constitutional reform, such as the establishment of the Constitutional Council and Steering Committee, overall progress has been intermittent. The most recent measure that renewed discussion on this topic was the tabling of the report by the Panel of Experts for the Steering Committee before the Constitutional Assembly on 11 January 2019. Within this context, the topic was selected due to: (1) the high volume of coverage it received, (2) the centrality of constitutional reform to the *yahapaalanaya* mandate and (3) the longevity of the request for reform to recognise the rights and requirements of minorities.

- In total, 392 articles out of 1,873 articles featured the selected topic. 227 of these articles were published in the Tamil press while 165 articles were published in the Sinhala press. In previous reports, the volume of Sinhala press coverage with respect to the topic selected has been less than 10 percent.
- 25 percent of articles from the total reportage in the Sinhala and Tamil press did not include bylines. 79 of these articles were from the Tamil press, while 20 articles were from the Sinhala press.
- From the issues classified as ‘similar issues’ featured commonly in the Sinhala and Tamil press, (1) the drafting of a new constitution as a tool to divide the country and (2) the primacy of Buddhism in the constitution received the highest traction.
- From the issues classified as ‘dissimilar issues’ in the Sinhala and Tamil press, (1) the optimism for minorities with the drafting of a new constitution and (2) the barriers to introducing a new constitution were mostly, or only featured only in the Tamil press.
- Contestation on the drafting of a new constitution as a tool to divide the country was the most widely covered issue, with 181 articles in the Sinhala and Tamil press. In particular, criticisms were levelled at the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), United National Party (UNP), Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the Tamil diaspora and the international community for supposedly attempting to divide the country via a new constitution.
- While both the Sinhala and Tamil press gave coverage to voices alleging a ‘secret agreement’ between the TNA and UNP to allegedly divide the country, the degree of criticism towards the TNA was stronger in the Sinhala press. Meanwhile, voices that

explicitly denied the 'secret agreement' between the two parties were mostly featured in the Tamil press.

- 54 articles collectively in the Sinhala and Tamil press referenced the primacy of Buddhism in the constitution. Sinhala press reportage seemed to adopt a majoritarian perspective and prioritised voices in favour of preserving a unitary state with primacy given to Buddhism and an extent of devolved power. By contrast, Tamil press reportage seemed to adopt a minority perspective and prioritised voices in favour of a secular, federal state.
  
- 16 articles in the Tamil press and 01 article in the Sinhala press presented the view that there is optimism for ethnic minorities with the drafting of a new constitution. The majority of these articles in the Tamil press adopted a lens of justice and reasoned the benefits of a new constitution either solely for the Tamil minority or ethnic minorities in general. Only 06 articles, inclusive of 03 Sinhala articles, underscored the importance of a new constitution for all Sri Lankans, irrespective of ethnic considerations.
  
- 19 articles in the Tamil press identified the barriers to enacting a new constitution. These barriers were: (1) process-related delays in forming a draft constitution, (2) the possible defeat of a new constitution due to ruptures in the coalition government and racially induced propaganda by politicians and (3) discussions on a new constitution being a mere device by the UNP to appease the TNA and United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This quarterly report was produced by Verité Research (VR) for the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). It analyses both Sinhala and Tamil language newspapers to identify the role of print media in fostering national-level reconciliation. The report also contributes towards IREX's Media Empowerment for a Democratic Sri Lanka (MEND) programme by providing journalists with a comprehensive picture of reporting related to reconciliation. Moreover, it identifies ethical practices that could assist journalists and improve the overall quality of journalism, by incorporating the findings from VR's online platform, Ethics Eye, in relation to unethical press reporting on women and minorities. The findings from the platform are included where necessary and applicable.

This report belongs to a series of reports that monitors the following topics and subtopics:

1. Transitional Justice and Reconciliation – press coverage under this topic focuses on several subtopics such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Office on Missing Persons (OMP), Enforced Disappearances Act, land-related issues, devolution of power, and constitutional reform.
2. Minorities – press coverage on minorities includes issues pertaining to justice between the state and minorities, such as ethnic and religious violence/discrimination.
3. Women – press coverage on this topic documents subtopics in relation to issues pertaining to justice between the state and women, such as female electoral quotas, political participation, labour force participation, and maternity leave.

Previous Media and Reconciliation reports analysed coverage on the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) and the devolution of power, as well as the October 26 political situation in Sri Lanka.<sup>1</sup> For the reporting period December 2018 – 15 February 2019, VR in consultation with IREX selected The Drafting of a New Constitution. As agreed by IREX and VR, this topic was mainly selected due to three reasons: (1) the high volume of coverage it received, (2) constitutional reform being a mandate of the *yahapaalanaya* government and (3) the longstanding request for reform by minority populations, particularly Tamils, for greater inclusivity of minority rights and requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> Verité Research, *Media and Reconciliation: Media Coverage of the Office on Missing Persons and the Devolution of Power* (2018); Verité Research, *Media and Reconciliation: Media Coverage of the October 26 Political Situation in Sri Lanka in relation to Minorities* (2018).

The structure of the report is as follows: Section 2 provides a description of the methodology followed. Section 3 analyses Sinhala and Tamil press reportage on The Drafting of a New Constitution. Meanwhile, Section 4 presents a general conclusion with the key observations identified in the findings of the report.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Press articles on The Drafting of a New Constitution were monitored from December 2018 to 15 February 2019. A total of 392 articles were selected from the Sinhala and Tamil press. 20 newspapers including the daily and weekend editions were examined for this purpose (see Exhibit 1).

### Exhibit 1: Newspapers Monitored

| Sinhala Daily Newspapers   | Sinhala Weekend Newspapers | Tamil Daily Newspapers | Tamil Weekend Newspapers           |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Lankadeepa</i>          | <i>Lankadeepa</i>          | <i>Virakesari</i>      | <i>Sunday Virakesari</i>           |
| <i>Divaina</i>             | <i>Divaina</i>             | <i>Thinakkural</i>     | <i>Sunday Thinakkural</i>          |
| <i>Lakbima<sup>2</sup></i> | <i>Lakbima</i>             | <i>Thinakaran</i>      | <i>Thinakaran<br/>Vaaramanjari</i> |
| <i>Mawbima</i>             | <i>Mawbima</i>             | <i>Tamil Mirror</i>    |                                    |
| <i>Dinamina</i>            | <i>Ravaya</i>              |                        |                                    |
| <i>Ada</i>                 | <i>Anidda</i>              |                        |                                    |
|                            | <i>Lanka</i>               |                        |                                    |

The above newspapers were selected based on readership data for the year 2017 by Kantar Lanka Market Research Bureau (Kantar LMRB).<sup>3</sup> *Lankadeepa* and *Virakesari* have the highest readership of the Sinhala and Tamil newspapers, respectively. Certain Sinhala alternative newspapers such as *Ravaya*, *Anidda* and *Lanka* were included despite the absence of their readership data as their content generally differs from coverage in the

<sup>2</sup> *Lakbima* announced on 30 November 2018 that it would temporarily suspend publication of its daily edition.

<sup>3</sup> Kantar Lanka Market Research Bureau, *National Demographic and Media Survey* (2017).



mainstream press, and can therefore be considered as providing alternative insights into events. The group of selected newspapers includes both state-owned and privately-owned print publications. The privately-owned print publications comprise both mainstream and alternative publications (see the Media Ownership Monitor Sri Lanka in order to obtain comprehensive information on the media ownership and political affiliations of these newspapers).<sup>4</sup>

The content on The Drafting of a New Constitution that is considered to be of relevance from these Sinhala and Tamil language newspapers is analysed through the lens of media parochialism. In the context of this report, media parochialism refers to the differences in reporting between the Sinhala and Tamil press, particularly when the content considered to be of relevance is featured in the press of only one of the local languages. This lens could give insight into: (1) the gaps in coverage of certain issues, (2) varying nuances in coverage of the same issue, as well as (3) any differences in the perspectives presented in reporting. This lens is therefore useful to understand Sinhala and Tamil press reporting as the Sinhala and Tamil press cater to two distinctive ethno-linguistic demographics. By using this lens, the analysis determines whether a particular news item features bias that may stem from reporting towards or against a certain ethnic/religious/linguistic community in Sinhala/Tamil language newspapers. The newspaper summaries that were used in the analysis are chronologically listed in the Annexure of this report.

## LIMITATIONS

- Time – The methodology of this report limits the analysis to press reportage within the specific timeframe of December 2018 to 15 February 2019. As such, it does not analyse coverage on The Drafting of a New Constitution subsequent to this time period.
- Sample – The sample focuses on print media in the Sinhala and Tamil languages, as opposed to other forms of media (e.g. television). Print media was selected due to its nationwide reach and importance in shaping public thinking.
- Perspective – The report utilises the lens of media parochialism and perspectives related to transitional justice and reconciliation, as opposed to other lenses such as a gendered perspective. However, a gendered perspective is adopted where necessary and applicable. For instance, the findings of Ethics Eye on women and minorities are featured in the quarterly reports if they are available and relevant to the topic chosen for the report.

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<sup>4</sup> Media Ownership Monitor Sri Lanka. <http://sri-lanka.mom-rsf.org/en/>.

### 3. THE DRAFTING OF A NEW CONSTITUTION

The need for a new constitution to resolve Sri Lanka's centre-periphery relations as well as ethno-religious and linguistic issues has occasionally entered the political arena since the promulgation of the nation's current constitution in 1978. For instance, in 2000 President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government presented a draft constitution that proposed a power-sharing model with the North and East. However, this draft constitution was denounced and burnt in parliament by members of the opposition.<sup>5</sup> In recent years, the push for constitutional reform, and by extension, a new constitution, re-entered the political arena with the election of Maithripala Sirisena to the post of Executive President. Sirisena's *yahapaalanaya* mandate particularly signalled optimism for minority populations who called for the devolution of power and greater protection of minority rights.<sup>6</sup> These rights include the equal recognition of all ethnicities, religions and languages.

During its tenure, the *yahapaalanaya* government has taken measures towards formulating a new constitution. These measures include establishing various bodies such as a Constitutional Assembly, Steering Committee, six Sub-Committees and a Panel of Experts for the Steering Committee.<sup>7</sup> In 2017, the Interim Report of the Steering Committee, which included the views of all political parties in parliament, was tabled before the Constitutional Assembly.<sup>8</sup> However, press conversations on drafting a new constitution lessened with the lack of consensus among parties during the debates on the Interim Report, and with increasing attention on other national-level issues. These national level issues included the Local Government elections in February 2018; instances of religious-based violence in March 2018; the No-Confidence Motion against Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in April 2018; and the political situation that resulted from President Maithripala Sirisena's appointment of Mahinda Rajapaksa to the post of Prime Minister on 26 October 2018.<sup>9</sup>

Renewed conversation on a new a constitution was triggered in 2019 following the report by the Panel of Experts for the Steering Committee.<sup>10</sup> Both the Sinhala and Tamil press

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<sup>5</sup> United Press International, 'Opposition Lawmakers Burn Copies of the New Constitution', (2000). <https://www.upi.com/Archives/2000/08/03/Opposition-lawmakers-burn-copies-of-the-new-constitution/7595965275200/>.

<sup>6</sup> The Economic Times, 'Sri Lanka Set to Abolish Executive Presidential System', (2015). <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/sri-lanka-set-to-abolish-executive-presidential-system/articleshow/50294583.cms>.

<sup>7</sup> For further details see the official website of the Constitutional Assembly of Sri Lanka: <https://english.constitutionalassembly.lk/>.

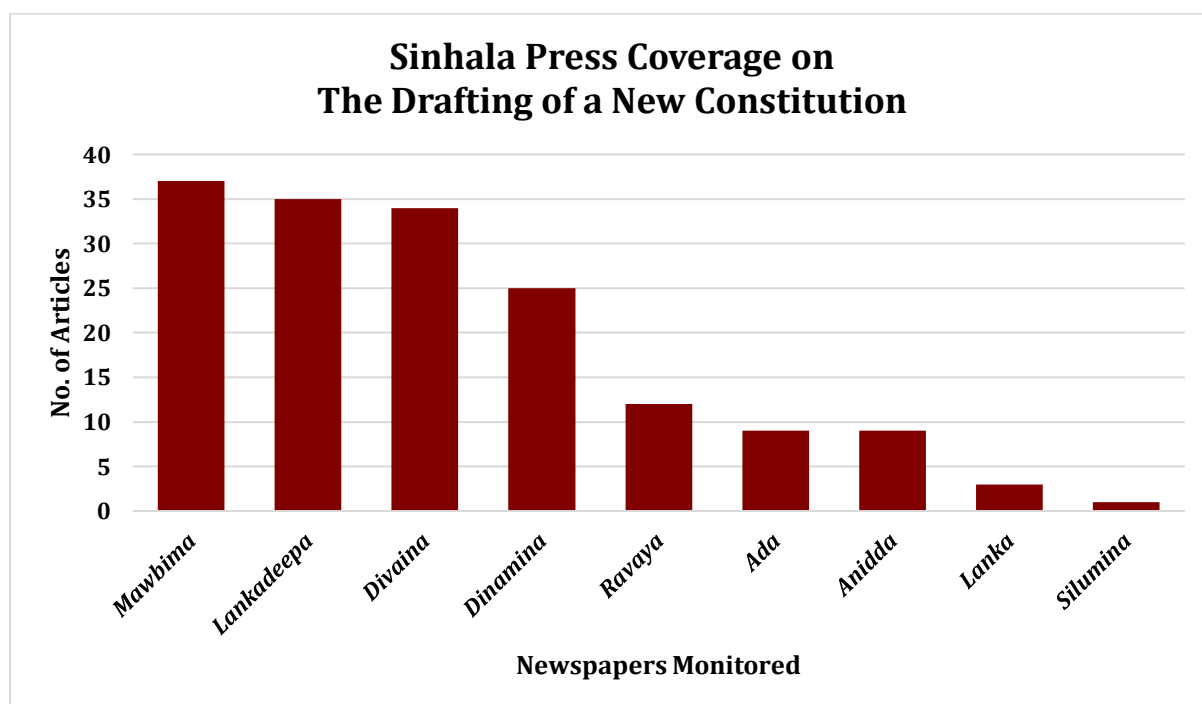
<sup>8</sup> Interim Report of the Steering Committee: <https://english.constitutionalassembly.lk/interim-report-of-the-steering-committee>.

<sup>9</sup> Daily Mirror, 'New Constitution for Sri Lanka: Ten Experts Working on Initial Draft of Constitution', (2018). <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/New-Constitution-for-Sri-Lanka-ten-experts-working-on-initial-draft-of-Constitution-153130.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Report by the Panel of Experts for the Steering Committee: <https://english.constitutionalassembly.lk/media-centre/press-releases/152-documents-tabled-at-the-constitutional-assembly-on-11-january-2019>.

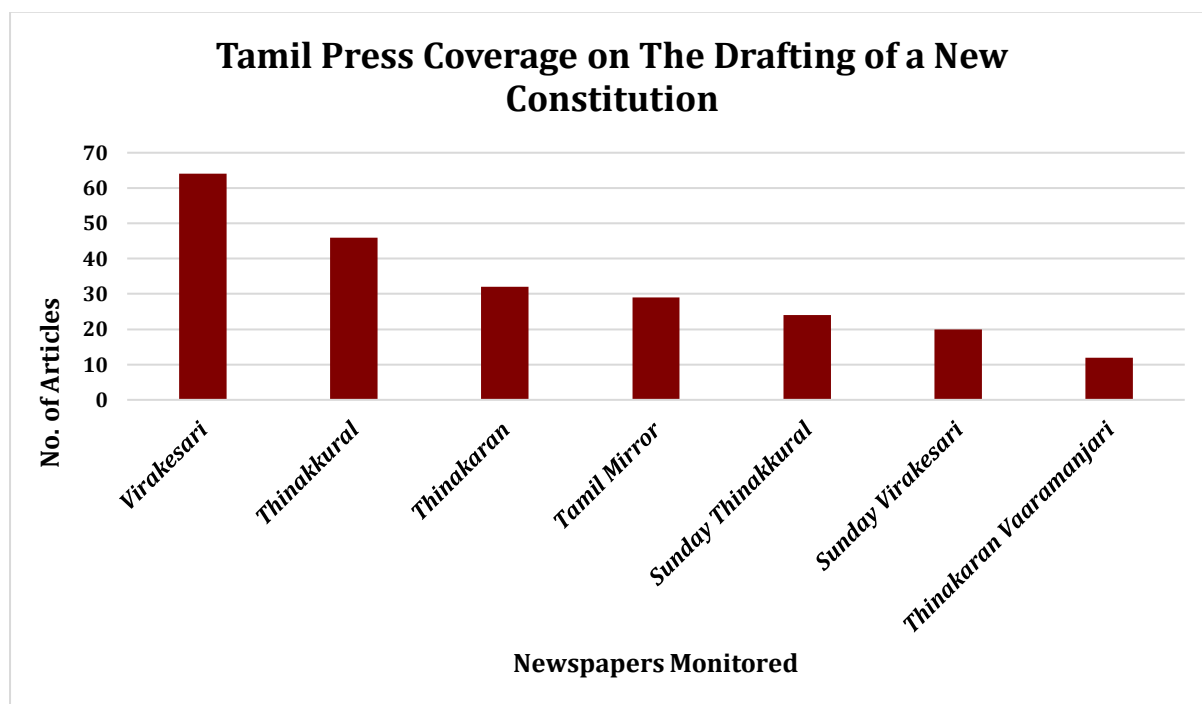
extensively covered varying perspectives on the content of the report as well as speculation on content that could be inserted in the draft of a new constitution. During the monitoring period, from a total of 1,873 articles on the topics Transitional Justice and Reconciliation, Minorities, and Women, 392 articles featured views on a new constitution. Of these 392 articles, 165 articles were published in the Sinhala press, while 227 were published in the Tamil press (see Exhibits 1 and 2). The ratio between the Sinhala (42 percent) and Tamil press (58 percent) indicates the national significance of the topic in the local language press. By contrast, previous issues analysed by the Media and Reconciliation reports have seen less than 10 percent of coverage in the Sinhala press on the monitored topics.<sup>11</sup>

**Exhibit 2: Sinhala Press Coverage on The Drafting of a New Constitution**



<sup>11</sup> Previous reports saw Sinhala press coverage at 02 percent and 07 percent respectively. See: Verité Research, *The Media and Reconciliation: Media Coverage of the Office on Missing Persons and the Devolution of Power* (2018), p.09; *Media and Reconciliation: Media Coverage of the October 26 Political Situation in Sri Lanka in relation to Minorities* (2018), p.11.

**Exhibit 3: Tamil Press Coverage on The Drafting of a New Constitution**



The bylines of news, features and opinion articles were also taken into consideration due to the importance of bylines from a media ethics perspective. As outlined in the previous report, the inclusion of bylines reflects ethical reporting practices such as transparency and accountability, while also providing due credit to journalists responsible for the content.<sup>12</sup> From the reportage, 25 percent of articles, i.e. 79 articles from the Tamil press and 20 articles from the Sinhala press, did not include bylines. A summary of the Tamil and Sinhala newspaper articles with and without a byline is shown in Exhibits 4 and 5.

<sup>12</sup> Verité Research, *Media and Reconciliation: Media Coverage of the October 26 Political Situation in Sri Lanka in relation to Minorities* (2018).

**Exhibit 4: Articles in Sinhala Newspapers with/without a byline**

| <b>Sinhala Newspapers</b> | <b>No Byline</b> | <b>Byline Included</b> | <b>Total No. of Articles</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Divaina</i>            | 9                | 25                     | 34                           |
| <i>Mawbima</i>            | 4                | 33                     | 37                           |
| <i>Lankadeepa</i>         | 3                | 32                     | 35                           |
| <i>Dinamina</i>           | 2                | 23                     | 25                           |
| <i>Anidda</i>             | 2                | 7                      | 9                            |
| <i>Lakbima</i>            | 0                | 0                      | 0                            |
| <i>Ravaya</i>             | 0                | 12                     | 12                           |
| <i>Ada</i>                | 0                | 9                      | 9                            |
| <i>Silumina</i>           | 0                | 1                      | 1                            |
| <i>Lanka</i>              | 0                | 3                      | 3                            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>20</b>        | <b>145</b>             | <b>165</b>                   |

**Exhibit 5: Articles in Tamil Newspapers with/without a byline**

| <b>Tamil Newspapers</b>        | <b>No Byline</b> | <b>Byline Included</b> | <b>Total No. of Articles</b> |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Thinakkural</i>             | 24               | 22                     | 46                           |
| <i>Virakesari</i>              | 14               | 50                     | 64                           |
| <i>Tamil Mirror</i>            | 14               | 15                     | 29                           |
| <i>Thinakaran</i>              | 11               | 21                     | 32                           |
| <i>Sunday Thinakkural</i>      | 8                | 16                     | 24                           |
| <i>Sunday Virakesari</i>       | 5                | 15                     | 20                           |
| <i>Thinakaran Vaaramanjari</i> | 3                | 9                      | 12                           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                   | <b>79</b>        | <b>148</b>             | <b>227</b>                   |

With respect to the content featured, the coverage was categorised under the following headings: (1) similar issues, and (2) dissimilar issues.

**(1) Similar Issues**

This topic covers the areas of discussion that were commonly featured in both the Sinhala and Tamil press. However, the nuances and viewpoints seen in the Sinhala and Tamil press coverage of these issues may differ.

The following areas were prominently featured in the Sinhala and Tamil press and are analysed in the report:

(i) The drafting of a new constitution as a tool to divide the country<sup>13</sup>;

<sup>13</sup> *Sunday Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakkural*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 05; *Thinakaran*, 12 February 2019, p.15; *Thinakaran*, 28 January 2019, p.05; *Thinakkural*, 29 January 2019, p.05; *Thinakaran*, 21 January 2019, p. 18; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.06; *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.07; *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.03; *Virakesari*, 04 February 2019, p.03; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 06 January 2019, p.31; *Virakesari*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakkural*, 31 January 2019, p.05; *Tamil Mirror*, 31 January 2019, p.04; *Thinakaran*, 31 January 2019, p.12; *Virakesari*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakaran*, 08 February 2019, p.07; *Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.01, 04; *Ada*, 31 December 2018, p.11; *Divaina*, 31 December 2018, p.01; *Mawbima*, 31 December 2018, p.01; *Divaina*, 18 December 2018, p.02; *Mawbima*, 18 December 2018, p.05; *Ravaya*, 27 January 2019, p.06; *Ada*, 15 January 2019, p.06; *Divaina*, 25 January 2019, p.13; *Lankadeepa*, 16 January 2019, p.08; *Mawbima*, 22 January 2019, p.10; *Divaina*, 28 January 2019, p.10; *Dinamina*, 21 January 2019, p.01; *Anidda*, 27 January 2019, p.11; *Divaina*, 13 December 2018, p.01; *Lankadeepa*, 13 December 2018, p.01; *Lanka*, 25 January 2019, p.09; *Ravaya*, 03 February 2019, p.08; *Tamil Mirror*, 11 February 2019, p. 01,12; *Virakesari*, 06 February 2019, p. 20; *Thinakaran*, 29 January 2019, p.01, 06; *Thinakkural*, 28 January 2019, p.01, 05; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Dinamina*, 21 January 2019, p.13; *Mawbima*, 22 January 2019, p.07; *Divaina*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 04; *Mawbima*, 29 January 2019, p.10; *Dinamina*, 28 January 2019, p.01; *Divaina* 29 January 2019, p.10; *Lankadeepa*, 28 January 2019, p.05; *Mawbima*, 04 February 2019, p.14; *Divaina*, 07 January 2019, p.13; *Dinamina*, 17 January 2019, p.10; *Dinamina*, 23 January 2019, p.04; *Thinakaran*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 04; *Thinakkural*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 08; *Virakesari*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakaran*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 04; *Dinamina*, 03 January 2019, p.01; *Divaina*, 03 January 2019, p.13; *Mawbima*, 30 January 2019, p.10; *Dinamina*, 02 February 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.08; *Ada*, 16 January 2019, p.09; *Lankadeepa*, 31 January 2019, p.10; *Divaina*, 31 January 2019, p.10; *Lankadeepa*, 15 February 2019, p. 01, 06; *Dinamina*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 06; *Divaina*, 15 January 2019, p.09; *Lankadeepa*, 14 January 2019, p.01; *Divaina*, 10 January 2019, p.01; *Dinamina*, 14 January 2019, p.06; *Mawbima*, 16 January 2019, p.12; *Mawbima*, 12 February 2019, p.06; *Lankadeepa*, 15 January 2019, p.10; *Virakesari*, 14 February 2019, p. 01, 10; *Tamil Mirror*, 11 February 2019, p. 01, 12; *Thinakaran*, 11 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.04; *Thinakkural*, 03 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Virakesari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 09; *Thinakaran*, 14 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Tamil Mirror*, 16 January 2019, p.03; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.07; *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakaran*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 04; *Thinakaran*, 21 January 2019, p.06; *Tamil Mirror*, 22 January, p.01, 12; *Virakesari*, 24 January 2019, p.19; *Virakesari*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 10; *Tamil Mirror*, 25 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Tamil Mirror*, 12 February 2019, p. 03; *Thinakaran*, 12 February 2019, p.04; *Divaina*, 22 January 2019, p.10; *Lankadeepa*, 22 January 2019, p.08; *Divaina*, 16 January 2019, p.09; *Lanka*, 16 December 2018, p.02; *Dinamina*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 06; *Anidda*, 20 January 2019, p.06; *Dinamina*, 16 January 2019, p.12; *Lankadeepa*, 17 January 2019, p.04; *Ravaya*, 20 January 2019, p.14; *Lankadeepa*, 28 January 2019, p.10; *Mawbima*, 16 January 2019, p.05; *Lankadeepa*, 17 January 2019, p.01; *Divaina*, 18 January 2019, p.08; *Mawbima*, 16 January 2019, p.05; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.07; *Thinakkural*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Mawbima*, 03 December 2018, p.10; *Virakesari*, 08 January 2019, p.08; *Thinakkural*, 28 January 2019, p.11; *Lankadeepa*, 09 January 2019, p.08; *Mawbima*, 09 January 2019, p.14; *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Mawbima*, 10 January 2019, p.05; *Divaina*, 10 January 2019, p.13; *Virakesari*, 28 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakkural*, 28 January 2019, p.11; *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.11; *Sunday Virakesari*, 27 January 2019, p.01, 09; *Thinakkural*, 29 January 2019, p.17; *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.11; *Tamil Mirror*, 15 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Mawbima*, 04 December 2018, p.06; *Divaina*, 23 January 2019, p.13; *Mawbima*, 01 February 2019, p.14; *Ada*, 12 February 2019, p.02; *Thinakkural*, 04 February 2019, p.20; *Tamil Mirror*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Thinakkural*, 08 February, p. 14; *Divaina*, 17 January 2019, p.08; *Mawbima*, 10 January 2019, p.01; *Divaina*, 10 January 2019, p.01; *Dinamina*, 07 January 2019, p.10; *Lankadeepa*, 16 January 2019, p.08; *Virakesari-2*, 06 January 2019, p.01, 07; *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Divaina*, 03 January 2019, p.10; *Mawbima*, 10 February 2019, p.18; *Mawbima*, 18 December 2018, p.14; *Divaina*, 19 December 2018, p.10; *Ada*, 06 December 2018, p.10; *Lankadeepa*, 06 December 2018, p.05; *Mawbima*, 17 December 2018, p.08; *Dinamina*, 17 December 2018, p.08; *Divaina*, 17 December 2018, p.03; *Mawbima*, 03 December 2018, p.14; *Lankadeepa*, 10 February 2019, p.22; *Virakesari*, 23 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.07; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.11; *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019,

(ii) The primacy of Buddhism in the constitution.<sup>14</sup>

Areas that received lesser coverage included:

(i) President Maithripala Sirisena's appointment of Mahinda Rajapaksa to the post of Prime Minister to deter a 'separatist' constitution. This topic included arguments that framed the formation of the Sirisena–Rajapaksa coalition in October 2018 as a means to deter a constitution serving Tamil 'separatists'.<sup>15</sup> Voices in favour of this view were mostly featured in the Sinhala press. By contrast, voices contesting this view were exclusively featured in the Tamil press.

(ii) Debate over the Sinhala term 'ekeeya' and the Tamil term 'orumiththanadu'. This topic covered the lack of clarity over the terms, i.e. 'ekeeya' and 'orumiththanadu', included in the report by the Panel of Experts for the Steering Committee.<sup>16</sup> Some articles

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p.01, 08; *Thinakkural*, 19 December 2018, p.03; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.09; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.02; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Mawbima*, 09 January 2019, p.12; *Mawbima*, 21 January 2019, p.12; *Thinakkural*, 23 January 2019, p.02; *Virakesari*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Tamil Mirror*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 14; *Virakesari*, 06 February 2019, p.08; *Thinakkural*, 18 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.05; *Virakesari*, 04 December 2018, p.11; *Thinakkural*, 15 January 2019, p.05; *Dinamina*, 18 January 2019, p.10; *Lankadeepa*, 21 January 2019, p.05; *Mawbima*, 15 January 2019, p.01; *Mawbima*, 07 January 2019, p.14; *Lankadeepa*, 29 January 2019, p.05; *Tamil Mirror*, 06 February 2019, p.01, 12; *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.07; *Dinamina*, 07 January 2019, p.10; *Divaina*, 17 January 2019, p.08 and *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08.

<sup>14</sup> *Anidda*, 20 January 2019, p.08; *Divaina*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 04; *Mawbima*, 11 February 2019, p.06; *Mawbima*, 16 January 2019, p.12; *Ravaya*, 20 January 2019, p.14; *Lankadeepa*, 02 January 2019, p.05; *Lankadeepa*, 16 January 2019, p.05; *Lanka*, 20 January 2019, p.11; *Silumina*, 10 February 2019, p.08; *Anidda*, 20 January 2019, p.06; *Ravaya*, 27 January 2019, p.01; *Mawbima*, 09 January 2019, p.12; *Ravaya*, 20 January 2019, p.13; *Dinamina*, 02 February 2019, p.09; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.31; *Thinakkural*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 05; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 06 January 2019, p.31; *Thinakaran*, 29 January 2019, p.01, 06; *Thinakkural*, 28 January 2019, p.01, 05; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 06 January 2019, p.07; *Virakesari*, 14 January 2019, p.04; *Thinakaran*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 04; *Tamil Mirror*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Tamil Mirror*, 22 January 2019, p.06; *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Tamil Mirror*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 12; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.07; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 20 January 2019, p.06; *Tamil Mirror*, 12 February 2019, p.03; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.04; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.09; *Virakesari*, 04 February 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakkural*, 04 February 2019, p.01, 06; *Thinakaran*, 04 February 2019, p.03; *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakkural*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Tamil Mirror*, 17 January 2019, p.02; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 04; *Thinakkural*, 23 January 2019, p.05; *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.11; *Tamil Mirror*, 23 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Virakesari*, 23 January 2019, p.18; *Thinakaran (Arangam)*, 08 February 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakaran*, 24 January 2019, p.10; *Thinakkural*, 17 January 2019, p.07; *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.20; *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 20 January 2019, p.06; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 20 January 2019, p.29; *Virakesari*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Tamil Mirror*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 14; *Tamil Mirror*, 15 January 2019, p.01, 12 and *Virakesari*, 11 January 2019, p.04.

<sup>15</sup> *Lankadeepa*, 10 February 2019, p.22; *Thinakkural*, 03 December 2018, p.13; *Lankadeepa*, 07 January 2019, p.10; *Ada*, 07 January 2019, p.07; *Lankadeepa*, 08 January 2019, p.10; *Divaina*, 11 December 2018, p.08; *Dinamina*, 08 January 2019, p.05; *Sunday Virakesari*, 30 December 2018, p.01, 10; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 30 December 2018, p.08; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 06 January 2019, p.07; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.07 and *Sunday Thinakkural*, 02 December 2018, p.07.

<sup>16</sup> *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.11; *Tamil Mirror*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Thinakkural*, 18 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Tamil Mirror*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 12; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Tamil Mirror*, 23 January 2019, p.08; *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakkural*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.31; *Tamil Mirror*, 18 January 2019, p.07; *Mawbima*, 15 January 2019, p.01; *Lankadeepa*, 08 February 2019, p.04; *Anidda*, 10 February 2019, p.15; *Dinamina*, 16 January 2019, p.04; *Dinamina*, 04 February 2019, p.04 and *Virakesari*, 13 February 2019, p.18.

limited the definition of these terms to either mean a unitary or federal state. These articles did not consider the meaning of these terms to be between a unitary and a federal state. A portion of the articles considered the usage of ‘ekeyya’ and ‘orumiththanadu’ to be a positive measure due to the negative, ethnic-specific significations that the English words ‘unitary’ and ‘federal’ had acquired in the North and South, respectively.

## (2) Dissimilar Issues

This topic covers the areas of discussion that were either minimally featured or only featured in the press of one of the local languages.

The following areas were prominently featured in the Tamil press but not in the Sinhala press and are analysed in the report:

- (i) Optimism for minorities with the drafting of a new constitution<sup>17</sup>; and
- (ii) The barriers to enacting a new constitution.<sup>18</sup>

Besides the above topics, the overall coverage was scattered and made reference to areas such as the process of introducing a constitution, amendments to legislature on the Executive Presidency, and support/opposition towards the drafting of a new constitution on varying grounds.

The prominent areas under (1) similar issues, i.e. (i) the drafting of a new constitution as a tool to divide the country and (ii) the primacy given to Buddhism in the new constitution, as well as (2) dissimilar issues, i.e. (iii) optimism for minorities with the drafting of a new constitution and (iv) the barriers to enacting a new constitution, are analysed in the subsequent sections.

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<sup>17</sup> *Sunday Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.02; *Virakesari*, 08 January 2019, p.02; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 02; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 27 January 2019, p.30; *Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.04; *Dinamina*, 22 January 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.19; *Thinakkural*, 14 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Virakesari*, 15 January 2019, p.11; *Thinakkural*, 14 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 20 January 2019, p.07; *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 14 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.12; *Thinakaran*, 06 February 2019, p.12 and *Thinakkural*, 29 January 2019, p.17.

<sup>18</sup> *Tamil Mirror*, 25 January 2019, p.08; *Virakesari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Virakesari*, 15 January 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 06 December 2018, p.04; *Tamil Mirror*, 23 January 2019, p.08; *Virakesari*, 29 January 2019, p.04; *Sunday Virakesari (Samakala Arasiyal)*, 10 February 2019, p.06; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 20 January 2019, p.06; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.07; *Thinakaran*, 25 January 2019, p.01, 04; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 02 December 2018, p.07; *Sunday Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.07, 09; *Thinakaran (Arangam)*, 08 February, p.04; *Virakesari*, 14 January 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakaran*, 24 January 2019, p.10; *Thinakkural*, 31 January 2019, p.05; *Sunday Virakesari*, 13 January 2019, p.08 and *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.06.



### (i) The drafting of a new constitution as a tool to divide the country

Contesting views emerged in the Sinhala and Tamil press over a new constitution on the grounds that it would serve as a tool to divide the country. The terms of the debate were set by Sinhala nationalist voices such as Leader of the National Freedom Front (NFF) Wimal Weeransa, Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa, Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) MP Dayasiri Jayasekara and United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Keheliya Rambukwella, among several others. They strongly opposed the drafting of a new constitution on these grounds. Some of them substantiated their claims by discrediting the actors alleged to be involved in the constitution making process. These actors included both (i) direct actors i.e. political parties and (ii) indirect actors i.e. implicitly involved actors such as the Tamil diaspora, NGOs and the international community. Meanwhile, defenders of a new constitution refuted the criticism emerging from the Sinhala national voices. Overall, the issue gained the most traction, with the Sinhala and Tamil press publishing a total of 181 articles on the topic. Coverage on the criticism of political actors is analysed below.

#### Direct actors

- TNA – A portion of the coverage solely criticised the TNA and characterised the party as self-seeking for attempting to 'divide the country' via federalism.<sup>19</sup> This criticism was almost exclusively published in the Sinhala press. From the total coverage on this issue, the Sinhala press featured 04 articles, whereas the Tamil press only featured 01 article. While the voices featured varied, the content and tonality of reporting were similar in the Tamil and Sinhala press.
- TNA and UNP – Sinhala nationalist politicians in the Sinhala and Tamil press strongly denounced the TNA and UNP by citing an alleged 'secret agreement' between the two parties.<sup>20</sup> Both parties were seen to be in a symbiotic relationship that would enable the UNP to secure political power through getting a majority on account of granting the TNA's demand for federalism. However, the degree of criticism in the Sinhala and Tamil press varied. Sections of the Sinhala mainstream press framed the TNA to be the political arm of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, they saw the TNA as attempting to achieve separatism via politics, following the failure of the LTTE's military approach. This could be seen with the labeling of the TNA-UNP

<sup>19</sup> *Mawbima*, 10 January 2019, p.01; *Divaina*, 10 January 2019, p.01; *Dinamina*, 07 January 2019, p.10; *Lankadeepa*, 16 January 2019, p.08 and *Virakesari-2*, 06 January 2019, p.01, 07.

<sup>20</sup> *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.1, 10; *Divaina*, 03 January 2019, p.10; *Mawbima*, 10 February 2019, p.18; *Mawbima*, 18 December 2018, p.14; *Divaina*, 19 December 2018, p.10; *Ada*, 06 December 2018, p.10; *Lankadeepa*, 06 December 2018, p.05; *Mawbima*, 17 December 2018, p.08; *Dinamina*, 17 December 2018, p.08; *Divaina*, 17 December 2018, p.03; *Mawbima*, 03 December 2018, p.14; *Lankadeepa*, 10 February 2019, p.22; *Virakesari*, 23 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.07; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.11; *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Thinakkural*, 19 December 2018, p.03; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.09; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.02 and *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10.

<sup>21</sup> *Ada*, 06 December 2018, p.10; *Lankadeepa*, 06 December 2018, p.05 and *Mawbima*, 04 December 2018, p.06.

relationship as an ‘elephant–tiger’ pact.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, headlines such as ‘*The Tamil National Alliance has taken the minority of the UNP hostage*’ insinuated the supposed danger posed by the TNA.<sup>23</sup>

By contrast, Tamil press criticism on the alleged TNA–UNP agreement featured more disapprobation of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe vis-à-vis his relationship with the Tamil minority.<sup>24</sup> Wickremesinghe was perceived to be opportunistic in fostering the space for a new constitution to supposedly appeal to the Tamil electorate.

- M.A. Sumanthiran – Aside from coverage on the two parties, a section of the press featured critical content on Media Spokesperson of the TNA M.A. Sumanthiran.<sup>25</sup> The criticism of Sumanthiran was also featured in several articles outside the discussion on the alleged TNA–UNP agreement.<sup>26</sup> Sumanthiran was negatively characterised in the Tamil press by way of historical comparison to former Leader of the LTTE Vellupillai Prabhakaran and former Leader of the Illankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK) S.J. Chelvanayagam. These comparisons served to demonstrate that Sumanthiran could secure “Eelam” on behalf of the Tamil polity.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, Sinhala reportage negatively characterised Sumanthiran by way of personalised comment. Examples include the headline, ‘*The unitary state idea of Sumanthiran is like addressing your mistress as mother*’, and the questioning of his decision to educate his children in Colombo.<sup>28</sup>
- TNA, UNP and JVP – Criticism on the consensus among these three parties on the devolution of power received minimal traction in the press.<sup>29</sup> The JVP was particularly criticised due to their past opposition to the devolution of power through the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution. Sinhala press coverage also referred to the convergence of the three parties as a ‘havula’.<sup>30</sup> The term ‘havula’ can be understood to mean a loose, opportunistic group that unites temporarily to achieve a specific goal. The use of the term in the context of the constitutional reform process has had the

<sup>22</sup> *Ada*, 06 December 2018, p.10.

<sup>23</sup> *Mawbima*, 17 December 2018, p.08; similar comments were also made in: *Dinamina*, 17 December 2018, p.08; *Divaina*, 17 December 2018, p.03 and *Lankadeepa*, 10 February 2019, p.22.

<sup>24</sup> *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.02; *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.01,10; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.07 and *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 08.

<sup>25</sup> *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.07; *Dinamina*, 07 January 2019, p.10; *Divaina*, 17 January 2019, p.08; *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Lankadeepa*, 21 January 2019, p.05 and *Mawbima*, 15 January 2019, p.01.

<sup>26</sup> *Virakesari*, 06 February 2019, p.08; *Thinakkural*, 18 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.05; *Virakesari*, 04 December 2018, p.11; *Thinakkural*, 15 January 2019, p.05 and *Dinamina*, 18 January 2019, p.10.

<sup>27</sup> *Virakesari*, 04 December 2018, p.11 and *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08.

<sup>28</sup> *Lankadeepa*, 29 January 2019, p.05 and *Dinamina*, 18 January 2019, p.10.

<sup>29</sup> *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.02; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Mawbima*, 09 January 2019, p.12; *Mawbima*, 21 January 2019, p.12; *Thinakkural*, 23 January 2019, p.02; *Virakesari*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Tamil Mirror*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 12 and *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 14.

<sup>30</sup> *The Media Analysis*, Vol.09, #02.

effect of delegitimising an action that is fundamentally democratic, i.e. the converging of different political parties to achieve a nationally important objective.

### Indirect actors

Collectively, the Sinhala and Tamil press published 08 articles that referenced the Tamil diaspora, the international community and NGOs as influential in shaping the content in the new constitution.<sup>31</sup> In particular, the Sinhala press underscored the link between Tamil separatism and Tamil-led terrorism. Separatism was deemed a longstanding ideology stemming from post-independence Sri Lanka; Tamil-led terrorism was considered one possible means of achieving separatism. Sinhala press commentary warned against the varying forces, both local and international, that could foster separatism via a new constitution long after the defeat of the LTTE.

Press arguments in defence of a new constitution paralleled the approach used by the Sinhala nationalist voices i.e. discrediting the critics. They identified the critics to be the “bankrupt” group led by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, following the aftermath of the 26 October political situation.<sup>32</sup> The criticisms were therefore considered fallacious, racially-induced, and intended to dupe the Sinhala polity for political gain.<sup>33</sup> Notably, it was mainly the Tamil press that featured articles that explicitly denied the ‘secret agreement’ between the TNA and UNP.<sup>34</sup> The TNA’s agreement to a unitary state was primarily welcomed by the Sinhala press as a ‘historic’ milestone in Sri Lankan politics.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Mawbima*, 04 December 2018, p.06; *Divaina*, 23 January 2019, p.13; *Mawbima*, 01 February 2019, p.14; *Ada*, 12 February 2019, p.02; *Thinakkural*, 04 February 2019, p.20; *Tamil Mirror*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Thinakkural*, 08 February, p.14 and *Divaina*, 17 January 2019, p.08.

<sup>32</sup> *Tamil Mirror*, 11 February 2019, p. 01,12; *Thinakaran*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 04; *Thinakkural*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 08; *Virakesari*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakaran*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 04; *Dinamina*, 03 January 2019, p.01; *Divaina*, 03 January 2019, p.13 and *Mawbima*, 30 January 2019, p.10.

