

CBK's checklist for MR!

- Former President Kumaratunga suggests democratic governance would bring automatic salvation in Geneva
- Tells Govt. "act democratically to avoid international pressure"
- Notes importance of religious freedom issues in Lanka featuring in US draft resolution
- Ranil offers unstinted support for building religious harmony

By DHARISHA BASTIANS

OFFERING words of counsel to the ruling Government, former President Chandrika Kumaratunga yesterday said Sri Lanka could ward off pressure at the UN Human Rights Council

GREEN LIGHT FOR CHANGE: UNP POLLS MANIFESTO OUT TODAY

THE United National Party will launch its election manifesto for the Western and Southern Provinces at Sirikotha today.

Titled "Bala Peraliyata Kola Eiyak", the UNP manifesto will be launched by the Party's Leadership Council chaired by Karu Jayasuriya. UNP National Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe will also participate in today's ceremony at the party headquarters in Pita Kotte at 11 a.m.

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ALLIES ALIGN?



Former President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe discussed ongoing attacks on religious minorities and pledged to work towards building racial and religious harmony yesterday - Pic by Upul Abayasekara

in Geneva if the country's leadership would act democratically.

"If Sri Lanka wants to save itself in Geneva, the Sri Lankan Government has to learn to conduct itself in accordance with universally-accepted democratic norms," Kumaratunga told reporters in Colombo.

She said acting democratically would bring 'automatic salvation' from the international pressure mounting against Sri Lanka in Geneva.

Championing the cause of religious freedom through the South Asia Policy and Research Institute that she chairs, Kumaratunga held discussions with Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe at his Jawatte Road office yesterday morning.

The former President noted that it was significant that the attacks against religious minorities had featured in the US draft



Mahinda Rajapaksa

A SNUB FROM MAHINDA?

THERE has been no response to her request for a meeting with President Mahinda Rajapaksa to discuss building religious freedom in the country, his predecessor and former party leader Chandrika Kumaratunga said yesterday.

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resolution in Sri Lanka now being circulated in Geneva. "It is not important who submitted the resolution, what is important is that this issue is now before a UN body," she observed.

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CBK's...

"The UNP is offering its unstinted support for building religious harmony in the country," Wickremesinghe said after the meeting. He said the discussions with Kumaratunga and her team had focused on the attacks on Muslim, Christian and Hindu places of worship in the country that had not been adequately addressed by law enforcement authorities.

Kumaratunga said that in the past few years, Sri Lanka had witnessed attacks on Muslim and Christian places of worship and Muslim businesses. "SAPRI's aim is to make the people in this country aware of how damaging racial and religious disharmony could be," she explained.

The Opposition Leader was accompanied by UNP General Secretary Tissa Attanayake and MPs Mangala Samaraweera, Ruwan Wijewardane and Ravi Karunanyake.

A delegation from SAPRI, including former Ambassador Dhanesh Cassie Chetty and Muslim Peace Council chief Javed Yusuf accompanied the former President to the meeting.

A snub...

"Our letter requesting a meeting has not even been acknowledged so far," Kumaratunga told reporters following her discussions with the UNP delegation.

She added that meetings sought with Government ministers had also failed to materialise.

"We are grateful to have received such a quick date for a meeting with the Opposition Leader and the UNP" she said.