

Next week crucial for ethnic peace. (1986 October 30). Sun

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## Stage set for Bangalore Summit

# Next week crucial for ethnic peace

By 'SUN' Political Correspondent

With barely a fortnight to go for the Rajiv Gandhi J. K. Jayewardene summit in Bangalore, the Governments of India and Sri Lanka are readying themselves to clear the hurdles to resume the next round of talks to end the Tamil ethnic conflict.

The issue is billed as the key topic for the two leaders during bilateral talks, they will have.

On the Indian side, officials in the Foreign Ministry have set in motion a series of measures to ready both the TULF and the militants. In this exercise, reports from New Delhi say, the next one week is considered crucial "for carrying forward the peace process or reconsidering India's mediatory role." It is for this reason that Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran's intervention had been sought by the centre to impress on the

militants the need for some degree of moderation.

Mr. Ramachandran has already met leaders of Tamil militant groups in the company of Indian Home Ministry's constitutional expert, S. Balakrishnan and urged them to submit their reactions to

the Sri Lanka proposals by November 3.

But new developments since the Government — TULF talks in September this year have caused anxiety in Sri Lanka Government circles. (Continued on Page 11)

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The militant groups were insisting on what they call a "Tamil homeland" (both the north and east to be a single unit) when provincial councils are set up. While they appear to be veering towards making this demand a pre condition to their participation in the talks, lobbying has already begun in Tamil Nadu to secure this demand and to prevail upon the Government of India not to press the militants to accept the proposals in its present form.

The Madras based HINDU, newspaper, which is reputed for espousing the cause of the militants, in a lengthy editorial on Tuesday accuses Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, of under valuing the merger issue. It says "he seemed to be under some misconception that the northern and eastern provinces (which the Sri Lankan Tamils claim as their

homeland) are non contiguous, that is, divided by some wedge of Sinhala territory. New Delhi must make a correction in its policy line on this point very quickly. The resolution of the unit of devolution issue cannot be postponed and made to wait on the implementation of the rest of the package, indeed the package must be expected to stand or fall on this question."

The editorial also notes: "They key thing that Rajiv Gandhi must remember — and act upon while meeting Mr. Jayewardene in Bangalore is that the Sri Lankan Tamils, moderates as well as militants, must be persuaded to accept a package by meaningful improvements in the package — not by anything that suggests forcing it down their throat."

In Colombo where officials have prepared back up documents to the proposals that have already emerged, concern centred on new moves by the LTTE, particularly its declared intention to unilaterally declare Eelam on January 1, 1987.

By the time President Jayewardene meets Premier Gandhi, the matter would have been taken up between the two countries at diplomatic levels. But President Jayewardene, government sources say, is sure to emphasise on the various steps the militant groups were taking to mar the climate for a peaceful settlement.