<sup>33</sup> *Lankadeepa*, 15 February 2019, p. 01, 06; *Dinamina*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 06; *Divaina*, 15 January 2019, p.09; 14 January 2019, p.01; *Divaina*, 10 January 2019, p.01; *Dinamina*, 14 January 2019, p.06; *Mawbima*, 16 January 2019, p.12; *Mawbima*, 12 February 2019, p.06; *Lankadeepa*, 15 January 2019, p.10; *Virakesari*, 14 February 2019, p. 01, 10; *Tamil Mirror*, 11 February 2019, p. 01, 12; *Thinakaran*, 11 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.04; *Thinakkural*, 03 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Virakesari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 09; *Thinakaran*, 14 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Tamil Mirror*, 16 January 2019, p.03; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.07; *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakaran*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 04; *Thinakaran*, 21 January 2019, p.06; *Tamil Mirror*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Virakesari*, 24 January 2019, p.19; *Virakesari*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 10; *Tamil Mirror*, 25 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Tamil Mirror*, 12 February 2019, p.03; *Thinakaran*, 12 February 2019, p.04; *Divaina*, 22 January 2019, p.10; *Lankadeepa*, 22 January 2019, p.08; *Divaina*, 16 January 2019, p.09; *Lanka*, 16 December 2018, p.02; *Dinamina*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 06; *Anidda*, 20 January 2019, p.06; *Dinamina*, 16 January 2019, p.12; *Lankadeepa*, 17 January 2019, p.04 and *Ravaya*, 20 January 2019, p.14.

<sup>34</sup> *Lanka*, 16 December 2018, p.02; *Dinamina*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 06 and *Lankadeepa*, 15 February 2019, p. 01, 06.

<sup>35</sup> *Dinamina*, 23 January 2019, p.04; *Lankadeepa*, 28 January 2019, p.05; *Mawbima*, 04 February 2019, p.14; *Divaina*, 07 January 2019, p.13; *Dinamina*, 17 January 2019, p.10; *Divaina*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 04; *Mawbima*, 29 January 2019, p.10; *Dinamina*, 28 January 2019, p.01; *Divaina* 29 January 2019, p.10; *Dinamina*, 21 January 2019, p.13; *Mawbima*, 22 January 2019, p.07; *Virakesari*, 06 February, p.20; *Thinakaran*, 29 January 2019, p.01, 06; *Thinakkural*, 28 January 2019, p.01, 05; *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 10 and *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10.

## **(ii) The primacy of Buddhism in the new constitution**

Press interest in the status of Buddhism in the constitution was evidenced in 40 articles in the Tamil press and 14 articles in the Sinhala press. While Sri Lanka is not a completely theocratic state, the 1978 constitution consolidated the primacy of Buddhism. This provision is widely contested since it could “greatly influence state policies and behaviour” and “justify preferential treatment to the Buddha Sasana in financial aid or restrict other religious organisations from propagating their faith”.<sup>36</sup>

In light of this relationship between Buddhism and the state, press discussion took place within an overarching debate of Sri Lanka as a secular state vs. a religious state. Proponents of the religious state presented a preservation argument, whereas proponents of a secular state presented a reformation argument. Importantly, both camps discussed Buddhism in conjunction with the concept of a unitary state.

Proponents of the preservation argument—mainly led by the UNP—affirmed the preservation of the status quo in the new constitution, i.e. the primacy given to Buddhism in a unitary state. They underscored the safety of ethno-religious minorities within a religious state. However, they proposed the reformation of centre-periphery relations in order to better devolve power to the provinces. Appearing in 26 articles, the preservation argument received the highest coverage collectively in the Sinhala and Tamil press. The content and tonality in the press of both local languages were similar.

Proponents of the reformation argument were mainly featured in the Tamil press and contested the religious state by arguing for a federal, secular state. By adopting a minority perspective, they perceived the primacy given to Buddhism as indicative of promoting majoritarianism at the expense of minority rights. Importantly, the understanding of ‘minority’ in the context of this argument was largely limited to the Tamil minority. For instance, Tamil nationalist politicians such as former Chief Minister of the Northern Province C.V. Wigneswaran argued against the religious state on the grounds that it would allow for state-sponsored Sinhala–Buddhist colonisation in Tamil dominated areas.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, several Tamil political parties and actors including the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) and Wigneswaran asserted that the religious state would prevent the formation of the “Tamil nation”.<sup>38</sup> Only editorials in *Thinakaran*, *Virakesari* and *Anidda*, and opinions from the Leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress Rauff Hakeem and a member of the Nava Sama Samaja Party Thirunavukkarasu broadly referenced minorities and stressed on fostering an inclusive, pluralistic society through the constitution.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Dian A. H. Shah, *Constitutions, Religion and Politics in Asia: Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka* (2017), p.79. <https://books.google.lk/books?isbn=1107183340>.

<sup>37</sup> *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 10 and *Thinakkural*, 22 January, p.01, 08.

<sup>38</sup> *Virakesari*, 04 February 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakkural*, 04 February 2019, p.01, 06; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 04; *Thinakkural*, 23 January 2019, p.05 and *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.09; *Anidda*, 20 January 2019, p.06; <sup>39</sup> *Virakesari*, 23 January 2019, p.18; *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 20 January 2019, p.06 and *Sunday Thinakkural*, 20 January 2019, p.29.

Besides the preservation and reformation arguments, there was limited coverage on the ‘compromise’ made by the TNA and UNP to achieve federalism by preserving the status of Buddhism. As per the ‘compromise’, the TNA allegedly agreed to an overall unitary structure with the primacy of Buddhism in exchange for the devolution of power. This was considered a compromise since the Tamil polity has previously demanded a separate state, as opposed to the devolution of power in a unitary state. The UNP was presumably compromising the existing centralised power structure by agreeing to the devolution of power in exchange for the preservation of some unitary elements and the primacy given to Buddhism. Notably, criticism levelled at the TNA by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa for the alleged compromise was only featured in the Tamil press.<sup>40</sup> By contrast, the UNP was characterised as “traitors” in *Mawbima* for allegedly agreeing to the compromise.<sup>41</sup>

In general, coverage on the binary contestations of Sri Lanka as either a unitary-Buddhist state or a secular-federal state was demonstrative of media parochialism. While the Sinhala press prioritised coverage on the preservation of the unitary-Buddhist state, the Tamil press prioritised coverage on the secular-federal state and highlighted its relevance to the Tamil minority. The volume and content of these articles seemed to cater to ethno-linguistic and religious groups typically associated with the Sinhala and Tamil press. Such ethnicised reporting has also been evidenced in previous Media and Reconciliation reports.<sup>42</sup>

### **(iii) Optimism for minorities with the drafting of a new constitution**

17 articles—16 in the Tamil press and 01 in the Sinhala press—featured optimism for ethnic minorities with the drafting of a new constitution.<sup>43</sup> By adopting a lens of justice, several Tamil politicians in 09 articles reasoned that a new constitution would specifically guarantee the rightful treatment of the Tamil minority. Some of these politicians included Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP G. Srinesan, Media Spokesperson of the TNA M.A. Sumanthiran, Illankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK) MP S. Shritharan and Democratic People’s Front (DPF) MP Velu Kumar.<sup>44</sup> Optimism towards a new constitution

<sup>40</sup> *Sunday Thinakkural*, 20 January 2019, p.29; *Virakesari*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Tamil Mirror*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 12; *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 14 and *Tamil Mirror*, 15 January 2019, p.01, 12.

<sup>41</sup> *Mawbima*, 09 January 2019, p.12.

<sup>42</sup> Verité Research, *The Media and Reconciliation: Media Coverage of the Office on Missing Persons and the Devolution of Power* (2018); *Media and Reconciliation: Media Coverage of the October 26 Political Situation in Sri Lanka in relation to Minorities* (2018).

<sup>43</sup> *Sunday Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.02; *Virakesari*, 08 January 2019, p.02; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 02; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 27 January 2019, p.30; *Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.04; *Dinamina*, 22 January 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.19; *Thinakkural*, 14 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Virakesari*, 15 January 2019, p.11; *Thinakkural*, 14 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 20 January 2019, p.07; *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 14 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.12; *Thinakaran*, 06 February 2019, p.12 and *Thinakkural*, 29 January 2019, p.17.

<sup>44</sup> *Thinakaran*, 06 February, p. 12; *Thinakkural*, 29 January 2019, p.17; *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 20 January 2019, p.07; *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 14 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Thinakkural*,

to rectify the issues faced by the Tamil minority could be seen with headlines such as, ‘TNA hopes for an independent environment where Tamils can live with autonomy’.<sup>45</sup>

08 Tamil articles and 01 Sinhala article alluded to a broader interpretation of the term ‘ethnic minorities’, rather than narrowing it to the ‘Tamil minority’, when discussing the benefits of a new constitution for all ethnic minorities.<sup>46</sup> Although the *Thinakkural* headline ‘Will constitutional reforms fulfill the aspirations of the Tamil people?’ focused on the aspirations of the Tamil people, the content of the article referred to minorities in general.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, only 06 articles, inclusive of 03 Sinhala articles, highlighted the importance of a new constitution for all Sri Lankans, irrespective of ethnic considerations.<sup>48</sup>

Media parochialism could be seen with the absence of coverage in the Sinhala press, and the relevance of the issue within the Tamil press. However, media parochialism could also be seen in the content of the Tamil press—through the conflation of ‘ethnic minorities’ with the ‘Tamil minority’, for instance.

#### **(iv) The barriers to enacting a new constitution**

The barriers to enacting a new constitution were discussed in 19 articles in the Tamil press. The barriers identified in these articles can be classified under: (1) delay, (2) defeat and (3) device.

09 articles discussed the varying delays in enacting a new constitution.<sup>49</sup> Some of these delays related to the need to hold the provincial council elections prior to drafting a new constitution, the time taken to produce a draft, the length of the process of passing a new constitution and the ongoing negotiations to include the proposals by the Buddhist clergy.

09 articles pointed to the passing of a new constitution being defeated due to 1) disagreements in the political arena and 2) racism.<sup>50</sup> A portion of these articles reasoned that the ruptures in the coalition government would result in the thwarting of efforts

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14 January 2019, p.01, 08; *Virakesari*, 15 January 2019, p.11; *Thinakkural*, 14 January 2019, p.06 and *Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.12.

<sup>45</sup> *Virakesari*, 15 January 2019, p.11.

<sup>46</sup> *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.19; *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 02; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 27 January 2019, p.30; *Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.04; *Sunday Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.02; *Virakesari*, 08 January 2019, p.02 and *Dinamina*, 22 January 2019, p.04.

<sup>47</sup> *Sunday Thinakkural*, 27 January 2019, p.30.

<sup>48</sup> *Dinamina*, 08 February 2019, p.12; *Lankadeepa*, 27 December 2018, p.04; *Anidda*, 10 February 2019, p.06; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 20 January 2019, p.29; *Thinakaran*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 06 and *Thinakaran*, 06 January 2019, p.06.

<sup>49</sup> *Tamil Mirror*, 25 January 2019, p.08; *Virakesari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10; *Virakesari*, 15 January 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 06 December 2018, p.04; *Tamil Mirror*, 23 January 2019, p.08; *Virakesari*, 29 January 2019, p.04; *Sunday Virakesari (Samakala Arasiyal)*, 10 February 2019, p.06; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 20 January 2019, p.06 and *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.07.

<sup>50</sup> *Thinakaran*, 25 January 2019, p.01, 04; *Sunday Thinakkural*, 02 December 2018, p.07; *Sunday Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.07, 09; *Thinakaran (Arangam)*, 08 February 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 14 January 2019, p.04; *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.06; *Thinakaran*, 24 January 2019, p.10; *Thinakkural*, 31 January 2019, p.05 and *Sunday Virakesari*, 13 January 2019, p.08.

towards enacting a new constitution. Some voices in support of this view included members of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE). Meanwhile, 01 *Thinakaran* opinion article held politicians such as former Chief Minister of the Northern Provincial Council C.V. Wigneswaran and Leader of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam accountable for deterring efforts towards enacting a new constitution.<sup>51</sup> Wigneswaran and Ponnambalam were seen to be propagating 'racist' views and insisting on a separate, federal state as opposed to agreeing to a unitary state with devolved powers. The article outlined that such demands would caution the Sinhalese against supporting a new constitution.

01 *Thinkkarual* editorial viewed the United National Party's (UNP) outward advocacy for a new constitution to be a strategic device used by the party.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, the UNP were seen to be backing a new constitution to sustain support from the TNA and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The article concluded by noting that a new constitution would not be enacted due to the UNP's lack of genuine effort in bringing about constitutional reform.

Similar to the coverage in Section (iii), media parochialism could be seen in both the Tamil and Sinhala press i.e., the issue was covered in the Tamil press but not in the Sinhala press.

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<sup>51</sup> *Thinakaran (Arangam)*, 08 February 2019, p.04.

<sup>52</sup> *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.06.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This section discusses the key findings and notable observations identified in the analysis. A quantitative analysis on the topic indicated its importance in both the Sinhala and the Tamil press. Moreover, the volume of coverage observed in Sections (i) and (ii), i.e. 181 and 54 articles respectively, conveyed the gravity of these specific issues in the vernacular press.

In categorising the coverage in Sinhala and Tamil newspapers into ‘similar issues’ and ‘dissimilar issues’, differing nuances in the coverage of these issues in the local language press was manifest. For instance, Sinhala press coverage on the drafting of a new constitution as a tool to divide the country saw stronger criticisms levelled at the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). Meanwhile, Sinhala and Tamil press coverage on the primacy of Buddhism in the new constitution strengthened the view that reporting on certain issues is split across ethnic lines. This was evidenced by the fact that the Sinhala press prioritised coverage that favoured the preservation of a unitary, Buddhist state, whereas the Tamil press prioritised coverage that favoured a secular, federal state. Moreover, the Tamil press tended to conflate and limit interpretations of the term ‘ethnic minorities’ with the ‘Tamil minority’. This feature was particularly observed in Tamil press articles cited in Sections (ii), (iii) and (iv).

Media parochialism was also conspicuous in Section (iv) with the absence of Sinhala press reportage on the barriers to enacting a constitution that would be beneficial for minorities and the general population of Sri Lanka. The marked silence of the Sinhala press, in contrast to the Tamil press, suggested the ethnic factors taken into consideration when reporting on minority related issues. However, the report also noted instances where the content and tonality did not vary between the Sinhala and Tamil press. For instance, content and tonality was similar in the press of both languages with respect to coverage on the preservation of the unitary state (see Section (ii)). Nevertheless, the existence of qualitative and quantitative gaps in coverage, and the ethnicised nature of reporting, may warrant improvement in providing balanced coverage of national-level issues. As outlined in previous reports, such balanced reporting is necessary in fostering meaningful reconciliation, especially in view of the key role played by the media in shaping public thinking.



## ANNEXURE

### TAMIL PRESS

#### **1. TNA only tries to defend Ranil's government | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 02 December 2018, p.07 | No Byline**

Leader of Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) Suresh Premachandran said in an interview that the current political crisis negatively affects the Tamil community. He noted that the enactment of a new constitution is impossible given the current political crisis. Further, he said that the long-lasting problems of the Tamils such as disappearances, land acquisition, militarisation in the North, and the release of political prisoners will continue.

#### **2. The moves of the TNA in the battle for power | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 02 December 2018, p.25 | No Byline**

The importance of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) to show the majority in the parliament has increased. Sources said that Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has promised the TNA to enact the new constitution before next year's Independence Day, if the TNA supports Prime Minister Wickremesinghe. In addition, the release of land and political prisoners have also been discussed. However, no official information has been released in this regard. A two-thirds majority will be needed to enact the new constitution and Ranil does not have the two-thirds majority in parliament. In addition, the signature of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, the President, will be needed to release land. Therefore, the fulfilment of the promises given by Ranil to TNA is questionable.

#### **3. Sirisena appointed Rajapaksa to prevent the merging of the North and East | *Thinakkural*, 03 December 2018, p.13 | No Byline**

Addressing an event on 13 December in Kandy, Minister S.B. Dissanayake stated that the President appointed Mahinda Rajapaksa as Prime Minister to protect the national wealth and the national economy, and to prevent the creation of a federal government and the amalgamation of North and East. Mahinda Rajapaksa accepted the premiership for the benefit of the country, he said.

#### **4. I will not be ungrateful towards Tamils | *Virakesari*, 04 December 2018, p.05 | No Byline**

Addressing a foreign media briefing held at Temple Trees, the former Prime Minister and the Leader of the United National Party (UNP), Ranil Wickremesinghe said that President became ungrateful to Tamils; but he will not do the same. “As I promised to the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), I took action to enact a new constitution soon after I came to power”, he emphasized. He said that their target is bringing a new constitution for the sake of Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities.

#### **5. Sumanthiran tries to obtain Tamil Eelam through agreement | *Virakesari*, 04 December 2018, p.11 | By: Rajadurai Hashan**

Addressing a media brief held on 3 December at the party office of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), Member of Parliament (MP) Rohitha Abeygunawardana has stated that that the United National Party (UNP) has been trying to divide the country for the last three years. He alleged that the UNP facilitated the revival of liberation fighters in the North. Further, he accused that Sumanthiran is trying to obtain the Tamil Eelam (which Velupillai Prabhakaran already tried) through an agreement. He said that the killing of two policemen in Vavunativu reflects the revival of the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam (LTTE). MP Abeygunawardana further said that the UNP administration aims to satisfy the diasporas. He also noted that the killing of the two policemen was a reaction to the denial of allowing the Maaveerar Day.

#### **6. The expectations of Tamils and the allegations of the President | *Virakesari*, 06 December 2018, p.04 | The Editorial**

The good governance government that came to power with the support of minorities did some things at the beginning of their tenure to solve problems faced by minorities. These include the releasing of a few political prisoners, and releasing occupied land. However, most of the promises given to the people still remain unfulfilled. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) extended its support to the good governance government based on these promises. The key election promise of the good governance government was the enactment of a new constitution to solve ethnic problems of the country. Even though a few steps have been taken, this promise remains unfulfilled. The United National Party (UNP) and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) disagreed at the point of enactment of the new constitution. Therefore, the process of enactment of the new constitution has been slow. The Tamils who voted in favour of President Maithripala Sirisena is disappointed with his recent activities as he acted against Tamils.

**7. Parliamentarian Sumanthiran said that executive presidency should be completely abolished through a new constitution | *Virakesari*, 19 December 2018, p.02 | By: R. Yasi and M.R.M. Waseem**

Addressing parliament on 18 December, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Member of Parliament (MP) M.A. Sumanthiran said that the new constitution promised the abolition of executive presidency, and that this promise should be fulfilled. MP Sumanthiran told parliament that the abolition of executive presidency is an integral part of the new constitution and focus should be given to introducing the new constitution. “We have been promised a new constitution and the Constitutional Assembly was set up for this purpose. However, the abolishment of executive presidency has dragged on and we feel that it is time to introduce the new constitution”, he said. MP Sumanthiran also said that the promise to abolish executive presidency was given before the presidential election in 2015. MP Sumanthiran noted that Sri Lanka experienced a constitutional crisis as a result of the executive president trying to exercise powers beyond what is vested in him through the constitution. Therefore, he emphasised the importance of abolishing executive presidency.

**8. We will not allow a new constitution to be enacted | *Thinakkural*, 19 December 2018, p.03 | By: Y. Dharmaraj**

Addressing a media briefing on 18 December in Battaramulla, Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Member of Parliament (MP) Lakshman Yapa Abeywardena said that they will not allow the present United National Party (UNP) government to bring a new constitution or make any amendments to the constitution at the behest of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) or any other political party. “However, we will consider giving our support if the government brings the proposed 20<sup>th</sup> amendment as promised during the previous elections,” he said. MP Abeywardena also said that in order to strengthen the powers of the Prime Minister, the government brought the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, instead of bringing the proposed 20<sup>th</sup> amendment. He claimed that the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment has created an unnecessary crisis between the judiciary, parliament and the executive today.

**9. New draft for the constitution will be submitted before Independence Day | *Sunday Virakesari*, 30 December 2018, p.01, 10 | By: R. Virushan**

Addressing a media briefing on 29 December, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Spokesperson and Member of Parliament (MP) M. A. Sumanthiran said that the draft constitution, which was to be presented in Parliament on November 7, 2018, would be presented before February 04, 2019, the Independence Day. He said that the political

conspiracy was staged to prevent the submission of the draft constitution. However, we have an obligation to uphold the rule of law, he added.

**10. New draft for the constitution will be submitted before the Independence Day | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 30 December 2018, p.08 | No Byline**

Addressing a media briefing on 29 December, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Spokesperson and Member of Parliament (MP) M.A. Sumanthiran said that the draft constitution, which was to be presented in parliament on 7 November 2018, would be presented before 04 February 2019, the Independence Day. He said that the political conspiracy was staged to prevent the submission of the draft constitution. “However, we have an obligation to uphold the rule of law”, he added.

**11. No space for a new constitution; stop the racist campaign | *Thinakkural*, 03 January 2019, p.01, 08 | By: Y. Dharmaraj**

At a briefing held on 2 January at the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) head office, the Leader of the JVP, Anura Kumara Dissanayaka noted that the new constitution will not be enacted or passed by the current parliament. He accused that politicians try to induce racism using the new constitution as a tool.

**12. The draft for a new constitution will be submitted this week | *Virakesari*, 06 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: R. Virushan**

The draft for a new constitution will be submitted to parliament this week. The draft includes provisions for abolishing executive presidency, strengthening the powers of the provincial councils, changing the election system, and strengthening parliament. The proposed draft has been enacted taking into consideration the recommendations of the committee of experts. A team of individuals is functioning under the guidance of the Prime Minister to draft the new constitution. The draft is to be submitted to parliament before 10 January. Recommendations made by political parties will be considered at the constitutional council.

**13. “The aim of the new constitution is to divide the country; we will never allow it”, says Mahinda’s team | *Virakesari*, 06 January 2019, p.01, 07 | No Byline**

Responding to the expected submission of a draft for a new constitution within this week, United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) Member of Parliament (MP) Keheliya Rambukwella said that the UPFA will never allow a new constitution to be enacted. Even

though the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and United National Party (UNP) pledge their support for a new constitution, it will not receive the two-thirds majority in parliament, he stated. MP Rambukwella further said that the constitution proposed by the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) will not be accepted by any party as the TNA's intention is to divide the country. He alleged that TNA is acting with selfish motives and is forgetting the people.

**14. The new constitution is not only for the Tamils | *Thinakaran*, 06 January 2019, p.06 | No Byline**

Since the time Sri Lanka received independence, Tamils have been expecting a political solution, and have been believing the promises given by successive governments. However, the expectations ceased in 1976, after the Vaddukoddai Resolution. Later, in 2015, the expectations revived with the new good governance regime. Tamils believed and are still believing that a new constitution will be enacted under the coalition government as the two main parties are ruling together. Reportedly, the steering committee is making serious efforts to submit the draft for a new constitution within this week. Parliamentarian M.A. Sumanthiran affirmed that a draft will be submitted before the day of independence. The Leader of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), Anura Kumara Dissanayaka stated that they will never allow a new constitution to be enacted under any circumstance. Based on feedback, even the Tamil journalists are confused as to whether the Tamils are requesting for the devolution of power or the decentralisation of power. Tamils do not request for power to be decentralised. If power decentralisation is what Tamils are requesting, then they would not have fought after 1987, for the provincial council system did decentralise power. According to a statement by MP Dayasiri Jayasekara, the Secretary of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), a solution should be arrived at, with the consent of the two main parties. All people, including MP Dayasiri Jayasekara should realise that a new constitution is not only for Tamils. Given the undemocratic political scenes that have been staged recently, a new constitution is needed for the benefit of all citizens of the country.

**15. TNA will hold negotiations with the Mahinda team | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 06 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: Roshan Nagalingam**

Media Spokesperson of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran said that after the release of the draft of the new constitution, the TNA will hold negotiations with the Mahinda team on matters included in the draft in favour of Tamils. He alleged that few politicians from the South oppose the constitution without knowing its contents. The contents should be explored only after the release of the draft, MP Sumanthiran said.

**16. The new constitution and the minorities | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 06 January 2019, p.07 | By: N. Lebrin Raj**

During an interview, Parliamentarian and Media Spokesperson of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), M.A. Sumanthiran said that the enactment of a new constitution is an integral part of the good governance government. The draft was to be submitted to the parliament in November 2018. However, it was not submitted due to the political crisis of the country that started in October 2018, he clarified. Further, Member of Parliament (MP) Sumanthiran stated that the hope for a new constitution has increased after the political crisis. MP Sumanthiran also mentioned that he believes the Sinhalese people will accept the new constitution, since the TNA is requesting for a solution within an undivided country. Though few steps have been taken to address the issues of Tamils, the moves have been slow, MP Sumanthiran added. He said that he hopes things will move faster given the current political situation of the country. Even though the Prime Minister has said in Kandy that Buddhism will be given priority, the interim report provides for equality of all religions. Equality will be ensured in the constitution, the MP stated.

**17. New constitution will not change the unitary nature of the country | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 06 January 2019, p.31 | By: M. Thirunavakkarasu**

During a meeting held on 1 January at Sirikotha, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that the new constitution would not change the unitary nature of the country. In addition, he pledged in a meeting held in Kandy that the unitary nature would not change, and Buddhism will get priority under the new constitution. Therefore, Tamils can no longer believe that federalism will come to effect under the new constitution. The book titled “Sri Lankan Constitution: Donoughmore Constitution to Sirisena” released in 2016 predicted that a political solution will not be given to the Tamils. The promise of the new constitution and the transitional justice process is mere eyewash to protect the country from the international community. India and other western countries have a responsibility to ensure justice to the Sri Lankan Tamils.

**18. Tamils should not believe the enactment of a new constitution | *Virakesari*, 08 January 2019, p.02 | By: R. Yasi**

Responding to a question, Leader of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Anura Kumara Disanayaka said that a new constitution is the only way to solve all the problems, particularly the ethnic problems. He emphasised the need to bring a new constitution which ensures the democracy and the rights of all three communities in Sri Lanka. Further, he pointed out that the denial of rights was the reason behind 30 years of the cruel war. He accused both the main parties for not bringing a new constitution despite promising and stating that they are in a position to bring in a new constitution. However, he said that JVP will not allow a constitution which would break the country.

**19. They are trying to break the country through creating a new constitution | *Virakesari*, 08 January 2019, p.08 | By: M. Mano Chithra**

Addressing a media briefing on 7 January in Colombo, Kotapola Amarakitti Thero said that some separatists are trying to create a new constitution to divide the country. He said that the United National Party (UNP) which is supporting the new constitution with keen interest, must ensure reconciliation in the country. UNP should not support to divide the country into nine under the name of federal, he added.

**20. The new constitutional draft is not to be submitted on 04 February | *Virakesari*, 09 January 2019, p.05 | By: M. Mano Chithra**

Addressing a media briefing at the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) office on 7 January, Parliamentarian Shantha Bandara said that a committee has been set up from their party to examine the new constitution. Reportedly, the deputy leader of the committee is Nimal Siripala de Silva. Member of Parliament (MP) Shantha Bandara said that the draft for a new constitution is not to be submitted on 4 February. Reportedly, MP Sumanthiran had said that the draft for a new constitution will be submitted on the day of Independence. However, there is no chance to submit the draft of a new constitution on 4 February.

**21. Short opinion by Gajendran Ponnambalam | *Tamil Mirror*, 11 January 2019, p.02 | By: Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam**

"All Tamils should join together in completely opposing the solution based on a unitary state" – Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam (Leader, Tamil National People's Front).

**22. The useless propaganda that threatens people | *Thinakaran*, 11 January 2019, p.06 | The Editorial**

While tasks related to forming the new constitution are being carried out swiftly, it can be observed that contradictory views are being levelled by the opposition against this. The Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa has informed that the new constitution is against the country and is a threat to the country. He has pointed out that the economic crisis that has affected the country and the new constitution that would divide the country are all detrimental to the country. We must think through to see if allegations levelled against the new constitution are true. The parliament was transformed into a constitutional assembly, and action is being taken to create a new constitution. The opposition leader is also a part of this constitutional assembly. The expert panel can put forward matters related to what the constitution should feature and the amendments that should be made to it. The reality is that a democratic country will have time for this.

What is the basis of the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition when he said that in a situation where no report is presented before the expert panel, the constitution would prove to be a threat to the country? This could be viewed as a plot to tie the knot between the ruling faction and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and create unwanted panic amidst the Sinhalese. Creating fear and panic in the minds of people cannot be allowed on any grounds. All parties should be transparent about the new constitution. If everyone acts with an open mind and good will, it will help the country attain a great future.

**23. Political leaders need to pay attention to the declining faith of the people | *Virakesari*, 11 January 2019, p.04 | The Editorial**

Will the new constitution be created? Will a solution to the long-term political issues of the people be reached through this? The Tamil speaking people live with great doubts pertaining to the above. When the good governance government came to power in 2015, everyone had high hopes that a political solution for the issues of the Tamil people would be reached. It was also predicted that actions towards this would be pursued with great dedication. However, the actions and the efforts that were taken towards the constitution in the past four years have not borne fruit. What has to be debated over in this case is if it was carried out whole heartedly. In that way the constitutional assembly is to gather in parliament at 10.30 am today (11 January), where Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe would be tabling a report by a panel of experts, and representations made by political parties to the constitutional assembly on the formation of a new constitution. The Prime Minister will present a report prepared by the Panel of Experts (POE) for the Steering Committee, which is based on the Interim Report, six Sub-Committee Reports, and representations made by political parties on drafting a new constitution. The POE's examined three matters of national importance; changing the electoral system, devolution of power, and transforming the system of executive presidency. Efforts towards the new constitution began to debilitate following the local government elections in February 2018 and following the political crisis in October 2018. The President and the Prime Minister shoulder a great responsibility in providing the promised solutions to the long-term issues of the Tamil people. Therefore, in the remaining time period efforts towards resolving the political issue of the Tamil people and the constitution should be carried out whole-heartedly.

**24. Letting the small fish escape while waiting for the big fish | *Virakesari*, 11 January 2019, p.04 | By: M.A.M. Nilam**

The New United Front Government, headed by Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, came into power in 1970 and adopted a new constitution, enforcing the "Sinhala Only" rule and making Buddhism the state religion. Both the Committee on the Revision of the Constitution and the Buddha Sasana Commission were dissolved following Bandaranaike's assassination in 1959. However, the agendas of both bodies were taken



up by the major political parties and governments that succeeded Bandaranaike. Mrs. Bandaranaike, who took over the leadership of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in 1960, promised in her first election manifesto that she would pursue both initiatives: she would work to create a republican constitution which included a chapter on fundamental rights, and she would implement the suggestions of the Buddha Sasana Commission. The Article 29(2) of the Soulbury Constitution that ensured the rights of the minorities had also been removed. In the early 1970s, the talk of a new constitution, which had existed in the political scene since the 1950s, finally gave way to actual constitutional change. In the 1970-1972 constituent assembly process, members debated a Draft Basic Resolution on Buddhism (Draft Basic Resolution 3). However, priority for a religious charter or chauvinism did not gain the place it ought to have, amidst the Buddhist due to the economic control and the food shortage that prevailed at the time.

The July 1977 general election in Sri Lanka witnessed a landslide victory for the United National Party (UNP). The SLFP representation in parliament reduced to a negligible proportion, and the representation of left-wing parties that continuously maintained a representation in parliament since 1948, was reduced to naught. Doctor Colvin R. de Silva's omission of Section 29 of the Soulbury Constitution in his 1972 constitution was very much valued by the minorities, not so much for what it did or did not do, but for the fact that it clearly stated in the constitution that legislation should not discriminate against minorities. This utterly gratuitous act has caused irreparable damage to race relations in our battered country. Mrs. Bandaranaike was charged with abuse of power and lost her civic rights for seven years. One month after the UNP was swept into power, communal violence erupted again. In 1978, a new constitution was adopted, with J. R. Jayewardene becoming the first executive president with unprecedented power. The UNP started massive development projects, the feasibility studies of all of which the previous SLFP government had done. The masses had voted in favour of an open economy and against chauvinism. However, J. R. Jayewardene had incorporated chauvinism even into the 1978 executive powered constitution. If only J. R. had given up on Buddhist chauvinism and implemented an open economy for Sri Lanka, then Sri Lanka too would have emerged as one of the most self-sufficient economies in Asia. This way, we would not have had to depend on other nations, socially, economically, or for foreign security. We praise the courage that went into the war that occurred between two ethnic factions. The community that won has been accused of war crimes and has been singled out in the United Nations (UN). Although 10 years have passed since the war ended, there is no international resolution, nor is there a new constitution to resolve this locally. The President had extended the term at the UN giving various excuses such as the country not yet being prepared for accountability. Now when the time draws closer to the UN sessions, is it fair to create problems? Let alone being accountable to the UN, the President is not even accountable to the people's mandate through which he came to power; 19<sup>th</sup> amendment which he had completely violated. The Supreme Court cancelled the dissolution of parliament that was carried out by the President prematurely at three and a half years, paving the way for elections. The parliament rejected the President's action

to remove Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe from the post of Prime Minister and appoint Mahinda Rajapaksa instead. Why was it that Maithripala Sirisena was able to bring only the 'kurra vilakku' when he last went to the UN? The people of the North and East gave their mandate to them to fulfil their aspirations, not to rule the entire country. This would not only be for the Tamil MPs of the North and East but also the Leader of the Opposition, Sampanthan. Over the past three years the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) enjoyed this single source of state power that the Tamil community has seldom had the opportunity to enjoy. The significance of the Leader of the Opposition's position is that it gives the TNA, which represents a minority community, a position within Sri Lanka's hierarchy of political leaders. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe would not have been able to reclaim his position during the political crisis that occurred last year, had it not been for the votes of the 14 members of the TNA that made the two-thirds majority in parliament. President Maithripala Sirisena announced in the gazette notification on 9 December 2018 that parliament would be dissolved and that a general election would be held in January 2019, following the political crisis on 26 October 2018. Two days after, 54 members of the United National People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) gained membership in the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP). They decided to retain their seats in parliament. However, following the unanimous decision taken by the Supreme Court to rule the action taken to dissolve parliament as illegal, they quickly turned the tables by saying that they did not fill any membership forms of the SLPP. Didn't the Chairperson of the SLPP know that if an Member of Parliament (MP) holds positions in two political parties at the same time, he can lose his post as a MP within a month? If this had been proved they would have lost not only the post of Opposition Leader but also the post of MP.

**25. Will not render any support for the new constitution | *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: M.A.M. Nilam**

The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) is not prepared to render its support towards the new constitution in any way. This is the firm stand taken by our party led by Mahinda Rajapaksa. Where we are concerned, it would be better to hold a general election, receive the people's mandate and then think about a constitution. Member of Parliament Dinesh Gunawardena stated this when expressing his view to *Varamanjari*. We were the driving force behind the many amendments made to the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, without which many parliamentarians would have been sent home today. We were in support of the new constitution because we were told that the electoral system would be changed. We completely rejected the legislature that was about to be passed in a sly manner. The information stated that it is a legislation (satta moolam) only available in the English language. This is total misguidance. Our stand is that a new government should be formed. We are not satisfied with the report presented by the Prime Minister. We will not allow the new constitution to be brought in. The government is attempting to bring in a constitution that would weaken the Buddhist Sinhalese majority. We understand that the

international community is in the backdrop of this. If attempts are continued without consideration, we will not hesitate to gather mobs and protest.

**26. Refusing the devolution of power is unjust when the Tamils ask for it; should not let go of this rare opportunity | *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: M.A.M. Nilam**

"In the matter of implementation of a constitution its fate is determined by the parliament. After the country gained independence, we have received a very rare opportunity" stated Leader of the House of the Parliament and Minister Lakshman Kiriella. A situation has arisen where Tamil people request for something that was denied before. This is the mistake made by the Sinhalese. He stated this while expressing his views to *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari* over matters regarding the constitution that are getting heated up. The country would have not had to face such a crisis if devolution was carried out as soon as we gained independence. The Tamils are pushed to a situation to request for something they were denied before. The Tamil faction was not involved in matters regarding the formation of the constitution before. Today, they have joined in, this is actually something to welcome. India is unified in the same matter, having more than 40 languages, whereas we remain so backward. The Sinhalese themselves requested for devolution to work unitedly. Is it fair to refuse the Tamils of what they want? We cannot hesitate anymore, what Ranil Wickremesinghe has put forward are the suggestions of all factions together. Therefore, we should pay attention to this.

**27. Don't give up due to indifferent attitude | *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 13 January 2019, p.06 | The Editorial**

Parliament was transformed into a constitutional assembly in order to draft the new constitution. However, even after a lapse of three years nothing constructive has taken place. The steering committee appointed to produce a copy of the draft constitution has worked with dedication, having met on 93 occasions to examine and include many suggestions in the draft, which unfortunately never reached the expected outcome of being able to have the draft completed. Controversy looms as to how the constitutional assembly and the steering committee are going to continue with the task of completing the draft. All this echoed in parliament last Friday (11 January). Efforts to produce a new constitution have been taken since 1984. Mahinda Rajapaksa states that the mandate of the people is required through a referendum for the creation of a new constitution after which it should receive the support of two-thirds majority in parliament has to be passed. When there are so many steps involved it is unnecessary to leave room for suspicion and racism. The constitutions of 1947 and 1972 were created in a very short period which shows that the parties had majority support. Therefore, delays could have been avoided, three years have lapsed. As matters prolong, it is common for boredom set in amongst

people and political parties regarding this. The expectations of the people over a new constitution should not go in vain. The future of the country is also dependent on this, do not give up due to an indifferent attitude!

**28. Is the UNP on the verge of giving up the new constitution? Conflict amidst backbench members | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10 | No Byline**

Information sources state that a situation has arisen where the members of the United National Party (UNP) are unable to take a firm stand regarding the constitution. United Freedom Front (UFF), the main opponent that has shown severe opposition towards the preparation of the new constitution, has also stated that the new constitution does not stand a chance of being passed in parliament. The UFF also insists that a people's mandate should be sought for a new constitution through a general election. In such a situation it has been stated that the UNP is unable to take a firm stand regarding the constitution due to the conflicts that have occurred between the UNP backbench Members of Parliament (MPs). While some MPs have planned to completely oppose the new constitution, some others are expressing their opposition towards certain matters related to the constitution. There is severe opposition within the party against the suggestion to the word 'ekeeya rajya' meaning one country in the Tamil language. Backbench MP Chaminda Wijesiri has stated that a clear explanation should be given to the word 'one country'.

**29. What is the solution for the Tamil people? – Queries Lanka Sama Samaja Party | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: Roshan Nagalingam**

The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) has raised a question asking that if the new constitution is not detrimental to Buddhism and the unitary state as stated by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, then what the solution for Tamil people is. The General Secretary of the LSSP, Professor Tissa Vitarana stated that they had not been informed what the new constitution carries as the solution for the Tamil people. He also said that leftist parties such as the LSSP would be in favour of the constitution if the new constitution provided a solution to the issues of the Tamil community. Therefore, by setting up an all-party representative's commission to put forward the issues of the Tamil people through discussions, the new constitution would gain the support of all parties.

**30. It is dangerous to pass the new constitution – Mahinda faction states | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10 | No Byline**

Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Parliamentarian, Dilum Amunugama stated that it is very dangerous to have the new constitution passed now as the present government is afraid of foreign powers and will oblige to them. Moreover, this is being pursued due to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's need to retain power and authority. Member of

Parliament (MP) Amunugama stated this during a media briefing that was organized by the SLPP in Kandy, day before yesterday (11 January). The 19<sup>th</sup> amendment was the main reason behind the political crisis that lasted for 51 days in the country. The complications in the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment regarding the dissolution of parliament are good enough reasons not to create a new constitution. He also said that Ranil Wickremesinghe's main intention was to retain power and authority by bringing in a new constitution that would divide the country or even something else because what mattered most to him was his position.

### **31. New constitution? | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.06 | The Editorial**

The proposed draft related to the new constitution prepared by experts and legal experts was submitted to the constitutional assembly recently. This was submitted by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe last Friday when the parliament gathered as the Constitutional Assembly, which was followed by a heated debate. While Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) addressed the gathering in favour of the new constitution, Mahinda Rajapaksa, Leader of the Opposition severely condemned it. When examining the debates that have taken place in parliament so far, it is doubtful if the constitution would be passed, even by April this year. There is also doubt that arises in the minds of people if the government is taking genuine effort towards having the new constitution passed or if it is to simply show that efforts are being carried out to resolve the ethnic crisis. When observing all this it is obvious that the government is indicating that it is in the process of implementing the new constitution in its attempt to manage both the TNA and the Human Rights Council.

### **32. Ensure the freedom of other religions | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.09 | By: P. Kirubakaran and N. Jeyakanthan**

Leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and Minister Rauff Hakeem has stated that there would be no harm in including a clause that ensures the freedom of all religions in the new constitution. He stated this during the meeting of the Constitutional Assembly that was held on Friday (11 January). Some tried to show that the constitution is being implemented in a great rush. We have formed the constitutional committee with true intentions. We took effort to carry this out as this was mentioned in many of the election Vignabanams. The request for additional power had been made by the chief ministers of the provincial councils, which has also been taken into consideration in the new constitution. Therefore, there should be considerable devolution of power between the provincial councils. However there has been a controversy that Buddhism will not be given first preference. The Prime Minister who addressed the gathering today completely denied it. The preference given to Buddhism will not be changed on any grounds.

**33. If it fails, there will be severe consequences, warns Sampanthan | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.09 | By: P. Kirubakaran and N. Jeyakanthan**

It is because all power is accumulated in Colombo that it is being misused. Therefore, power should be distributed across provinces and regions, stated Leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), R. Sampanthan. He made this statement during the meeting at the constitutional assembly that was held on Friday (11 January). The 1947 and 1972 constitutions were formed with very short aims. Even the constitution of 1978 was passed within a very short period of time as the UNP had the support of the two-thirds majority. But the reports that were handed over today are based on the discussions carried out with all parties and taking their views into consideration. According to these reports, a new constitution can be formed. The Prime Minister has put forward his opinion regarding the constitution. The devolution of power for provinces first took place under the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment of 1987, and the North and East were temporarily merged. It was during this period that the war broke out. Mangala Munasinghe's report for a solution plan was brought in during President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's time. President Maithripala Sirisena was the main activist of the government at the time. Similarly, a commission was formed during President Mahinda Rajapaksa's regime and discussions were held regarding devolution of power, but they conveyed conflicting views for their political gain. During the peak of the war they made many promises to India, the United States of America (USA) and the United Nations (UN) stating that a devolution of power would be implemented following the war. This was done to gain the support of these countries during the war. Therefore, the new constitution should be passed with a two-thirds majority through a referendum. If this fails there will be severe consequences, warned Sampanthan. Let's create a new millennium through the devolution of power across provinces and regions!

**34. TNA MPs should join the government, invites Minister Champika Ranawaka | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.08 | By: P. Kirubakaran and N. Jeyakanthan**

Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka stated that the TNA MPs should unite with the government and receive ministerial portfolios to serve the North and East. He stated this during the gathering of the constitutional assembly that was held on Friday (11 January). Fake patriotism has been created amidst the Sinhalese. This time action has been taken to prepare the constitution with the stand taken by all parties. The Soulbury, 1972, and 1978 constitutions were all passed to fulfil the needs of each party. We have provided the stand taken by us with regard to the constitution in writing, and it is based on democracy and stability. Therefore, if democracy or stability is affected this will cause great problems. The new constitution should be passed to resolve the political issues.

**35. New governor's strategy? | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.27 | By: Nilanthan**

How did Suren Raghavan, present Governor of the Northern Provincial Council, become the President's Media Director, if he had known the nature of the level of oppression created by national Buddhist racism? That too at a time when President Maithripala Sirisena was messing up with the constitution? What is the signal that the President is trying to give the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the entire community through an appointment such as this? Maithri's term is another 11 months. If the constitution is not changed within that time, then the election for the next president will be held in December. Will the new leader allow Suren to continue as governor? What the Tamil people require is not additional holidays but a multi-cultural island free of Sinhala Buddhist great national mentality.

