

# MODERATES ARE SCARED TO EXPRESS THEIR THOUGHTS: CBK

*'Feared Muslim domination a fallacy'*

BY LAKNA PARANAMANNA

HARMONY

As the only living former President/Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, I felt the responsibility to speak out in order to resolve the prevalent religious tensions in the country, Former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga said yesterday. Speaking to the media during the event held at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute to present the recommendations on 'Promoting Religious Harmony' by the 'Forum for Inter Faith Dialogue' (FOIFD), Ms. Kumaratunga said,

"I have remained silent for a long time because I get hammered by the government-run media whenever I make a comment on a current issue in the country, claiming that I have no right to do so. But I believe I have every reason to voice my concerns as I am a premier citizen of this country. So when I took up this cause I realised that most moderate Buddhists are frightened to talk due to fear of intimidations and the killings that are going

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on... ”

She stated therefore she realised that she did not wish to remain silent anymore and hence, worked in collaboration with the South Asia Policy and Research Institute (SAPRI) to establish



lish the 'Forum on Inter Faith Dialogue' (FOIFD). Ms. Kumara-

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The 'Forum for Inter Faith Dialogue' yesterday presented its recommendations on building religious tolerance and an inclusive society during an event held at the Foundation Institute. Former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga attempts to engage in a conversation with TNA Leader K. Sampanthan as Deputy Indian High Commissioner P. Kumaran looks on.

tunga also stressed on the importance for the people to be aware of a moderate point of view. "The moderates at the start were very scared to express their thoughts but they are now

beginning to be convinced of the need for another voice to reach the people. The masses have been concerned of the rumours that circulated on Muslims taking over Sri Lanka, their population increase etc. Although most didn't wish to believe these claims, they did not hear any other view either," she added.

Anunayake thero of Maha

Pic by Kushan Pathiraja

Vihara Vanshika Shiyampali Maha Nikaya Malwatta Chapter of Sri Lanka - Venerable Niyangoda Vijithasiri thera, The Anunayake Thero of the Amarapura Maha Nikaya - Venerable Kotugoda Dhammavasa thera, Colombo Archbishop Reverend Oswald Gomis, Moulavi M.R. Mahir and S. Kuhantha Sharma Swamy also spoke.