

Dispute swirl around killing of politician in Sri Lanka. (1994, October 27). *Gazette*.

## Disputes swirl around killing of politician in Sri Lanka

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COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Political skirmishing over responsibility for the killing of Sri Lanka's opposition leader marred official mourning ceremonies yesterday for him and for more than 50 others who died with him in what was apparently a suicide bombing on Sunday.

Associates of the slain leader, Gamini Dissanayaka, said in a news conference that the government of Prime Minister Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, who is favored to win the presidency, was partly to blame for the bombing because it had failed to heed pleas from Dissanayaka for enhanced security during his presidential campaign.

"We asked for a strengthening of security, and we didn't get it," said Wickrema Weerasooriya, a brother-in-law of Dissanayaka who served as the slain politician's principal adviser. Dissanayaka's 50-year-old widow, Srma, was named on Tuesday to take her husband's place in the Nov. 9 election.

The government has acknowledged that it passed on warnings to Dissanayaka of a possible attempt on his life by a rebel group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, after intelligence agencies learned that the opposition leader was on a rebel "hit" list. Police officials say that the bombing, in which more than 100 people were injured, bore strong similarities to previous suicide bombings attributed to the rebels.

As Dissanayaka's body was being moved yesterday to lie in state at the country's parliament building, Weerasooriya and other senior officials of the United National Party, which Dissanayaka headed, said that requests for additional security and vehicles for Dissanayaka had been ignored. Instead, they said, Dissanayaka had "borrowed" security men from the departing president, D.B. Wijetunga, who was the previous head of the United National Party.

The dispute over security suggested there had been an early breakdown in efforts to find common ground between the two main political parties after the bombing. Several of the country's leading newspapers have appealed for political differences to be set aside in favor of a common effort, perhaps through a coalition government of the two main parties, to end the cycle of bombings and shootings in which four major political figures, including a former president, Ranasinghe Premadasa, have been killed in the last 18 months.

The government has said that it cautioned Dissanayaka about the risks involved in attending public rallies and had urged the opposition leader's aides to keep crowds well back from speakers' platforms.

The prime suspect is a woman whose severed head was found 25 metres from the centre of the blast.