**36. Is the unitary state or a united country transparent in the constitution? | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 13 January 2019, p.31 | By: P. Partheeban**

The controversy regarding the new constitution has started once again in Sri Lanka with the ushering in of the new year. While the question whether the new constitution will be passed before 4 February remains unanswered, the most pressing question that the Tamil people await for a response is how the governance in the new constitution will be. There is much confusion as to whether the new constitution will include a unitary rule as many politicians accuse or whether it will be one country as the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Parliamentarian and Spokesperson M.A. Sumanthiran states. There is another question if a federal state is implied by the term 'one country'. The Sinhala term 'aekiya' is given a new interpretation unknown to the law. The alternative proposal states 'in this article 'eekiya rajyaya'/'orumitthanadu' means a state which is undivided and indivisible, and in which the power to amend the constitution or to repeal and replace the constitution shall remain with the legislature and the people of Sri Lanka as provided in this constitution'. So, we have now a new interpretation peculiar to "this article". It is needless to say that even a federal state cannot be divided. This controversy took place again when Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe met with the Mahanayaka Theras of Kandy to receive their blessing after he was sworn in as Prime Minister. The news that he had made a promise that the term 'unitary rule' would not be changed and that the prominence given to Buddhism would continue, gained importance in both the Sinhala and Tamil media. Much confusion prevails amidst the people over the meaning of the term 'eka rajya' that is being delivered through reports submitted by Tamil politicians and reports denying it. When terms related to the distribution of power or devolution of power are vague in their meaning and what they refer to, the description and explanation becomes important. The above was stated during an interview with A. Sarveswaran, Senior Lecturer of Law at the University of Colombo.

### **37. The next phase of the constitution is doubtful | *Sunday Virakesari*, 13 January 2019, p.01 | No Byline**

There is doubt if the next phase of the constitution will be carried according to views expressed by important persons of political parties and political watch dogs. A report prepared by the Panel of Experts for the Steering Committee based on the Interim Report, six Sub-Committee Reports, the Report of the ad hoc Sub-Committee assigned to look into the relationship between the parliament and the provincial councils were presented to the constitutional assembly day before yesterday (11 January). According to the POE's report, the legislature will be divided into two parts, the Parliament and the Second Chamber. 233 MPs will be elected to serve a 5-year term in parliament, while the Second Chamber will consist of 55 members. 140 MPs will be directly elected from electorates while provincial councils will receive the power to select 76 MPs. The report calls for Executive Presidency to be abolished. According to the report, parliament will have the power to appoint the president, and the president will be appointed with not less than one-half of the total of the whole legislature. The President, who is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces will be accountable to parliament. The document adds that the President can be taken to court over matters pertaining to fundamental rights and writ petitions. The President appointed by parliament will serve a 5-year term. The POE report notes that a cabinet which is collectively responsible to parliament should be appointed. The Cabinet will be headed by the Prime Minister. The PM will be the person in Parliament who has the trust of most of the members. However, if a political party wins most seats in parliament, and a prime ministerial candidate has been named while the party was facing the elections, there is no requirement to look into the opinion of a majority in parliament. The prime minister will be able to hold office until the next election is held and a new prime minister is appointed. The number of cabinet ministers should not exceed 30 and the prime minister will function as the head of the cabinet. The prime minister is vested with the power to assign the number of ministries to ministers and subjects to the cabinet ministers. The report also refers to certain provisions for referendums at a provincial level. Member of the Steering Committee, Spokesperson for the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and President's Counsel M. A. Sumanthiran stated that there was hope that action towards the next phase of the new constitution will be carried out soon and that full support would be rendered towards this. The United National Party (UNP) backbench MPs state that they are not in favour of a new constitution if it were to include features of a federal system. The opposition insists that implementing a new constitution is unnecessary at this stage, and that it would only cause problems, and says that a general election should be held immediately. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) too noted that the constitution-making process initiated by the government is moving too slowly and has failed to bring about a consensus among various political parties and groups. Given the inflammatory nature of the views expressed by those opposed to the proposals on the table, taking it forward from here will be a massive challenge for this government, as the government is also grappling with many other issues that are more the priority for the public at large, than the enactment of a new constitution.



**38. Even if there isn't a new constitution, at least the 20<sup>th</sup> amendment should be passed - People's Liberation Front [JVP] insists | *Sunday Virakesari*, 13 January 2019, p.08 | By: Rajadurai Hashan**

The new constitution is of importance in the present political context. If this is not possible then at least Executive Presidency should be abolished through the 20<sup>th</sup> amendment submitted by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), stated the JVP Parliamentarian Nalinda Jayathissa, when questioned over the report on the draft of the new constitution submitted by the expert panel. It is not proper for the leader of the opposition and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) faction to criticize the new constitution without any knowledge of why it is important to the country. The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) is involved in putting down the constitution because they presume that it would divide the country, which is something to be ashamed of. The creation of a new constitution is becoming an impossibility amidst such opposition. Even the United National Party (UNP) is behaving irresponsibly towards this. Therefore, the 20<sup>th</sup> amendment submitted by the JVP should be passed. No one can come up with any racial views regarding this. Following the creation of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution against Mahinda Rajapaksa family, his faction should definitely abolish Executive Presidency. Today they themselves are against the 20<sup>th</sup> amendment. When power is vested fully within a sole authority the consequences are disastrous. This was made clear from the political crisis that occurred last year (2018). The President should render his full support towards abolishing Executive Presidency.

**39. Although there is a need for the new constitution, no opportunity in parliament | *Virakesari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 10 | No Byline**

There is a difference of opinion between members of parliament and their policies. Therefore, although the new constitution is required, we have lost time stated the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Member of Parliament (MP) for the Kalutara District, Nalinda Jayathissa. He stated this while explaining regarding the formation of the new constitution. The provincial councils should be informed first and foremost regarding the new constitution. However, the term of most of the provincial councils have expired and a few more will end in a few months, but the provincial council elections have not been held. The draft of the new constitution is supposed to be submitted before 4 February and there is a period of two weeks for that. Therefore, it is not possible that the draft will be submitted before this.

**40. Sampanthan warns that if they don't get a solution, there will be no future | *Virakesari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 09 | By: Robert Anthony**

Addressing the Thai Pongal festival held at Temple Trees on 13 January, the Leader of Tamil National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan said that there will be no future for the country if a new constitution is not enacted. He said that Sri Lanka has undertaken to implement the resolution passed at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the international community monitors the activities of Sri Lanka. He emphasised that Sri Lanka is committed to deal with the past. Furthermore, he said that though the war ended, the root causes of the war still remain as it is. The government of Sri Lanka received the support of international community as it promised to bring a political solution. However, the promise is still not fulfilled, he alleged. Further, he noted that Sri Lanka failed to implement the resolution passed at the UNHRC.

**41. Prime Minister requested not to spread racism | *Virakesari*, 13 January 2019, p.01, 09 | By: Robert Anthony**

Addressing the Thai Pongal festival held at Temple Trees on 13 January, the Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe affirmed that a draft for a new constitution has not been submitted so far. He said that only the reports have been submitted. He noted that they have the responsibility to submit the reports to the parliament and constitutional council and they have submitted the final report to them. He said that the parliament should decide on the acceptance of the final report. Further, he said that they are looking into the development affairs and resettlement activities in the Northern province. He alleged that the people who induce racism spread rumours saying that the new constitution will divide the country. He accused that there also are rumours spread saying that the powers of police have been reduced under the new constitution. He declared that a new constitution is crucial to achieve a permanent solution for the national problem of the country. He requested not to induce racism among communities.

**42. Tamils should not abandon their trust on a political solution | *Virakesari*, 14 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: R. Yasi**

Media Spokesperson of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), M. A. Sumanthiran affirmed that chances still exist to get a political solution. He accused that Tamil leaders say that there are no chances of getting solutions in a democratic manner. As such, are they saying to carry arms for solutions, he questioned. He noted the lost opportunities in the past. However, he said that he does not want to accuse anyone. He said that since the international community supports them, they should not lose this opportunity as well. He said that carrying arms is not an easy way to succeed. He said that nothing is impossible

in politics. He reinforced that they should utilise this opportunity by bringing a new constitution. He said they should make the enactment of a new constitution possible.

#### **43. Historical mistakes should not happen again | *Virakesari*, 14 January 2019, p.04 | The Editorial**

A political solution for Tamils has been a dream for a long time. There exists a chance to lose another opportunity to get a political solution. Tamil leaders had been fighting for the rights of Tamils. However, since they had been ignored, an armed conflict started. The armed conflict ended a few years ago and again Tamils have been raising their voices for their rights. History marks several instances where attempts were made to bring a political solution and later abandoned. Tamils fear as to whether such kind of a historical mistake will happen this time as well. Good governance came to rule in 2015 and gave promises for a political solution. It is assumed that the political solution will be feasible as the contradicted parties are ruling together and the coalition government is formed. The good governance proceeded to bring a new constitution. Tamil National Alliance (TNA) supported this initiative with adjustments. The interim report and the expert report on the said interim report have been submitted to the constitutional assembly. However, strong resistance has been being raised to enact a final draft for a new constitution. The prime minister said that the new constitution will not divide the country nor derogate the importance of Buddhism. However, the process of enacting a new constitution will be further processed only if the members of the constitutional assembly give consent to that, he said. Prime Minister questioned as to why the Rajapaksa faction is opposing the new constitution since there are no arrangements for federal, derogation of Buddhism, or amalgamation arrangements of North and East. The Leader of the Opposition, Mahinda Rajapaksa said that there is no need of a new constitution in the current political context. He said that this parliament is not appropriate for bringing a new constitution, and therefore, to hold a general election. Commenting on this, the Leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), R. Sampanthan said that Mahinda Rajapaksa received the support of the international community to end the war upon pledging that he will bring a political solution. However, now he is acting for his political benefits. Doubts have been raised as to whether a new constitution will be enacted, as the main political party has stated that the new constitution is not needed.

#### **44. Racism is being induced based on the new constitution which is not drafted yet | *Thinakaran*, 14 January 2019, p.01, 12 | By: *Thinakaran* Correspondent**

Addressing the Thai Pongal festival held at Temple Trees on 13 January, the Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe affirmed that no draft for a new constitution has been submitted so far. He alleged that people who induce racism spread rumours saying that a new constitution will divide the country. He accused that there are rumours being

spread saying that the powers of the police have been reduced under the new constitution. Prime Minister further accused that the people who induce racism go to Viharas to confuse the Buddhist religious leaders. He declared that a new constitution is crucial to achieve a permanent solution for the national problem of the country. Mr. Wickremesinghe requested not to induce racism among communities and declared that if there is a new constitution, it will be publicly shown.

**45. We should not drag the solution for ethnic problem based on personal party politics | *Thinakaran*, 14 January 2019, p.01, 12 | By: *Thinakaran* Correspondent**

Addressing the Thai Pongal festival held at Temple Trees on 13 January, the Leader of Tamil National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan said that there will be no future to the country if a new constitution is not enacted. He said that Sri Lanka has undertaken to implement the resolution passed at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the international community monitors the activities of Sri Lanka. He emphasised that Sri Lanka is committed to deal with the past. Furthermore, he said that though the war ended, the root causes of the war still remain as they are. Sampanthan said that the party politics has been the reason for the delay in achieving a political solution. The government of Sri Lanka received the support of international community as it promised to bring a political solution. However, the promise is still not fulfilled, he alleged. Further, he noted that Sri Lanka failed to implement the resolution passed at UNHRC.

**46. We will not waive international support for achieving the political solution | *Thinakkural*, 14 January 2019, p.01, 08 | By: *Roshan Nagalingam***

Addressing a discussion on “Democratic solution for the national problem of Tamils and the role of Tamil political parties” at Jaffna Veerasingham Hall on 12 January, Parliamentarian of Tamil National Alliance (TNA), M. A. Sumanthiran said that chances still exist to get a political solution. He noted the lost opportunities in the past. Sumanthiran said that he does not want to accuse anyone. He said that since the international community, particularly Russia and China support them, and that they should not lose this opportunity as well. Sumanthiran further noted that nothing is impossible in politics. He reinforced that they should utilize this opportunity by bringing a new constitution. He said they should make the enactment of a new constitution possible. He noted that the new constitution contains solutions for Tamils fulfilling their political aspirations.

**47. If a new constitution does not receive two-thirds majority, a solution should be obtained through international mechanisms | *Thinakkural*, 14 January 2019, p.06 | By: Pattiruppu Correspondent**

Addressing a ceremony organised to lay the foundation of houses in Batticaloa on 13 January, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Parliamentarian Shriritharan said that the TNA hopes to achieve an independent environment where Tamils can live with autonomy within an undivided state. He said that if they do not accept the new constitution, the country will be destroyed. He said that they should be given police and land powers. Further, he noted that they don't need to rule in other provinces, but they have to live with autonomy in their provinces. Shriritharan further said that the new constitution should receive two-thirds majority in parliament. Constitution can be enacted only of more than 50 per cent of people support it, he added. Only if two-thirds majority is received can we get a political solution through international mechanisms.

**48. Sampanthan expressed his deep concern on the delay to achieve a political solution | *Virakesari*, 15 January 2019, p.04 | The Editorial**

The Leader of Tamil National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan stated the importance of a permanent political solution and expressed his deep concern about the delay. He had believed that the political solution would be achieved before 2016 December. Sampanthan reiterated his beliefs on a political solution at various events. He extended his support to enact a new constitution with several adjustments. In this context, he expressed his concerns on the delay to bring a new constitution at Pongal celebration. He said that there will be no development in the future if a new constitution is not enacted which ensures equal rights to all communities. He said that Sri Lanka has undertaken to implement the resolution passed at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the international community monitors the activities of Sri Lanka. Sampanthan emphasised that Sri Lanka is committed to deal with the past. Furthermore, he said that though the war ended, the root causes of the war still remain as it is. The government of Sri Lanka received the support of the international community as it promised to bring a political solution. However, the promise is still not fulfilled, he alleged. Further, he noted that Sri Lanka failed to implement the resolution passed at UNHRC. Sampanthan expressed his deep concerns at the constitutional assembly as well on 11 January. He said that Mahinda Rajapaksa received the support of the international community to end the war upon pledging that he will bring a political solution. However, now he is acting for his political benefits. The ruling governments do not care about bringing a political solution to the national problem. Mahinda Rajapaksa gave promises to the then Secretary General of United Nations, Ban Ki-moon and the then Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, saying he will bring a political solution. However, he did not fulfil that promise. The government at the time held 16 rounds of negotiations with the TNA due to the pressure of India. However, nothing worked out. Even though having a coalition ruling and good

governance gave a hope of a political solution, now the hope is disappearing. However, member of TNA, M.A. Sumanthiran still claims to have hope on the government to bring a political solution. It is the responsibility of the international community to exert pressure upon relevant parties.

**49. TNA hopes for an independent environment where Tamils can live with autonomy | *Virakesari*, 15 January 2019, p.11 | No Byline**

Addressing a ceremony organised to lay the foundation of houses in Batticaloa on 13 January, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Parliamentarian Shrisharan said that the TNA hopes to achieve an independent environment where Tamils can live with autonomy within an undivided state. He said that if they do not accept the new constitution, the country will be destroyed. He said that they should be given police and land powers. Further, he noted that they don't need to rule in other provinces, but they have to live with autonomy in their provinces. Shrisharan further noted that the new constitution should receive two-thirds majority in parliament. Constitution can be enacted only if more than 50 per cent of people support it, he added. Only if two-thirds majority is received can we get a political solution through international mechanisms.

**50. No bright future for Sri Lanka if there is no political solution | *Thinakkural*, 15 January 2019, p.04 | By: N. Lebrin Ram**

Addressing the Thai Pongal festival held at Temple Trees on 13 January, the Leader of Tamil National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan said that there will be no future for the country if a new constitution is not enacted. He said that Sri Lanka has undertaken to implement the resolution passed at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the international community monitors the activities of Sri Lanka. He emphasised that Sri Lanka is committed to deal with the past. Furthermore, he said that though the war ended, the root causes of the war still remain as they are. The government of Sri Lanka received the support of the international community as it promised to bring a political solution. However, the promise is still not fulfilled, he alleged. Further, he noted that Sri Lanka failed to implement the resolution passed at UNHRC. Sampanthan said that party politics has been the reason for the delay in achieving a political solution. He said it is not reasonable to drag the matter of the political solution to party politics. Further, he said that they have acted to protect the democracy and the supreme law of the country during the recent political crisis.

**51. The appointment of Tamil speaking governors is welcomed | *Thinakkural*, 15 January 2019, p.04 | No Byline**

The United Peace Alliance (UPA) mentioned that the appointment of Tamil speaking governors in the Northern and Eastern Provinces has given hopes of a political solution for the ethnic problem. Secretary of the UPA Hassan Ali welcomed the appointment of Tamil speaking governors in Northern and Eastern provinces. He noted that Sinhala speaking persons had been appointed as governors in the Northern and Eastern provinces during the last 30 years. He said that they have passed a resolution in their council to protect the rights of minorities until the new constitution is enacted. The 12<sup>th</sup> clause of the resolution says that the governors and the district secretaries should be Tamil speaking persons. In this context, media published statements to induce Tamil-Muslim disputes based on the appointments made. This should be stopped immediately, he emphasised.

**52. Sampanthan and Sumanthiran try to divide Tamils and Sinhalese | *Thinakkural*, 15 January 2019, p.05 | | By: Y. Dharmaraj**

Addressing a media brief on 14 January in Battaramulla, UPFA MP Rohitha Abeygunawardena said that Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MPs M.A. Sumanthiran and R. Sampanthan will not accept the unity of Tamils and Sinhalese. They try to divide the two communities as they need to protect their positions, he accused. He requested Sumanthiran and Sampanthan not to divide the Tamils and Sinhalese. He accused that persons such as Sumanthiran induce racism to protect their posts.

**53. New constitution contains the powers which divide the country | *Tamil Mirror*, 15 January 2019, p.01, 12 | No Byline**

Responding to an international media, the Leader of Opposition, Mahinda Rajapaksa said that the new constitution will not be needed in the current context. He said that they will not allow to pass a new constitution. He said the powers included in the new constitution will divide the country. He also said that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) still supports the new constitution though the Prime Minister said that the new constitution contains no arrangement for federal solution, it will not derogate Buddhism and no amalgamation arrangements of North and East have been included in it. He questioned why the TNA supports the new constitution, if they don't get any benefits from it.

**54. Dayasiri Jayasekara commented on the expert report for a new constitution | *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: Robert Anthony**

Describing the report by the Panel of Experts on drafting the new constitutional draft, Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) MP Dayasiri Jayasekara accused that the United Nations Party (UNP) and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) have produced garbage in parliament in the name of a report. He alleged that the UNP hopes to oppose the SLFP without solving the problems of Tamils. He said that the report by the Panel of Experts is vague.

**55. The cooperation of Tamil political leaders is crucial | *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: R. Yasi**

Commenting on the enactment of the new constitution, Leader of the House Lakshman Kiriella said that Tamil political parties did not cooperate to enact two constitutions enacted in the past. He said that the United Nations Party (UNP) did not speak of a federal solution and the amalgamation of the North and East. It speaks only about strengthening of provincial councils' functioning. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) also has agreed to accept devolution of power within a unitary state.

**56. Ranil and TNA cheat the Tamils | *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.02 | By: R. Yasi**

The senior member of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Dilan Perera requested not to divide the country. He accused that Ranil Wickremesinghe uses the constitution for votes. He further accused that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) also deceives the Tamils. The United Nations Party (UNP) seeks to provide a separate state to Tamils through conspiracy, he alleged.

**57. Three impediments to pass a new constitution | *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.07 | The Editorial**

There are three major barriers to enact a new constitution. First, both the President Sirisena and Leader of Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa are opposing the report by saying that the executive presidency should not be abolished. Also, they are seeking to amend the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The second barrier is the unclear position of Ranil Wickremesinghe. The third barrier is the need to hold general, Presidential and provincial council elections. These are the three barriers that prevent the enactment of a new constitution.



**58. A Buddhist monk fasts opposing the enactment of a new constitution | *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.07 | No Byline**

A Buddhist monk called Ven. Amatha Dhamma Thera started his hunger strike in front of Colombo railway station against the new constitution saying that the new constitution divides the country. He carries posters against the interference of India, and the effort of the United States to construct a Navy base in Sri Lanka.

**59. Constitutional affairs: An attempt to mislead the Mahanayake Theras | *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.08 | By: Waseem**

Addressing a media briefing on 15 January, Ven. Dambara Amila Thera said that the Theras have been acting in support of Mahinda Rajapaksa. He accused that politicians met with the Theras and misled them on the new constitutional issue. He said that G. L. Peiris met the Anunayake Thera of Asgiriya chapter and had said that the new constitution will divide the country. He requested the Theras to analyse what politicians say without believing it as it is.

**60. The new constitution is the secret agreement made between Ranil and TNA | *Virakesari*, 16 January 2019, p.09 | By: R. Yasi**

The Mahanayake Theras requested the President and Prime Minister to abandon the process of enacting a new constitution. They accused that the new constitution is the secret agreement made between Ranil and Tamil National Alliance (TNA). They accused that they listened only the voices of minorities and try to divide the country. They accused that they need the new constitution to implement the Geneva resolution.

**61. It is important to enact a good constitution for the country | *Thinakaran*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 06 | No Byline**

Addressing an event in Kolonnawa, Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka said that it is important to enact a new constitution for the people of this country. He said that few people tried to induce Sinhalese against the new constitution. He said that 225 parliamentarians gave consent to amend the constitution in the recent past. He said that the constitution should be able to preserve the democracy and stability of the country.

**62. A Buddhist monk fasts opposing the enactment of a new constitution | *Thinakkural*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 08 | No Byline**

A Buddhist monk called Ven. Amatha Dhamma Thera started his hunger strike in front of Colombo railway station against the new constitution saying that the new constitution divides the country. He carries posters against the interference of India, and the effort of the United States to construct a navy base in Sri Lanka.

**63. No remedy for Tamils in the Panel of Experts' report for a new constitution | *Tamil Mirror*, 16 January 2019, p.01, 12 | By: P. Niros**

Addressing a media briefing on 15 January in Battaramulla, Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) MP Rohitha Abeygunawardena said that they don't have a problem if a new constitution is enacted and it gives a solution to the Tamils. However, the new constitution does not include a solution for Tamils. He said that Tamils are cheated in the name of the constitution for their votes. He further alleged that new constitution is being enacted to satisfy the international community.

**64. New constitution will not be brought to fulfil according to the wish of a single individual | *Tamil Mirror*, 16 January 2019, p.03 | No Byline**

After the Pongal celebrations at Bambalapity Vajira Pillayar temple, Minister of Power, Energy, and Enterprise Development Ravi Karunanayake said that the new constitution will not be brought to fulfil according to the wish of a single individual. He accused that some spread racism using the enactment of a new constitution.

**65. Government explains on the enactment of a new constitution | *Virakesari*, 17 January 2019, p.01, 08 | By: N. Dinusha**

Addressing a media brief held at Temple Trees on 16 January, Minister of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine Rajitha Senarathne said that there is no need to fear about the enactment of new constitution as the draft was not submitted to the parliament yet. The new constitution will be enacted only after the approval of the majority in the parliament and after the approval of people at a referendum, he stated. He said that it is necessary to get the opinions of provincial councils on new constitution.

**66. The new constitution provides the maximum federalism | *Virakesari*, 17 January 2019, p.04 | The Editorial**

Though the constitution is named as a unitary state, the features of the constitution provide federalism. The ordinary people will believe that the country will not be divided as the country is still unitary. However, in fact, though the constitution tells the nature of the country is unitary, the features included in the constitution enable federalism in the country which may allow the autonomy and self-determination.

**67. Rajitha explains on the enactment of a new constitution | *Thinakkural*, 17 January 2019, p.01, 08 | By: Y. Dharmaraj**

Addressing a media briefing held at Temple Trees on 16 January, Minister of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine Rajitha Senaratne said that there is no need to fear the enactment of the new constitution as the draft has not been submitted to the parliament yet. The new constitution will be enacted only after the approval of the 2/3 majority in the parliament and after the approval of people at a referendum, he stated. He further said that it is necessary to get the opinions of provincial councils on the new constitution.

**68. The new constitution is a barrier to the political aspirations of the Tamils | *Thinakkural*, 17 January 2019, p.07 | By: Karaitivu Correspondent**

Speaking to the supporters at his residence in Karaitivu on 16 January, the Karaitivu Divisional Organiser of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) said that the new constitution will not fulfill the political aspirations of Tamils. He accused the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) as it falsely campaigns on the new constitution and supports the United Nations Party (UNP). He accused that TNA supports the new constitution even after Ranil expressly said that there is no arrangement for federal, degradation of Buddhism, no amalgamation arrangements of the North and East in the constitution.

**69. Don't vote in favor of the unitary state | *Tamil Mirror*, 17 January 2019, p.02 | By: S. Geethanjan**

Addressing the Pongal celebrations on 15 January at the party office in Mullaitivu, the Secretary of the Tamil National People's Front, S. Gajendran requested the Tamils not to vote in favour of the unitary state. He said that the Tamils' nation should be recognised. He said that the constitution with a unitary character will not be a solution for Tamils. He accused that the TNA supports the new constitution even after Ranil

Wickremesinghe expressly said that there is no arrangement for federalism, the deterioration of Buddhism and no amalgamation arrangements of the North and East in the constitution. Therefore, he said that all should prepare to reject the new constitution.

#### **70. New Constitution | *Tamil Mirror*, 18 January 2019, p.07 | By: Mohamed Bathusha**

An exchange of views with regard to the new constitution is in the process of being presented. The government that came to power in 2015 instead of waiting to amend the republican constitution of 1978 took efforts to bring in the new constitution. According to this the interim report of the proposed constitution was submitted in 2016. Moreover, the constitution making process was delayed due to the political environment that followed while the advantages and disadvantages were being examined. It is under these circumstances that exchange of views are being currently presented in the public arena once again. The government is taking every effort to introduce the constitution as soon as possible. Leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan said that the new constitution was essential for people who belong to all three communities living in this country to remain united and enjoy equal rights. However, the Sinhalese nation has begun to show severe opposition although the government shows explicit interest in forming a new constitution. While the great Sinhala nationality and Tamil nationality hold such a stand related to the new constitution, the Muslim nationality speaks about its own contemporary stand within the community and in public. In short, the Muslim community is prepared to stand in the forefront and should stand for any constitution that is in favor of the Sinhalese and Tamils, as doing it is also a social responsibility. Attention needs to be paid to the Government's proposition that the Sinhala phrase 'Ekeeya Rajya' be used in both the Sinhala and English drafts of the proposed Constitutional changes to describe the nature of the Sri Lankan State. This is because of the growing storm threatening to overwhelm Constitutional reforms due to protests by extremist groups about the description of the nature of the State of Sri Lanka. According to reliable sources, legal and Constitutional experts have pointed out to the Prime Minister and several other stalwarts in the Government that this could be the best solution at the moment as the use of the term 'unitary' to describe the State may lead to separation as observed. There is an extensive doubt if the term is being used for reasons of translation, or one term to satisfy the Tamils and another keep the Sinhalese clam and another to be able to face the international community? 'Ekeeya Rajya' in the English draft as well as the Sinhala word puts more weight on the terminology in describing the State as an indivisible one which proposes the merging of the North and East which is the basis of all issues. The doubt regarding the in-depth meaning of this term exists amidst the Sinhala and Muslim communities. The opposition is spreading false propaganda that Ranil Wickremesinghe is trying to give away the North and Eastern provinces as an independent state. However, people like MP Sumanithiran stated two days back that both terms are the same i.e that the term 'Ekeeya Rajya' means 'Orumiththanadu'. However, it is appropriate to point out at this juncture that Ranil Wickremesinghe had stated to the Mahanayaka thera that the feature of the unitary state will not change in the country. Muslims echo waves of

opposition regarding the new constitution while political observers point out that efforts could be taken through the new constitution to merge the North and East. As much as Tamils justify why the North and East should be merged to implement a solution plan for the ethnic conflict, there are equally justifiable reasons why the two provinces should not be merged that is being argued by the Muslim faction. The merging of the North and East which was done under the Sri Lanka – India agreement in 1988 without consulting the Muslims was not approved by Muslim leaders such as M. H. M. Ashroff at the time. However, since this merging was temporary and awaited the referendum of the people; the merging became a permanent feature for 19 years without a referendum. It was under such circumstances that after a case was independently filed by three individuals that the provinces were divided and independent in 2007. The provincial council governance was not in force during the time the provinces were merged. Moreover, it was during this time period that Muslims experienced grief through armed terrorists' groups including the LTTE. Therefore, having experienced this, the Muslims realize that no matter who the governor or chief minister is under an independent state it is far beneficial compared to the former. So Muslims are not in favor of nor in need of the merging of the North and East. If this merging takes place there is a chance for the Tamils to at least receive shadow authority. The Tamil nation could at least be convinced that a part of their dream has been fulfilled, but none of the Tamil leaderships state that the benefit it would bring to the Muslim community. Come what may as much as the aspirations of the Tamils require to be fulfilled, that solution should be something that is acceptable to the Muslims. Which means that this would emerge as a permanent solution only if the politicians of the North and East honor the feelings of the people.

**70. Those who request for devolution should not live in the South, states Sarath Weersekara | *Thinakkural*, 18 January 2019, p.01, 08 | No Byline**

"No Tamil politician who speaks on federalism has the right to live with the Sinhalese in the South," stated Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara. Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP M.A. Sumanthiran and former Chief Minister of the Northern Provincial Council C.V. Wigneswaran want to create a federal system so that only Tamils can live in the North in order to make Sri Lanka an 'orumiththanadu'. These individuals, according to Weerasekara, do not have the right to live with the Sinhalese in Colombo or with the Southern Sinhalese and Muslims. He also said that if they wish to speak in this manner again, they should go and settle in the North.

**71. Sumanthiran calls Mahinda to render his support! | *Thinakkural*, 18 January 2019, p.01, 05 | No Byline**

"Even you are greatly favored in this country, use this to guide the Sinhalese people and join us to have the new constitution passed" stated MP M.A. Sumanthiran in his explicit call to Opposition leader Mahinda Rajapaksa. Participating at a special ceremony to

felicitate him day before yesterday (16 January). Participating at media briefing conducted by the National Integration Organization yesterday (17 January) at Kottadi in Point Pedro, Sumanthiran in his address requested Mahinda Rajapaksa not to prevent the formation of the new constitution. Mahinda had stated that he would pray for a permanent political solution for the Tamils at the Thai Pongal day event, which we very much welcome. Therefore, I request that they join us in this endeavor. We are prepared to accept the suggestions of the All-Party Representative Committee (APRC) came into existence during your tenure in 2006. Your contribution towards this is important. We wish to seek lasting peace in this country and not another bloody bath. We truly wish that a proper solution should be reached through the constitution, the people have provided us with such a mandate.

**72. They attempt to use the term "Ekeeya" and divide the country into nine Provinces – Global Sri Lankan Union | *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.11 | By: N. Thanuja**

The Government is proposing that the Sinhala phrase ‘Ekeeya Rajya’ be used in both the Sinhala and English drafts of the proposed Constitutional changes to describe the nature of the Sri Lankan State. The draft constitution envisages devolution of power over State Land and the separation of provincial police from the national police. The Global Sri Lankan Forum/Union stated that “It will divide the country into nine semi-independent units” he has charged. To meet the demand for provincial autonomy, the new constitution vests power over State Land in both the central and the provincial governments with the condition that land use is carried out as per the rules of the National Land Commission. But the commission’s policies should be shaped in consultation with all provincial councils. The provinces will also have their own police forces headed by officers of the rank of Deputy Inspector General. There will be separate National and Provincial Police Commissions to make appointments, transfers and promotions at the national and at the provincial levels. The new constitution introduces a Second Chamber to the national legislature. The lower and larger chamber called “parliament” will have 233 members elected for a five-year term. Out of these, 140 will be elected from single-member constituencies and the rest will be elected on a provincial basis. There will be a Second Chamber of 55 members, for which members will be elected by parliament and the provincial councils. The Second Chamber will be there not to block bills passed by parliament, but to have a second look and give suggestions for improvement. In drafting bills, parliament will be expected to give due consideration to the view expressed by the Second Chamber. The draft constitution has described Sri Lanka as “Ekeeya Rajya” in Sinhala and “Orumitthanadu” in Tamil which mean a “United Country”. The experts had avoided labeling the constitution as either “unitary” or “federal” given the strong feelings for and against these two concepts. Citizens of this country should stand against the new constitution which being prepared with a view of diving the country and defeat this decision stated the forum.

**73. It is for the votes of the Northern people that the Prime Minister is taking efforts towards a new constitution | *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: M. Mano Chithra**

"Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has created chaos among the people in the South in order to retain his favourable position with the people of the North and gain their votes in the upcoming election by joining with Tamil politicians in an effort to create a new constitution," stated General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Dayasiri Jayasekara. He stated this in response to the questions raised after a discussion at the SLFP head office. He also stated that the aim behind their discussion on a new constitution is because they want everyone to know the SLFP's stance and do not want people to be disappointed by the constitution.

**74. What is the Diplomatic Goal Behind the Merging Neighboring Provinces | *Thinakkural*, 20 January 2019, p.28 | By: Roshan Nagalingam**

It is a well-known fact that in or about 1926 the Kandyan Sinhalese wanted federalism. In the same year, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the most productive politician of the then Ceylon, has proclaimed "a thousand and one objections could be raised against the system but, when the objections are dissipated, I am convinced that some form of Federal Formula be the only solution". These prophetic words still ring in the ears of the 21st Century. For several years many of the elites have advanced a solution based on federal formula stating that it would end the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Even the Agreement signed between the Government of Sri Lanka and LTTE in 2002, known as Oslo Declaration was to address the ethnic conflict on the line of federalism and internal self-determination. It was a significant development but abandoned by the government after the hour of victory. The structure of the proposed new Constitution should be a Federal Form of Government like in Belgium or any other federal model with suitable modifications and adaptations, satisfactory to the needs of Sri Lanka, or for a combination of Unitary and Quasi-Federal form of government, like the Indian model with powers equal to the Tamil Nadu Government or implement the 13th Amendment to the Constitution without exception and dilution in any manner whatsoever, or for a Unitary System of Government, we can have the Scotland model – A Parliament should be established for the Northern and the Eastern Provinces as one political unit with extensive powers as enjoyed by Scotland Parliament. The Tamils want power-sharing process and the economic development to take place simultaneously, side by side without effecting a change of demographic situation of the Tamil population, living in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. In fact, the Sri Lankan Tamils are yearning for a political solution, aspiring for recognition that they are a distinct nationality. They were so recognized by; Colonial powers, more so, the British recognized them as a Nation. From 1911 to 1920, the Tamils were treated in the Legislative Council on an equal footing with

the Sinhalese despite their numerical inferiority. Professor K.M. de Silva states ‘in the political jargon of the day, there were two majority communities, the Sinhalese and Tamils, and the minorities were the other smaller groups. The situation changed fundamentally after 1922 instead of two majority communities and the minorities, there was one majority community, the Sinhalese. The Tamils now regarding themselves increasingly a minority community’. The Kandyan Memorandum to the Donoughmore Commission recognized them. When the Sinhala Leaders breached the Written Agreement entered into with Sir Pon. Arunachalam on 07.12.1918, they proclaimed so loudly that the Tamils were a Nation though less in numerical strength unlike the Sinhalese, and they required no safeguards or privileges. The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 29, 1987, recognized that the Northern and the Eastern Provinces have been areas of historical habitation of Sri Lankan Tamil speaking peoples. The Tamils want Recognition that the Northern and the Eastern Provinces should form as one political unit. It was so recognized by; i) The Kandyan Memorandum to the Donoughmore Commission recognized the Northern and the Eastern Provinces as one Tamil linguistic federal unit, ii) Bandaranaike – Chelvanayagam (BC) Pact was signed in 1956. BC Pact provided one Autonomous Regional Council for the Northern Province and two or more for the Eastern Province. In the Eastern Province, the Tamils and the Muslims were by necessary implication, elevated with the Sinhalese as nationals. Thus, BC Pact had created three Nationals within one State, and iii) The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 29, 1987. The power-sharing process had to be implemented from the Centre to the periphery. Once powers are identified, defined and devolved, they should not be abridged, reduced, taken away or diluted in any manner whatsoever, and the concept of a fully-fledged internal self-determination should be provided without hindrance to develop their areas on all grounds. Before the armed resistance of the Tamil people took the centre stage, three major processes could be identified aimed at the marginalisation and destabilisation of the Tamil nation. The first was the state sponsored colonisation schemes, which under the pretext of development, settled depressed peasants and later lumpen elements of the Sinhala nation alongside military garrisons within the traditional homeland of the Tamil people. It was aimed at disrupting the demographics and geographical contiguity of the Traditional homeland of the Tamil people. Secondly there have been numerous laws and constitutional amendments passed, which legalised and thereby legitimised the structural violence against the Tamil nation. A number of these laws provided the legal justification for atrocities perpetuated against Tamils while strengthening a culture of impunity for crimes orchestrated by the state. Thirdly there have been majoritarian-Tamil pogroms orchestrated by the state, mainly in 1956, 1958, 1974, 1977, 1981 and 1983 which saw thousands of Tamil civilians massacred. Besides such pogroms, the Tamil people have been slaughtered or forcibly transferred in order to set the grounds for state enacted colonisation schemes.

Upon a new constitution being promulgated, and if it is to alter, amend or repeal any of its provisions, there should be a 2/3rd majority of the whole members of Parliament. However, where the rights of the Tamils or the Muslims were to be affected, there should



be a 2/3rd majority of the Tamil members and/or of the Muslim Members of Parliament together with the two-third members of the Tamils and/or the Muslims of the Provincial Councils of the Northern and Eastern Provinces and it should have been strictly adhered. This provision should be incorporated in the Constitution itself. If the proposed new constitution is intended to resolve a permanent settlement of all political issues and make Sri Lanka a truly democratic country of the people, by the people and for the people, then all the rights of all the communities, who have decided to live with the dominant group, should be carefully protected and nurtured in all political units without exception. All citizens living therein should be afforded with unfettered opportunities to live in equality, safety and harmony, prosper and exercise their sovereignty and to enjoy internal self-determination in all their rights, Muslims should be recognized as a distinct nationality. They were already recognized so under the BC Pact, Hill Country Tamils should be recognised as a distinct community and they should be afforded with unfettered opportunities to live in equality, safety and harmony, prosper and exercise their sovereignty and to enjoy internal self-determination in the areas of their habitation.

**75. “Those who have not seen the constitution scream that it will divide the country” – Prime Minister Ranil | *Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.1, 4 | By N. Thanuja**

"Those who have not seen the new constitution scream that we are attempting to divide the country. However, we are not involved in any action of dividing the country. We are carrying forward our duties with the blessings of the Asgiriya and Malwatte Chapters. Their suggestions on the constitution have been taken into consideration," stated Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe while participating in the opening ceremony of a new building in Galle yesterday (19 January 2019). He also said that the Opposition states that they are trying to divide the country.

**76. 'Function Unitedly' to Create a New Constitution | *Tamil Mirror*, 18 January 2019, p.01, 12 | By: C. Amirtha Priya**

"All amendments made to the constitution following independence have been carried out by main parties to retain their power, everyone should unite to create the new constitution", insisted Secretary of the National Movement for Social Justice Palitha Lihiniya Kumara. He also said that Mahinda Rajapaksa had stated that the present government does not have the strength to implement the new constitution in the parliament. In saying so, Kumara asked as to which government had the strength to do it. He questioned this at a media briefing held in Rajagiriya yesterday (17 January).

**77. Mahinda should traverse with us for the success of the new constitution - Spokesperson for TNA Sumanthiran | *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.01, 10 | No Byline**

“I wish to make an open call to the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) or the faction led by Mahinda Rajapaksa and plead with them not to prevent the new constitution from being formed. You must come forward to traverse with us”, stated Media Spokesperson of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran. He made this statement day before yesterday (16 January) during a felicitation event held at Point Pedro. He stated that Mahinda Rajapaksa had said that he would pray that the Tamil people receive a political solution. “We welcome the fact that he has openly acknowledged that the Tamil people need a solution, therefore we request that he joins us in the journey toward this. The draft of the new constitution does not consist of anything that would divide the country. It has gone beyond the term indivisible country and the term undivided country has been included. But it states that powers should be completely separated, this is what we request. The media in particular is not interested in clearly stating what the new constitution is all about, instead it is very interested in writing about the contexts of politicians. The only person to have spoken clearly about the constitution is former opposition leader Thavarasa who has mentioned the same views I had mentioned; that the constitution does not consist of a unitary state and that it consists the characteristics of a federal system. We must not continue to dream of an independent state rather a solution should be found under a unitary government. The media in the North and South have stated exactly the opposite of what ever I have said. The politics played by the media is worse than the game that politicians play. There will be an end to the schemes of the media that are playing hard to prevent a political solution from being reached”.

**78. The new constitution is totally against the majority | *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.02 | By: Rajadurai Hashan**

MP Vasudeva Nanayakkara stated that the new draft constitution is totally against the majority community. The effect of this will affect the minority community in the future. This is why we as a joint opposition have united in opposing this. He stated that this when queried regarding the debates for and against the new draft constitution that is being opposed by the Podujana Peramuna. The UNP is attempting to create a rift between the Sinhalese and Tamil people using the new constitution. There are many issues to be resolved in the country, which are a priority besides the new constitution. There is a dire for a new constitution to be created in the current situation. Opposition leader Mahinda Rajapaksa has the support of the majority, if a constitution is formed under his leadership it would be welcome by the entire country, said he.

**79. It is time to unite to win over our rights – Kandy District Member of Parliament Velukumar | *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.04 | By: S. Roserian Lambert**

"The political representatives of the Tamil speaking community should unite in order to break the oppressive barriers that have been unleashed against the minority community and to win over our rights", requested the Kandy District MP Velukumar, Deputy Leader of the Democratic People's Front (DPF). The MP made the above request while participating in a cordial meeting that was held between the Kandy District members of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the Tamil Progressive Front (TPF). "This is a very crucial time for the Tamil speaking community and their political representatives as efforts towards the formation of a new constitution is underway. It is hoped that if this passed justice would be established to a certain extent for the Tamil people. However, racists are trying their best to disrupt this. What the racists cannot tolerate is the Tamil, Muslim unity. The recent conspiracy to disrupt the Tamil, Muslim unity in the Eastern Province was exposed. We should remember not to be a faction that fuels the hunger of racists".

**80. The constitution that is to come is an electric fence to the aspirations of the Tamils – SLFP Organiser furious | *Virakesari*, 18 January 2019, p.20 | No Byline**

"It has been half a century since the Tamil people struggled for autonomy, by way of ahimsa, through an armed conflict and political morality. However, the new constitution that is to come will not fulfill the aspirations of the Tamils. It will only serve as an electric fence for the aspirations of the Tamils", stated Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Organiser and former Deputy Chairperson of the Karaithivu Regional Council. He stated this during a meeting with supporters in his residence. He also said: "The political solution still seems to be a sour grape. The UNP has declared that the new constitution would be passed. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) blabbers that the Tamil people will receive all that they desire through this. This new constitution is an electric fence that is placed across the aspirations of the Tamil people. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has openly stated that there is no federalism in the new constitution, North and East will not be merged, Buddhism will be given the foremost place and that Sri Lanka will continue to be a unitary state. If so what sort of progress is this new constitution going to bring for the Tamils? TNA parliamentarian Sumanthiran continues to dupe the Tamil community by saying that federalism is hidden within the term 'ekeeya rajya'. If we are to succeed with the political solution, then this would only be possible by bringing the unitary state that has been in existence from the time the country gained independence to an end".

