

19 October 2006

Mr. Speaker,

In terms of the provisions of the Standing Orders, I wish to raise the following matter of urgent public importance:

The merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces as one Unit by President J. R. Jayawardane in 1988 has been held by the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka to be invalid on the basis of some technical reason pertaining to the procedure related to the merger. No further legal measure is available under Sri Lanka's judicial system to reverse the said finding.

Three Presidents, President R. Premadasa, President D. B. Wijetunga and President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, who succeeded President Jayawardane have during a period of eighteen years (1988 – 2006), postponed annually the date for the holding of a poll, relating to the continuance of the merger.

The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987 acknowledged that the Northern and Eastern Provinces were the areas of historical habitation of the Tamil speaking people, and the merger was effected on the said factual basis.

Three Tamil-speaking citizens representing the historical inhabitants of the Eastern Province, who sought to intervene in the three petitions challenging the merger, were denied the right to intervene. They were thus prevented from stating their case justifying the merger fully and effectively before the court.

Consequently, the judgment delivered has the effect of irretrievably damaging the current peace process unless corrective action is immediately taken. This view has been stated both by India and other members of the International Community. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) wishes to reiterate that the failure to take immediate steps to validly merge the Northern and Eastern Provinces as one Unit, will permanently shut the door on the possibilities of finding a solution within one country. It is with the intention of bringing out the urgency of the matter that the TNA commenced protests in the Well of the House on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of October 2006.

The TNA calls upon the President and the Government of Sri Lanka to immediately take the necessary action to validly restore the Status Quo Ante pertaining to the constitution of the North-East as one Unit. The TNA urges the Government to respond favorably by the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2006 the latest.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**G. G. PONNAMBALAM M.P.**  
(For the TNA Parliamentary Group)