**81. Opposition towards the New Constitution within the UNP | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 20 January 2019, p.01, 10 | No Byline**

“There is opposition towards the new constitution from the Mahinda faction with racial motives. The same opposition is growing within the UNP as well, for which their time has lapsed. They are trying to show that it is a year for elections”, stated leader of the Tamil Progressive Front – Democratic People's Front and minister Mano Ganesan Minister of National Integration, Official Languages, Social Progress and Hindu Religious Affairs. Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim factions should forget all party differences and render their support to resolve the political crisis, said he.

**82. Mahanayakas and the Constitution | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 20 January 2019, p.06 | By: Illayathambi Thambia**

A group of United National Party (UNP) MPs made a presentation on the new constitutional proposals to the Mahanayakas of the Asgiriya and Malwatte Chapters. The members of parliament who visited the Asgiri Viharaya in Kandy visited the Mahanayake of the Asgiriya Chapter Ven. Warakagoda Sri Gnanarathana Thera and informed him about the new constitutional process and proposals. Venerable Thibbatuwawe Sri Sumangala Thera, the Mahanayake of the Malwathu Chapter was also briefed on the new constitutional proposals at the Malwatte Maha Viharaya today (January 18). Thibbatuwawe Sri Sumangala Thera stated that they will not discuss the contents as there is serious opposition to it. He noted that no one wishes to see the division of the country. Minister Lakshman Kiriella who was present at the occasion noted that this report would be presented to Parliament and it is the Parliament that would create the draft constitution and not the government. Minister Ranjith Madduma Bandara and Palitha Range Bandara both called on Venerable Medagama Dhammananda Thera, the Registrar of the Asgiri Chapter of the Siam Sect. The most venerable Thera noted that issues have arisen with regard to the constitution due to statements made by MP M.A. Sumanthiran. Madduma Bandara intervened and stated that whatever statements are made, the constitution needs a 2/3rds majority to pass in parliament. The Thera who read the report brought in by the UNP Ministers highlighted several concerns that he had with the language of the report, especially on the status of Buddhism and the powers of the Government. He added that it is best if a discussion is held with the President and the Mahanayake Theras in order to resolve all doubts regarding the constitution. When examining political moves two matters are clear; that the efforts towards the next phase of the new constitution is losing its stand, secondly even if such a constitution is enforced it will not satisfy the Tamil people. The meeting between the Mahanayakas and the UNP representatives have clearly proven this.

**83. Will the Constitutional Reform Fulfill the Aspirations of the Minority People? | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 20 January 2019, p.29 | | By: Gajamugan**

"The fact that the new constitution is going to divide the constitution is a false propaganda. It does not contain anything like that. The politicians are gambling with the fate of this country. This country will not prosper as long as the accursed racism persists" the political member of the Nava Sama Samaja Party Thirunavukkarasu mentioned this in an interview with *Thinakkural*. The President brought great disrepute to the country through a political crisis as a result of his poor decisions. Beyond the case of a new constitution being passed or not the challenges that this issue is facing must be examined first. From the time the 1972 constitution was implemented, Buddhism was given the foremost place and it has continued that way. The Buddhist Mahanayakas propagate against the new constitution claiming that it will divide the country to protect Buddhism. The political leaders of this country have no intention of carrying out programs to develop the country nor resolving political issues. The reason for Mahinda Rajapaksa to hail himself for the victory attained in the 30-year war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the armed conflict, were the Sinhalese political leaders. The right to self-determination has been requested since 1974. People should be given the right to self-determination and the talk of minority and majority should be given up. We have been campaigning for this across the country for a long time. All people of this country have sovereignty. Sri Lanka is battling in stormy waves ever since the Sinhala only act was introduced. This is the main and fundamental reason for the backward state of our country. We are not sure if the general or the presidential elections would be held first. It seems that the two main parties are paying attention to both the presidential and general elections. But there is a possibility that a provincial council election would be held first. As usual we will contest in this election and carry our policies and views among the people".

**84. The gamble taking place with the new constitution; interview with MP Vijitha Herath | *Sunday Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.06 | By: R. Ram**

"A new gamble is taking place in the name of the new constitution; the reality is that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is persuading the Tamil people; Mahinda Rajapaksa and Maithripala Sirisena faction are persuading the Sinhala people and the United National Party (UNP) is persuading the social elites, stated Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Gampaha District Secretary Vijitha Herath in an interview with *Virakesari*. He said the party continues to believe that constitutional reform is necessary. He further explained that the JVP has always maintained its stance on opting for a new constitution in order to abolish the executive presidency, strengthen the unity amongst the people in order to create a developed society, resolve public issues and protect the fundamental rights of all citizens. He also pointed out that the new constitution was not a novel thing to be discussed. Discussions on the new constitution commenced in 2015 during which the entire Parliament became a constitutional assembly. He added that political parties

formed their own operational committees under which several sub committees were formed. "An all-party conference was held in July 2006 under the government of Mahinda Rajapaksa to put forward proposals for a new constitution. Following the conference, a new committee comprising party representatives was formed. Later, an executive committee was also formed, and a report was also submitted," Herath said while adding that the JVP was involved in all such committees. He also said that recent discussions on the new constitution had surfaced since the sub-committee appointed to finalise the draft of the new constitution had failed to do so due to the wide array of opinions being expressed within the committee. Herath added that it is only a set of proposals that have been submitted before Parliament and not a draft bill of the new constitution. The JVP parliamentarian also refuted allegations claiming that the proposed new constitution was an attempt to divide the country. He also said that if the country kept circumventing the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment a situation where we can never find a solution to the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment will prevail. "The JVP will always stand for a new constitution which abolishes the executive presidency, changes the electoral system and protects of the rights of all citizens", he reiterated.

**85. "I don't believe that the new constitution will be passed – interview with Sidharthan | *Sunday Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.07, 09 | By: Thirumalai Navam**

It is not a new lesson that all Sinhalese leaders of this country have been against the devolution of power for the Tamil people and continue to work against this. Therefore, it is doubtful if the new constitution that is supposed to be in the making will be passed, stated People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) Leader and MP D. Sidharthan, in an interview with *Virakesari*. "Efforts towards a political solution remain unsatisfactory where I am concerned. The report by the Panel of Experts on the new draft constitution has been submitted to the Constitutional Assembly. I have no faith in the creation of the new constitution under the present government, the reason being the political crisis that has caused many divisions in the constitution. Whatever said and done we as members of the TNA we are firm that the efforts that have been taken so far regarding the new constitution to continue and reach a conclusion to be reached. There are several procedures to be carried before the implementation of the new constitution, we doubt if the remaining period of time will be sufficient for this. We have not moved an inch away from the peoples mandate which is to help the Tamil people regain their rights. People accuse the TNA of not having achieved anything in the past three years, but the issues of the Tamils exist for the past 70 years. It is inappropriate to say that the TNA has not achieved anything when struggles have been taking place from the period of Rev. Selva, G.G. Pinner, Amirthalingham and continued thereafter through movements such as the LTTE, how could we be accused of not having attained success when such strong forces failed to do so. The TNA never stated that it agreed to a solution within a unitary state.

**86. Full Stop to the Opposition by Mahinda Faction | *Sunday Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: R. Ram**

Strategies are being formulated to impede the antagonism staged by the Opposition Leader and former President Mahinda Rajapaksa regarding the new constitution. 11 July 2006 was an important day in the history of Sri Lanka. It marked the date on which President Mahinda Rajapaksa made credible steps towards seeking a political solution to the national question, and the date on which the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) came into existence. Fifteen political parties were initially represented at the APRC. It consisted of a seventeen-member expert panel to facilitate the process, one representative from each political party, and the Chairperson Professor Tissa Vitharana. Besides the prolific time and energy spent on the APRC the APRC was a momentous feat because it represented a local solution to resolving the national question. Unlike the recent Parliamentary Select Committee that was founded to address similar issues, it acknowledged several different perspectives, bestowing them each with a degree of political influence over what was assumed would become the future constitution of the Sri Lankan nation. It was a political arena in which these eclectic views, representative of Sri Lanka's ethno-cultural diversity, clashed, converged and reached consensus. Perhaps not itself a lone-standing solution to the ethnic conflict, it was certainly a platform for dialogue through which solutions could be envisaged and advanced. After three years of deliberation and 128 meetings, the APRC ended uneventfully and without fruit. While it is doubtful if the Mahinda faction and the President Maithripala Sirisena's faction will continue their participation in the steering committee of the new constitution, a crisis has occurred where a unanimous decision cannot be taken regarding the next phase of the constitution. The Parliamentary Select Committee has been criticized heavily because of its inability to give voice to opposition views. To date, considering its non-majoritarian, representative and multipronged approach and the fact that it is the most recent document on power sharing receiving Southern consensus, the APRC Final Report is still one of the most relevant modern strategies for tackling the continuing national question. One way forward is to officially publish the Final Report produced by the APRC; another step would be to evaluate seriously the suggestions contained within it as the basis for future negotiations. This would also aid in putting a full stop to the opposing actions of the Mahinda faction towards the new constitution.

**87. The new constitution should be created in such a way as to cause detriment to anyone – Father Ranjith suggests to Dayasiri | *Sunday Virakesari*, 20 January 2019, p.02 | By: M. Mano Chithra**

While a solution will be provided for the Tamil people, the new constitution should be created taking the Sinhalese and the Muslims into consideration. Therefore, this should be given a lot of thought by each and every parliamentarian" Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) general secretary Dayasiri Jayasekara stated that this suggestion was given by His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith. Cardinal Ranjith had stated this when minister Dayasiri went to receive his blessings following his appointment as the general secretary

of the SLFP. He further stated, the cardinal mentioned certain matters regarding the new constitution; that it should be clearly explained to the people and should be implemented without causing detriment to any community.

**88. Opposition towards the new constitution even within the UNP; the Tamil parties should forget their political differences and unite | *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 20 January 2019, p.01, 10 | No Byline**

The Mahinda faction carry out their opposition against the new constitution in order to carry out a strategy aimed at racism. This opposition has grown stronger within the United National Party (UNP) as well, their time has lapsed for this. They say this is a year of elections" stated Mano Ganesan, Minister of National Integration, Social Progress, Official Languages and Hindu Affairs. In the beginning the steering committee decide on three main goals; abolishing executive presidency, changing the electoral system and resolving the political crisis, with time they took serious effort to fulfill the first to and tried to put aside the political solution. The steering committee moved rapidly to please the JVP and worked towards the first goal; abolishing executive system and later changed the electoral system, they functioned in the steering committee to finish off the representation of the minority that is scattered in the Southern province. Now the possibility of a new constitution is nearing. I anticipated this a few years ago and stated that another alternative should be found. I told the truth. The Tamil, Muslim parties that advice the Sinhalese parties to forget their party differences and support efforts carried out to resolve the political crisis, have forgotten that they have not given up their party differences to unite together. We must speak in one voice and make our requests unitedly in a unified Sri Lanka.

**89. New constitution – are these only narratives for a child that was never conceived? | *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 20 January 2019, p.06 | By: Karunakaran**

The issue of the unitary state has been the dividing line between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority. The conflict point is the fear of the ethnic Sinhalese majority who wish to prevent separatism by centralising powers at the level of the central government and the aspirations of the ethnic Tamil minority who wish to have self-determination powers to decide for themselves regarding what the priorities in the areas in which they live as a majority. If Sri Lanka is to consolidate the democratic gains of 2015, it is vital that President Sirisena's SLFP and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe's UNP overcome their differences, rivalries and ideological differences and jointly provide leadership to introduce a Third Republican Constitution. A new constitution that learns from the mistakes of the 1972 and 1978 Constitutions, adapts features from international best practice and which is compatible with basic principles of constitutionalism, is vital for the introduction of good governance, the protection of human rights and national



reconciliation and unity. The new draft constitution that is the subject many a debate and controversy where as it is in a stage that could be compared to that of an unborn child or even an unconceived child. Even though the space for the free discussion of ideas opened up with the election of the present government in 2015, the space has been dominated by nationalist voices. The mainstream polity and media have failed to play a positive role in regard to promoting and supporting pluralist values. This can be seen in the current debate of constitutional reform. One of the key and emotive issues that has arisen is the treatment of Buddhism as having the foremost place in the country's constitution. The inclusion of a non-discrimination clause to this article has become subject to polarized debate on the grounds that it seeks to undermine the foremost place given to Buddhism. Government leaders are taking great pains to assuage sentiment by promising not to change anything in the constitution that relates to Buddhism. As this is an election year, the political contestants are more likely to fan ethnic and religious sentiments, as this is their surest way of getting the people's vote by proclaiming that they are the national patriots and others are traitors. However, in multi ethnic, multi religious and plural societies, issues that pit one community against another cannot be resolved through the principle of majority vote. Sri Lanka's long-term challenges in maintaining relations between its communities were manifested in increasing inter-religious tension that boiled to the surface during the anti-Muslim riots that took place in the country in March 2018 and in the inter religious and inter-ethnic tensions that continue to simmer beneath the surface. Political leaders and state officials have a key role to play in building a pluralistic society in which there is equal voice irrespective of number and in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain and develop their traditional culture or special interest within the sphere of a common citizenship.

**90. A governor is but a government officer – how will he implement the 13? Former Northern Provincial Council Chairperson C.V.K. Sivagnanam | *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 20 January 2019, p.07 | By: Sumithi Thangarasa**

"All functions of the governor [this is with reference to the present governor of the Northern provincial council Suren Ragavan] who serves as a government agent are based on the decisions taken by the government. Therefore, he is someone who can move within the limits set for him by the President. Our contention is to create the devolution of power for the provinces through the new constitution, which goes even beyond the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

When a governor who is within the provincial system states that he wants to completely implement the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment, this is the stand taken by the government. The government did not carry out many of the powers of the provincial councils from 1988. I cannot understand how he could say that the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment will be implemented? As this is dependent on the decision of the President and the government. However, I praise the governor for his enthusiasm, we welcome his efforts. But how far his efforts will bear

fruit is questionable? As neither the government nor the President is ready to take such a stand. How he is going to implement the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment is questionable. Anyhow the implementation of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment is questionable" stated former Chairperson of the Northern Provincial Council C. V. K. Sivgnanam.

**91. The new constitution shouldn't be one that sows the seed of racial hatred - Batticaloa District MP G. Srinesan | *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 20 January 2019, p.07 | By: S. Thavabalasingam**

The Tamil speaking community is in anticipation of a constitution that is fair ensuring their protection, and to find themselves equal with other communities. A constitution should be able to create equality amidst races, good will and national feeling. There should be no racism, hatred towards language or region. The constitution should be formulated with great care. It is expected that the new constitution will provide our Tamil people their fundamental rights, we will build our foundations on it, for which our people should firmly join hands", stated the Batticaloa district parliamentarian and VIP of the TNA G. Srinesan.

**92. Leader of the Opposition said that they will not allow the secret plans of Ranil and Sumanthiran | *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 08 | By: M.R.M. Waseem**

Addressing the opening ceremony of a temple in Beliatta on 20 January, Opposition Leader Mahinda Rajapaksa pledged not to allow Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Parliamentarian M.A. Sumanthiran implement the secret plans made by them. Mahinda Rajapaksa said that the Prime Minister declared that the draft of a new constitution has not been enacted yet. However, the Prime Minister accused them, saying that people who have not seen a constitution say the country is about to be divided. However, they are the ones who revealed the contents of a new constitution. "Sumanthiran and Ranil are trying to implement their secret plans through a new constitution. We will not allow that to happen," he said.

**93. UNP claims no secret agreement with TNA | *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: R. Yasi**

United National Party (UNP) MP Lakshman Kiriella stated that there are no secret agreements with the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). He said the TNA was involved in negotiations with the government legally. He said that some try to defeat the government by spreading rumours like saying the UNP made a secret agreement with the TNA. The TNA is not an armed group, it is a party that represents the majority of Tamils. They have a responsibility to listen to the voices of Tamils. However, racists do not want this and try to confuse the people with racist thoughts, he added. He said the TNA is negotiating with

the government in the presence of all parties at the constitutional assembly. He accused Mahinda Rajapaksa of acting to spread racism, despite knowing the importance of a new constitution.

**94. Enact a new constitution to win the trust of minorities | *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.06 | By: Nuwara Eliya Correspondent**

Addressing his welcome party at Holy Trinity Central College in Nuwara Eliya on 19 January, Minister and Leader of the Up-Country People's Front Velusami Radhakrishnan declared that the proposed new constitution draft was submitted to parliament recently. He said that the new constitution will solve the long-lasting problems of minorities. He alleged that some are trying to defeat the new constitution using racism. He stated that if the government abandons efforts towards the new constitution because of strong objections from racists, it will lose the support of minorities. He said the good governance government should enact a new constitution to win the trust of minorities.

**95. Vasudeva Nanayakkara said that they will defeat the new constitution | *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.09 | No Byline**

Commenting on the report submitted by the Experts' Committee on the new constitution, Democratic Left Front (DLF) Leader and Parliamentarian Vasudeva Nanayakkara said that though the Prime Minister claimed that no draft for a new constitution has been enacted yet, Tamils in the North were informed that the new constitution making process is nearly complete. He said the report of the steering committee was submitted to parliament recently. However, debates cannot be carried out on the report of the steering committee if there is no draft of the new constitution. He said that the government is cheating Tamils. Further, he alleged that the government submitted the report for a new constitution to postpone provincial council elections. He alleged that most of the contents of the report are not suited for the country and they are taking efforts to negotiate with the backbench MPs of United National Party to defeat the new constitution.

**96. Mahindananda Aluthgamage invited all to join them | *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.11 | By: M.R.M. Waseem**

United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Mahindananda Aluthgamage said that only the people with President Sirisena and Leader of Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa support the country. If anyone from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) tries to join the government, they are going to support the new constitution which divides the country

just for money. He said that those who went to join the government from the SLFP should join them to protect the country from being divided.

**97. Mahinda leads false campaigns against a new constitution | *Thinakaran*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 04 | No Byline**

Addressing an event on 19 January, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that they will only implement the new constitution if it features a unitary nature. He said that they should explore the opinions of the Mahanayake Theras of the Malwatte Chapter on the new constitution. He said the constitution assembly representing all political parties and headed by him will be responsible for the new constitution. He said that without two-thirds support in the constitutional assembly, they cannot draft a new constitution. He accused Opposition Leader Mahinda Rajapaksa who proposed dividing the country into zones of falsely campaigning against a new constitution.

**98. The proposed new constitution is being attacked by racist thoughts | *Thinakaran*, 21 January 2019, p.06 | The Editorial**

The report of the Expert's Committee has been submitted to the parliament and it has been sent to the Malwathu and Asgiriya chapters for observation. The attempt to enact a new constitution started three years ago. However, the strong opposition against new constitution and the disputes arisen amongst the members of the good governance postpone the enactment of new constitution. However, even a draft of a new constitution is not enacted yet. However, the opposition from South became stronger. The racist thoughts have been used to defeat the new constitution. However, political experts said the new constitution facilitates only the minimum level of political solution to the Tamils of North and East. In addition, political representatives of North say that new constitution will not fulfil the political aspirations of Tamils. The 'racists' say that the Prime Minister facilitates the new constitution for Tamil National Alliance as it supported him during the recent political crisis. All opportunities to achieve the political solutions were destroyed by racist thoughts.

**99. No secret agreement between the government and TNA | *Thinakaran*, 21 January 2019, p.18 | No Byline**

Addressing at the public gathering, Minister of Housing & Construction Sajith Premadasa said that no secret agreement between the government and TNA. He said that the people from North and East only requested to develop them and respect them as humans. He said that opposition accused the government saying that the government tries to divide the country. However, government has the responsibility to solve the problems of Tamils.

**100. No secret agreement between the government and TNA | *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.06 | No Byline**

Addressing at the public gathering, Minister of Housing & Construction Sajith Premadasa said that no secret agreement between the government and TNA. He said that the people from North and East only requested to develop them and respect them as humans. He said that opposition accused the government saying that the government tries to divide the country. However, government has the responsibility to solve the problems of Tamils.

**101. Full support to the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment | *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 08 | By: Y. Dharmaraj**

Responding to a question posed by a *Thinakkural* journalist, General Secretary of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Dayasiri Jayasekara said that the President agrees to completely implement the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to solve the problems of Tamils. However, it said that if negotiations are taken regarding this, it would agree to implement the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment by reducing police and land powers. He further stated that power devolution and economic difficulties are the main two problems of Tamils and solutions will be given to their problems within a week. He said that the opinions of the constitutional assembly and steering committee cannot be submitted to the parliament. If they bring the draft of a new constitution instead of committee reports, they will consider that. He accused the United National Party (UNP) and Tamil National Alliance (TNA) of submitting ideas on a new constitution in rush to win votes. He asserted that disputes have arisen among UNP members. They are trying to add the word for “united country” to the constitution, and this has different expectations amongst the Sinhalese.

**102. Government will lose the support of the minorities if it does not enact the new constitution | *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 02 | By: Nuwara Eliya Correspondent**

Addressing his welcome party at Holy Trinity Central College in Nuwara Eliya on 19 January, Minister and Leader of the Up-Country People's Front Velusami Radhakrishnan declared that the proposed new constitution draft was submitted to parliament recently. He said that the new constitution will solve the long-lasting problems of minorities. He alleged that some are trying to defeat the new constitution using racism. He stated that if the government abandons efforts towards the new constitution because of strong objections from racists, it will lose the support of minorities. He said the good governance government should enact a new constitution to win the trust of minorities.

**103. Ranil asserted that the new constitution will feature unitary nature |  
*Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.03 | No Byline**

Addressing an event on 19 January, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that they will only implement the new constitution if it features a unitary nature. He said that they should explore the opinions of the Mahanayake Theras of the Malwatte chapter on the new constitution. He said the constitution assembly representing all political parties and headed by him will be responsible for the new constitution. He said that without two-thirds support in the constitutional assembly, they cannot draft a new constitution.

**104. Minister Daya Gamage said that they will reject the new constitution if it features federalism | *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.04 | No Byline**

Addressing a media conference on 18 January in Kandy, Minister Daya Gamage said that they will reject the new constitution if it features federalism. He said that the need for a new constitution arose as a result of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment. They brought 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to reduce the powers of the President. He accused people such as Mahinda Rajapaksa of spreading racism based on the enactment of a new constitution. He added that they will speak against the new constitution if it features federalism or undermines Buddhism.

**105. UNP assures that no police power or land power awarded under the new constitution | *Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.07 | No Byline**

During a meeting between the Mahanayake Theras of Malwatte and Asgiriya chapters, United National Party ministers affirmed that provincial councils will not be given police or land powers. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe affirmed that the new constitution will not feature federalism or undermine Buddhism. He also asserted that the North and East will not be amalgamated. Minister Lakshman Kiriella stated that the draft for a new constitution was not submitted as alleged by the Opposition. Minister Daya Gamage also asserted that Buddhism will be prioritised under the new constitution. Minister Ranjith Madduma Bandara pledged that provincial councils will not be given police nor land powers. However, the Mahanayake Thera of the Malwatte Chapter Thibbatuwawe Sri Sumangala Thera said to hold general elections before enacting a new constitution.

**106. The new ministry is the basis for the amalgamation of North and East |  
*Thinakkural*, 21 January 2019, p.11 | No Byline**

Addressing a media conference in Colombo on 18 January, Parliamentarian Vasudeva Nanayakkara said that the Ministry for Development of North Eastern Region is the basis to merge the North and East together. He said that the government accepted the request

of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) to merge the North and East. He stated that TNA MP Sumanthiran requested a ministry for North and East development. This is the first step to North and East amalgamation and the government also supported this, he alleged. He stated that the new constitution is sure to be enacted according to the wishes of the TNA.

**107. The report by the Panel of Experts should be rejected | *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.11 | No Byline**

The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) issued a statement that the report by the Panel of Experts proposed for the continuation of the unitary nature of the country. The party said that it believed that a political solution can be achieved in a democratic manner. The political solution should give relief to all the sufferings of the Tamils and autonomy to the Tamils living in the North and East. Further, it was stated that the party was seeking a political solution that featured federalism instead of a unitary state. TELO stated that they were in a position to reject the report by the Panel of Experts since it featured a unitary state and gave priority to Buddhism. The party also claimed that the report did not feature the devolution of power beyond the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**108. If the government tries to cheat the Tamils, it will lose its power | *Thinakkural*, 23 January 2019, p.05 | By: Karaitivu Correspondent**

Addressing a meeting at Shanmuga Maha Vidyalaya in Karaitivu, Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) MP Kaveendran Kodeeswaran said that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is able to change the fate of the government. Therefore, if the government tries to cheat the Tamils, he said that the TNA will facilitate the defeat of the government. He added that if the aspirations of Tamils are ignored, the TNA will respond to it. He said that the solution for them is being enacted and they will fight to implement it. He alleged that Tamil hospitals in the Ampara District are systemically ignored. Moreover, he alleged that a single ambulance was not given to the Tamil area amongst the ambulances distributed in the Eastern Province.

**109. The political future will be decided on the enactment of a new constitution | *Tamil Mirror*, 23 January 2019, p.01, 12 | No Byline**

During a TV programme on 21 January, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP M.A. Sumanthiran said that he came into politics to get a solution for the ethnic problem of the country. He declared that he would retire from politics if the country gets a political solution. He also stated that priority is given to Buddhism under the new constitution. Accordingly, he questioned as to why the religions followed by the Tamils are not

prioritised. He said that they have no problem prioritising Buddhism, but the people will think about why their religions are not prioritised, given the fact that they too are citizens of Sri Lanka. He said that many predict that the enactment of a new constitution is impossible. However, he said that a new constitution is crucial to a permanent solution to the political problem of the country. He said that they are requesting for the devolution of power within a united country.

**110. Vijitha Herath affirmed the impossibility of enacting a new constitution | *Tamil Mirror*, 23 January 2019, p.08 | No Byline**

During an interview with the *Tamil Mirror*, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) MP Vijitha Herath said that neither the draft nor a new constitution was enacted yet. He said that some are trying to induce racism and gain political benefits by using the discussions surrounding a new constitution. He claimed that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is falsely campaigning in the North by saying that they are bringing a new constitution. By listening to these campaigns, he said that Southern politicians assert that a new constitution would secretly divide the country. He said that a decision was not yet taken about whether to include the words “united nation.” He and the JVP welcomed a constitution that ensures the rights of minorities. They were of the view that giving rights to the people would solve the political problem in the country. Therefore, federalism would not be required. However, he said that enacting a new constitution is impossible.

**111. The international community should ensure that the promises are fulfilled, says Sampanthan | *Virakesari*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: R. Yasi**

During the discussion with the Head of the South Asia Department and India Policy Coordinator for the Common Wealth Office, Fergus Auld, at the British High Commission in Colombo on 22 January, Leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan emphasised that the President and Prime Minister should work together to fulfil the promises given to the Tamils. When briefing Auld on the current political situation, Sampanthan said that the devolution of power should be effective to the extent that people are able to exercise power over their daily issues. He said that the lack of political will causes problems and delays in enacting a new constitution. Sampanthan pointed out that there will be no future for the country if a political solution is not implemented. Further, he said that politicians are afraid of devolving power as they will not be able to engage in corruption thereafter. He said that this is the opportunity to enact a new constitution. He requested the international community to ensure that the promises made are fulfilled. Further, he stated that the resolution passed at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) should be implemented.



**112. Federalism can be achieved under a unitary constitution | *Virakesari*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08 | No Byline**

Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa said in his statement released on 23 January that the draft for the new constitution would destroy the country. He questioned the necessity of bringing a new constitution at such a critical period, especially when the agricultural sector of Sri Lanka was affected by unexpected insects. He alleged that the draft for the new constitution weakens parliament and provides more power to provincial councils. He outlined that reducing the powers of parliament is a feature of federalism. He claimed that the legislative power of parliament was reduced in the draft. He said that the contents of the lists (national, concurrence, and provincial council) are not stated in the draft. He also said that the police force will be divided under the new constitution. He said that this country could be destroyed by dividing the police force into 10 different forces. Additionally, he claimed that the provincial councils are vested with land powers; this means that the central government cannot acquire land, even for the purpose of national security, without the permission of the provincial councils. Further, an emergency situation declared by the central government can be reviewed by the constitutional court. By taking these points into consideration, he claimed that the United National Party (UNP), Tamil National Alliance (TNA), and Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) are trying to change the fate of the country. He said that the unitary nature and priority to Buddhism are adjustments of the TNA to achieve the real features of federalism through a new constitution since they do not care about mere wording if they can receive features of federalism under the new constitution. He stated that they are not against constitutional reform and agree that the present constitution should be amended. However, he stated that the draft for a new constitution featuring federalism will destroy the country.

**113. Sirinesan alleged that Mahinda's team is falsely campaigning about the new constitution | *Virakesari*, 24 January 2019, p.19 | By: Paddiruppu Correspondent**

Addressing the foundation laying ceremony of the Vishnu Temple in Kaluvanchikudi on 22 January, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP G. Sirinesan accused former President Mahinda Rajapaksa's team of spreading false rumours and running campaigns against the new constitution. He stated that some media outlets support these false campaigns. He affirmed that the TNA is providing 100 percent cooperation to achieve a political solution. He said that the media should act with due diligence to win the rights of the Tamils.

**114. Sampanthan briefs on the current political solution | *Thinakaran*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 06 | No Byline**

During the discussion with the Head of the South Asia Department and India Policy Coordinator for the Common Wealth Office, Fergus Auld, at the British High Commission in Colombo on 22 January, Leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan emphasised that the President and Prime Minister should work together to fulfil the promises given to the Tamils. When briefing Auld on the current political situation, Sampanthan said that the devolution of power should be effective to the extent that people are able to exercise power over their daily issues. He said that the lack of political will causes problems and delays in enacting a new constitution. Sampanthan pointed out that there will be no future for the country if a political solution is not implemented. Further, he said that politicians are afraid of devolving power as they will not be able to engage in corruption thereafter. He said that this is the opportunity to enact a new constitution. He requested the international community to ensure that the promises made are fulfilled. Further, he stated that the resolution passed at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) should be implemented.

**115. Sri Lanka's issue should be brought to the Security Council | *Thinakaran*, 24 January 2019, p.10 | No Byline**

Addressing the media, Leader of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) Suresh Premachandran asserted that a resolution was passed by the EPRLF at its central committee meeting to take up Sri Lanka's issue to the Security Council of the United Nations (UN) or allow Sri Lanka to be investigated on war crimes by a specific tribunal. He stated that since the issue of Sri Lanka was not solved at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the Tamils only have these two options. Moreover, he alleged that the government would justify itself before Geneva by saying that it had established the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) and that the military had released 90 percent of occupied lands – the latter of which was untrue. He questioned as to how the new constitution would benefit the Tamils if it features a unitary nature and gives priority to Buddhism. These points do not differ from the current constitution. He also emphasised the impossibility of bringing a new constitution.

**116. We abandoned the demand for a separate state | *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08 | No Byline**

During the 'Wada Pitiya' political TV programme on *TV Derana* on 22 January, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP M.A. Sumanthiran said that they do not want a separate country, but are requesting for the devolution of power within the country. He said that

they had demanded a separate state for the last 30 years. However, he said that they have abandoned this demand and only request for the devolution of power. He also stated that the name of the country will be changed under a new constitution.

**117. Problems of the Tamils cannot be solved through a new constitution | *Tamil Mirror*, 21 January 2019, p.01, 12 | No Byline**

Addressing a public gathering, Minister of Megapolis and Western Province Development Patali Champika Ranawaka said that the problems of the people in the North cannot be solved only through a new constitution. He said that the members of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) should receive ministerial posts to provide services to the Tamils. He noted that no one from the Northern Province had held a ministerial post since 1968. Minister of Plantation Industries Navin Dissanayake said that the Tamils in the North have specific problems and they are negotiating with the TNA to solve those problems.

**118. Don't believe the rumours on the new constitution | *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: Irosha Velu**

Addressing a media conference on 21 January at Sirikotha, Deputy Minister of Development Strategies and International Trade Nalin Bandara said that this is the only parliament where a single party does not have a majority. Therefore, good plans can be implemented during the office of this parliament. He pointed out that this is the right opportunity to enact a new constitution. He said that no one should create another ethnic dispute by falsely claiming that Media Spokesperson of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran is bringing a new constitution in favour of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). He said that a new constitution that gives priority to Sinhala and Buddhism should be enacted with the support of the Tamils.

**119. If the North and East are not merged, the Tamils will disappear | *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 10 | No Byline**

Commenting on the enactment of a new constitution, former Chief Minister of the Northern Provincial Council C.V. Wigneswaran said that the Tamils had been expecting a new constitution for a long time. He accused the government of seeking to sway Geneva by saying that it had implemented a few steps to address the problems of Tamils. He explained that if the government sought to incorporate Tamils into the economic and political affairs of the country, then the Tamils would not demand federalism and the amalgamation of the North and East. Instead, he said that the government sought to control the Tamils. He claimed that Tamil representatives were also persuaded into accepting what was given. He pointed out that the words "united country" mean a unitary

nature. Therefore, he claimed that though the wording had changed, the new constitution still featured a unitary state.

He also commented on the status of Buddhism by saying that since the current constitution prioritises Buddhism, Buddhist monks are building viharas everywhere in the North and East. He alleged that they do not establish viharas because they love Buddhism, but to prove Sinhala dominance; this might lead to Sinhala colonisation. He claimed that if the North and East are separated, Sinhala dominance will be clearly established, and the Eastern Province will be taken from the Tamils. He gave statistics to prove the increase in Sinhala colonisation in the East. He stated that the amalgamation of the North and East is crucial to protect Tamils and their uniqueness. He stated that the draft of the new constitution did not feature federalism. He claimed that the confusing wording in the new constitution will lead the court, consisting many Sinhala speakers, to make biased decisions in the future.

**120. Sri Lanka should be brought to the Security Council of the United Nations |  
*Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.06 | No Byline**

Addressing the media, Leader of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) Suresh Premachandran asserted that a resolution was passed by the EPRLF at its central committee meeting to take up Sri Lanka's issue to the Security Council of the United Nations (UN) or allow Sri Lanka to be investigated on war crimes by a specific tribunal. He stated that since the issue of Sri Lanka was not solved at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the Tamils only have these two options. Moreover, he alleged that the government would justify itself before Geneva by saying that it had established the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) and that the military had released 90 percent of occupied lands – the latter of which was untrue. He questioned as to how the new constitution would benefit the Tamils if it features a unitary nature and gives priority to Buddhism. These points do not differ from the current constitution. He also emphasised the impossibility of bringing a new constitution.

**121. We will not support the constitution if it does not give rights to Tamils |  
*Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.09 | No Byline**

Addressing an opening ceremony on 20 January, member of the Illankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK) Charles Nirmalanathan said that they will not support the constitution if it does not give rights to Tamils. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has the responsibility of assuring the political rights and development of Tamils. He emphasised that the Tamils should live with dignity. He said that a few individuals allege that the constitution features a unitary state. However, he maintained that they will not support any constitution which does not ensure the dignity of Tamils.

**122. Mahanayaka Theras destroy the constitutional efforts of the government | *Virakesari*, 22 January 2019, p.09 | By: Jaffna Correspondent**

Addressing an event in Vannarpannai, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP E. Saravanapavan said that the Mahanayaka Theras had been destroying the constitutional efforts by the government for the last 76 years. Furthermore, he accused the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) of strongly opposing the amalgamation of the North and East.

**123. TELO rejected the report by the Panel of Experts | *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 04 | By: Robert Anthony**

The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) issued a statement that the report by the Panel of Experts proposed for the continuation of the unitary nature of the country. The party said that it believed that a political solution can be achieved in a democratic manner. The political solution should give relief to all the sufferings of the Tamils and autonomy to the Tamils living in the North and East. Further, it was stated that the party was seeking a political solution that featured federalism instead of a unitary state. TELO stated that they were in a position to reject the report by the Panel of Experts since it featured a unitary state and gave priority to Buddhism. The party also claimed that the report did not feature the devolution of power beyond the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**124. The report by the Panel of Experts should be rejected | *Virakesari*, 21 January 2019, p.11 | No Byline**

The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) issued a statement that the report by the Panel of Experts proposed for the continuation of the unitary nature of the country. The party said that it believed that a political solution can be achieved in a democratic manner. The political solution should give relief to all the sufferings of the Tamils and autonomy to the Tamils living in the North and East. Further, it was stated that the party was seeking a political solution that featured federalism instead of a unitary state. TELO stated that they were in a position to reject the report by the Panel of Experts since it featured a unitary state and gave priority to Buddhism. The party also claimed that the report did not feature the devolution of power beyond the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**125. Tamils do not ask to divide the country | *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.07 | No Byline**

During an interview, member of the North Western Provincial Council from the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Namal Karunaratne alleged that the Mahinda Rajapaksa group was trying to create ethnic disputes between the Sinhala and Tamil communities by

creating rumours. He said that they expect a political solution within a unitary country. He said that the Tamils also wish to live together with dignity, and added that they do not want to divide the country.

**126. We will not allow the secret plans to be enacted via the constitution | *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.07 | No Byline**

Addressing the opening ceremony of a vihara in Beliatta on 20 January, Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa pledged to prevent Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Media Spokesperson of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran from implementing their 'secret' plans. Rajapaksa said that the Prime Minister had declared that the draft of a new constitution had not been enacted yet. However, the Prime Minister accused them, by saying that people who have not seen a constitution are claiming that the country is about to be divided. However, they are the ones who revealed the contents of a new constitution. "Sumanthiran and Wickremesinghe are trying to implement their secret plans through a new constitution. We will not allow that to happen," he said.

**127. The government can receive the support of the minorities only by bringing a new constitution | *Thinakaran*, 22 January 2019, p.19 | By: Hatton Special Correspondent**

Addressing his welcome party at the Holy Trinity Central College in Nuwara Eliya on 19 January, Leader of the Up-Country People's Front Velusami Radhakrishnan declared that the proposed new constitution draft was submitted to parliament recently. He said that the new constitution will solve the long-lasting problems of minorities. He alleged that some were trying to defeat the new constitution by using racism. He stated that if the government abandons efforts towards the new constitution because of strong objections from racists, it will lose the support of the minorities. He said the good governance government should enact a new constitution to win the trust of minorities.

**128. New constitution is crucial to the country | *Thinakkural*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 05 | By: Y. Dharmaraj**

Addressing a media brief at Sirikotha, Deputy Minister of Development Strategies and International Trade Nalin Bandara said that enacting a new constitution was one of the main promises made by the President, and therefore, the President has a responsibility to enact a new constitution. He stated that this is the best and last chance to enact a new constitution. He said that the constitution should be enacted for the best interest of the country. The 1972 constitution was enacted by the United Front without the support of

any other parties; therefore, it only addressed their needs. The 1978 constitution was enacted according to the wishes of former President J.R. Jayawardene. However, the new constitution will not be enacted to fulfil the wishes of any single party. He said that if the United National Party (UNP) and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) joined together they can get a two-thirds majority with the support of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). He asserted that Media Spokesperson of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran accepted the unitary state and priority given to Buddhism. He said that a new constitution cannot be enacted if racists like former Chief Minister of the Northern Province C.V. Wigneswaran and Leader of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam come to parliament. Bandara claimed that the constitution making process is huge and complex, so it cannot be enacted for the aspirations of a single party, he added.

**129. Tamils should not lose their uniqueness | *Thinakkural*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 08 | No Byline**

Commenting on the enactment of a new constitution, former Chief Minister of the Northern Provincial Council C.V. Wigneswaran said that the Tamils had been expecting a new constitution for a long time. He accused the government of seeking to sway Geneva by saying that it had implemented a few steps to address the problems of Tamils. He explained that if the government sought to incorporate Tamils into the economic and political affairs of the country, then the Tamils would not demand federalism and the amalgamation of the North and East. Instead, he said that the government sought to control the Tamils. He claimed that Tamil representatives were also persuaded into accepting what was given. He pointed out that the words "united country" mean a unitary nature. Therefore, he claimed that though the wording had changed, the new constitution still featured a unitary state.

He also commented on the status of Buddhism by saying that since the current constitution prioritises Buddhism, Buddhist monks are building viharas everywhere in the North and East. He alleged that they do not establish viharas because they love Buddhism, but to prove Sinhala dominance; this might lead to Sinhala colonisation. He claimed that if the North and East are separated, Sinhala dominance will be clearly established, and the Eastern Province will be taken from the Tamils. He gave statistics to prove the increase in Sinhala colonisation in the East. He stated that the amalgamation of the North and East is crucial to protect Tamils and their uniqueness. He stated that the draft of the new constitution did not feature federalism. He claimed that the confusing wording in the new constitution will lead the court, consisting many Sinhala speakers, to make biased decisions in the future.

**130. We will not support the constitution if it does not give rights to Tamils | *Thinakkural*, 22 January 2019, p.17 | No Byline**

Addressing an opening ceremony on 20 January, member of the Illankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK) Charles Nirmalanathan said that they will not support the constitution if it does not give rights to Tamils. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has the responsibility of assuring the political rights and development of Tamils. He emphasised that the Tamils should live with dignity. He said that a few individuals allege that the constitution features a unitary state. However, he maintained that they will not support any constitution which does not ensure the dignity of Tamils.

**131. Mahinda team tries to create a ghost in the name of a new constitution | *Tamil Mirror*, 22 January 2019, p.01, 12 | By: K. Kamal**

Addressing a media brief on 21 January at Sirikotha, State Minister of Internal and Home Affairs and Provincial Councils and Local Government J.C. Alawathuwala said that Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa and his team are running false campaigns about the new constitution. He said that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) requested a solution within a unitary state and they agreed to give priority to Buddhism. He said that Rajapaksa is trying to describe the new constitution as a devil when it has not even been enacted yet.

**132. Enactment of a new constitution | *Tamil Mirror*, 22 January 2019, p.06 | The Editorial**

Though the leaders of the government wished the Hindus for Thai Pongal, a monk disrupted the Pongal celebrations at the Neeraviyadi Pillayar Temple. It should be noted that these temple premises have been forcibly occupied by a monk recently. The new constitution features a unitary state, priority given to Buddhism, no amalgamation of the North and East and no federalism. Therefore, the Prime Minister questioned as to why the new constitution was opposed, since it includes these features. Objections against the new constitution were raised in the South. Sinhala political parties give priority to the votes of the Sinhalese over the existence of Tamils. The racist politicians claim that Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe is in a trap made by Sampanthan and Sumanthiran, but in fact, both Sampanthan and Sumanthiran are in the trap made by Wickremesinghe. Sumanthiran stated that the international community supports Tamils, and if that is true, they don't want to please anyone to enact a new constitution. The negotiations should be held under the observation of the international community.



**133. TNA meets the Theras as it tries to enact the constitution secretly | *Virakesari*, 23 January 2019, p.06 | By: Rajadurai Hashan**

Addressing a media brief on 22 January, United People's Freedom Alliance MP Lakshman Yapa Abeywardena accused the United National Party (UNP) and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) of not processing the enactment of the new constitution in a formal way. Therefore, he said that they have to surrender to the Mahanayaka Theras now. He alleged that the new constitution did not feature anything good for the people, particularly for the Tamils. He said that no political solution has been reported to any parties. "In this context, especially when we do not know the contents of the new constitution, how we can support it?" he questioned. He accused the UNP and TNA of enacting the constitution secretly. Further, he said that the TNA frames the Northern Province as a backward province to achieve its political motives. He claimed that the fund allocated for the development of the Northern Province was not utilised at the end of the year and was sent back to the central government for the above purpose.

**134. Minorities in Sri Lanka | *Virakesari*, 23 January 2019, p.18 | No Byline**

If Sri Lanka achieves a political solution, the country will become developed. The lack of a political solution causes the lack of development. Minorities were not included in formulating national level policies. For example, the constitutions of 1972 and 1978 were enacted without the participation of minorities. Both constitutions prioritised Buddhism and identified Sri Lanka as a Buddhist state. This is absurd, as Sri Lanka is a multi-religious country. The oppression of minorities can be seen throughout the history of Sri Lanka after independence. Though the minorities have engaged in various protests and negotiations, the ethnic problem is yet to be solved. Despite the end of the war, problems are not solved. Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa oppressed the minorities even after the war ended, and this dictatorship led to the regime change in 2015. However, the national coalition was broken after the President appointed Mahinda Rajapaksa as Prime Minister. However, the President had to re-appoint Ranil Wickremesinghe as Prime Minister following a long crisis. The United National Party (UNP) is attempting to enact a new constitution to pay its gratitude to the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) which supported Wickremesinghe to be re-appointed as Prime Minister. Mahinda Rajapaksa has strongly opposed the enactment of a new constitution. He proposed holding general elections and then enacting a new constitution through a new parliament, saying that the people's mandate to enact a new constitution was vested in the UNP and several other parties. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe expressed the impossibility of enacting a new constitution in parliament. In addition, he asserted the uncertainty of a new constitution at an event in Galle. The unitary status, and prominence given to Buddhism are included in the new constitution. However, the TNA asserts that the public should not focus on the wording of the new constitution.

**135. If the government tries to cheat Tamils, it will lose its power | *Virakesari*, 23 January 2019, p.20 | By: Karaitivu Correspondent and Kalmunai Additional Correspondent**

Addressing a meeting at Shanmuga Maha Vidyalaya in Karaitivu, member of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) Kaveendran Kodeeswaran said that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is able to change the fate of the government. Therefore, he said that if the government tries to cheat the Tamils, the TNA will facilitate the defeat of the government. He also claimed that if the aspirations of the Tamils are ignored, the TNA will respond to it. He said that the solution for them is being enacted and they will fight to implement it. He alleged that the Tamil hospitals in the Ampara District are systemically ignored. Moreover, he alleged that a single ambulance was not given to the Tamil area amongst the ambulances distributed in the Eastern Province.

**136. The government does not have the mandate to enact a new constitution | *Thinakkural*, 23 January 2019, p.02 | By: Y. Dharmaraj**

Addressing a media briefing held at the party office of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) in Battaramulla, United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Piyal Nishantha said that the current government does not have the people's mandate to enact a new constitution. He said that a new constitution was unwanted for the country. He alleged that the United National Party (UNP), Tamil National Alliance (TNA), and Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) are trying to change the fate of the country. He further stated that the religious leaders also asserted that a new constitution is not necessary.

**137. The report by the Panel of Experts should be rejected | *Thinakkural*, 23 January 2019, p.05 | By: Talaimannar Correspondent**

The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) issued a statement that the report by the Panel of Experts proposed for the continuation of the unitary nature of the country. The party said that it believed that a political solution can be achieved in a democratic manner. The political solution should give relief to all the sufferings of the Tamils and autonomy to the Tamils living in the North and East. Further, it was stated that the party was seeking a political solution that featured federalism instead of a unitary state. TELO stated that they were in a position to reject the report by the Panel of Experts since it featured a unitary state and gave priority to Buddhism. The party also claimed that the report did not feature the devolution of power beyond the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**138. The constitutional draft will destroy Sri Lanka | *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 14 | No Byline**

Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa said in his statement released on 23 January that the draft for the new constitution would destroy the country. He questioned the necessity of bringing a new constitution at such a critical period, especially when the agricultural sector of Sri Lanka was affected by unexpected insects. He alleged that the draft for the new constitution weakens parliament and provides more power to provincial councils. He outlined that reducing the powers of parliament is a feature of federalism. He claimed that the legislative power of parliament was reduced in the draft. He said that the contents of the lists (national, concurrence, and provincial council) are not stated in the draft. He also said that the police force will be divided under the new constitution. He said that this country could be destroyed by dividing the police force into 10 different forces. Additionally, he claimed that the provincial councils are vested with land powers; this means that the central government cannot acquire land, even for the purpose of national security, without the permission of the provincial councils. Further, an emergency situation declared by the central government can be reviewed by the constitutional court. By taking these points into consideration, he claimed that the United National Party (UNP), Tamil National Alliance (TNA), and Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) are trying to change the fate of the country. He said that the unitary nature and priority to Buddhism are adjustments of the TNA to achieve the real features of federalism through a new constitution since they do not care about mere wording if they can receive features of federalism under the new constitution. He stated that they are not against constitutional reform and agree that the present constitution should be amended. However, he stated that the draft for a new constitution featuring federalism will destroy the country.

**139. No future for the country if a political solution is not achieved | *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 05 | No Byline**

During the discussion with the Head of the South Asia Department and India Policy Coordinator for the Common Wealth Office, Fergus Auld, at the British High Commission in Colombo on 22 January, Leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan emphasised that the President and Prime Minister should work together to fulfil the promises given to the Tamils. When briefing Auld on the current political situation, Sampanthan said that the devolution of power should be effective to the extent that people are able to exercise power over their daily issues. He said that the lack of political will causes problems and delays in enacting a new constitution. Sampanthan pointed out that there will be no future for the country if a political solution is not implemented. Further, he said that politicians are afraid of devolving power as they will not be able to engage in corruption thereafter. He said that this is the opportunity to enact a new

constitution. He requested the international community to ensure that the promises made are fulfilled. Further, he stated that the resolution passed at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) should be implemented.

**140. Features of federalism in the unitary constitution | *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 08 | By: Jeyakanthan**

During a political TV programme at a Sinhala TV station on 22 January, Leader of the Pivithuru Hela Urumaya Udaya Gammanpila said that the new constitution features federalism, though it is labelled as a unitary constitution. He said that the new constitution was the result of international pressure on Sri Lanka. He said that Tamils fought in a non-violent way from 1949 – 1972 under Selvanayagam and fought with arms until 2009 under Prabhakaran, and now they are fighting with international support under Media Spokesperson of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran. He said that they do not agree with the contents of the draft which was enacted secretly. He questioned why the TNA changed the wording of the constitution if they agreed to a unitary state.

**141. TNA and UNP cheat the Tamils | *Thinakkural*, 24 January 2019, p.06 | By: Roshan Nagalingam**

General Secretary of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) Tissa Vitharana accused the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and United National Party (UNP) of cheating the Tamils by saying that a new constitution will be enacted. Though the Prime Minister has said that the new constitution will not receive a two-thirds majority, Leader of the TNA R. Sampanthan insists that a new constitution will be enacted before Independence Day.

**142. No future for the country if a political solution is not achieved | *Tamil Mirror*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 12 | No Byline**

During the discussion with the Head of the South Asia Department and India Policy Coordinator for the Common Wealth Office, Fergus Auld, at the British High Commission in Colombo on 22 January, Leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan emphasised that the President and Prime Minister should work together to fulfil the promises given to the Tamils. When briefing Auld on the current political situation, Sampanthan said that the devolution of power should be effective to the extent that people are able to exercise power over their daily issues. He said that the lack of political will causes problems and delays in enacting a new constitution. Sampanthan pointed out that there will be no future for the country if a political solution is not implemented. Further, he said that politicians are afraid of devolving power as they will not be able to engage in corruption thereafter. He said that this is the opportunity to enact a new

constitution. He requested the international community to ensure that the promises made are fulfilled. Further, he stated that the resolution passed at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) should be implemented.

**143. If parliament is controlled, 'Ekeeya Rajya' will become 'federal' | *Tamil Mirror*, 24 January 2019, p.01, 12 | No Byline**

Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa said in his statement released on 23 January that the draft for the new constitution would destroy the country. He questioned the necessity of bringing a new constitution at such a critical period, especially when the agricultural sector of Sri Lanka was affected by unexpected insects. He alleged that the draft for the new constitution weakens parliament and provides more power to provincial councils. He outlined that reducing the powers of parliament is a feature of federalism. He claimed that the legislative power of parliament was reduced in the draft. He said that the contents of the lists (national, concurrence, and provincial council) are not stated in the draft. He also said that the police force will be divided under the new constitution. He said that this country could be destroyed by dividing the police force into 10 different forces. Additionally, he claimed that the provincial councils are vested with land powers; this means that the central government cannot acquire land, even for the purpose of national security, without the permission of the provincial councils. Further, an emergency situation declared by the central government can be reviewed by the constitutional court. By taking these points into consideration, he claimed that the United National Party (UNP), Tamil National Alliance (TNA), and Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) are trying to change the fate of the country. He said that the unitary nature and priority to Buddhism are adjustments of the TNA to achieve the real features of federalism through a new constitution since they do not care about mere wording if they can receive features of federalism under the new constitution. He stated that they are not against constitutional reform and agree that the present constitution should be amended. However, he stated that the draft for a new constitution featuring federalism will destroy the country.

**144. No solution will be reached during this government | *Tamil Mirror*, 25 January 2019, p.01, 12 | No Byline**

Minister of Industry and Commerce, Resettlement of Protracted Displaced Persons and Co-operative Development Rishad Bathiudeen stated that the current government will not provide any solution pertaining to the new constitution. Speaking at an event in Vavuniya on 24 January, the Minister pointed out that the process towards a new constitution is hampered due to the severe negative propaganda in the South, where it is being claimed that the new constitution would divide the country.

**145. The issue with the draft constitution | *Tamil Mirror*, 25 January 2019, p.08 | No Byline**

The commentary states that despite various discussions on the new constitution, the only issue was that the draft of the new constitution has not been released yet. The commentary brings out this point in the context where Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa in the South and former Chief Minister of the Northern Provincial Council C.V. Wigneswaran in the North are claiming that the draft of the constitution was against them. The commentary states that while there is no draft released, there was an interim report submitted by the Steering Committee, which was guided by the Constitutional Council, and was released in 2017. In addition, a report by the Panel of Experts for the Steering Committee was also submitted to the council. The commentary points out the possibility of some aspects in the report not being included in the draft.

**146. No faith that a solution plan will be implemented; don't think it will be possible | *Thinakaran*, 25 January 2019, p.01, 04 | No Byline**

Minister of Industry and Commerce, Resettlement of Protracted Displaced Persons and Co-operative Development Rishad Bathiudeen stated that he had no faith that the current government or the President or the Prime Minister would provide a solution regarding the new constitution. He stated that there was negative propaganda in the South about the proposed new constitution. According to this propaganda, the new constitution would divide the country. In addition, Bathiudeen said that different views were being spread about the constitution in Tamil and Muslim areas. He said that bringing in a new constitution was not possible due to the lack of a government majority in parliament, and conflicts among political parties.

**147. Cannot be passed in secret nor coincidentally | *Thinakaran*, 25 January 2019, p.18 | By: Wimal Ariyawansa**

The opinion article discusses the debates surrounding the new constitution is being debated and discussed. It points out that the new constitution cannot be drafted or implemented without the approval of a two-thirds majority in parliament. In addition, the constitution says that Sri Lanka is a 'Unitary Republic State'. Therefore, any amendment that is brought to contradict this has to be introduced via a referendum. The commentary also discusses the possibility of war heroes being punished through the new constitution. The commentary points out that the Geneva resolution merely states that those found guilty of gross human rights violations during the war should be punished. The alleged war criminals could be part of the military, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), or other groups. The other aspect discussed in the commentary is the allegation that the Office on Compensation is aligned with the LTTE. The commentary states that the law on compensation did not mention anything about providing

compensation to former LTTE members. As per the law, this will be decided by the office based on its policy, as well as the decision taken by the cabinet.

**148. The Constitutional Assembly; what was the reason for the recommendations made by the president to be rejected? The speaker will discuss this with the Leader of the Opposition soon | *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 27 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: M.A.M. Nilam**

United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Dinesh Gunawardena stated that it was clearly visible that the Constitutional Council was acting in a partisan manner. He pointed out that the council was politicised to the extent that it had refused the proposals of President Maithripala Sirisena. He questioned as to why the President's proposals were turned down. He said this refusal, without proper reasons, was against the constitution and they would discuss the matter with the head of the Council, Speaker Karu Jayasuriya.

**149. Everything will be included in the new constitution, informs the Prime Minister | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 27 January 2019, p.10 | No Byline**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that the recommendations by the All Party Representatives Committee will be included in the new constitution. General Secretary of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) Prof. Tissa Vitharana said that the Prime Minister had made this comment when asked about it at the wedding of Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa's son last week. Prof. Vitharana said that he had suggested that discussions for a political solution could be conducted based on the contents of the All Party Representatives Committee report that was handed earlier. He said that the report included recommendations that were agreed upon by 13 political parties out of 18.

**150. The action by the Maha Sangha is against the constitution *Sunday Thinakkural*, 27 January 2019, p.28 | By: M. Thirunavakarasu**

The commentary discusses the future of the proposed new constitution in the backdrop of the track record of the United National Party (UNP). The commentary compares the current process towards the new constitution to the District Council Bill in 1968. The commentary states that the current process towards a new constitution is a 'White Report' which looks at accommodating the views of the relevant stakeholders and documenting them. The commentary also discusses the visit of the UNP delegation to meet the Buddhist prelates. The Chief Prelate of the Malwatte Chapter stated that work towards the new constitution should be carried out after conducting the elections this year. In addition, General Secretary of the UNP Akila Viraj Kariyawasam also said that the new constitution will be implemented with the permission of the Maha Nayakas. In this

backdrop, the commentary discusses whether the new constitution, which is a white report, would be converted to a grey, and black reports eventually.

**151. Will constitutional reforms fulfill the aspirations of the Tamil people? | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 27 January 2019, p.30 | By: A.R. Nanthakumar**

The commentary looks at the salient points that need to be addressed in the new constitution, specifically in terms of the minorities. The commentary discusses a wide range of aspects that need to be addressed. Some of the aspects are, treating all religions equally, the importance of the government not having any bias towards any religion, the importance of singing the national anthem in Sinhala and Tamil, and also to make both languages as national and administrative languages. The commentary also puts forward suggestions on how the devolution of power should be implemented.

**152. The functions of the constitutional council are fair; Speaker says that the views of a few have created the wrong impression | *Sunday Virakesari*, 27 January 2019, p.04 | By: N. Thanuja**

Head of the Constitutional Council and Speaker Karu Jayasuriya stated that wrong impressions were being created in the country about the Constitutional Council due to misleading information by a handful of parliamentarians. He made this observation while explaining allegations pertaining to the appointment of members to the council and its activities. He stated that he had acted in accordance with the law and in a transparent manner in appointing the members of the council.

**153. There is no Executive President under the new constitution | *Sunday Virakesari*, 27 January 2019, p.01, 09 | No Byline**

Former Secretary of Defence Gotabaya Rajapaksa says there will be no Executive President in the new constitution. He stated that the central government would be weakened, and the provincial councils will be strengthened by giving them police and land powers. He also pointed out that even though the new constitution will not contain the word 'samashiti' (federalism), it will divide the country.



**154. The constitutions following independence and the plight of the minorities – Part 5 | *Sunday Virakesari*, 27 January 2019, p.09 | By: Attorney-at-law Kananamanathan**

The opinion article deals with the history of constitutional reform and the plight of minorities. The article highlights salient points of the 1978 constitution in terms of the election of the President, his/her duties, and the position of Tamil as an official language.

**155. An attempt to divide the country through the draft for a new constitution | *Virakesari*, 28 January 2019, p.01, 10 | By: Rajadurai Hashan**

Addressing an event held on 26 January at the Abayarama Vihara former President Mahinda Rajapaksa said that the government cheats the people without fulfilling the promises given. He claimed that the government mentions controversial ideas on the draft of a new constitution. He alleged that the draft is to divide the country. He said that a new constitution is not needed for the country or the people. He said that the process for enacting a new constitution included a lot of secret activities. Therefore, he asserted that all should oppose the new constitutional making process.

**156. TNA agrees to the unitary nature constitution which would imprison the Tamils | *Virakesari*, 28 January 2019, p.09 | By: Malikaithivu Correspondent**

Addressing a media briefing held at his residence on 27 January, National Organiser of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Veeragathi Krishnamoorthy said that Tamil National Alliance (TNA) missed all the opportunities to achieve a solution for the problems of the Tamils. He claimed that now the TNA tries to imprison the Tamils under a constitution that preserves a unitary state. He alleged that the TNA had not done anything for the Tamils.

**157. The draft constitution will not protect the minorities | *Virakesari*, 28 January 2019, p.17 | No Byline**

Addressing a discussion on 26 January in Akkaraipatru, Chairperson of the Akkaraipatru Mediation Board said that the proposed draft will not protect minorities and fulfill the aspirations of minorities. He said that the constitutions enacted thus far did not consider the interests of the people but instead, considered the interests of the political parties which led to the deterioration of democracy. He said that a new constitution should consider the interests of the country and the people. However, he pointed to the objections raised by the people in the South and the monks from the Malwathu and

Asgiriya Chapters. He said that though the two-house legislature is a welcome, the increase of the members of the legislature is not a good move. He said that the safeguards for minorities are generally ensured in constitutions in multi-cultural countries, however, the proposed constitution does not discuss any safeguards for minorities.

**158. The UNP does not have any motivation to bring the constitution secretly |  
*Thinakaran, 28 January 2019, p.05 | By: Akurana Group Correspondent***

Addressing an opening ceremony of a branch of the Sathosa Centre on 26 January in Kandy, Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs Abdul Haleem ascertained that the United National Party (UNP) does not have any intention to bring the constitution secretly. He said that the UNP, which respects the law, will not bring a constitution secretly. He further affirmed that the new constitution will be brought only with a two-thirds majority in parliament and the support of the people.

**159. The state did not officially recognise the proposal for a new constitution |  
*Thinakaran, 28 January 2019, p.05 | By: Oluvil Correspondent***

Addressing a discussion on 26 January in Akkaraipatru, the Chairperson of the Akkaraipatru Mediation Board said that the state did not officially recognise the proposal for the new constitution. Therefore, it cannot be considered as a draft for a new constitution, he added. Though 399 main provisions are cited in the draft, the provisions are not comprehensive. He said that the draft was released in all three languages in parliament. He said that they should consider whether federalism will be beneficial for Muslims. He mentioned that the devolution of land powers and the land commission are welcome. He added that the Muslims live as the majority only in the Eastern Province, therefore, the rights of Muslims in the Eastern Province should be discussed.

**160. It is a big success that all accept the unitary nature; Ranil says | *Thinakkural,*  
*28 January 2019, p.01, 05 | By: Y. Dharmaraj***

Addressing an event held on 27 January in Kalutara, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that it is a huge success for all parties to accept the unitary nature of the country. He said that they have considered the opinions of each and every parliamentarian through the establishment of the Constitutional Assembly to enact a new constitution. He affirmed that a new constitution will be enacted only if it receives a two-thirds majority in parliament. He said that all parties accepted the unitary ruling for the first time. He said that Tamils had been demanding for federalism since the 1950s. However, they now accept the unitary state and the priority given to Buddhism, he added.

**161. Powers shall not be devolved to the provinces | *Thinakkural*, 28 January 2019, p.11 | No Byline**

Addressing a media briefing on 24 January in Colombo, Ven. Dhammaratana Thera said that if powers were devolved to the provinces, the power in the country would be destroyed. He said that the new constitution seeks to devolve the powers. He asserted that the government, the President and the state should have powers. He further claimed that people or political parties cannot devolve the powers. He alleged that the government was trying to divide the country into parts.

**162. People will not allow the country to be divided | *Thinakkural*, 28 January 2019, p.11 | No Byline**

Addressing an event held on 26 January at the Abayarama Vihara former President Mahinda Rajapaksa said that the government cheats the people without fulfilling the promises given. He claimed that the government mentions controversial ideas on the draft of a new constitution. He alleged that the draft is to divide the country. He said that a new constitution is not needed for the country or the people. He said that the process for enacting a new constitution included a lot of secret activities. Therefore, he asserted that all should oppose the new constitutional making process He believed that the new constitution will not receive a majority in parliament.

**163. Disappointment of the Tamils | *Virakesari*, 29 January 2019, p.04 | The Editorial**

Tamils have been disappointed once again. Though the Tamils supported the good governance government with several expectations, their current expectations have disappeared. The current political situation clearly shows the impossibility for a permanent political solution. Tamils have been demanding for a political solution which could be accepted by all parties. However, the negotiations to achieve a permanent solution were not successful. The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment was introduced in 1987 amidst several barriers. However, the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment has not been an apt solution for the Tamils. The land and police powers introduced by the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment were not given to the provinces. Despite the request to abolish the concurrence list, the list has been extended. Though the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment has been implemented in the country for a longer period, still the problems of Tamils remain unsolved. Both the Tamils and the international community expected a solution after the end of the war, yet it did not happen. The Steering Committee was established to enact a new constitution. The sub-committees explored various issues such as electoral reform. The Panel of Experts for the Steering Committee also submitted its report. Subsequently, controversial opinions were shared on the report. The efforts to make a new constitution became slow after the local

government elections in 2018. It is crucial for the President and the Prime Minister to pay due attention to bring a permanent solution for the Tamils.

**164. The new constitution should ensure the rights of the Muslims | *Virakesari*, 29 January 2019, p.16 | By: Ampara Correspondent**

Addressing a discussion on 26 January in Akkaraipatru, the Chairperson of the Akkaraipatru Mediation Board said that the state did not officially recognise the proposal for the new constitution. Therefore, it cannot be considered as a draft for a new constitution, he added. Though 399 main provisions are cited in the draft, the provisions are not comprehensive. He said that the draft was released in all three languages in parliament. He said that they should consider whether federalism will be beneficial for Muslims. He mentioned that the devolution of land powers and the land commission are welcome. He added that the Muslims live as the majority only in the Eastern Province, therefore, the rights of Muslims in the Eastern Province should be discussed.

**165. Not accepting the unitary nature is the reason for the delay in achieving a political solution | *Thinakaran*, 29 January 2019, p.01, 06 | No Byline**

Addressing an event held on 27 January in Kalutara, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that it is a huge success for all parties to accept the unitary nature of the country. He said that they have considered the opinions of each and every parliamentarian through the establishment of the Constitutional Assembly to enact a new constitution. He affirmed that a new constitution will be enacted only if it receives a two-thirds majority in parliament. He said that all parties accepted the unitary ruling for the first time. He said that Tamils had been demanding for federalism since the 1950s. However, they now accept the unitary state and the priority given to Buddhism, he added.

**166. Enacting the constitution is not an easy task for the UNP | *Thinakkural*, 29 January 2019, p.05 | By: Wathurugama Correspondent**

Addressing an opening ceremony of a branch of the Sathosa Centre on 26 January in Kandy, Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs Abdul Haleem ascertained that the United National Party (UNP) does not have any intention to bring the constitution secretly. He said that the UNP, which respects the law, will not bring a constitution secretly. He further affirmed that the new constitution will be brought only with a two-thirds majority in parliament and the support of the people.

**167. Tamils should examine the new constitutional draft | *Thinakkural*, 29 January 2019, p.17 | No Byline**

Addressing a conference on 26 January in Jaffna, former member of the Northern Provincial Council C.V.K. Sivagnanam stated that though the new constitutional draft contains both advantages and disadvantages, the Tamils should examine the draft without completely rejecting it. He requested the people not to rely on certain words, but rather examine the positive aspects of the new draft. He claimed that requesting for a separate state would be pointless since the majority is not willing to accommodate this request. He therefore requested for the people to think broadly to maintain unity among the Tamils.

**168. The country will collapse if the constitution is enacted for a province | *Thinakkural*, 29 January 2019, p.17 | No Byline**

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, during a meeting with the Leader of the Global Sri Lankan Forum, stated that the country will collapse if the constitution is enacted at the behest of a single province. He stated that since no other provinces, except one province, desired a new constitution, it was unnecessary for the country. He said that such a constitution would impede reconciliation in the country.

**169. We should defeat the attempt to enact a new constitution | *Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.03, 06 | By: Fahim**

Addressing a media briefing on 29 January at its party office, the Sri Lanka Independent Trade Union Federation stated that the government should consider the other problems in the country without focusing on the constitution making process. They requested the government to hold the provincial council elections soon.

**170. Giving priority to the interests of the country is the responsible of all | *Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.04 | The Editorial**

All parties who are concerned with the best interests of the country have been trying to bring a political solution by enacting a new constitution. The government has also been trying to enact a new constitution. A Steering Committee was established and an interim draft was presented by considering the recommendations given by all parties. The draft was debated in parliament.

Meanwhile, the Panel of Experts for the Steering Committee produced a report. Since an agreement was not reached on the report, an alternative report was drafted and

submitted to parliament. Leader of Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa claimed that a new constitution is not necessary for the country as it is to divide the country. However, he accepted the power devolution zonal system introduced by former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. Moreover, he said that the devolution of power should be facilitated to the maximum level during the All Party Conference that was convened by him. There is a massive difference between his opinions during his tenure as President and at present. The Rajapaksa team uses the new constitution making process for their political benefits. They falsely campaign against the enactment of a new constitution. It is the responsibility of each citizen to support the government to find a permanent political solution to the ethnic problems of the country.

**171. The new constitution is a mere dream | *Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.05 |  
By: Subathra Deshapriya**

United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Shehan Semasinghe stated that there was no need to change the constitution. He stated that Jayampathy Wickramaratne and Media Spokesperson of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran are enacting the constitution. Moreover, he accused Sumanthiran of carrying out the aspirations of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). He alleged that the United National Party (UNP) is trying to bring a new constitution as directed by the LTTE-supported diaspora. He said that the government does not have a two-thirds majority to enact a new constitution. Also, he accused the diaspora of spending money to enact a new constitution.

**172. New constitution should not deprive the powers that were devolved |  
*Thinakaran*, 30 January 2019, p.12 | By: Eravur Group Correspondent**

Addressing the memorial event of the Kokkaddicholai massacre, Batticaloa District MP G. Sirinesan said that Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is trying hard to provide a political solution for the Tamils. He said that some falsely campaign in the South by saying that the government provides federalism for the Tamils in North. However, he said that a new constitution should not deprive the powers that were devolved.

**173. Lack of a two-thirds majority is a good omen | *Tamil Mirror*, 30 January 2019,  
p.01, 08 | By: Menaka Mookandi**

During the special interview given to *Tamil Mirror*, Media Spokesperson of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran said that important constitutional amendments such as the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment were passed at a time when the government did not have a majority. Therefore, he said that the lack of a majority is a good omen to enact a new constitution. He said that while people in the

South allege that he is dividing the country, those in the North allege that he waived the claim for a separate state.

He said that the Steering Committee has convened 82 times thus far and the sub-committees have submitted their reports after meticulously examining the relevant subject matter assigned to them. He said that the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) was the main reason for the delay in enacting a new constitution. He explained on the constitutional making process and the steps taken thus far. He also explained the future steps that would be taken. He said that the contents of the draft should be clearly explained to avoid confusion and erroneous opinions. He emphasised that no provision was included in the draft to divide the country. He said that Dr. Jayampathy Wickramaratne has been carrying out efforts to explain the constitution. He said that the President should also support the enactment of a new constitution as he had pledged for this purpose in 2015. He affirmed that the powers devolved to the provincial councils will be a solution for the problems faced by the Tamils. However, he explained that some powers cannot be delegated and should be with the central government.

He said that a new constitution can be enacted during the tenure of this government. However, he said that if the government does not have the courage to enact it, it will be difficult. He said that the enactment will be made possible if the two main parties support it. He said that a two-thirds majority in parliament and the people's mandate via a referendum were needed to enact a new constitution.

**174. Dr. Jayampathy Wickramaratne explains the need for a new constitution |  
*Thinakaran*, 31 January 2019, p.05 | No Byline**

Dr. Jayampathy Wickramaratne said that the major problem of the 1978 constitution is the unlimited powers of the Executive President. He said that national problems increased after the 1978 constitution. He said that the 1978 constitution only guarantees civic and political rights. Moreover, he pointed out the loopholes in the existing electoral system prescribed in the constitution. Therefore, he said that the constitution should be changed. He emphasised the need to abolish the Executive Presidency. He said that the constitution is the root cause for all the problems that happened in the past.

**175. The TNA is ready to accept the power devolution suggested by Mahinda |  
*Thinakaran*, 31 January 2019, p.12 | By: Eravur Group Correspondent**

Addressing the sports-meet of the Batticaloa Chenkaladi Vivekananda Vidyalaya, Batticaloa District MP Seenithamby Yogeswaran said that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is ready to accept the devolution of power recommended in the reports of the committees appointed by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. He said that MPs from

the TNA did not accept ministerial posts as they were respecting the sacrifices done by many to get a political solution. He said that former President Mahinda Rajapaksa runs false campaigns by saying that the new constitution features federalism. Moreover, he said that he was really concerned as Rajapaksa, who said during his regime that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment should be facilitated, is currently opposing the devolution of power to the provincial councils.

**176. The defeat of a new constitution is not the mistake of Tamil's political solution | *Thinakkural*, 31 January 2019, p.05 | By: Roshan Nagalingam**

Responding to questions on the enactment of a new constitution, Senior Law Lecturer A. Sarveswaran said that the lack of will, failure of Tamil leaders to make adjustments and the lack of unity between the main parties impeded the permanent political solution for the ethnic problem in the country. He said that if Tamil leaders did not make adjustments and give their consent for a new constitution, the Southern community would have easily blamed that the effort to enact a new constitution was failed because of Tamil leaders. He said that Tamil National Alliance (TNA) acted with patience and made adjustments to facilitate a new constitution. However, he said that the possibility of enacting a new constitution is questionable given the disputes between the main parties. He said that the new draft includes federal features beyond the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**177. TNA is ready to accept the power devolution suggested by Mahinda | *Thinakkural*, 31 January 2019, p.05 | By: Eravur Correspondent**

Addressing the sports-meet of the Batticaloa Chenkaladi Vivekananda Vidyalaya, Batticaloa District MP Seenithamby Yogeswaran said that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is ready to accept the devolution of power recommended in the reports of the committees appointed by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. He said that MPs from the TNA did not accept ministerial posts as they were respecting the sacrifices done by many to get a political solution. He said that former President Mahinda Rajapaksa runs false campaigns by saying that the new constitution features federalism. Moreover, he said that he was really concerned as Rajapaksa, who said during his regime that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment should be facilitated, is currently opposing the devolution of power to the provincial councils.



**178. It is our success if we enact a new constitution during our office, says Speaker | *Tamil Mirror*, 31 January 2019, p.01, 12 | No Byline**

Addressing a memorial event on 29 January, Speaker Karu Jayasuriya said that the new constitution was not submitted to parliament. He said that they have received the opinions of the Buddhist clergy. The clergy had said that it is crucial to discuss the matter for two days when all the parties are present. Moreover, he said that if they enact a new constitution during their tenure, it will be a huge success. Otherwise, he added that this problem will be inherited by future generations as well.

**179. TNA is ready to accept the power devolution suggested by Mahinda | *Tamil Mirror*, 31 January 2019, p.04 | By: Eravur Correspondent**

Addressing the sports-meet of the Batticaloa Chenkaladi Vivekananda Vidyalaya, Batticaloa District MP Seenithamby Yogeswaran said that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is ready to accept the devolution of power recommended in the reports of the committees appointed by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. He said that MPs from the TNA did not accept ministerial posts as they were respecting the sacrifices done by many to get a political solution. He said that former President Mahinda Rajapaksa runs false campaigns by saying that the new constitution features federalism. Moreover, he said that he was really concerned as Rajapaksa, who said during his regime that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment should be facilitated, is currently opposing the devolution of power to the provincial councils.

**180. Special Seminar on 'New Constitution and the Muslims' | *Thinakkural*, 01 February 2019, p.23 | By: Ampara Correspondent**

A special seminar was held in Akkaraipattu titled, 'Draft of the New Constitution and Muslims'. The seminar was held on Saturday, 26 January. The seminar was organised by I.S.D and senior Lawyer M.M. Faheez. The seminar discussed the content of the draft of the new constitution and aspects that could be beneficial and detrimental to Muslims.

**181. Political interest is the only thing that can create a new constitution – Dr. Jayampathy Wickramaratne | *Sunday Virakesari*, 03 February 2019, p.01, 03 | By: R. Ram**

Dr. Jayampathy Wickramaratne says that a new constitution can be implemented only if there was political will among the political leaders and parties. He stated that everyone agreed that the country needed a new constitution. He said that parliament has been

converted to a Constitutional Assembly. He said that a Steering Committee was formed to draft a new constitution.

**182. Who is disrupting? | *Sunday Virakesari*, 03 February 2019, p.01, 11 | By: N. Kannan**

The commentary discusses the prevalent confusion over the process of implementing a new constitution. There is continued confusion on the new constitution and what it envisages for the Tamil people. Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MPs R. Sampanthan and M.A. Sumanthiran are pushing for its implementation. There is confusion as to how the solution for the nation will be addressed in the new constitution. While Sampanthan states the solution should be federalism, Sumanthiran states that even though it does not incorporate a federal model, it should incorporate attributes of a federal system. However, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe says the solution will be based on a unitary state. At the same time, the United National Party (UNP) is not in a position to bring in a new constitution since it does not have a majority in parliament. Only Sampanthan and Sumanthiran are interested in the new constitution whereas the UNP is focused on facing the next election.

**183. The constitutions following independence and the state of minorities | *Sunday Virakesari*, 03 February 2019, p.10 | By: Attorney-at-law Kanakanamanathan**

The commentary describes the political developments following constitutional reforms in Sri Lanka in 1972 and 1978. The article discusses key political developments in the country following the introduction of the 1978 constitution. This includes the introduction of district ministers and district councils. The article also discusses political tensions emerging from the constitution in the early 1980s, which led to the burning of the Jaffna Library with approximately 97,000 rare books and publications. In addition, the article discusses the emergence of armed groups in the North, and the 1983 riots.

**184. Should the new constitution be given up or suspended? The Constitutional Assembly will decide | *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 03 February 2019, p. 01, 10 | By: M.A.M. Nilam**

General Secretary of the United National Party (UNP) Akila Viraj Kariyawasam said that no one can act arbitrarily to halt or abandon processes towards a new constitution. He added that such a decision could only be taken by the Constitutional Assembly. He stated this in response to the statements made by President Maithripala Sirisena. Sirisena claimed that he was not aware of the progress and he wasn't confident that a new

constitution will be implemented in the coming year. Kariyawasam pointed out that the Constitutional Assembly had met several times and the Interim Report of the Steering Committee had also been handed over to the Assembly.

**185. Wigneswaran alleged that the new constitution is a drama | *Virakesari*, 04 February 2019, p.01, 10 | By: *Virakesari* Correspondent**

During the Jaffna–Kilinochchi regional conference of the Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) held on 03 February 2019 at the Jaffna Weerasingham Hall, founder of the Tamil People’s Alliance and former Chief Minister of the Northern Province C.V. Wigneswaran alleged that the two main parties in Sri Lanka are seeking to oppress the Tamils. He claimed that the disappointments the Tamils will face through a new constitution are concealed by the two parties. He said that under a new constitution, the unitary nature is preserved, and federalism is refused. He added that the constitution also gives priority to Buddhism. He said that while they are pressing for the amalgamation of North and East, the new constitution will divide the Tamil nation. He alleged that the constitutional making process seeks to enable the Tamils to say that they don’t need a solution.

**186. Tamils should be given a dignified solution | *Virakesari*, 04 February 2019, p.03 | By *Virakesari* Correspondent**

Chief Organiser of the United National Party (UNP) for the Colombo District and Western Province member C.Y. Ram stated that Tamils should be given a dignified solution within this year. He said that though the country celebrates the 71<sup>st</sup> Independence Day, in fact, the country still does not enjoy full independence. He said that the UNP had agreed for a solution within a unitary state. However, this should not be seen by the Southern parties as a weakness of the UNP. He said that a new constitution should be enacted as a solution to address the ethnic problem of the country.

**187. President violates the promises given by him | *Virakesari*, 04 February 2019, p.04 | The Editorial**

Addressing a religious event on 31 January in Horana, President Sirisena said that he does not believe that a new constitution can be enacted within this year. He further said that he is not aware of the contents of a new constitution. He alleged that a new constitution is used to disappoint the Northern people and persuade the Southern people. Even if a new constitution is enacted, it should strengthen the country and parliament, he said. It should be noted that though the Tamils supported President Sirisena in 2015 with the hope of getting a political solution, the Tamils did not receive anything. Despite this, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) supported the coalition government to get a political

solution. Yet nothing has happened. It is unbelievable that the president, who promised to enact a new constitution, is saying that he is unaware of the contents of a new constitution. Despite the few steps taken by the President at the beginning to address the problems of Tamils, there was no follow-up. It should be noted that the President acknowledged the importance of enacting a new constitution as a political solution. However, he currently issues statements opposing the enactment of a new constitution. The statement of the President on the impossibility of enacting a new constitution within this year disappoints the Tamils.

**188. We cannot accept that President saying that a new constitution will not be enacted | *Virakesari*, 04 February 2019, p.20 | By: Chenkalady Correspondent**

Addressing a Pongal event on 04 February 2019 in Vaharai, Media Spokesperson of The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran said that though the President takes another position, they are not ready to abandon the effort on making a new constitution. He said that following the report by the Panel of Experts, some people in the South say that a new constitution is going to divide the country, while Tamils say that a new constitution does not have anything for them, and the President says it is impossible to enact a new constitution. He requested the President to remember his own promises and statements that he said during the establishment of the Constitutional Council. The President had agreed that a war would not have resulted if the Indo-Ceylon accord was implemented. Though the President seems to forget his own promises, Sumanthiran said that they will facilitate the enactment of a new constitution. He emphasised the need for power devolution as well.

**189. We are not ready to abandon the effort of making a new constitution | *Thinakaran*, 04 February 2019, p.01, 06 | By: Kalkudah *Thinakaran* Correspondent**

Addressing a Pongal event on 04 February 2019 in Vaharai, Media Spokesperson of The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran said that though the President takes another position, they are not ready to abandon the effort on making a new constitution. He said that following the report by the Panel of Experts, some people in the South say that a new constitution is going to divide the country, while Tamils say that a new constitution does not have anything for them, and the President says it is impossible to enact a new constitution. He requested the President to remember his own promises and statements that he said during the establishment of the Constitutional Council. The President had agreed that a war would not have resulted if the Indo-Ceylon accord was implemented. Though the President seems to forget his own promises, Sumanthiran said

that they will facilitate the enactment of a new constitution. He emphasised the need for power devolution as well.

**190. Wigneswaran alleged that a new constitution is a drama | *Thinakaran*, 04 February 2019, p.03 | By: Jaffna Group Correspondent**

During the Jaffna–Kilinochchi regional conference of the Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) held on 03 February 2019 at the Jaffna Weerasingham Hall, founder of the Tamil People’s Alliance and former Chief Minister of the Northern Province C.V. Wigneswaran alleged that the two main parties in Sri Lanka are seeking to oppress the Tamils. He claimed that the disappointments the Tamils will face through a new constitution are concealed by the two parties. He said that under a new constitution, the unitary nature is preserved, and federalism is refused. He added that the constitution also gives priority to Buddhism. He said that while they are pressing for the amalgamation of North and East, the new constitution will divide the Tamil nation. He alleged that the constitutional making process seeks to enable the Tamils to say that they don’t need a solution. Further, he emphasised that the international community and the United Nations should exert pressure on Sri Lanka. He said that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) should not support the government, which did not fulfill the UN resolution passed in 2015.

**191. Wigneswaran alleged that a new constitution is a drama | *Thinakkural*, 04 February 2019, p.01, 06 | No Byline**

During the Jaffna–Kilinochchi regional conference of the Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) held on 03 February 2019 at the Jaffna Weerasingham Hall, founder of the Tamil People’s Alliance and former Chief Minister of the Northern Province C.V. Wigneswaran alleged that the two main parties in Sri Lanka are seeking to oppress the Tamils. He claimed that the disappointments the Tamils will face through a new constitution are concealed by the two parties. He said that under a new constitution, the unitary nature is preserved, and federalism is refused. He added that the constitution also gives priority to Buddhism. He said that while they are pressing for the amalgamation of North and East, the new constitution will divide the Tamil nation. He alleged that the constitutional making process seeks to enable the Tamils to say that they don’t need a solution. He also alleged that the new constitution making process is a mere drama.

**192. We will not abandon the constitutional making process | *Thinakkural*, 04 February 2019, p.01, 08 | By: Valaichchenai Correspondent**

Addressing a Pongal event on 04 February 2019 in Vaharai, Media Spokesperson of The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran said that though the President takes another position, they are not ready to abandon the effort on making a new constitution. He said that following the report by the Panel of Experts, some people in the South say that a new constitution is going to divide the country, while Tamils say that a new constitution does not have anything for them, and the President says it is impossible to enact a new constitution. He requested the President to remember his own promises and statements that he said during the establishment of the Constitutional Council. The President had agreed that a war would not have resulted if the Indo-Ceylon accord was implemented. Though the President seems to forget his own promises, Sumanthiran said that they will facilitate the enactment of a new constitution. He emphasised the need for power devolution as well.

**193. Bring the constitution after proving the majority | *Thinakkural*, 04 February 2019, p.20 | No Byline**

Ven. Bellanwila Dhammaratana Thera urged the government to abandon the constitution making process until the elections are held and the majority is proven. Further, he said that they cannot allow the country to be divided due to the international pressure. He said that the government should have been more transparent about the new constitution making process. He said that the constitutional proposal should be submitted to parliament after the majority is proven through a new general election. Further, he suspected international pressure in relation to forming a new constitution.

**194. We will not abandon the efforts for a new constitution | *Tamil Mirror*, 04 February 2019, p.04 | By: Yudhajith, Ahamad, Perinbarajah and Sabesh**

Addressing a Pongal event on 04 February 2019 in Vaharai, Media Spokesperson of The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran said that though the President takes another position, they are not ready to abandon the effort on making a new constitution. He said that though the President forgets his own promises, they will facilitate the enactment of a new constitution.

**195. President can't say that a new constitution will not be enacted | *Virakesari*, 05 February 2019, p.08 | By: M. Mano Chithra**

Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) MP Duminda Dissanayake said that President Maithripala Sirisena does not have any authority to say that a new constitution will not be enacted. However, the President meant that a new constitution will not be enacted before the end of the next year, Dissanayake clarified. Further, he stated that the promises given to the Tamils will be fulfilled.

**196. Mahinda Rajapaksa denies the reasonable demands of Tamils | *Tamil Mirror*, 05 February 2019, p.04 | By S. Karthigesu**

Addressing the sports-meet on 03 February 2019 at Ampara Thambattai Maha Vidyalaya, Ampara District MP Kaveendran Kodeeswaran said that Tamils have been protesting to live a dignified life. However, former President Mahinda Rajapaksa denies all of their requests, he alleged. He said that Rajapaksa continuously cheated the Tamils by saying that the country does not need a constitution.

**197. Viyath Maga forum warns about the enactment of new constitution | *Virakesari*, 06 February 2019, p.08 | No Byline**

Addressing a media conference on 05 February 2019 in Colombo, member of the Viyath Maga forum and senior Attorney-at-Law Raja Gunaratne alleged that Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MPs M.A. Sumanthiran and R. Sampanthan are trying to enact a constitution that divides the country. He said that Sumanthiran and Sampanthan know that they can only enact such a terrible constitution during this government. He warned that the new constitution is very dangerous to the people of this country. He said that the country has two main problems namely, the financial difficulties and the new constitution making process. He said that the United National Party (UNP) introduced 15 amendments, along with the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, to the current constitution, of which the 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Amendments are very dangerous. He alleged that the 20<sup>th</sup> Amendment would be more dangerous. He claimed that the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment leads to a waste of resources and the wealth of the country. Meanwhile, he said that the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment reduced the powers of the President and the 20<sup>th</sup> Amendment will divide the country as per the aspirations of foreign powers. He questioned as to why the government tries to enact a new constitution since the people did not ask for it.

**198. We will not cheat the Tamils who trusted us | *Virakesari*, 06 February 2019, p.20 | By: Chenkalady Correspondent**

Addressing the foundation laying ceremony in Valaichenai, Batticaloa District MP Seeniththamby Yogeswaran affirmed that they will definitely facilitate the rights of Tamils. He explained that the President has violated the constitution twice. He affirmed that for the first time in history, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is involved in the constitution making process. He added that former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who said that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment should be given, has now said that he will not allow the country's powers to be devolved.

**199. New constitution should be enacted | *Thinakaran*, 06 February 2019, p.12 | By: Pasikudah Correspondent**

Addressing a Pongal event on 4 February 2019 in Vaharai, Illankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK) MP Pon. Selvarasa clarified that the released report is not a draft for a constitution, but it is the report by the Panel of Experts. He said that a new constitution should be enacted to fulfil the aspirations of Tamils. He said that though few allege that the new constitution does not have anything for the Tamils, this was untrue. He was concerned about the recent erections of Buddha statues in Mullaitivu and Vavuniya. He urged the government not to hurt the Tamils through whom they came to the power.

**200. I will give a solution to the ethnic problem | *Tamil Mirror*, 06 February 2019, p.01, 12 | By: Mathan**

Addressing the media on 05 February 2019, Leader of Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa said that he is ready and able to provide a solution to the problems of the Tamils. He requested the Tamil leaders to prepare for negotiations to facilitate a solution to the ethnic problem of the country. He alleged that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) acted with ignorance, which resulted in the failure of achieving a political solution. He said that he will be able to provide a solution if the Tamil leaders can adjust a few matters. He said that he cannot accept the contents of the new constitution as the people will not accept it. He alleged that the new constitution cannot be enacted in rush in the manner that TNA MP M.A. Sumanthiran and Dr. Jayampathy Wickramaratne think. He said that a new constitution can be enacted once a stable government is established. While commenting on the allegation of Sinhala colonisation under Mahaweli project, he said that no development project can be done for a single community and if Sinhala colonisation occurs then the Tamils can demand for their rights.



**201. The expectations of Tamils and the moves of Mahinda | *Tamil Mirror*, 06 February 2019, p.05 | The Editorial**

Leader of Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa said that he is ready and able to provide a solution to the problems of the Tamils. He requested the Tamil leaders to prepare for negotiations to facilitate a solution to the ethnic problem of the country. He alleged that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) acted with ignorance, which resulted in the failure of achieving a political solution. The question remains as to whether the statements of Rajapaksa are mere attacks against the TNA or are genuine. The government rejected the demands of the Tamils such as the amalgamation of the North and East and devolving land powers and police powers during the negotiations held in January 2011 between the TNA and Rajapaksa. However, in the end, Rajapaksa alleged the TNA failed to reach an agreement. They cannot expect the TNA to compromise all aspirations of the Tamil community.

**202. Will Mahinda give a solution to the ethnic problem? | *Virakesari*, 07 February 2019, p.04 | No Byline**

Leader of Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa said that he is ready and able to provide a solution to the problems of the Tamils. He requested the Tamil leaders to prepare for negotiations to facilitate a solution to the ethnic problem of the country. He alleged that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) acted with ignorance, which resulted in the failure of achieving a political solution. He said that even though the TNA is not supportive towards the Tamil people, he is willing to provide a solution to the Tamils.

Responding to this allegation, Leader of TNA Sampanthan said that the previous government did not agree to fulfil the aspirations of Tamils. However, he said that they are ready to negotiate with Rajapaksa at any time. Rajapaksa pledged to the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, that he will provide a political solution for the Tamils. Additionally, after the end of the war, Rajapaksa visited New Delhi and promised the then Prime Minister of India that he will provide a political solution that goes beyond the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. However, he did not take any efforts to negotiate with the TNA. During negotiations with the TNA, an agreement was reached to release the list of those who surrendered. Meanwhile, the TNA submitted the draft of a new constitution to solve the ethnic problem. However, the government did not respond to the list of those who surrendered and as well as to the draft for a new constitution. Ultimately, the negotiations ended in failure.

**203. UNP requested Mahinda to support to the new constitution | *Virakesari*, 07 February 2019, p.02 | By N. Dinusha**

Addressing a media conference at Sirikotha on 06 February 2019, United National Party (UNP) MP Harshana Rajakaruna said that all, including members of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa's team, should cooperate to enact a new constitution. He said that a two-thirds majority will be needed to enact a new constitution. He said that the report by the Panel of Experts was submitted to parliament, and parliament has the authority to either select or reject the recommendations of the report. He called for discussions to clarify doubts on the new constitution. He agreed that the new constitution cannot be enacted only by the UNP.

**204. JVP will not allow the country to be divided | *Thinakaran*, 08 February 2019, p.07 | By: Tharaka Wickramesekera**

Responding to a question, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) MP Sunil Handunetti said that a few politicians are spreading rumours to attempt to divide the country for their own political benefits. He affirmed that the JVP will not allow the country to be divided under any circumstances, which could be seen even in the past.

**205. The effort of making a new constitution is undermined amidst the political crisis | *Thinakaran-Arangam*, 08 February 2019, p.iv | No Byline**

The constitutional making efforts which were undermined by the recent political crisis still not restarted. In this context, political parties and politicians use a new constitution as a tool to win the votes at the next election. The racist politicians hold racist campaigns to defeat the constitutional making effort. C.V. Wigneswaran and Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam spread racist thoughts which can induce Southern political powers. C.V. Wigneswaran has alleged that the two main parties in Sri Lanka are seeking to oppress the Tamils. He has accused that the disappointments that Tamils will get through a new constitution are voluntarily concealed to them. He said that under a new constitution unitary nature continues and federalism is refused as well as it gives priority to Buddhism. He said that while they are protecting for the amalgamation of North and East, the new constitution will divide the Tamil nation. He alleged that the constitutional making process seeks to enable the Tamils to say that they don't need a solution and it is a drama. Further, he emphasized that international community and the United Nations should exert pressure to Sri Lanka for a solution. Also, he said that TNA should not support to the government which did not fulfill the UN resolution passed in 2015. He has shared these concerns During the Jaffna-Kilinochchi regional conference of Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) held on 3 February 2019 at Jaffna

Weerasingham Hall. These kinds of thoughts would definitely induce the Southern political powers and create further impediments to the enactment of a new constitution.

**206. It is impossible to prevent the country from being divided if the Executive Presidency is abolished | *Thinakkural*, 08 February 2019, p.14 | No Byline**

During an interview with *Ceylon Today*, United National Party (UNP) MP Wijeyadasa Rajapaksa said that the country does not need a new constitution in the current context. He said that the present problems of the country are financial difficulties, underworld activities and not the new constitution. He said that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment facilitated the devolution of power and deprived the rights of the Executive Presidency to some extent. If the Executive powers are completely abolished, then no one can prevent the country from being divided, he warned. He said that the government is enacting the constitution due to the pressure from the Tamil diaspora and foreign powers. He said that a proposal should be brought to parliament to establish a new constitutional council. Further, he said that he opposed the recommendations of the six-sub committees.

**207. "Once our presidential candidate wins, there will be changes in the constitution" – Rajapaksa at a conference in Bangalore | *Thinakaran Vaaramanjari*, 10 February 2019, p.01, 10 | No Byline**

Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa stated that unfortunately, he will not be able to contest in the next presidential elections and that they will put forward a good candidate who will win. Rajapaksa added that once their candidate wins the presidential election, they will be able to make amendments to the constitution. Rajapaksa made these statements in response to a question raised on the problems of the Sri Lankan Tamils during an interview with *The Hindu* in Bangalore on 09 February 2019.

**208. "Once winning the presidential election, there will be amendments to the constitution" – Mahinda Rajapaksa | *Sunday Thinakkural*, 10 February 2019, p. 01, 10 | No Byline**

Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa stated that unfortunately, he will not be able to contest in the next presidential elections and that they will put forward a good candidate who will win. Rajapaksa added that once their candidate wins the presidential election, they will be able to make amendments to the constitution. Rajapaksa made these statements in response to a question raised on the problems of the Sri Lankan Tamils during an interview with *The Hindu* in Bangalore on 09 February 2019. Rajapaksa added that even if they are able to solve the problems of the Tamil people, they are unable to satisfy the politicians.

**209. "If a national government is formed, then it's a diplomatic failure" – MP Shriritharan | *Sunday Virakesari (Samakala Arasiyal)*, 10 February 2019, p.06 | By R. Ram**

In an interview to *Sunday Virakesari*, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP S. Shriritharan stated that the formation of a national government will be a diplomatic failure. Shriritharan spoke on a wide range of issues including the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution, the international inquiry into human rights violations and the new constitution. On the new constitution, Shriritharan stated that it will be unsuccessful to bring a new constitution as all parties are not clear as to how the constitution will be implemented. Shriritharan said that the current government came into power with the support of the TNA. He said that the TNA have currently lost the position of the Opposition in parliament. However, Shriritharan added that they will not betray the government but will make their future decisions based on the future moves of the government.

**210. "Once our presidential candidate wins, we will make amendments to the constitution" – Mahinda Rajapaksa | *Sunday Virakesari*, 10 February 2019, p.01, 10 | News Section**

Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa stated that unfortunately, he will not be able to contest in the next presidential elections and that they will put forward a good candidate who will win. Rajapaksa added that once their candidate wins the presidential election, they will be able to make amendments to the constitution. Rajapaksa made these statements in response to a question raised on the problems of the Sri Lankan Tamils during an interview with *The Hindu* in Bangalore on 09 February 2019. Rajapaksa added that even if they are able to solve the problems of the Tamil people, they are unable to satisfy the politicians.

**211. "Cannot trust" – Sumanthiran states that they are requesting for the devolution of power for the Tamil people | *Virakesari*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 10 | By: Robert Anthony**

Media Spokesperson of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP M.A. Sumanthiran stated that they cannot trust that former President Mahinda Rajapaksa will amend the constitution and provide a solution for the Tamil people. He added that if Rajapaksa took measures for this, they will support it. Sumanthiran provided this response when questioned on the statement made by Rajapaksa recently in India. Rajapaksa stated that once his party's candidate wins the presidential election, they will be ready to amend the constitution. Further, Rajapaksa added that it was hard to share power the way the Tamil politicians are requesting it. He also claimed that they were ready to share power with the people. Sumanthiran explained that it was the TNA's goal to get power sharing for the people and not for themselves. Sumanthiran also stated that they had no trust in

Rajapaksa's statement based on their experience in 2011. The TNA held 18 rounds of negotiations with the Rajapaksa faction and sought reasonable political solution. However, the government representatives back then failed to attend approximately three rounds of negotiations, leading to the inability to reach any solution.

**212. "Is Rajapaksa, who doesn't want a new constitution, going to provide a solution for the Tamil people?" – Wickremesinghe | *Virakesari*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 10 | By: *Virakesari* Correspondent**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe questioned as to how former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who stated that there was no need to create a new constitution and that a new constitution will divide the country, would present solution for the Tamil people when he returns to power. Wickremesinghe added that Rajapaksa was attempting to fool the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the Tamil people once again. Wickremesinghe also affirmed that the attempts they took to create a new constitution will continue. Wickremesinghe made this statement when questioned by a journalist working for an international press agency on the statement made by Rajapaksa. While speaking to Tamil newspaper editors on 01 February 2019, Rajapaksa stated that the TNA had disrupted their attempts to bring a solution for the ethnic problem. Rajapaksa also claimed that if his group returned to power, they will speak with the Tamil people and provide a solution. In response to this statement, Wickremesinghe stated that Rajapaksa and the TNA had held negotiations during the previous regime and that the TNA was fooled by Rajapaksa. Wickremesinghe added that people from all three ethnicities were in support of a new constitution and that the Rajapaksa group was attempting to hinder the process of creating a new constitution based on racist politics.

**213. "The main Tamil party is ready to get a solution in an *Orumithanadu (unitary state)*" – Wickremesinghe | *Tamil Mirror*, 11 February 2019, p. 01, 12 | No Byline**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that after 70 years, the main Tamil political party in Sri Lanka has agreed to find a political solution within a unitary state. Wickremesinghe made this statement while speaking at an event held on 10 February 2019 in Balapitiya. He further stated that the draft bill on the new constitution has not been made yet. He claimed that some politicians who are bankrupt are spreading false information that the country will be divided, and that Buddhism will lose its foremost place. Wickremesinghe denied the above accusations and added that all actors are in favour of giving the foremost position for Buddhism, working together, and devolving power. He stated that if all of these factors are agreed to by everyone then they can create a bill on the constitution.

**214. "The proposed constitution an election trump of the opposition" | *Thinakaran*, 12 February 2019, p.04 | The Editorial**

From the time Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, the politics of the South has been journeying on the path of racism. From the time the request for expansion of the political rights of Tamils emerged, racial politics also emerged along with that. Racism is the ideal trump card for Sri Lankan politics to survive. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is that many Sri Lankan politicians are not honest. That is that they will not hesitate to take any role for their political gain. When politicians like this take up the weapon of 'racism' into their hands, the majority of people are easily drawn towards this. They do not have an iota of guilt for taking a dishonest political path. What is important to them is their political survival! The second reason for the success of racial politics is the ignorance that prevails amongst the majority. Most people don't come forward to explore the racial views expressed by politicians. The funny part is that many are still so vulnerable to completely believe the stories woven by politicians! Even the educated among them are prepared to believe everything like the uneducated. It is due these two important factors that the 'business of racial politics' is running in our country for more than half a century.

The opposing views against the proposed constitution by parties unsupportive of the government are not surprising in Sri Lankan politics. Instilling fears about the security of the country is a tactic that diverts waves of people towards the opposition and is a tactic that has been carried out throughout history! The draft bill that is prepared before the constitution has not yet been carried out. At the same time, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has not put forward any suggestions related to the proposed constitution up to now. However, new forecasts are being continuously received regarding the new constitution from the opposition faction. They keep saying that the United National Party (UNP) has planned to divide the country through the new constitution. Some others say that the government has decided to provide the North and East with autonomy. It is unnecessary to state here that such unfounded views only create unnecessary complications. Such unnecessary imagination and mischievous propaganda not only create fear amidst the Sinhala people, but the truth is that it will also flip opposition against the constitution. Such politicians will never stand back to create a wave of opposition amidst the people and incite them to stage a protest over this. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has severely condemned politicians who stirred the innocent people of the South against the proposed constitution. Wickremesinghe has accused 'bankrupt' politicians of being involved in drowning people in confusion. In the meantime, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), which is maintaining goodwill with the government since the presidential election in 2015, have been providing both the Tamils and the Sinhalese with enough explanations regarding the proposed constitution. But it is apparent that anti-government factions have been sowing seeds of false propaganda amidst the Sinhalese people in recent times. They may be undertaking a political business deal using the proposed constitution in the face of the forthcoming elections. The

government that is in power is trying to resolve a pressing national issue, the opposition objecting this is the display of the third-grade political culture of this country. It is due to the result of such a degrading political culture that the solution to the national issue has also become impossible. When will our country be cleansed of such a political culture? This is the frustration of those who love their country!

**215. "The historical mistake that is occurring once again" | *Virakesari*, 11 February 2019, p.04 | The Editorial**

The people had laid down their expectations at the presidential election that took place on 08 January 2015 which included the creation of a new constitution that would resolve the issues faced by the country. The political solution for the Tamils was one of these issues. The general opposition, led by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, operates against these expectations. It is funny when he says that he will amend the constitution if he wins the presidential election again. Rajapaksa, on a visit to India, addressed a seminar held by the *Hindu Daily* on 09 February 2019. In response to a question during the event, Rajapaksa said that he cannot unfortunately contest in the election and therefore, have had to look for one of their best candidates to contest. He also informed that once their contestant wins, they will make the necessary amendments to the constitution. Responding to a question regarding the Tamil people he said that, "the people can be satisfied but not the politicians, this is my problem".

During his address at the seminar, he spoke on India – Sri Lanka relations and the role played by India during the last war. The close relationship between the two countries saw a rift in the 1980s and again in 2014 as soon as there was a change in government in India. When the Sri Lankan government carried out the war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Rajapaksa stated that the mechanism jointly created by Sri Lanka and India was important for the future and that it was important to exchange views, learn from and understand each other. The address made by Rajapaksa was one that ideally announced the understanding between Sri Lanka and India being the main reason for winning the battle against the LTTE. Rajapaksa had assured a political solution for the ethnic crisis following the end of the war. This was promised to Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) Ban Ki-moon and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the time. But the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government at the time didn't show any concern regarding a political solution out of sheer pride after winning the war. This is why a political solution could not be reached. The government that had brought the war to an end continued to oppress the Tamil people. After carrying out talks with the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) for a year, the government moved away from that as well. Since they did not resolve the issues of the Tamil people in this way, this led the Tamil people to render their support to the contestant of the general opposition, current President Maithripala Sirisena, at the time.

Once Sirisena was elected as President, the good governance government was also sworn in. It was during the presidential and general election that a promise was made to carry out three matters: create a new constitution, abolish executive presidency and change the electoral system. A majority of the people, including the Tamil people, were in support of this mandate. According to this mandate, around a year after the good governance government assumed power in 2016 January, parliament was transformed into a Constitutional Assembly and plans to create a new constitution were underway. Discussions regarding a political solution were also held and an Interim Report for the new constitution was also submitted. Members belonging to the general opposition led by Rajapaksa such as MPs Dinesh Gunawardena and Prasanna Ranatunga were also part of the Steering Committee. The Interim Report was prepared in consultation with them. In such a situation the opposition were antagonistic towards any ideas that were put forward regarding the new constitution. They propagated the view that the new constitution was being created to divide the country. Even now the general opposition has raised war flags against the submission of the report by the Panel of Experts related to the Interim Report of the new constitution.

Rajapaksa, who addressed a gathering in Bangalore, stated that he will change the constitution once his contestant wins the election. From the above details it can be proved that the general opposition would not, under any circumstances, render its support towards the efforts of creating a new constitution. When examining the history of this country, it is apparent that it is a norm for governments that come to power to try to resolve issues while opposition parties rival against it. From Rajapaksa's statement it is apparent that history is being repeated. It was because history was repeated in such a manner for three decades that the country headed for destruction. It won't benefit the country if lessons are not learnt from history. As India has rendered its support to the Sri Lankan government during the final phase of the war, the Tamil people have taken a stand that India should apply pressure to have the fundamental issues and the ethnic crisis resolved. The Tamil people expect India to be a pillar of strength in creating the new constitution and in the efforts taken towards a political solution as it had rendered support in the past. Therefore, we wish to point out that the involvement of the central government of India in efforts towards this would be a great pillar of strength in the future.

## **216. Politics of Compromise | *Virakesari*, 13 February 2019, p.18 | The Editorial**

It is not necessary to hold onto words and certain terms. Instead the need of the hour is to focus on the contents. This was expressed as the stand taken by the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) in their attempt to find a political solution to the ethnic crisis through the new constitution. The draft constitution has described Sri Lanka as an “ekeeya rajya” in Sinhala and “orumitthanadu” in Tamil which means a “united country”. The experts had avoided labelling the constitution as either “unitary” or “federal” given the strong feelings



for and against these two concepts". This is the argument put forward by the leadership of the TNA.

President Maithripala Sirisena had also reassured that the new constitution was based on a system of unitary governance. The stance taken by the government very clearly expresses that the unitary government would be the main feature of the new constitution, whereas the stance taken by the TNA is contrary to this. Ordinary Tamil people struggle to gain an understanding of the complicated stand related to the system of governance.

If a country has gained independence, the people of that country should be able to adore their country as their motherland. It is also important for them to have a national identity. However, there is no unified identity among the people in Sri Lanka. 04 February 2019 has been declared as the country's Independence Day. The identity of Sinhalese Buddhists holds the foremost place and carves out an identity for the Sinhalese in particular although there are other communities who live in this country. Since the country is trapped in an ethnic conflict, true independence cannot bloom in the country. In the backdrop of this political ideology there is a general view that only the majority in the country enjoy independence. The armed conflict that took place as a struggle of the minority communities for their political rights, turned out to be severe and was brought under control with the help of international support due to the war being a threat to international terrorism. President Sirisena in his Independence Day address did not mention the changes that should have taken place after the war. What should have really been done by the those who governed the country and brought the war to an end and the government that followed was to have arrived at a political solution for the fundamental problem that caused the war. They shirk from their responsibility of reaching a political solution and have shifted their focus. Therefore, true peace, unity, reconciliation, goodwill amidst communities have failed to take place following the war.

The country has been pushed back to a backward state. The government that declared the Independence Day as a National Day as per the constitution failed to state that it will be observed as a National Day. The President in his Independence Day address mentioned the victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and gratefully thanked the military for their service in destroying the LTTE, instead of how the governing faction gained independence from the British. What seems to be conveyed here is that winning the armed conflict is considered a victory very much and independence gained for the country despite the LTTE being citizens of this country, nothing is mentioned regarding them or those who were massacred at Mullivaikkal violating the ceasefire agreement. It is under these circumstances that the politics of compromise is being carried out by the Tamil faction to find a political solution to the ethnic crisis by using political tactics. They may state that it is sufficient to focus on the contents of the constitution and not to mince with words.

**217. "After the presidential elections, the constitution will be amended" – Mahinda Rajapaksa | *Tamil Mirror*, 11 February 2019, p. 01, 12 | No Byline**

Leader of Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa, while speaking at an interview held in India, stated that after the presidential elections, the constitution will be amended. He made this statement while taking part in an interview following a conference organised by *The Hindu* in Bangalore on 09 February 2019. Rajapaksa added that unfortunately, he will not be able to contest in the elections and that their party will put forward a suitable candidate.

**218. "A new constitution will definitely come" – Lakshman Kiriella | *Tamil Mirror*, 11 February 2019, p. 01,12 | No Byline**

Minister of Public Enterprise, Kandyan Heritage and Kandy Development Lakshman Kiriella stated that the country had to face a war because a constitution, which devolved power, was not created soon after independence with the consent of all parties. Kiriella added that despite any accusations tabled by the Opposition, a new constitution will definitely come into place. He further stated that through the new constitution, the provincial councils will be strengthened. Kiriella made this statement on 10 February 2019 while addressing at an event held in Mawilmada, Kandy.

**219. "The Opposition is talking about a constitution that doesn't exist" – Atukorale | *Virakesari*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 10 | By: M.R.M. Waseem**

While speaking to journalists following an event held in Balangoda on 10 February 2019, Minister of Justice and Prison Reforms Thalatha Atukorale stated that while even a bill on a new constitution hasn't been created yet, the Opposition is spreading lies regarding it. Atukorale added that the opposition is going to Buddhist temples and spreading this information to the Thera's since they do not have anything to criticise about the government. Atukorale said that the United National Party (UNP) will not take any steps that will hinder the unitary status and the sovereignty of the country. She also added that the UNP will always protect the Buddhist Dharma and the security of the country. She accepted that there was a need for a new constitution at the moment.

**220. "Bankrupt politicians are attempting to confuse innocent people" – Prime Minister | *Thinakaran*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 04 | By: Lawrence Selvanayagam**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that after 70 years, the main Tamil political party in Sri Lanka has agreed to find a political solution within a unitary state. Wickremesinghe made this statement while speaking at an event held on 10 February

2019 in Balapitiya. He further stated that the draft bill on the new constitution has not been made yet. He claimed that some politicians who are bankrupt are spreading false information that the country will be divided, and that Buddhism will lose its foremost place. Wickremesinghe denied the above accusations and added that all actors are in favour of giving the foremost position for Buddhism, working together, and devolving power. He stated that if all of these factors are agreed to by everyone then they can create a bill on the constitution.

**221. "India in favour of creating a government under Rajapaksa" – Prof. G.L. Peris | *Tamil Mirror*, 12 February 2019, p. 01, 12 | By: P. Nirosh**

Member of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Prof. G.L. Peris stated that India was in favour of creating a government under the leadership of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. Peris added that if a motion to dissolve parliament was brought forth, the SLPP will support it. He made these statements while briefing the media yesterday (11 February 2019) from the SLPP headquarters in Battaramulla. Peris added that the government must not allocate money for the creation of a new constitution in its budget and that when the SLPP comes to power, they will bring in amendments to the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**222. "Cannot create a constitution according to the words of racists" – Ravi Karunanayake | *Tamil Mirror*, 12 February 2019, p.03 | No Byline**

Minister of Power, Energy and Business Development Ravi Karunanayake stated that a constitution cannot be created according to the words of racists. He made this statement while speaking to media personnel following a meeting with Governor of the Western Province Azath Salley yesterday (11 February 2019). He added that a new constitution is not introduced for a particular ethnicity or a religion and emphasised that while a new constitution is needed, it cannot be brought in by force. Karunanayake explained that a constitution should be brought in with the support of all the people based on their expectations. Karunanayake also reassured that the constitution would be made within a unitary framework while giving the foremost position to Buddhism. He accused 'racists' of spreading false information on the constitution.

**223. "There are no plans to unite the provinces through constitutional amendments" – Lakshman Kiriella | *Thinakaran*, 12 February 2019, p.15 | By: M.A. Amanullah**

Minister of Public Enterprise, Kandyan Heritage and Kandy Development Lakshman Kiriella stated that there were no plans to unite two provincial councils through constitutional amendments or provide police and land authority to it. He added that the goal of the government was to strengthen the provincial councils and to get all the people

in the country to live in harmony and peace. Kiriella made this statement while taking part in a Buddhist event held in the Hantana region of Kandy. Further, Kiriella said that the plan to create a new constitution was to table it soon as there was support from all 225 MPs, including that of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa and United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Dinesh Gunawardena. Kiriella added that the country had to face a war because a constitution was not created soon after independence with the consent of all the people.

**224. "PM is trying to find a political solution through a new constitution" – Lakshman Kiriella | *Virakesari*, 14 February 2019, p. 01, 10 | By: R. Yasi**

Minister of Public Enterprise, Kandyan Heritage and Kandy Development and Leader of the House Lakshman Kiriella stated that if the rights of the Tamils were provided in the constitution, they wouldn't have gone for an armed struggle. Kiriella has also added that the United National Party (UNP), under the leadership of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, is ready to create a constitution that is acceptable by all to solve the problems in the country. Kiriella made this statement on 10 February 2019 while addressing an event held in Kandy. Further Kiriella said that the plan to create a new constitution was to table it soon. Based on the support provided by all 225 MPs, including former President Mahinda Rajapaksa and United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Dinesh Gunawardena, a Steering Committee was established. Kiriella reassured that the lies spread stating that they were planning to join the North and East and limit the powers of the police were in fact not true. Kiriella also stated that the country had to face a war because a constitution was not created soon after independence with the consent of all for power sharing.

**225. "They speak of the political solution which was proposed by Rajapaksa" – Ranil Wickremesinghe | *Virakesari*, 15 February 2019, p.01,10 | By: R. Virushan and M. Newton**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that they are currently trying to provide a political solution for the ethnic problem in the country by holding negotiations. Wickremesinghe added that it was essential to create an environment where all the people can live in harmony. Wickremesinghe made this statement while taking part in an event on microfinance at the Weerasingham Hall in Jaffna. Currently, the Prime Minister is on a three-day visit to the Northern Province. He added that it was during the regime of Mahinda Rajapaksa that the proposal on the new constitution from all representatives were discussed. However, Wickremesinghe added that the same people who said that this proposal was good in the past are now saying that it is going to divide the country. He stated that the United National Party (UNP) has not yet presented any documents relation to the devolution of power. He criticised the Rajapaksa group and accused them of attempting to hide their 'bankruptcy'. Wickremesinghe assured that the draft constitution has not been created yet and emphasised that it was important to provide a

political solution to create an environment in the country where everyone can live together. Wickremesinghe also stated that there was a huge responsibility to develop the war affected North.

**226. "Solution for the problems of the people in the North within three months" – Wickremesinghe | *Thinakaran*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 04 | By: Lawrence Selvanayagam**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that there will be solutions to the problems faced by the people in the North within a period of three months. Wickremesinghe stated that they are currently trying to provide a political solution for the ethnic problem in the country by holding negotiations. Wickremesinghe added that it was essential to create an environment where all the people can live in harmony. Wickremesinghe made this statement while taking part in an event regarding microfinance at the Weerasingham Hall in Jaffna. Currently, the Prime Minister is on a three-day visit to the Northern Province. He added that it was during the regime of Mahinda Rajapaksa that the proposal on the new constitution from all representatives were discussed. However, Wickremesinghe added that the same people who said that this proposal was good in the past are now saying that it is going to divide the country. He stated that the United National Party (UNP) has not yet presented any documents relation to the devolution of power. He criticised the Rajapaksa group and accused them of attempting to hide their 'bankruptcy'.

**227. "Problems will be solved through a new constitution" – Wickremesinghe | *Thinakkural*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 08 | By: Vinojith and K. Hamsanan**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that the existing problems will be solved through a new constitution. Wickremesinghe stated that they are currently trying to provide a political solution for the ethnic problem in the country by holding negotiations. Wickremesinghe added that it was essential to create an environment where all the people can live in harmony. Wickremesinghe made this statement while taking part in an event where 700 individuals were freed from debts through microfinance loans at the Weerasingham Hall in Jaffna. Currently, the Prime Minister is on a three-day visit to the Northern Province. He added that it was during the regime of Mahinda Rajapaksa that the proposal on the new constitution from all representatives were discussed. However, Wickremesinghe added that the same people who said that this proposal was good in the past are now saying that it is going to divide the country. He stated that the United National Party (UNP) has not yet presented any documents relation to the devolution of power. He criticised the Rajapaksa group and accused them of attempting to hide their 'bankruptcy'.

## **SINHALA SUMMARIES**

### **228. Ranil is trying to divide the country into nine parts | *Mawbima*, 03 December 2018, p.10 | By: Akila Jayawardena**

"The country is entangled in a massive invasion. The previous government tried to destroy the powers of Buddhist monks by trying to implement racist acts and bhikkhu discourse. This government already made plans to implement a new constitution. They are trying to implement the proposed constitution at any cost. They are trying to divide the country into nine sections and destroy the resources we have," said Elle Gunawansa Thera.

### **229. Judges please do not betray the nation for privileges | *Mawbima*, 03 December 2018, p.14 | By: Hashan Pushpika**

"The illicit relationship between the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the United National Party (UNP) was exposed after 26 October. Therefore, the illicit relationship within the previous relationship was already exposed. Why is the TNA worrying so much? Discussions were held to grant federalism before February. They were planning to implement the constitution on 07 December. All these ideas were destroyed. That is why an affidavit was given to fulfil their desires and appoint Ranil (Wickremesinghe) as prime minister once again," stated Wimal Weerawansa.

### **230. The federalists are trying to take the post of Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition | *Mawbima*, 03 December 2018, p.12 | By: Udayanthi Munasinghe**

Measures have been taken by 15 federalists to appoint a Prime Minister who supports federalism and keep the post of Leader of the Opposition under their authority. Can the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) act on behalf of a Prime Minister who supports federalism? Can the UNP support appointing a Prime Minister who supports federalism?

### **231. The contract that divides the country has got stuck | *Mawbima*, 04 December 2018, p.06 | By: Nalaka Godahewa**

The only thing the good governance regime carried out with precision was fulfilling the Geneva promises one by one from 2015 to 2018. Out of the 20 specifics mentioned in the Geneva proposals, the only thing left to do is to introduce a new constitution to the country. A person who cannot understand that the extremist Tamil diaspora is behind the

implementation of the constitution is not suitable to politics. This new constitution is expected to weaken the central government and strengthen the power of local governing bodies. We do not need special intelligence to understand their next step. Deceased Prabhakaran must be happy from wherever he is that a group of individuals wearing suit and tie and veitti have easily carried out what he could not fulfil through an armed conflict of 30 years."

**232. The UNP-TNA agreement should be exposed to the country | *Ada*, 06 December 2018, p.10 | By: Amith Maduranga**

"The agreement between the UNP and TNA should be exposed to the world as soon as possible. It is impossible to say what type of an attack will be directed against the people who are victims of the next elephant-tiger agreement. The TNA stated for over a month that they will not support Ranil Wickremesinghe being appointed Prime Minister. The TNA then changed their opinion quickly. What was the reason for this change? What were the promises made? The TNA worked as the political mechanism of the LTTE. Their intentions have not changed. They expected the federal constitution to be implemented under the Tiger-Elephant agreement of 2015," stated Leader of the Pivithuru Hela Urumaya (PHU) Udaya Gammapi.

**233. What are the promises that were given by the TNA to change the UNP? | *Lankadeepa*, 06 December 2018, p.05 | By: Wineetha M. Gamage**

"The agreement between the UNP and TNA should be exposed to the world as soon as possible. It is impossible to say what type of an attack will be directed against the people who are victims of the next elephant-tiger agreement. The TNA stated for over a month that they will not support Ranil Wickremesinghe being appointed Prime Minister. The TNA then changed their opinion quickly. What was the reason for this change? What were the promises made? The TNA worked as the political mechanism of the LTTE. Their intentions have not changed. They expected the federal constitution to be implemented under the Tiger-Elephant agreement of 2015," stated Leader of the Pivithuru Hela Urumaya (PHU) Udaya Gammapi.

**234. Executive Presidency | *Divaina*, 11 December 2018, p.08 | The Editorial**

The *Divaina* editorial stated that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) requested various parties to promise them that the activities in the North and East would not be carried out without their consent, if they want their support for the government. TNA MP Dharmalingam Sithadthan stated that several parties gave them such promises. The TNA also stated that they submitted several proposals, such as finding solutions to the national

crisis through a new constitution, abolishing the Prevention of Terrorism Act, releasing Tamil prisoners, releasing land in the North held by the military, and many other proposals, to those who were establishing a government. The only obstacle these extremists have in fulfilling these desires is the executive presidency.

**235. “Will arrive at a political solution in a non-divided unitary state soon” – Former Prime Minister Ranil states | *Divaina*, 13 December 2018, p.01 | By: Ajith Alahakoon**

Former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated in parliament yesterday (12 December), that he will arrive at a political solution in a non-divided unitary state. They will take measures to grant this solution through a new constitution. Measures will also be taken to strengthen provincial councils and abolish the executive presidency. Ranil Wickremesinghe further stated that a solution will be given to the Tamil, Sinhalese, and Muslim communities by safeguarding democratic rights.

**236. More powers to provincial councils in a non-divided, unitary state | *Lankadeepa*, 13 December 2018, p.01 | By: Ariyathana Ranabahu**

Former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated in parliament yesterday (12 December), that he will arrive at a political solution in a non-divided unitary state. They will take measures to grant this solution through a new constitution. Measures will also be taken to strengthen provincial councils and abolish the executive presidency. Ranil Wickremesinghe further stated that a solution will be given to the Tamil, Sinhalese, and Muslim communities by safeguarding democratic rights.

**237. A false agreement to spread racism | *Lanka*, 16 December 2018, p.02 | By: Gayan Rupasinghe**

Currently, a fake document is circulating on social media saying that the TNA (Tamil National Alliance) is requesting a constitution to divide the country. TNA MP Sumanthiran refuted these allegations. He also stated that this rumour began to spread after 14 people from the TNA pledged their support to Ranil Wickremesinghe, and since the political conspiracy led by Sirisena and Rajapaksa was defeated, these rumours were spread with the motive of provoking racist sentiment.



**238. The Tamil National Alliance has taken the minority of the UNP hostage | *Mawbima*, 17 December 2018, p.08 | No Byline**

"In parliament, Ranil Wickremesinghe spoke about implementing a new constitution on 12 December. The new draft of this constitution has already been published in the media. The proposed new constitution is trying to divide the country into nine quasi-federal provincial states. This constitution will also abolish executive presidency. Therefore, the presidential election will not be held before 09 December 2019. In addition, this constitution will change the system of conducting general elections. Currently, the Tamil National Alliance has taken the United National Party hostage," stated former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**239. Currently, we have to clash with a party coalition that postpones elections | *Dinamina*, 17 December 2018, p.08 | No Byline**

"In parliament, Ranil Wickremesinghe spoke about implementing a new constitution on 12 December. The new draft of this constitution has already been published in the media. The proposed new constitution is trying to divide the country into nine quasi-federal provincial states. This constitution will also abolish executive presidency. Therefore, the presidential election will not be held before 09 December 2019. In addition, this constitution will change the system of conducting general elections. Currently, the Tamil National Alliance has taken the United National Party hostage," stated former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**240. The people will definitely receive the regime change they expected | *Divaina*, 17 December 2018, p.03 | No Byline**

"In parliament, Ranil Wickremesinghe spoke about implementing a new constitution on 12 December. The new draft of this constitution has already been published in the media. The proposed new constitution is trying to divide the country into nine quasi-federal provincial states. This constitution will also abolish executive presidency. Therefore, the presidential election will not be held before 09 December 2019. In addition, this constitution will change the system of conducting general elections. Currently, the Tamil National Alliance has taken the United National Party hostage," stated former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**241. The TNA will give their fullest support to Prime Minister Ranil for new constitutional reform | *Divaina*, 18 December 2018, p.02 | By: Dinasena Rathugamage**

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) will give their fullest support to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. Leader of the TNA R. Sampanthan stated that by implementing a new constitution, they will try to find solutions to the North and East crisis soon.

**242. Will need the support of all the MPs to implement a new constitution | *Mawbima*, 18 December 2018, p.05 | By: Lakshmi Jayakody**

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) will give their fullest support to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. Leader of the TNA R. Sampanthan stated that by implementing a new constitution, they will try to find solutions to the North and East crisis soon.

**243. Will go to the streets and protest if a new constitution or constitutional reforms are implemented | *Mawbima*, 18 December 2018, p.14 | By: Lakmal K. Baduge**

"The Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim communities should unite as Sri Lankans. However, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) informed the UNP that they will support any government if a federal constitution is implemented. We have clearly stated that there is no need to introduce federalism to this country. The constitution implemented by J.R. Jayawardene contains elements of federalism introduced by the Indo-Lanka Free Trade Agreement. However, a situation has arisen where all elements of federalism cannot be implemented. Therefore, we would like to say that if they are ready to end the struggle against dividing the country, we will fight against it," stated Convener of the Eastern People's Organisation MP Jayantha Wijesekera.

**244. Will fight continuously against the federal constitution | *Divaina*, 19 December 2018, p.10 | By: Saman Mallawarachchi**

"The Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim communities should unite as Sri Lankans. However, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) informed the UNP that they will support any government if a federal constitution is implemented. We have clearly stated that there is no need to introduce federalism to this country. The constitution implemented by J.R. Jayawardene contains elements of federalism introduced by the Indo-Lanka Free Trade Agreement. However, a situation has arisen where all elements of federalism cannot be implemented. Therefore, we would like to say that if they are ready to end the struggle against dividing the country, we will fight against it," stated Convener of the Eastern People's Organisation MP Jayantha Wijesekera.

**245. This initiative is to keep the decisive power within the Eelam federal camp | *Mawbima*, 20 December 2018, p.10 | By: Ishara Silva**

"It is clear that the federal camp maintaining the Eelam ideology played a pivotal role in ousting Mahinda Rajapaksa. Yesterday (19 December), Sumanthiran wanted to prevent Mahinda Rajapaksa from being appointed as Leader of the Opposition. There are ten members appointed to the Constitutional Council. One is the Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition has the power to appoint seven of nine members. Therefore, their reason for removing Mahinda Rajapaksa from the post of Opposition Leader is clear. The Eelam federal camp wants to keep the power to appoint members for high posts of the country within their camp. They are trying to remove Mahinda Rajapaksa from the post of Opposition Leader because he won't leave room to implement a federal constitution," stated MP Pavithra Wanniarachchi.

**246. Keeping the power of appointing the leaders of the country within the Eelam Camp is a conspiracy | *Lankadeepa*, 20 December 2018, p.05 | By: Nalaka Sanjeewa Dahanayake**

"It is clear that the federal camp maintaining the Eelam ideology played a pivotal role in ousting Mahinda Rajapaksa. Yesterday (19 December), Mr. Sumanthiran wanted to prevent Mahinda Rajapaksa from being appointed as Leader of the Opposition. There are ten members appointed to the Constitutional Council. One is the Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition has the power to appoint seven of nine members. Therefore, their reason for removing Mahinda Rajapaksa from the post of Opposition Leader is clear. The Eelam federal camp wants to keep the power to appoint members for high posts of the country within their camp. They are trying to remove Mahinda Rajapaksa from the post of Opposition Leader because he won't leave room to implement a federal constitution," stated MP Pavithra Wanniarachchi.

**247. Removing Mahinda Rajapaksa from the Eelam federal camp is a huge conspiracy | *Dinamina*, 20 December 2018, p.08 | By: Nuwan Kodikara**

"It is clear that the federal camp maintaining the Eelam ideology played a pivotal role in ousting Mahinda Rajapaksa. Yesterday, Mr. Sumanthiran (19 December) wanted to prevent Mahinda Rajapaksa from being appointed as Leader of the Opposition. There are ten members appointed to the Constitutional Council. One is the speaker. The Leader of the Opposition has the power to appoint seven of nine members. Therefore, their reason for removing Mahinda Rajapaksa from the post of Opposition Leader is clear. The Eelam federal camp wants to keep the power to appoint members for high posts of the country within their camp. They are trying to remove Mahinda Rajapaksa from the post of

Opposition Leader because he won't leave room to implement a federal constitution," stated MP Pavithra Wanniarachchi.

**248. Truth wins after the verdict | *Lankadeepa*, 27 December 2018, p.04 | By: Jayathilaka De Silva**

A constitution that treats everyone equally and respects the fundamentals of democracy is an instant necessity right now. A constitution can't be implemented instantly. It must be implemented with the participation of people and taking their views into consideration. It is true that this idea was taken to parliament and the people recently. However, it was not sufficient.

**249. A new constitutional draft will be submitted before 4 February with the support of the UNP and JVP | *Lankadeepa*, 31 December 2018, p.12 | By: Romesh Madusanka**

"A draft for the new constitution can be submitted with the support of the United National Party (UNP) and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). Currently, activities are being carried out to implement a new constitution. We expect that a draft compiled by us together with the UNP and JVP will be presented before February 4. These three parties will discuss the report which was submitted by the expert's committee," stated MP M.A. Sumanthiran of the TNA (Tamil National Alliance).

**250. The constitutional draft compiled by us, the UNP, and JVP will be presented | *Ada*, 31 December 2018, p.11 | By: Madusanka Amarasinghe**

"A draft for the new constitution can be submitted with the support of the United National Party (UNP) and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). Currently, activities are being carried out to implement a new constitution. We expect that a draft compiled by us together with the UNP and JVP will be presented before 04 February. These three parties will discuss the report which was submitted by the expert committee," stated TNA (Tamil National Alliance) MP M.A. Sumanthiran.

**251. The new constitution will be released on 04 February with the support of the UNP and JVP | *Divaina*, 31 December 2018, p.01 | No Byline**

"A draft for the new constitution can be submitted with the support of the United National Party (UNP) and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). Currently, activities are being carried out to implement a new constitution. We expect that a draft compiled by us

together with the UNP and JVP will be presented before 04 February. These three parties will discuss the report which was submitted by the expert committee," stated TNA (Tamil National Alliance) MP M.A. Sumanthiran.

**252. The new constitution will be submitted to parliament on 04 February with the support of the UNP and JVP | *Mawbima*, 31 December 2018, p.01 | By: Lakshmi Jayakody**

"A draft for the new constitution can be submitted with the support of the United National Party (UNP) and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). Currently, activities are being carried out to implement a new constitution. We expect that a draft compiled by us together with the UNP and JVP will be presented before February 4. These three parties will discuss the report which was submitted by the expert's committee," stated MP M.A. Sumanthiran of the TNA (Tamil National Alliance).

**253. Implementing a new constitution will not impose a threat to Buddhism | *Lankadeepa*, 02 January 2019, p.05 | By: Thilakrathne Dissanayake**

"The allegations claiming that the new constitution is a threat to Buddhism is blatantly false. A new constitution will be implemented to give priority to Buddhism and safeguard the Buddha Sasana. We will never undermine the importance of Buddhism. We will pass a new constitution, giving the highest place to Buddhism in it," stated State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene.

**254. Several individuals are misleading the people by creating false shock and fear | *Dinamina*, 03 January 2019, p.01 | By: Chameera Eldeniya**

A group of people claiming to be patriots are misleading people by instilling fear and shock into their minds. First of all, a draft needs to be submitted to the parliament. After conducting a debate on this, it needs to be passed with a two-thirds majority of parliament, which will be followed by a referendum. Those who have lost their belongings after their political conspiracy was defeated are trying to move forward in politics by instilling fear and shock into the minds of people," stated Leader of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Anura Kumara Dissanayaka.

**255. The JVP opposed it every time they tried to divide the country, some were hiding under their beds | *Divaina*, 03 January 2019, p.13 | By: Ajith Alahakoon**

A group of people claiming to be patriots are misleading people by instilling fear and shock into their minds. First of all, a draft needs to be submitted to the parliament. After conducting a debate on this, it needs to be passed with a two-thirds majority of parliament, which will be followed by a referendum. Those who have lost their belongings after their political conspiracy was defeated are trying to move forward in politics by instilling fear and shock into the minds of people," stated Leader of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Anura Kumara Dissanayaka.

**256. Due to the political instability of the country, dependents of NGOs and those who are hungry for political power are taking dangerous action | *Divaina*, 03 January 2019, p.10 | By: Cyril Wimalasurendra**

"Prior to the Presidential election of 2015, the general secretary of the UNP (United National Party) revealed that the leader of the UNP promised the TNA (Tamil National Alliance) that federalism, which divides the country, will be granted. Now, it is clear that this is true. Currently, dependents of NGOs and those who are hungry for political power are taking measures against the country by trying to implement a new constitution and by making use of the current instability," stated Chief Incumbent of the Getambe Rajopavanaramaya Ven. Keppetiyagoda Siriwimala Thera.

**257. Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna will not allow a constitution that divides the country | *Dinamina*, 07 January 2019, p.10 | By: Anura Premalal**

The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) will not allow the constitution to divide the country. This constitution was compiled to fulfil the desires of those who want to divide the country. Sumanthiran and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) are behind this. Their motive is to divide the country through a weak government. They are trying to implement a new constitution to fulfil this desire. We will never leave room for this," stated MP Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena.

**258. Now they have begun to curb television channels and newspapers | *Ada*, 07 January 2019, p.07 | By: Geethanjali Priyadarshani**

"By joining with President Maithripala Sirisena, we managed to prevent the passing of the separatist constitution the UNP was planning to implement with the support of the TNA. Now they are discussing a new constitution again. This is an attempt to divide the

country. This must be defeated. We will defeat this attempt of the government," stated former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**259. We managed to prevent the separatist constitution from being passed by joining with Maithri | *Lankadeepa*, 07 January 2019, p.10 | By: Pushpakumara Jayarathne**

"By joining with President Maithripala Sirisena, we managed to prevent the passing of the separatist constitution the UNP was planning to implement with the support of the TNA. Now they are discussing a new constitution again. This is an attempt to divide the country. This must be defeated. We will defeat this attempt of the government," stated former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**260. Sumanthiran has become the unofficial Prime Minister | *Mawbima*, 07 January 2019, p.14 | By: Harshani Arsecularathne**

"MP Sumanthiran stated recently that a new constitution will be presented to parliament on February 04. If a constitution is being presented to parliament, it should be presented by the Leader of the House, if not the Prime Minister or any other individual holding a position of similar status. However, the statements made by Sumanthiran show that he has taken the powers of the government into his hands. They are clearly demanding a federal system. They are trying to fulfil their separatist desires," stated Propaganda Secretary of the NLF (National Liberation Front) Mohammed Muzammil.

**261. The Tamil political parties of the North have agreed to divide power within a unitary state | *Divaina*, 07 January 2019, p.13 | No Byline**

"Those who do not know anything about federalism, unitarist status and devolution of power making statements on these topics is a joke. The Selection Committee has been appointed to draft the constitution. This constitutional draft will be submitted to the parliament soon. Afterwards, a debate will be conducted to implement the final draft of the constitution. The political parties of the North have agreed to devolve power within a unitary state," stated Minister Rajitha Senarathne.

**262. Problems can't be solved through a constitution which will spread hatred among communities | *Lankadeepa*, 08 January 2019, p.10 | By: Nawarathne Samaratunga**

"By joining with President Maithripala Sirisena, we managed to prevent the passing of the separatist constitution the UNP was planning to implement with the support of the TNA. Now they are discussing a new constitution again. This is an attempt to divide the

country. This must be defeated. We will defeat this attempt of the government," stated former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**263. Only the constitutional draft will be submitted to parliament | *Dinamina*, 08 January 2019, p.01 | By: Mahinda Aluthgedara**

The Steering Committee in charge of implementing a new constitution stated that only a draft of the new constitution will be submitted to parliament. The committee noted that after submitting it to parliament, it will be discussed at the Constitutional Council. The Steering Committee further noted that the constitutional draft was compiled by a group of experts based on the reports submitted by the Steering Committee and six sub-committees.

**264. Support the President to defeat the act of dividing the country | *Dinamina*, 08 January 2019, p.05 | By: Chandrika Perera**

All communities of the country should support the President to defeat activities carried out to divide the country. It was noted that a new constitution will be passed before Independence Day. Trying to implement it as soon as possible and passing three acts immediately to receive the support of international tribunals to settle internal matters are obstacles to reconciliation," stated Director of the Buddhist Research Institute Hegoda Vipassi Thera.

**265. They are trying to implement a constitution secretly | *Divaina*, 08 January 2019, p.04 | By: Anura Balasuriya**

"This government is well aware that they will not receive the support of people in implementing a new constitution, and therefore they are involved in carrying it out secretly. There is a plan to remove all strong leaders from politics for opposing this act of treachery," stated Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Prof. G.L. Pieris.

**266. If they believe that the SLFP MPs will support the constitution, they are being deceived | *Lankadeepa*, 09 January 2019, p.08 | By: Wineetha M. Gamage**

"Thinking that members of parliament representing the SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) will support the government to implement the new constitution with a two-thirds majority vote is deceiving. Although Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP Sumanthiran stated that the new constitution will be implemented with the support of 21 MPs, the new constitution cannot be submitted with the two-thirds majority as it would lack the



support of 24 MPs from the SLFP. Only 101 from the UNP, 14 from the TNA, 6 from the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and 06 from the SLFP will extend their support to implement a new constitution," stated Leader of the Pivuthuru Hela Urumaya (PHU) Udaya Gammanpila.

**267. Trying to pass the federal constitution by granting Rs. 400 million to a member of parliament | *Mawbima*, 09 January 2019, p.14 | By: Krishan Pathirath Jayasuriya**

"Thinking that members of parliament representing the SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) will support the government to implement the new constitution with a two-thirds majority vote is deceiving. Though MP Sumanthiran stated that the new constitution will be implemented with the support of 21 MPs, the new constitution can't to be submitted with the two-thirds majority without the support of 24 MPs from the SLFP. Only 101 from the UNP, 14 from the TNA, 6 from the JVP and 6 from SLFP will extend their support to implement a new constitution," stated Leader of the Pivuthuru Hela Urumaya Udaya Gammanpila.

**268. Traitors are trying to implement a federal constitution by stating that they are safeguarding Buddhism | *Mawbima*, 09 January 2019, p.12 | By: Dhammika Ranaweera**

"Those who go to temples and promise to give priority to Buddhism but support a federalist constitution that divides the country are traitors. This government is safe because of TNA MP Sumanthiran. He stated that a new constitution will be implemented before 04 February. The JVP stated that they will implement constitutional reform. The JVP wants to grant power to Ranil. The TNA wants to achieve federalism," stated senior Attorney-at-Law Kalyananda Thiranagama.

**269. The entire country has been entangled in three concerns at the end of four years of the good governance regime | *Mawbima*, 10 January 2019, p.05 | No Byline**

"There are three concerns in our country. One is when the economy will collapse. The second is the collapse of the administration with the implementation of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The third is a new constitution that will be implemented to divide the country. The government expects to divide the country into nine federal units that are independent states with equal powers," stated Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**270. Strongly condemning the process of the Tamil National Alliance demanding federalism | *Mawbima*, 10 January 2019, p.01 | By: Nadeeka Daya Bandara**

"At this time, there is no need for a new constitution nor constitutional reform. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) continues to demand a federal constitution. We should defeat those who support federalism. I would like to remind the government that a constitution which is a threat to reconciliation is not suitable for the country," stated Secretary of the Asgiriya Chapter Medagama Dhammananda Thera.

**271. This country does not need federalism | *Divaina*, 10 January 2019, p.01 | By: Samanthi Weerasekera**

"At this time, there is no need for a new constitution nor constitutional reform. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) continues to demand a federal constitution. We should defeat those who support federalism. I would like to remind the government that a constitution which is a threat to reconciliation is not suitable for the country," stated Secretary of the Asgiriya Chapter Medagama Dhammananda Thera.

**272. "Passing a new constitution is a mission to purchase Parliamentarians" – Rajapaksa | *Divaina*, 10 January 2019, p.13 | No Byline**

"There are three concerns in our country. One is when the economy will collapse. The second is the collapse of the administration with the implementation of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The third is a new constitution that will be implemented to divide the country. The government expects to divide the country into nine federal units that are independent states with equal powers," stated Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**273. The Panel of Experts' report on the new constitution will be submitted to parliament tomorrow | *Lankadeepa*, 10 January 2019, p.01 | By: Ajantha Kumara Agalakada**

The report compiled by the expert committee on the recommendations of the constitutional Steering Committee will be submitted to parliament tomorrow (11 January). A government spokesperson stated that this report will be submitted to parliament as decided by the Steering Committee that gathered in parliament yesterday (09 January). The constitutional Steering Committee headed by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe comprises 21 members of parliament.

**274. The story that the police will be divided by the new constitution is false | *Divaina*, 10 January 2019, p.01 | No Byline**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that the new constitution will not divide the police based on provinces. The Prime Minister stated the following yesterday (09 January) at a Thai Pongal celebration, noting the headlines of the *Divaina* newspaper: "We still have not taken a final decision on the constitution. We have only submitted the reports of the experts committee and stances of political parties on this. There is no draft or a constitution."

**275. No need for a new constitution | *Divaina*, 14 January 2019, p.01 | By: Samantha Weerasekera**

"Though the Maha Sanga stated from the start that a new constitution is not necessary, carrying out its implementation against the wishes of the people and Maha Sanga raises concerns about whether the government is trying to fulfil someone else's desires. The country needs an election now, as the solution to this crisis," stated Anunayake of the Asgiri Chapter Ven. Anamaduwe Dhammadassi Thera.

**276. Some politicians are carrying out a nationalist movement | *Dinamina*, 14 January 2019, p.06 | No Byline**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that the new constitution will not divide the police based on provinces. The Prime Minister stated the following at a Thai Pongal celebration, after noting the headlines of the *Divaina* newspaper: "We still have not taken a final decision on the constitution. We have only submitted the reports of the experts committee and stances of political parties on this. There is no draft or a constitution."

**277. No need of a constitution, need an election | *Mawbima*, 14 January 2019, p.01 | By: Nadeeka Daya Bandara**

"Though the Maha Sanga stated from the start that a new constitution is not necessary, carrying out its implementation against the wishes of the people and Maha Sanga raises concerns about whether the government is trying to fulfill someone else's desires. The country needs an election now, as the solution to this crisis," stated Anunayake of the Asgiriya Chapter Ven. Anamaduwe Dhammadassi Thera.

**278. There is no constitution nor a draft | *Lankadeepa*, 14 January 2019, p.01 | By: Anjula Maheeka Weeraratne**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that the new constitution will not divide the police based on provinces. The Prime Minister stated the following at a Thai Pongal celebration, after noting the headlines of the *Divaina* newspaper: "We still have not taken a final decision on the constitution. We have only submitted the reports of the experts committee and stances of political parties on this. There is no draft or a constitution."

**279. Mahinda is trying to deceive people by portraying the new constitution as a demon | *Lankadeepa*, 15 January 2019, p.10 | No Byline**

"Mahinda and his group are trying to create new facts. They are trying to create new demons. They are highlighting changes in the constitution. We will not try to destroy the unitary nature of the country. Only the report issued by the experts committee has been submitted. The new constitution will not be submitted secretly. Those kinds of measures can't be taken without providing information to the people and listening to their ideas," stated Minister Navin Dissanayake.

**280. Sumanthiran is deceiving both Sinhalese and Tamil people | *Mawbima*, 15 January 2019, p.01 | By: W. K. Manju Prasad**

The report submitted by the Steering Committee of the Constitutional Council laid the foundation to establish federal rule by deceiving the Sinhalese and Tamil people. The Sinhalese version of the report includes the word *Ekiya* (Unitary), while the Tamil version include the word *Orumittanadu*. The Sinhalese translation of this word is united. The Tamil word for unitary is *Ochchaiachchi*. When I raised this at the Steering Committee meeting, TNA (Tamil National Alliance) MP M.A. Sumanthiran strongly opposed my request. Using the word *Orumittanadu* is to form a federalist state," stated Leader of the EPDP (Eelam People's Democratic Party) Douglas Devananda.

**281. Don't get caught to propaganda which deceives people and provokes racist sentiments | *Divaina*, 15 January, p.09 | No Byline**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that the new constitution will not divide the police based on provinces. The Prime Minister stated the following at a Thai Pongal celebration, after noting the headlines of the *Divaina* newspaper: "We still have not taken a final decision on the constitution. We have only submitted the reports of the experts committee and stances of political parties on this. There is no draft or a constitution."

**282. It is pointless to dream of Eelam while telling the Sinhalese community to live in a unitary state | *Ada*, 15 January 2019, p.06 | By: Madusanka Amarasinghe**

"The Tamil community should try to win the trust of the Sinhalese community, and supporting Eelam by promising to live in a unitary state cannot be accepted. During the time of the LTTE (Liberation of Tamil Tigers of Eelam) could any person get on stage and say that we were unitary state, don't provide solutions in a unitary state? Could some have lived uttering such words? We do not demand another country. We request the devolution of power within a unitarist state," stated Media Spokesperson of the TNA M.A. Sumanthiran.

**283. Provoking racism is not a duty of the Leader of the Opposition | *Dinamina*, 16 January 2019, p.12 | By: Chandima Karunaratne**

The Leader of the Opposition should not provoke racist sentiment to defeat the new constitution. A set of proposals were submitted to the expert committee that was appointed to implement a new constitution. They instilled fear and shock by stating it is a constitution that divides the country. They are setting fire to the country by doing this," stated Co-Convener of the Civil Society and Trade Union Collective Saman Rathnapriya.

**284. At Weerasingham hall | *Dinamina*, 16 January 2019, p.04 | The Editorial**

The *Dinamina* editorial stated that the word "federal" causes shockwaves in the South of Sri Lanka. Shock and fear about a federal system has been created. However, people of developed countries request a federal system. Federalism is not a system where a country is divided but an administrative system used to devolve power. The word unitarist creates shockwaves in the North. The majority of the North believe that a unitarist state is a kingdom of the Sinhalese. This situation occurred as a result of propaganda and promises carried out by political parties.

**285. Giving false information to monks about the constitution and making them preach false information is a sin | *Ada*, 16 January 2019, p.09 | By: Amith Maduranga**

"Giving false information to monks and making them preach false information is a sin. Though they protested against the new constitution for nearly three and half years, not even a fetus has been created in the womb. The people are the architects of the constitution. Instilling fear and shock about federalism and lying that the police will be divided into nine parts is false," stated Senior Lecturer Dambara Amila Thera.

**286. The new constitution is not a dangerous trap which divides the country | *Mawbima*, 16 January 2019, p.12 | By: Hashan Pushpika**

"The new constitution which is being compiled by giving prominence to Buddhism and the unitarist nature is not a dangerous trap which divides the country. It is a result of the 70 years of experiences gained by all the political parties at the Parliament. The new constitution can't be compiled without the support of all the members of the Parliament. Therefore, statements that mislead people should not be made" stated Minister Ravi Karunanayake.

**287. All the MPs who support the new constitution will be defeated in the coming election | *Lankadeepa*, 16 January 2019, p.08 | By: Nimala Kodithuwakku**

The TNA (Tamil National Alliance) and forces which are detrimental to the country are trying to implement a federal constitution. When the entire country is demanding for relief, the government is trying to implement a new constitution. These groups are planning to divide the country once again with the support of foreign conspirators. If anyone supports this constitution, we will go from house to house to defeat them." Ven. Muruttetuwe Ananda Thera, the Chairperson of the Pevedi Handa foundation.

**288. The new constitution is not a deadly trap that divides the country but a result of the 70 years of experience of all political parties | *Lankadeepa*, 16 January 2019, p.05 | By: Shantha Pradeep Kumara Kularathne**

"The new constitution which is being compiled by giving prominence to Buddhism and the unitarist nature is not a dangerous trap which divides the country. It is a result of the 70 years of experiences gained by all the political parties at the Parliament. The new constitution can't be compiled without the support of all the members of the Parliament. Therefore, statements that mislead people should not be made" Stated Minister Ravi Karunanayake.

**289. A constitution which is practical and devoid of fantasies should be implemented | *Divaina*, 16 January 2019, p.09 | No Byline**

"Various individuals are trying to carry out their political campaigns by instilling fear into the minds of people and by spreading fake patriotism among the people. However, this constitution was compiled with the agreement of all 225 members of parliament. It was initiated with the agreement of everyone. Our stance is to implement a practical constitution which is supported by Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities and we will

not implement constitutions to divide the country" stated Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka.

**290. Leave the new constitution aside | *Divaina*, 16 January 2019, p.01 | By: Cyril Wimalasurendra**

"The government should try to find solutions to the grievances concerning people rather than trying to implement a new constitution. We have received information about an attempt made by the government to implement a new constitution before February 4. The government should leave it aside and pay attention to the grievances concerning the people." The Chief Prelates of the Malwatte and Asgiriya Chapters mentioned the above to State Minister Ruwan Wijewardena on January 15.

**291. Should safeguard the unitarist nature of the country irrespective of who implements it | *Lankadeepa*, 16 January 2019, p.08 | By: Thilakarathne Dissanayake**

"Will not allow anyone to divide the country. The problem is not whether it is done by the government or the opposition. The unitarist nature should be safeguarded. The government is now ready for this. The opposition always opposed the constitution mentioning that it will divide the country. They are creating conflicts among communities. Creating conflicts among religious groups. There is a particular group which destroys the country by destroying Mahinda Rajapaksa to safeguard their votes. As a government, we will not implement a constitution which divides or breaks the country.," stated Minister Arjuna Ranatunga.

**292. Don't divide the country | *Mawbima*, 16 January 2019, p.05 | No Byline**

"A federal system of governance has been proposed by the new constitution. There are many characteristics which we can't agree upon. Therefore, it should not be submitted to the parliament. The Buddha Sasana task force has requested the President and Prime Minister that if there is a necessity of implementing a new constitution, it should be submitted to the constitutional committee under the guidance of the Maha Sanga. "The chairperson of the above task force committee, Ven. Diyyagaha Yassasi, Ven. Kotugoda Dhammavasa , Ven. Ittepane Dhammalankara and Ven. Dodampahala Chandrasiri and representatives of many organisations have made this request by signing a document.

**293. Summon the President and the Prime Minister and tell them that there is no need of constitutions which divide the country | *Mawbima*, 16 January 2019, p.05 | By: Nadeeka Daya Bandara**

A group of clergy and lay persons representing civil society have mentioned yesterday (January 15) that this is not the time to implement a constitution nor a draft when they met with the chief Prelates of the Malwatte–Asgiriya Chapters. These organisations held a religious ceremony outside the Temple of the Tooth Relic by mentioning that a new constitution is not necessary.

**294. No need of a constitution without the blessings of the Buddhist Monks | *Lankadeepa*, 17 January 2019, p.01 | No Byline**

"A federal system of governance has been proposed by the new constitution. There are many characteristics which we can't agree upon. Therefore, it should not be submitted to the parliament. The Buddha Sasana task force has requested the President and Prime Minister that if there is a necessity of implementing a new constitution, it should be submitted to the constitutional committee under the guidance of the Maha Sanga." The chairperson of the above task force committee, Ven. Diyyagaha Yassasi, Ven. Kotugoda Dhammavasa, Ven. Ittepane Dhammalankara and Ven. Dodampahala Chandrasiri and representatives of many organisations have made this request by signing a document.

**295. The people's mandate on the new constitution | *Divaina*, 17 January 2019, p.08 | The Editorial**

"It is true that the country needs constitutional reforms. However, we feel that this not the right time for this. The unstable political environment and minority government are not suitable to implement a new constitution. What is needed is a political solution which everyone can agree upon and not the solutions which are suggested by Sumanthiran, Sampanthan, Wigneswaran and not a one-party solution which is suggested by the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) and Tamil diaspora that demands federalism." This was stated in the *Divaina* Editorial.

**296. Mentioning the view of Tamil political parties when compiling a new constitution is a positive feature of democracy | *Dinamina*, 17 January 2019, p.10 | By: Nihal Jayawardena**

Leader of the House Lakshman Kiriella has mentioned that, the Tamil political parties did not extend their support when implementing constitutions after independence and since



the Tamil political parties have come forward to express their views at present, it is positive democratic feature.

**297. Opportunists who are supporting racism | *Lankadeepa*, 17 January 2019, p.04  
| By: Wasanthapriya Ramanayake**

The country needs a new constitution. It was those days by the current President Maithripala Sirisena. He also mentioned that, some are spreading false rumours when he was trying to implement a new constitution to foster reconciliation among communities. The President who mentioned that he will not divide the country and prevent foreign interventions is silent at present. Those who are opportunists are provoking racism and carrying out a false propaganda.

**298. The Chief monks rise against the new constitution | *Divaina*, 18 January 2019, p.08 | By: Janitha Senevirathne**

The Buddha Sasana Task Force issued a statement saying that measures should not be taken to implement a constitution which is brought forward by the TNA (Tamil National Alliance) without the blessings of the Maha Sanga. Its Chairperson, Ven. Diviyagaha Yasassi Thera and Ven. Aggamaha Panditha Kotuwegoda Dhammavasa Thera and several other monks have signed the petition. The MPs of the UNP (United National Party) have clearly mentioned to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe that if the new constitution is implemented before the elections, winning the elections with the votes of the majority of the Sinhalese will be a difficult task. The elections commission has issued a letter to the President, Prime Minister and the leaders of the political parties to conduct the provincial council elections according to the proportional representative system and MP Sumanthiran has mentioned in Jaffna recently that ministerial post Northern development activities will be changed as the Minister of Northern and Eastern development. Therefore, the government should try to understand that such statements can cause suspicion in the minds of the Sinhalese in the South.

**299. More than Rs. 200,000 spent for the compilation of the new constitution | *Ada*, 18 January 2019, p.11 | By: Indika Hewewitharana**

United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Thilanga Sumathipala mentioned that a constitutional committee and a Steering Committee were appointed, and 94 meetings were held at parliament which cost more than Rs. 200,000. He added that the Steering Committee should submit a document containing all the ideas and proposals without wasting time and deceiving people by presenting only the views of political parties. He

also noted that the document which was presented to parliament recently promising to abolish the executive presidency is a forged document.

**300. Sumanthiran who demands a separate state sends his children to Colombo schools | *Dinamina*, 18 January 2019, p. 10 | By: Nuwan Kodikara**

Former MP Sarath Weerasekara stated that Tamil National Alliance (TNA) would not demand a separate state today had it been proscribed after the killing of Prabhakaran. He made these remarks at a media briefing held at the headquarters of national organisations on 17 January convened to explain the current political context. He also claimed that the children of TNA MP M.A. Sumanthiran are schooling in Colombo. Maduruoya Dhammissara Thera who attended the meeting stated that we should not act in a hassle when the government is trying to bring the constitution by provoking people. The convener of the National Organisation Union Dr. Gunadasa Amarasekara expressed the view that Sumanthiran has stated that they can change the government overnight. While positing the view that such statements depict the extent to which they have taken Wickremesinghe under their control, he urged to refrain from expressing views underrating Tamil people.

**301. Constitutional proposals are gimmicks to the North | *Ravaya*, 20 January 2019, p.09 | By: Upali Colombage**

Politicians have forgotten that the war originated due to second class-citizen treatment bestowed on Tamil people and the pressure expressed by the Tamil people is being misinterpreted as a style of Tamil politicians. The lack of an agreement in the South to devolve power to North is reflected through the conversations that took place when constitutional drafting assembly was convened in the legislature on Friday. The same sentiments are echoed in the statements made by Joint Opposition faction interpreting the new constitution as a separatist constitution. In reality, Tamils are living in abject poverty and their political interest is only marginal. In such a backdrop the politicians in the South are the ones who are directing Tamil youth to take arms back and they are simultaneously propagating religious conflicts. As the discussion on the constitution comes to the arena only during the election times it has become a gimmick. It is also stated that the challenges for the implementation of 13<sup>th</sup> amendment have not been identified yet.

**302. The political crime of the constitution that is not brought in | *Ravaya*, 20 January 2019, p.09 | By: Priyantha P. Ranasinghe**

Co-Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the new constitution Ganapati Wickramaratne stated that the constitutional draft was prepared based on the interim

reports that were made previously and on the ideas of the party representatives. The Joint Opposition cannot contemplate that cannot be done when preparing the 20<sup>th</sup> amendment as the United National Party (UNP) and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) are there. TNA's claim that the new constitutional draft would be brought in before 04 February cannot be neglected in spite of the uphill task of acquiring the parliamentary majority. Though UNP has deliberated on the new constitution to appeal to the minority votes the effort has become futile. But the implementation of the new constitution is on the hands of the UNP.

**303. The blessings are needed for the new constitution from constitutional experts | Ravaya, 20 January 2019, p.13 | By: Wimalanath Weeraratne**

The clergy has issued a cynical statement saying that the blessings of chief Prelates should be obtained to draft the new constitution and also to obtain the representation of the clergy in the constitutional drafting committee. It is stated that such statements are made as the politicians lack a backbone. It is further stated that statements such as these are made by the clergy as the politicians cannot convinced that constitution is not a personal matter as that of religion as they pursue Sinhala votes from that. Wickremesinghe should be able to express his candid views in front of the chief Prelates of the sangha chapters as a diplomat and in case of impossibility of such a conduct, we can propose that Sumanthiran can explain the articles one by one to the chief Prelates.

**304. There is independence in reconciliation | Ravaya, 20 January 2019, p.14 | By: T. Nadarasa**

The report on the new constitution that embraces the views of political parties and common public has been presented to the Constitutional Assembly last Friday. Though Leader of the United National Party (UNP) Ranil Wickremesinghe claimed that the new constitution is not a separatist constitution and it does not affect Buddhism in any manner, he did not express any opinion as to whether the new constitution is a remedy to the ethnic issue. Moreover, Leader of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Anura Kumara Dissanayake hilariously made the remark that there would be no new constitution and Sumanthiran would have to keep his letters at home. Sampanthan calmly urged for support to implement the political proposals presented during the Rajapaksa period even amidst the contemptuous response of the latter on the new constitution. It is highly unlikely for the materialisation of the request of Sampanthan given the rampant racism.

**305. "Senate is progressive" – TNA | Ravaya, 20 January 2019, p.01 | By: Lawrence Ferdinando**

Batticaloa Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP Gnanamuthu Srineshan posited the view that though the expert committee report does not encompass within it a federal political

solution desired by Tamils, the inclusion of a senate in the legislature is a progressive suggestion.

**306. “No need of unitary-federal nomenclature” – TULF | *Ravaya*, 20 January 2019, p.01 | By: Windya Gamage**

Leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) Ananda Sangari is of the opinion that this report would not be implemented ever despite the reference to factual evidence in it. He attributed the unwillingness of several MPs over the report to the such impossibility. He further stated that he always supports the Indian model and proposed the implementation of that model.

**307. “The support of two main parties is essential” – EPDP | *Ravaya*, 20 January 2019, p.01 | By: Windya Gamage**

Leader of the Eelam People’s Democratic Party (EPDP) Douglas Devananada stated that in order to provide constitutional solutions to the grievances of Tamils, it is essential for the two parties to come together. He added that the he had come up with a proposal that included several steps in pursuit of that objective and mentioned that the proposal adopts a pragmatic approach that promotes healthy discussions with the Chief Ministers of provinces.

**308. “Mitigate extremism” – SLMC | *Ravaya*, 20 January 2019, p.01 | By: Lawrence Ferdinando**

Secretary of Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) Nizaam Kariyappar expressed the view that he appreciates the fact that the expert committee report on the constitution was made with the participation of the Tamil community’s representatives. Moreover, he believed that the resistance by certain Sinhala extremists over the expert committee report would boost advantages for Tamil extremist elements.

**309. The absence of the new constitution, the 20<sup>th</sup> Amendment and Wickremesinghe | *Anidda*, 20 January 2019, p.10 | No Byline**

In the absence of a draft of the new constitution, how is it possible for the Rajapaksa clan to portray a constitutional ghost? It is observed that United National Party is bringing a constitution after the lapse of a period of four and half years after coming into power to acquire the wavering public support. It is dubious whether there was any genuine effort by the President and the Prime Minister to bring the new constitution despite the lengthy process it took. Meanwhile an uphill task lies ahead of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) to get the 20<sup>th</sup> amendment aimed at abolishing the executive presidency passed. The government keeps mum on the allegations of a federal character of the new constitution as responses if provided would have a tremendous impact on the

referendum. Being well aware of the practical difficulty in getting the constitution passed, Wickremesinghe has gone into a silent mode over the constitution.

**310. The dilemma over the new constitution | *Anidda*, 20 January 2019, p.08 | By: Athulasiri Samarakone**

There has been ongoing discourse on a new constitution and an array of ideas can be seen through it. The ideology of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) is that the new constitution is a federal constitution; the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) thinks that the new constitution would abolish executive presidency; on the contrary, the United National Party (UNP) thinks that the new constitution gives priority to Buddhism. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA), holding a completely different view, says that the main parties oppose the new constitution saying it is a federal one. As these diverse ideologies on the new constitution are already being used as election slogans, the bringing of a new constitution among all these odds is a progressive factor. The writer adds that there is a dilemma over the advent of the new constitution.

**311. Is the constitution made in the way the racists want it to be? | *Anidda*, 20 January 2019, p.06 | No Byline**

Even though the next year is going to be an election year, it appears that the new constitution will not be brought. While the Mahinda faction is portraying a federal ghost, some claim that prior approval of the sangha is needed to bring a new constitution. The extremists contemplate a monarchical system where Buddhism becomes the state religion and Sinhala becomes the official language. They dislike any sort of power devolution to minorities. Extremist and majoritarian ideas are not conducive to the progress of a country and there is the acute need of a constitution that guarantees the rights and freedom of minorities.

**312. I am not against the devolution of power | *Lanka*, 20 January 2019, p.11 | By: Padma Weragoda Arachchi**

Prasanna Ranatunga thinks that the constitution of a country needs to grant the appropriate place to Sinhala-Buddhism and it should be fair by all communities. He further expressed the view that executive presidential powers act as a buffer for the arbitrary conduct of the provincial councils. He raised concerns on the presence of such a safeguard in the event the executive presidential post is abolished. He also mentioned that under the new constitution brought in by the Tamil National Alliance, legislative power would be conferred on the provincial councils and that power cannot be taken back without the sanction of the provincial council. Expressing their opposition to granting police powers to provincial councils, he posited the view that even they are willing to bring a new constitution.

**313. The JVP which opposed the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the past, they are supporting the federal system | *Mawbima*, 21 January 2019, p.12 | No Byline**

"Though the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) opposed the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the UNP by sacrificing the lives of 60,000 youth of the country, they are trying to support the federal system, and room should not be left for the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and Muslim extremists and the UNP (United National Party) and JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) to destroy the country according to their own desire," stated Chairperson of the Sinhale National Council Ven. Akmeemana Dayarathna Thera.

**314. The activities of the new constitution has stopped now. It will begin after an election – Mano Ganesan | *Mawbima*, 21 January 2019, p.04 | By: Lakshmi Jayakody**

"The activities of the new constitution have stopped right now. The activities of the new constitution will commence only after an election. However, the government should have carried this out during the year they came into power. Therefore, the possibilities of establishing a new constitution should be re-examined," stated Minister Mano Ganesan.

**315. A proposal for a unitary state when compiling the draft of the constitution | *Dinamina*, 21 January 2019, p.13 | By: Asela Kuruluwansa**

"It has been proposed to incorporate the words 'unitary concept' in Sinhalese, Tamil, and English versions of the draft of the constitution, to avoid any issues arising when interpreting the constitution. We should state that the Tamil political parties have accepted the concept of a unitary state for the first time in history. This was carried out during the drafting of the new constitution, to avoid issues when interpreting the constitution. I should mention that neither a new constitution nor a draft has been compiled," stated Minister Lakshman Kiriella.

**316. "It was Mahinda who extended support to divide the country into regions and form a union of regions" – Prime Minister | *Dinamina*, 21 January 2019, p.01 | By: Asela Liyanage**

"Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa was the first person to suggest dividing the country into regions and forming a union of regions. Myself and my government will always remain in the stance that we should devolve power within a unitary state. We are ready to support any activity that supports a unitary state. However, I and the UNP

(United National Party) would not support any other activity that is implemented outside this framework," stated Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

**317. Sumanthiran wants to break this country into pieces, we have no right to oppose it | *Lankadeepa*, 21 January 2019, p.05 | By: Nalaka Sanjeewa Dahanayake**

"A draft of the new constitution has been submitted to the parliament. It is implementing federalism, which is expected by Sumanthiran. We love the country. We have feeling towards our country. All of us can live together in harmony in this country. Therefore, we are not racists. However, if they are trying to divide this country into pieces, we will oppose it. When we discuss this, we are labelled as traitors. We are not fools to provoke racism," stated Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**318. This is the best time to implement a new constitution | *Divaina*, 22 January 2019, p.10 | By: Akitha Perera**

"Since all of the political parties have failed to obtain a majority, this is the best time to implement the new constitution. Otherwise, it would not be possible to change the one-party constitution even in 2078. It does not matter if you are SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party), UNP (United National Party), or JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) when implementing a new constitution. We should maintain a single ideology. If not, we should think about whether we are going to implement a new constitution or cover up the gaps," stated Deputy Minister Nalin Bandara.

**319. Though the government is protesting saying that the country will be divided, there is no draft still | *Mawbima*, 22 January 2019, p.10 | By: Rasika Senevirathne**

"Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa was the first person to suggest dividing the country into regions and forming a union of regions. Myself and my government will always remain in the stance that we should devolve power within a unitary state. We are ready to support any activity that supports a unitary state. However, I and the UNP (United National Party) would not support any other activity that is implemented outside this framework," stated Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

**320. All the political parties agreed to use the word Unitary | *Mawbima*, 22 January 2019, p.07 | By: W.M K Manju Prasad**

"It has been proposed to incorporate the words 'unitary concept' in Sinhalese, Tamil, and English versions of the draft of the constitution, to avoid any issues arising when interpreting the constitution. We should state that the Tamil political parties have accepted the concept of a unitary state for the first time in history. This was carried out during the drafting of the new constitution, to avoid issues when interpreting the constitution. I should mention that neither a new constitution nor a draft has been compiled," stated Minister Lakshman Kiriella.

**321. The flower bud gang are mentioning false statements about a constitution which does not exist | *Lankadeepa*, 22 January 2019, p.08 | By: Anjula Maheeka Weeraratne**

"Since all of the political parties have failed to obtain a majority, this is the best time to implement the new constitution. Otherwise, it would not be possible to change the one-party constitution even in 2078. It does not matter if you are SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party), UNP (United National Party), or JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) when implementing a new constitution. We should maintain a single ideology. If not, we should think about whether we are going to implement a new constitution or cover up the gaps," stated Deputy Minister Nalin Bandara.

**322. Why do you need a new constitution | *Dinamina*, 22 January 2019, p.04 | By: Nishan Mendis**

"It is important to implement a new constitution which is suitable for Sinhalese community as well as the Tamil and Muslim communities. It is necessary to devolve power to do so. Though several steps were taken in the past decades to find solutions to the national crisis, a procedure to devolve power could not be implemented. If the Tamil and Muslim communities are facing issues, political power should be divided on a local level to find solutions for it. Therefore, the national issue should be addressed according to a political view point," stated Dr. Terrance Purasinghe, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Political Science, Sri Jayawardenapura University.



**323. The shock and fear against federalism | *Dinamina*, 23 January 2019, p.04 | By: Wasanthapriya Ramanayake**

Currently, the politicians of the country are divided into two and attacking each other by undermining the problem of devolution of power. The existing constitution, which was compiled in 1978, is currently 40 years old. It was amended 19 times. Therefore, there is a need to implement a new constitution. No one says that this is not so. There is one thing that has taken place for the first time in 70 years. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has joined the process of implementing a new constitution. This was not seen in 1972 and 1978. This is a new trend that emerged after the war ended. A victory of the current parliament.

**324. The new constitution has given priority to the new constitution and later removed it | *Divaina*, 23 January 2019, p.13 | By: Eric Gamini Jinapriya**

Retired Major General Kamal Gunaratne stated, though terrorism was defeated by the war, separatism could not be defeated, and the proposed new constitution is a giant step for the separatist project. Currently, our motherland is facing a huge threat. That is the proposed new constitution which will be implemented by the government to satisfy the demands of the Tamil diaspora and the international community. If they are trying to betray our motherland, we will not remain silent.

**325. The constitution which contains the unitarist label but divides the country | *Mawbima*, 24 January 2019, p.13 | By: Krishan Pathirath Jayasuriya**

"Opposing the constitutional reforms brought by the current government does not mean that we oppose all constitutional reforms. We accept that the current constitution should undergo many changes. We will present our suggestions on constitutional reform during the upcoming elections and receive the votes of the people. We request all political parties to extend their support to us," requested Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**326. We oppose the constitutional draft which weakens the power of the parliament and transforms a unitarist state into a federal state | *Divaina*, 24 January 2019, p.13 | No Byline**

"Opposing the constitutional reforms brought by the current government does not mean that we oppose all constitutional reforms. We accept that the current constitution should undergo many changes. We will present our suggestions on constitutional reform during

the upcoming elections and receive the votes of the people. We request all political parties to extend their support to us," requested Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**327. Mahinda Rajapaksa is the only Opposition Leader who does not know the difference between a draft and a report | *Divaina*, 25 January 2019, p.13 | By: Priyadharshana Liyanage**

Neither the constitution nor the draft for a new constitution has been compiled yet, and a report consisting of the ideas of party leaders has been submitted. The Vice President of the SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) and Galle District MP Piyasena Gamage stated to *Divaina* on January 24 that Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa is making false accusations, saying that it is dividing the country.

**328. "Devolving Power in an Undivided Country is the Interest of Tamil People" – Sumanthiran | *Ravaya*, 27 January 2019, p.06 | By: Lawrence Ferdinando**

A proposal was passed in parliament on 09 March 2016. None of the MPs opposed it. That is how measures were taken to implement a new constitution. Committees were appointed for this. They were divided into standing committees and subcommittees. The Chairperson of the Subcommittee was Bandula Gunawardena. There were 81 rounds of standing committee meetings. All the members of the JO (Joint Opposition) also took part in these. A Tamil person has been appointed as a Governor of the Northern Province. The President did not discuss this with us before making this appointment. Before this, the President discussed appointing Palihakkara and Reginald Cooray with us. However, this time, it did not happen. But we are happy that a Tamil person was appointed," stated Media Spokesperson of the TNA (Tamil National Alliance) M.A. Sumanthiran.

**329. "A legal report was compiled for the request of the President" – Jayampathy | *Anidda*, 27 January 2019, p.01 | By: Tharindu Uduwaragedara**

Dr. Jayampathi Wickramaratne stated to *Anidda* that since the constitutional Steering Committee and the six sub committees have presented general views on the constitution, the President requested a legal report on this matter. Furthermore, he noted that since the two Expert Committee reports do not have any final conclusions, the President does not agree on some facts mentioned in these reports. Therefore, the Constitutional Committee which comprises all the members of parliament should discuss all the issues pertaining to this matter and a final report should be compiled by the Steering Committee.

**330. Even though it is Orumittanadu or not, the idea behind it is a unitarist state | Anidda, 27 January 2019, p.11 | By: K. W. Janaranjana**

Attorney-at-Law Dr. Jayampathi Wickremerathne stated that though two different views are being presented in the Expert's Committee, they have compiled a legal document, and since it needs the approval of parliament, it cannot be referred to as a constitutional draft. Though the TNA presented the word "orumiththanadu," meaning united, the correct word was used after consulting experts. The nature of the state is unitarist. Though I have stated that dividing power to provincial councils under this system is not completely safe, power can be divided to provincial councils under this system. Since there is a delay in passing the new constitution, we will support the 20<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**331. Conflicts inside the TNA | Ravaya, 27 January 2019, p.01 | By: Lawrence Ferdinando**

Propaganda Secretary of the TELO (Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation) M.K. Shivajilingam stated to *Ravaya* that removing the term "unitarist" from the constitution is not sufficient, and the Tamil people are expecting a federal solution. Since it was decided to give priority to Buddhism in the new constitution, the majority of Tamil Hindus in his area are not happy with the decision. However, Media Spokesperson of the TNA (Tamil National Alliance) MP M.A. Sumanthiran stated to *Ravaya* that the Tamil community expects devolution of power and not a federal state.

**332. The political parties have accepted the unitarist state for the first time in history | Dinamina, 28 January 2019, p.01 | By: Upali Karunaratne**

"For the first time in history, all the political parties have accepted the unitarist state. It is a result of the combined effort of all political parties connected to the government. Some are accusing the government of trying to divide the country. We are not trying to divide the country. We are trying to arrive at a political solution. No government managed to receive the support of all political parties to accept the unitarist state. During the past few years, there was demand for a separate state. However, now they have agreed to devolve power in a unitarist state. Interpreting this as dividing the country is blatantly false," stated Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

**333. Proposals by Chief Ministers to compile a new constitution | *Anidda*, 27 January 2019, p.12 | By: Anuranga Jayasinghe**

Chief Minister of the Central Provincial Council Sarath Ekanayake stated that a Chief Minister is necessary to maintain law and order in a province, and the concurrent list should be removed.

Chief Minister of the Wayamba Provincial Council Dharmasiri Dassanayake stated that conflicts can arise when devolving power from the central government to the provincial government. The former Chief Minister of the North Central Provincial Council has requested abolishing the post of governor. Chief Minister of the Uva Provincial Council Chamara Sampath Dassanayake has requested establishing a provincial legal affairs department, and Chief Minister of the Western Provincial Council Isura Devapriya has requested safeguarding the right of the Chief Minister and Cabinet of Ministers when appointing officials.

**334. The new constitution is instilling unnecessary shock and fear | *Lanka*, 27 January 2019, p.09 | By: Sisira Yapa**

Former MP Sajin Vaas Gunawardena stated that a copy of the new constitution is not available anywhere and there is unnecessary fear and shock about it, and the executive powers of the President should face several changes, as mentioned in the 20<sup>th</sup> Amendment. He noted that since the TNA (Tamil National Alliance) wants to arrive at a solution under a unitarist state, a political solution should be arrived at quickly to counter those who are provoking racism.

**335. For the first time in history, Tamil-Muslim parties accepted Sri Lanka as a unitary state | *Lankadeepa*, 28 January 2019, p.05 | By: Anjula Maheeka Weeraratne**

"For the first time in history, all the political parties have accepted the unitarist state. It is a result of the combined effort of all political parties connected to the government. Some are accusing the government of trying to divide the country. We are not trying to divide the country. We are trying to arrive at a political solution. No government managed to receive the support of all political parties to accept the unitarist state. During the past few years, there was demand for a separate state. However, now they have agreed to devolve power in a unitarist state. Interpreting this as dividing the country is blatantly false," stated Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

**336. Don't leave room to pass the constitution which is unfavourable for the country | *Lankadeepa*, 28 January 2019, p.10 | By: J.A.L. Jayasinghe**

"There is a chance that a new constitution that is unfavourable for the country will be passed with the support of several MPs (members of parliament) and I requested the Chief Prelates not to allow them to pass it in parliament. This proposed new constitution will divide the country into pieces. The country will become a completely federal state. The country will face a disaster with border disputes. Therefore, this new constitution should be defeated," stated Professor Medagoda Abeytissa Thera.

**337. Mahinda Rajapaksa was the first to support the division of the country into regions | *Divaina*, 28 January 2019, p.10 | No Byline**

"Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa was the first person to suggest dividing the country into regions and forming a union of regions. Myself and my government will always remain in the stance that we should devolve power within a unitary state. We are ready to support any activity that supports a unitary state. However, I and the UNP (United National Party) would not support any other activity that is implemented outside this framework," stated Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

**338. For the first time in history, all the political parties have accepted the unitary state | *Divaina*, 29 January 2019, p.10 | By: Wijaysiri Widyasekera**

"For the first time in history, all the political parties have accepted the unitarist state. It is a result of the combined effort of all political parties connected to the government. Some are accusing the government of trying to divide the country. We are not trying to divide the country. We are trying to arrive at a political solution. No government managed to receive the support of all political parties to accept the unitarist state. During the past few years, there was demand for a separate state. However, now they have agreed to devolve power in a unitarist state. Interpreting this as dividing the country is blatantly false," stated Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

**339. The unitary state idea of Sumanthiran is like addressing your mistress as mother | *Lankadeepa*, 29 January 2019, p.05 | By: Muditha Dayananda**

"The story that Sumanthiran is telling, that the word unitary does not denote a unitarist state but an undivided state, is like he is referring to his mistress as his mother. Saying, I love my mother. Sumanthiran has stated that he wants a undivided unitarist state. We

know that it indirectly means a federal state," stated Leader of the Pivithuru Hela Urumaya (PHU) Udaya Gammanpila.

**340. For the first time in history all the political parties have agreed | *Mawbima*, 29 January 2019, p.10 | By: Sujith Mario**

"For the first time in history, all the political parties have accepted the unitarist state. It is a result of the combined effort of all political parties connected to the government. Some are accusing the government of trying to divide the country. We are not trying to divide the country. We are trying to arrive at a political solution. No government managed to receive the support of all political parties to accept the unitarist state. During the past few years, there was demand for a separate state. However, now they have agreed to devolve power in a unitarist state. Interpreting this as dividing the country is blatantly false," stated Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

**341. Those who messed up after a coup are instilling shock and fear about a federal constitution | *Mawbima*, 30 January 2019, p.10 | By: Wasantha Kumara**

"Those who lost during the political coup in October are trying to instil shock and fear about a federal constitution to cover it up. A constitution is the supreme law of a country. Compiling a constitution can't be done in a disorganized manner. A constitution can't be compiled according to the desires of Ranil Wickremesinghe, Mahinda Rajapaksa, and Sumanthiran. None of them have seen the constitutional draft. They are instilling shock and fear by using certain Buddhist monks and media. The Rajapaksa clan is behind this," stated JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) MP Nalinda Jayatissa.

**342. The constitutional crisis should be settled within the Parliament without leaving it to the next generation | *Lankadeepa*, 31 January 2019, p.10 | By: D.G. Sugathapala**

"The statements made by Buddhist monks about the new constitution are painful. Since those who live abroad are trying to take several advantages, I would like to request everyone to settle this within parliament without leaving it to future generations. As the Chairperson of the Constitutional Council, I would like state that there is no such constitution. Several proposals have been presented. There are various views on this. This problem should be settled with everyone's agreement. If not, dividing the country is not acceptable," stated Speaker Karu Jayasuriya.

**343. The order of monks is divided on the constitution | *Divaina*, 31 January 2019, p.10 | By: Sugathapala Diyagahage**

"The statements made by Buddhist monks about the new constitution are painful. Since those who live abroad are trying to take several advantages, I would like to request everyone to settle this within parliament without leaving it to future generations. As the Chairperson of the Constitutional Council, I would like to state that there is no such constitution. Several proposals have been presented. There are various views on this. This problem should be settled with everyone's agreement. If not, dividing the country is not acceptable," stated Speaker Karu Jayasuriya.

**344. "This is a constitution that creates chaos in the South and a constitution that cheats the Northern people" – Sirisena | *Mawbima*, 01 February 2019, p.01, 02 | By: Pahan Wijesekere and Mathugama Wasantha Kumara**

President Maithripala Sirisena stated yesterday (31 January) that the constitution that has been brought is a constitution that creates chaos in the South and cheats Northern people. The President also posited the view that though the country needs a constitution, it should be a constitution that addresses the grievances of the people. He expressed his views at a Buddhist religious ceremony held at a temple in Horana. While expressing the view that after the 1800s, this period is the period where international interference and influence is extensively exerted. Sirisena added that even he is being attacked as a result of this. He also stated that it is a treacherous act for a politician to seek foreign assistance to further their political objectives.

**345. "It would be a victory for us to leave the parliament after introducing the new constitution" – Karu Jayasuriya | *Mawbima*, 01 February 2019, p.10 | By: Gunapala Irathnavalli, T. Vithanawasam and Tharindu B. Wijehewa**

Speaker Karu Jayasuriya said that it would be a victory for the members of parliament to leave after introducing the new constitution, without leaving that task to the next generation. He stated this at an anniversary of the Ramagna Bhikku sect held at Wijayanada Pirivena, Galle. While expressing his regret at the unfavourable remarks expressed on the constitution, he urged the due attention of the clergy and the responsible conduct of veteran politicians in this regard.

**346. “Ranil should inform the country as to whether he approves or disapproves the new constitutional draft” – Gevindu Kumarathunga | *Mawbima*, 01 February 2019, p.12 | By: Shiran Ranasinghe and Nisansala Abeygunasekera**

Chairperson of Yuthukama Sanvada Kavaya Gevindu Kumarathunga stated that the Prime Minister should divulge to the country his opinion on the new constitutional draft that has been presented to the parliament. Addressing the media in the Sambuddatva Jayanthi Mandiraya yesterday (31 January), he also posited the view that the use of terminology ‘Ekeeya’ as opposed to ‘unitary’ in the English copy would have serious repercussions. He also stated that the Prime Minister should reveal his opinion as to whether he assents or dissents to the constitutional draft before obtaining the sanction of legislature. He also emphasised the need for the public to rally against the separatist constitution brought by the rulers.

**347. “The only struggle that exists at present is the struggle to save the country from foreign influences” – Weerawansa | *Mawbima*, 01 February 2019, p.14 | By: Harshani Arsecularatne**

Leader of the National Freedom Front (NFF) Wimal Weerawansa stated that the citizenry should be concerned about the struggle to save the country from foreign influences. He also expressed the view that despite the presence of other struggles like class struggles, environmental struggles and fights for democracy, the citizens should focus on the big issue i.e. western influences. He expressed these views at a discussion at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute. He also mentioned that with the advent of the present government, the separatist agenda has become stronger. He stated that Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe alleges that there is no constitutional draft while Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP M.A. Sumanthiran says that there is a constitutional draft. In addition, Weerawansa stated that Leader of the TNA R. Sampanthan says that it is only a series of suggestions. Citing these diverse remarks on the constitutional draft, Weerawansa queried as to what the real nature of the new constitution is at present. Emphasising the need to prevent racial and religious conflicts, he commented that the imperialist forces want to destabilise the country with the emergence of extremist groups.

**348. A letter by 21 NGOs based in Jaffna to Geneva demanding the inclusion of self-determination in North in the constitution | *Divaina*, 01 February 2019, p.09 | By: Keerthi Warnakulasuriya**

21 NGOs and Archbishops of Trincomalee and Batticaloa have sent a letter to United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet requesting the recognition of self-determination in the North via a constitution. The letter also requests a new Geneva proposal as the former Geneva proposal has not been implemented. The letter urged the Commissioner to exert pressure on the government to establish a hybrid



court with the involvement of foreign judges and to implement the recommendations made by the National Reconciliation Task Force.

**349. “The new constitution cheats the Northern People and confuses the South” – Sirisena | *Lankadeepa*, 02 February 2019, p.01, 06 | By: Mangala Edirisinghe**

President Maithripala Sirisena stated that he views the new constitution as something that provokes the Sinhala Buddhists in the South and simultaneously cheats the Northern people. He stated this at a Buddhist religious ceremony held in Horana yesterday (January 31). Sirisena also expressed that he has not seen the new constitution yet. Casting doubts on the likelihood of bringing a new constitution in this year as several elections will be held, he noted that a new constitution, if brought, should strengthen parliament.

**350. “This is an election year” – Sirisena | *Dinamina*, 02 February 2019, p.01, 06 | By: Upali Karunaratne**

President Maithripala Sirisena stated that a new constitution is needed and if it is brought, it should give priority to create a strong parliament. He made these statements at a Buddhist religious ceremony held in Horana. Sirisena further stressed that decision making is becoming difficult due to the formation of governments without a clear majority. He specifically pointed out that the consequence of this was the need to pacify every demand made by minority parties. Moreover, he noted that the external influences on the country are rampant in this time period. He said that the prime motive behind any change in the country should benefit the country.

**351. “Our ideas are not included in the constitutional proposals” – Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena | *Dinamina*, 02 February 2019, p.04 | By: Duminda Sampath**

United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena stated that their submissions not present in the constitutional proposals brought forth. He stated this at an interview with *Dinamina*. Abeywardena also pointed out that the process of drafting a new constitution is not driven by the needs of the citizenry. He said that there is controversy as to whether the new constitutional proposals suggest a federal or unitary state. He urged the government to follow stable principles in this regard. Abeywardena also expressed his displeasure on the granting of police powers to provincial councils. He emphasised that though the provincial councils have land powers, these powers are not being used. He stressed that the UPFA will raise their concerns on bringing a new constitution that caters to the agendas of separatists.

**352. “The country would not be divided with the advent of a new constitution” – Karunaratna Paranawithana | *Dinamina*, 02 February 2019, p.04 | By: Duminda Sampath**

United National Party (UNP) MP Karunaratna Paranawithana stated that ‘bankrupt’ forces are spreading utter lies about the constitutional drafting process. He also mentioned that they use racism and religious animosity and misinterpret the new constitution. He claimed that this is reprehensible conduct. He expressed these views at an interview with *Dinamina* over the current issues. He expressed the view that there are three principles on which any constitution in our country is grounded upon, i.e. the partnership of powers, regional autonomy and special representation. He argued that it is imperative to work in compliance with these principles to ensure the active participation of all communities in the administration of the country. Paranawithana however argued that the three principles should not be used to their ultimate extremes. He said that there is the need for a stable central government.

Specifically referring to the fact that the UNP is seeking consensus on the constitution, he stressed that there should be a broad discourse over the constitution in society. Moreover, he emphasised that separatism has no chance of surviving at present and pointed out that Northern politicians should work in cooperation with the central government to expedite the development in North.

**353. “Politics centred around religious discussions and the drafting of constitutions” – Prof. Prishantha Gunawardena | *Dinamina*, 02 February 2019, p.09 | No Byline**

The British created an administrative structure through which the special status granted to Buddhism during the Sinhala monarchy was retained. But in 1835 this special status granted to Buddhism was done away with. The Soulbury constitution 1947 did not contain a provision specifically referring to religion. Nonetheless, the influence exerted by the Buddhist clergy is evident in the republican constitutions. The Buddhist clergy became more empowered after the 1956 social revolution. Every constitutional reform after independence were thwarted due to the efforts of the opposition at that respective period. Driven by narrow political desires, the opposition always alleged that there is a secret agreement behind the proposed constitutional reforms. Buddhism became the state religion through the 1972 first republican constitution largely due to the profound impact of the Buddhist clergy. The 1978 constitution has taken this further. As per Article 09 of the 1978 second republican constitution, “the Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana, while assuring to all religions the rights granted”. Even after 1980, the active participation of Buddhist clergy in politics was there to be witnessed. The most notable aspect of this involvement is the staunch opposition portrayed by the Buddhist clergy to any constitutional reform aimed at devolving power

to minorities. Their vociferous objections to the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, reforms brought by the Kumaratunga government and the 2001 ceasefire agreement are notable among these.

The chief prelates of the Malwathu and Asgiriya Chapters recently expressed the view that the government should prioritise addressing the grievances of people rather than grappling with a new constitution. They also expressed the sentiment that the country would not be divided through the new constitution. In this backdrop, there is a dire need of a wide discourse with the participation of the Buddhist clergy on the constitutional drafting process.

### **354. The politics of the UNP and the interests of Tamil people | *Anidda*, 03 February 2019, p.10 | No Byline**

*Hiru TV* was successful in taking a racist word out of Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP M.A. Sumanthiran's mouth to provoke the Sinhalese community. Though the Rajapaksas are spreading racial hatred, Sumanthiran and his party mentioned from the beginning that his party expects to devolve power within one country. Since Sumanthiran, who is a master of the Sinhalese language, is capable of bringing the grievances of Tamil persons closer to the hearts of Sinhalese people, he has become an enemy of the Rajapaksas. Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is considered as the legendary masculine figure of Sri Lanka, does not like to grant administrative powers to minorities. Sumanthiran, who mentioned that he opposed the conspiracy which took place on October 26 without any ulterior motives, also noted that the proposals on the new constitution were delayed due to the changes in the President and Prime Minister. However, if the new constitution is passed, it will be impossible for Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to become the President in the coming elections. This article further stated that the interests of the TNA should be fulfilled, and the executive presidency should also be abolished.

### **355. New constitutional reforms and poisonous racism | *Ravaya*, 03 February 2019, p.08 | By: Terrance Purasinghe**

According to Political thinker Sorel, communalism is not racism is a myth. The 1972 and 1978 constitutions do not reflect common agreements between the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities. The Sinhalese Buddhist majority oppose the new constitution by saying that it will divide the country. Those who dislike the federal constitution say that it will divide the country. Yet, they do not have proper knowledge on the matter. The main objective of a federal constitution is to unite the country and not to divide the country. Supporters of Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa are responsible for spreading false information about the federal constitution by mentioning that it divides the country. However, though the Tamil politicians requested for a federal system in the past, the current Tamil leaders request for a new constitution which can devolve power regionally.

**356. For the first time in history, Tamil political parties have joined hands to implement a constitution | *Mawbima*, 04 February 2019, p.14 | By: Saman Nedungamuwa**

"They are trying to provoke racist sentiments by discussing about a new constitution. We can see that the opposition parties are trying to create a wrong impression. Our main motive is to implement a new constitution without insulting any religion or community. A new constitution will be implemented with the support of all political parties. For the first time in history, Tamil political parties have gotten together. This is a positive sign," stated United National Party (UNP) Ravindra Samaraweera.

**357. The true story of federalism | *Dinamina*, 04 February 2019, p.04 | By: Asela Kuruluwansa**

The word which comes into the limelight when discussing about the new constitution is 'federalism'. The politicians from the North as well as the South fear to utter the word federalism. Therefore, it is important to understand if the federal system is a system which divides the country and creates separate states or whether it is a system that can unite a society facing the risk of being separated in terms of ethnicity and religion. At present, it is visible that those who oppose federalism have no idea as to what it is. When analysing post-independence political history of seven decades, it is clear that the opposition was always responsible for instilling fear about federalism.

**358. Kiriella is making false statements about the constitution | *Mawbima*, 04 February 2019, p.10 | By: Bertie Weerasinghe**

"Minister Lakshman Kiriella is making false statements saying that the new constitutional draft comprises 75 percent of the facts which were agreed upon at the All Party Conference. He is discussing about the facts that were approved by former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. Those All Party Conference proposals he is talking about are not mine. Those are Chandrika's," stated Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**359. I don't know anything about the constitution, the new constitution has become a mess which is messing up the minds of people | *Lankadeepa*, 04 February 2019, p.12 | By: Mangala Edirisinghe**

"There is a need for a constitution. I see this necessity in terms of strengthening our parliament. Therefore, the constitutional reforms should give priority to create a strong parliament, which can govern the country. As the President, I am not aware of anything that is being discussed about the new constitution. The new constitution has become a mess that has messed up the minds of people for four years." Stated President Maithripala Sirisena.

**360. "The main feature of a constitution is its supremacy" – Dr. Deepika Udagama | *Ravaya*, 10 February 2019, p.06 | By: Nimal Abeysinghe**

"Unlike our neighbours across the Palk Strait, the constitutions that we have adopted so far have not been public-oriented endeavours. Public participation in the drafting process of the constitution guarantees the respect of the citizenry towards that constitution," stated Dr. Deepika Udagama. She expressed these views at an interview with *Ravaya* over the current constitutional making process. Specifically referring to the lack of public involvement within the process of drafting the 1972 and 1978 constitutions, Dr. Udagama posited the view that the repercussions of such ill-conceived efforts are clearly discernible at present.

However, she noted with appreciation that the Panel of Experts pertinent to the current constitutional drafting process has not replicated that mistake. She pointed out that the report issued by the Panel encompasses the ideas expressed by the citizenry in this country. She claimed that it is even used by the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL). Therefore, she wanted it to be given a central role in the current discourse. She also pointed out that a constitution should embody the sentiments of its teeming multitudes. Dr. Udagama said that a constitution should guarantee the fundamental rights and freedom of the people. Grounded in the social justice principle, she noted, that the constitution should have provisions for the marginalised sections of the society. She expressed the view that the HRCSL particularly deliberated on this aspect. She urged the need to constitutionally recognise the judicial review of parliamentary legislation and expressed the need to establish strong checks and balances to control the abuse of power.

**361. “Grant priority to Buddhism without confining it to words” – Prof. Chanadana Abeyratne | *Silumina*, 10 February 2019, p.08 | By: Rasika Kotudurage**

Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences in the University of Kelaniya Professor Chandana Abeyratne stated that the monarchical system that existed in our country was a benevolent system except on a few occasions. Expressing his views on the constitution and the pattern of administration in ancient Sri Lanka during an interview with *Silumina*, he particularly referred to the impact Buddhism had on our administrative system. He pointed out that as the ruling elite during independence were largely English-speaking bourgeoisie, there was a relegation of the authentic Sri Lankan identity. While pinpointing the endeavour taken by former President S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike to resuscitate the local identity, he said that this effort was not successful due to practical difficulties.

Specifically referring to the incident of making Sinhala the official language, he pointed out that it was a serious error by us. He admitted the fact that as the majority in the country were Sinhalese, there might have been a justification to do so. But he opined that neglecting Tamil and English resulted in dire consequences. He further stressed that this made Tamils second class citizens of the country. Juxtaposing our experience with that of neighbouring India, he pointed out that we could not build our Sri Lankan identity. He also pointed out that the granting of priority to Buddhism should not be confined to mere words. Instead of including such a provision as a mere window dressing, he urged the practical implementation of the provision. He stressed the fact that he supports such a move as according to Buddhism, all racial groups should be treated equally.

**362. A new constitution is urgent | *Anidda*, 10 February 2019, p.06 | By: D. Kuruppu**

All parties in Sri Lanka promised in the last presidential and general election that they would change the current constitution and the promise was included in the party manifestos. Thus, there is a responsibility on the shoulders of the present members of parliament to help in the drafting of the new constitution. The arbitrary nature of the executive powers vested in the President was clearly observed during the recent constitutional crisis. It was only due to the effort of the judiciary that the ulterior plans did not get momentum it needed. We should refrain from celebrating the war as those who died due to it are our own citizens. There is a timely need to bring a new constitution that abolishes Executive Presidency and that guarantees fairness to all communities.

**363. The constitutional discussion that neglects the content | *Anidda*, 10 February 2019, p.15 | By: Harsha Gunasena**

The lack of proper attention to the contents of the new constitution has resulted in various misinterpretations of it. The Panel of Experts' report that investigated the grievances of the public and their ideas was the first step in the process of preparing the

new constitution. Then the Steering Committee, presided by the Premier, was entrusted with the task of preparing the constitutional draft. The controversy over the new constitution is particularly intensified due to the lack of clarity as to the nature of the state, i.e. whether it is unitary or federal. Nonetheless it is recommended that there should be a broad discussion over the contents of the proposed new constitution.

**364. “Ranil Wickremesinghe and Mahinda Rajapaksa are ready to grab power at any cost” – Anura Kumara Dissanayaka | *Mawbima*, 10 February 2019, p.20 | By: Anuradha Herath**

Leader of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Anura Kumara Dissanayaka states that there is no constitutional draft at present, let alone a constitution. He also noted that there is no room for the passage of a new constitution as even the drafting of a new constitution is increasingly becoming difficult. He made these statements during an interview on the current political context with *Mawbima*. He emphasised the fact that the report by the Panel of Experts on the constitution was presented to parliament directly as there was a disagreement over the contents of it within the Steering Committee on the constitutional drafting process. He charged that those who are portraying a demon within the process of drafting the new constitution are mainly a group of unscrupulous chauvinists.

**365. “We have plenty of Presidential candidates” – Keheliya Rambukwella | *Lankadeepa*, 10 February 2019, p.22 | By: Prasanna S. Tennakone**

United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Keheliya Rambukwella states that the United National Party (UNP), though being the party with the greatest number of MPs in parliament, does not submit a proposal on the new constitution. He alleged that the UNP is under the control of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) at present since the latter provides the decisive numbers for the former to maintain the government. He expressed these views during an interview with *Lankadeepa* on the current political context. Rambukwella also posited the view that there was an attempt by the UNP to bring a federal constitution earlier and that effort was sabotaged due to the alliance formed in October 2018.

**366. “The ideas of the UNP are not needed for a new constitution” – Daya Gamage | *Mawbima*, 11 February 2019, p.06 | By: Dammika Ranaweera**

Minister of Primary Industries and Social Empowerment Daya Gamage stated that the civil society headed by Maduluwawe Sobhitha Thera wanted a new constitution before 2015 due to the tyrannical rule of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. He further stated that even Rajapaksa later said that there should be a new constitution and it should be brought with the agreement of the Tamil and Muslim people. Gamage stated these views

during an interview on the current political context. He stated that currently, there is only a series of proposals over the new constitution and it has been presented to parliament. Nonetheless, he argued that there is no necessity to seek the ideas of the United National Party (UNP) to the constitutional drafting process. He specifically referred to the fact that the new constitution should be drafted to retain the unitary status of the country and to give priority to Buddhism.

When questioned as to whether the unitary status of the country is endangered by the terminology 'oruniththanadu', he replied that he did not want to comment on this issue as he is not aware of the true meaning of that word. He however pointed out that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) agreed to keep the unitary status of the country and to retain the foremost place given to Buddhism.

**367. “We will amend the constitution after obtaining victory at the next presidential election” – Rajapaksa | *Lankadeepa*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 06 | No Byline**

Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa stated that although he cannot contest for the next Presidential election, the constitution would be amended after the victory of the candidate representing his party. Rajapaksa made this statement while answering a question during a conference organised by *The Hindu* newspaper in Bangalore, India recently (09 February). Rajapaksa also pointed out that the bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka would be strengthened in a government headed by him.

**368. “Sri Lanka would be a playground for the international buccaneers due to the new constitution” – Raja Gunaratne | *Divaina*, 06 February 2019, p.13 | By: Lasitha Duminda**

Member of the Viyath Maga Organisation senior Lecturer Raja Gunaratne stated that Sri Lanka would be a playground for international buccaneers in the near future through the new constitution. While stressing on the fact that the general public should oppose this move, Gunaratne stated that they should be vigilant as the constitution is the basic legal framework of the country.

**369. Distorting the constitution | *Lankadeepa*, 08 February 2019, p.04 | By: M.O.A. de Zoysa**

The term unitary/oruniththanadu is a controversial topic at present. Those who oppose the new constitution charge that the drafters of the new constitution attempt to restructure the country into a federal framework after dismantling the unitary status of the constitution by using the term oruniththanadu. They also claim that if this attempt of



the drafters of the new constitution bears fruit, the disintegration of the country into two political units as Southern and a Northern state is inevitable.

The question looms whether the drafters of the new constitution resorted to the use of the nomenclature *orumiththanadu* after deeming the country as a federal unit given the presence of some federal features in the existing constitution. If that were the reality, it is worthy to note that the drafters of the new constitution exposed the official identity of Sri Lanka and created crisis in the political arena. Unless urgent steps are taken to remedy that defect, it will be difficult to obtain the approval of the citizenry.

**370. The right to life should be included in the new constitution | *Dinamina*, 08 February 2019, p.12 | By: Sirimasiri Hapuarachchi**

As all individuals possess a legal right to have freedom and security to life, it should be guaranteed in the new constitution. The citizenry also should extend their support to the Public Representation Committee on constitutional affairs presided by Lal Wijenayake. There is a dire need for everyone to set aside racial, religious differences and assist national reconciliation.

**371. “UNP cannot win a single district in the country” – Kanchana Wijesekera” | *Mawbima*, 10 February 2019, p.18 | By: Prageeth S. Karunathilake**

United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Kanchana Wijesekera stated that the UPFA has handed over their suggestions on the solution to the national issue while the United National Party (UNP) did not provide a proposal outlining a solution to the national issue. He expressed these views during an interview with *Mawbima* on the present constitutional crisis. Wijesekera accepted that it was the UNP who introduced provincial councils to the country, but he argued that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is demanding more than the powers granted under the provincial council system. He charged that the Prime Minister is willing to pacify the demands of the TNA and as such, the UPFA voiced their objection over the granting of land and police powers to provincial councils.

Wijesekera stressed the fact that the Northern politicians should identify the problems in their areas and present them to the legislature. Citing that there are ample opportunities to do so, he argued that the best way to do so is to get ministerial portfolios under the present government. He emphasised that the proposals presented to parliament do not provide a viable solution on the ethnic issue in the country.

**372. Constitutional Assembly given power to take a final decision on the new constitution | *Lankadeepa*, 11 January 2019, p.01 | By: Anjula M. Weeraratne**

The government decided to allow the Constitutional Assembly to take a decision on the process of a new constitution. The government also decided to terminate the drafting process of the new constitution if the Constitutional Assembly insists. The rough sketch of the constitutional draft would be presented to parliament with the report by the Panel of Experts.

**373. The final decision on the new constitution to be taken by the Constitutional Assembly | *Dinamina*, 11 January 2019, p.01 | By: Shiromi Abeysinghe**

The government decided to allow the Constitutional Assembly to take a decision on the process of a new constitution. The government also decided to terminate the drafting process of the new constitution if the Constitutional Assembly insists. The rough sketch of the constitutional draft would be presented to parliament with the report by the Panel of Experts.

**374. “The Constitutional Assembly would convene today” – Deputy Speaker | *Dinamina*, 11 January 2019, p.02 | By Swarna Wijekoon, Roshan Thushara, and Mahinda Aluthgedara**

Deputy Speaker Ananda Kumarasiri stated that the Constitutional Assembly would convene today (11 January) from 10.30 am -12.30 pm. He expressed these views in parliament. Nonetheless, Leader of the National Freedom Front (NFF) Wimal Weerawansa stated that in order to convene the Constitutional Assembly the MPs should be notified three days prior. However, the Deputy Speaker and the Prime Minister insisted that the Constitutional Assembly would be convened as per a decision taken at the party leaders’ meeting. The Deputy Speaker also stressed that the convening of the Constitutional Assembly had been included in the agenda of parliament and asked the MPs to complain to the Speaker if there are any issues.

**375. Constitutional Assembly given the power to take a decision on the future of the new constitution | *Divaina*, 11 January 2019, p.01 | By: Akitha Perera**

The government decided to allow the Constitutional Assembly to take a decision on the process of a new constitution. The government also decided to terminate the drafting process of the new constitution if the Constitutional Assembly insists. The rough sketch

of the constitutional draft would be presented to parliament with the report by the Panel of Experts.

**376. “The notification on convening the Constitutional Assembly was not given before three days” – Weerawansa | *Divaina*, 11 January 2019, p.01 | By: Akitha Perera and Ranil Dharmasena**

Deputy Speaker Ananda Kumarasiri stated that the Constitutional Assembly would convene today (11 January) from 10.30 am -12.30 pm. He expressed these views in parliament. Nonetheless, Leader of the National Freedom Front (NFF) Wimal Weerawansa stated that in order to convene the Constitutional Assembly the MPs should be notified three days prior. However, the Deputy Speaker and the Prime Minister insisted that the Constitutional Assembly would be convened as per a decision taken at the party leaders’ meeting. The Deputy Speaker also stressed that the convening of the Constitutional Assembly had been included in the agenda of parliament and asked the MPs to complain to the Speaker if there are any issues.

**377. The report of the expert committee would be presented to the Constitutional Assembly today | *Divaina*, 11 January 2019, p.04 | By: Ajith Alahakone**

The report of the Panel of Experts on the new constitution would be presented to the Constitutional Assembly presided by the Prime Minister. There would be a meeting chaired by Deputy Speaker Ananda Kumarasiri for this purpose and the report would be presented in parliament by the Prime Minister. All party leaders would express their ideas in parliament on the new constitution.

**378. Sumanthiran: Five reports on constitution are in place | *Divaina*, 11 January 2019, p.04 | By: Keerthi Warnakulasuriya**

Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP M.A. Sumanthiran is reported to have said that there are five reports comprising the ideas of various political parties and the Chief Ministers on the new constitution. It is also reported that the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Switzerland had a role to play in the process of drafting the new constitution. It is also said that there is a proposal by a political party to establish two deputy presidential posts.

**379. “We oppose the amalgamation of the North and East proposed by Northern politicians” – H.M.M. Harees | *Ada*, 12 February 2019, p.07 | By: Wasantha Chandrapala**

State Minister of Provincial Councils and Local Government H.M.M. Harees stated that the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) opposes the proposal advocated by Northern politicians including Tamil National Alliance (TNA) M.A. Sumanthiran to amalgamate the Northern and the East Provinces. He made these remarks at a ceremony held in Ampara. Harees pointed out that the proposed amalgamation of the two provinces is a challenge to them and therefore they should oppose the proposal. Specifically referring to the conduct of some Northern politicians, Harees pointed out that during the war time all Sinhala, Muslim and Tamil communities had to face many hardships. Urging unity among the three communities, Harees appreciated the soldiers for defeating terrorism.

**380. “Tamil, Muslim leaders agreed to a unitary status and to grant priority to Buddhism – Kiriella” | *Divaina*, 11 February 2019, p.01, 04 | By: Samanthi Weerasekera and Cyril Wimalasurendra**

Minister of Public Enterprise, Kandyan Heritage and Kandy Development Lakshman Kiriella stated that Tamil and Muslim parties are in agreement with the unitary status and giving the foremost place for Buddhism. He also stated that the Tamil and Muslim parties presented proposals to strengthen the provincial council system. He made these statements at a religious ceremony held at a religious place in Kandy. Kiriella mentioned that in a context where only a series of proposals as opposed to a constitution is in place, some individuals are propagating racism in the country. He also stressed that unlike previous occasions, the participation of minority parties was obtained during the drafting of the new constitution.

**381. “LTTE supporters are attempting to bring a new constitution to the country” – Weerawansa | *Ada*, 12 February 2019, p.02 | By: Siri Daminda**

Leader of the National Freedom Front (NFF) Wimal Weerawansa stated that the independence that was gained after the defeat of terrorism by President Mahinda Rajapaksa gradually collapsed after 08 January 2015. Moreover, he pointed out that the country is deviating from the path of progress. He expressed these views at a meeting held in Kaduwela recently. Pointing out the fact that there was tremendous influence from foreign forces and NGOs to the country, Weerawansa said that those who support the Liberation of Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) were attempting to bring a new constitution.

**382. “The government spent more than ten lakhs unnecessarily for the process of drafting the new constitution” – Prof. G.L. Peiris | *Lankadeepa*, 12 February 2019, p.05 | By: Nalaka S. Dahanayake**

Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Professor G.L. Peiris stated that the government spent more than ten lakhs unnecessarily for the drafting process of the new constitution. He urged the government to not allocate a single penny for the drafting process of the new constitution in the budget this time. Prof. Peiris made these remarks at a media briefing held at the party headquarters of the SLPP in Battaramulla. He also pointed out that though a colossal amount was spent on the constitutional drafting process, a tangible benefit from it is not visible. He said that there is no one to take responsibility for the report prepared by the drafting committee of the new constitution.

**383. “Despite the commitment of the civil society to the new constitution, there was no political leadership for it” – Prof. Sarath Wijesuriya | *Lankadeepa*, 12 February 2019, p.10 | By: Nimala Kodituwakku**

Convener of the National Movement for Social Justice (NMSJ) Professor Sarath Wijesuriya stated that despite the committed role of civil society groups for the new constitution, there was no political leadership for it. He pointed out that the passage of the new constitution is unlikely given the lack of enthusiasm by the two main national leaders. Professor Wijesuriya made these remarks at a public meeting held at the Kadirgamar Institute on the proposed constitutional reform. He pointed out that for the first time in Sri Lankan history the ideas of the general public were obtained to prepare a new constitution and the foundation was laid to draft a new constitution with the participation of all members in the legislature. He noted that it was the civil society that took the job of notifying people on the new constitution.

Dr. Jayampathi Wickramaratne who attended the meeting noted that as the constitution is the basic law of the country, the significance of it cannot be undermined. Moreover, he pointed out that there is not even a final draft of the constitution, let alone a new constitution. He also said that it was necessary to strengthen the rights of citizenry through the new constitution.

**384. Frontline Socialist Party in protest demanding a new constitution | *Lankadeepa*, 12 February 2019, p.12 | By: Ishan Sanjeewa**

The Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) and some civil society groups held a protest demanding a new constitution that gives power to the citizenry. The protest was held in Fort.

**385. “Do not allocate a single cent for the constitutional drafting process” – G.L. Peiris | *Divaina*, 12 February 2019, p.13 | By: Anura Balasuriya**

Chairperson of the Sri Lankan Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Professor G.L. Peiris stated that a single cent should not be allocated for the constitutional drafting process from the present budget. He pointed out that he makes this request specifically because a tangible benefit was not taken after spending more than ten lakhs on the constitutional drafting process. Peiris also mentioned that no one is willing to take the responsibility of the report on the new constitution. He made these remarks at a media briefing held in the headquarters of the SLPP in Battaramulla yesterday.

**386. Transitional justice and Sinhala-Tamil racism | *Mawbima*, 12 February 2019, p.06 | By: Wimal Ariyawansa**

With the constitutional crisis on October 26, there was the emergence of racism again. In the backdrop of discourse on the new constitution, there were discussions also on the mechanisms to ensure that those who committed serious crimes were held accountable. These steps were tarnished due to the conduct of racist politicians. Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa stated that after the constitutional coup that he accepted the position of the Prime Minister to prevent the division of the country through the new constitution. However, an insight into the passing of a new constitution and the amendment procedure for the existing constitution reveals something drastically in contrast to the statement made by the former President.

The article discusses the clear procedure, as per the constitution, on how to enact a new constitution. This includes obtaining a majority in parliament and a referendum. It is crystal clear that in order to change Article two of the constitution that gives unitary state to the country, the people should approve it via a referendum. Therefore, there is no chance for the government to disintegrate this country secretly and alter the basic structure of the country without a referendum. The valorisation of the soldiers and misinterpreting the accountability mechanisms of the government as attempts to punish the soldiers is another aspect of the racist propaganda. This is carried out in order to appeal to the Sinhala voters. Nonetheless, it should be borne in mind that Sri Lanka has undertaken to fulfil and protect human rights by signing human rights treaties. The government has the responsibility to take legal actions against any member of the armed forces who committed heinous crimes in the guise of war.

The chauvinist politicians also spread various misconceptions about the office of reparations. They branded it as an endeavour to provide financial aid to the Liberation of Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) and portrayed this government as an anti-Sinhalese government. It is worthy to note that former President Rajapaksa acknowledged the report of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) and there was an

extensive rehabilitation programme for former LTTE cadres under his regime. Thus, the pertinent question is how reparation is being subject to criticism by the Rajapaksa camp.

As a synopsis, it is significant to point out that reconciliation is aimed at the welfare of citizens of our own country as opposed to the welfare of the international community. It is aimed at healing the wounds of the communities affected by the war, violence and turbulences. All citizenry should be considered as equals. In pursuit of transitional justice, there is a need to refrain from furthering narrow political objectives.

**387. “19<sup>th</sup> Amendment would be completely abolished under an SLPP government”  
– Prof. G.L. Peiris | *Mawbima*, 12 February 2019, p.14 | By: Ishara Silva**

Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Professor G.L. Peiris stated that though a colossal amount of over ten lakhs was spent on the process of drafting the new constitution, there was no benefit of it. He also stated that there was no one to take the responsibility of the report presented on the new constitution. Professor Peiris made these remarks at a media briefing of the SLPP in Battaramulla yesterday (11 February).

**388. “The new constitutional reforms replace the fundamental rights that were discussed before 350 years” – Frontline Socialist Party | *Ada*, 14 February 2019, p.08 | By: Amith Maduranga**

Education Secretary of the Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) Pubudu Jayagoda stated that the fundamental rights discussed over 350 years ago were replaced when preparing the proposal on the new constitution. He emphasised that the proposal on the new constitution does not contain provisions to confer power to the citizenry. Instead, he charged that the new proposal contains provisions as to how power would be allocated to the President, the Prime Minister and the members of parliament.

**389. A lesson from the failures in the past | *Lankadeepa*, 14 February 2019, p.04 |  
By: Charitha Herath**

During the period of 71 years after the independence, Sri Lanka was governed under three constitutions. First, we followed the 1947 Soulbury constitution and it was replaced by the first republican constitution of 1972. Sri Lanka is being governed under the second republican constitution of 1978 at present and the 1978 constitution has 19 amendments up to now. There is a discussion over the 20<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the 1978 constitution. During the period of President Chandrika Kumaratunga there were various proposals to reform the constitution. The fact that a constitutional draft was set on fire by the then opposition (present government) is no secret.

The process of drafting the new constitution carried out by the present government is not free of criticisms. It is likely that the new constitutional draft would receive the negative response faced by the previous constitutional drafts. The attempts by successive governments to draft a new constitution reflect a bitter truth – even after the lapse of a period of 71 years after independence, Sri Lankans do not have a clear idea as to how our basic law should be. It also points to the fact that we do not have a consensus on the nature of post-independence Sri Lanka. Due to the lack of a broad discourse within the political parties on the new constitution, constitutional discourse is increasingly being subject to the domination of few experts in the civil society. That further intensifies the issue on a new constitution and the results in the stagnation of the issue.

If viewed from another perspective, it is observed that there were three militant struggles against the “nation state” established after the three post-independence constitutions. The presence of such turbulence explains the fact that there is a serious error as to the nature of the governing system in our country. Despite continuous expressions of euphoria on the fact that independence was obtained in 1948 without shedding a single drop of blood, it is patently clear that after independence there were many blood flows in the country. In this election year it is important to focus on a viable mechanism that remedies the problems we face in the present context.

**390. "Those who appreciated the reconciliation proposals of Rajapaksa are calling us traitors" – Wickremesinghe | *Lankadeepa*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 06 | By: Anjula M. Weeraratne and Sithum Chathuranga**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that the government discourse on the political solution was confined to the All Party Representative Committee report (APRC report) that was brought during the period of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. In such a context, he mentioned that the parties who appreciated the APRC report are now branding the present government as traitors when the present government discusses the very same report. Wickremesinghe expressed these views at a ceremony held in Weerasingham hall in Jaffna. He pointed out that the United National Party (UNP) did not sign any document or a proposal on the devolution of power and affirmed that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is speaking about the APRC report at present. He pointed out that those who criticise the discussion of the APRC report at present wish to further their own narrow political objectives. The Prime Minister also stressed the need for national unity.

**391. The national crisis of poverty | *Lankadeepa*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 06 | By: Dhamma Dissanayake**

According to constitutional experts, racist politicians and “radical” experts, there is a national issue in this country. They claim that the national issue emerged due to not allocating power for racial groups. Simultaneously, these groups attempt to conceal their desire for power. In reality, the citizenry in this country did not get power in any instance.



The national issue of this country was dragged on for several decades due to the conduct of the rulers, constitutional experts and other fake experts. These groups portrayed that the solution to the national issue would be a cure-all to all other major and minor issues too. As a result, the areas of law and order, public welfare and all other economic, welfare aspects did not receive the attention they deserve. The general public are in dire straits due to this. Therefore, it is significant to understand the true national issue in this country. The main issue that cuts across all strata of the society is the poverty and the relevant stakeholders should take necessary steps to remedy this issue.

**392. "UNP did not sign any document that divides the country" – Wickremesinghe | *Dinamina*, 15 February 2019, p.01, 06 | By: Chameera Elladeniya**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that the United National Party (UNP) did not sign any document that divides the country. He further mentioned that if someone need to divide the country, then that individual should have discussions with former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. He pointed out that it is ironic to notice that the parties who presented the All Party Conference report during the period of Rajapaksa are branding the UNP as traitors when the very same report is being discussed at present. Casting aspersions on the veracity of statements by those vociferous groups, Wickremesinghe queried whether it is the UNP or the Rajapaksa's who deserve to be called as traitors. The Premier expressed these views at a ceremony held in Weerasingham Hall in Jaffna.

Wickremesinghe also pointed out that the government is in pursuit of a political solution and said that there is no agreement yet on the constitutional draft. Stressing the need to grant rights to the Northern people, he pointed out the significance of reconciliation. Wickremesinghe also made it an opportunity to highlight the fact that the national anthem was sung in Tamil for the first time under the ruling period of D.S. Senanayake and under his government.