

M.D.H. Jayawardena

# Tiger among the felines

RAVI PRASAD HERATH

The progress of something lies on nothing but the contribution of the people of unique calibre - George Bernard Shaw

After J.R. there was none to take it further the generation that existed resembled to somewhat 'an apathetic bunch of intellectual rulers that lay amidst 'deceitful politics' if one would quote.

J.R. while he was alive, however believed that there was more to take further what he had firmly and prosperously built to be carried forward thus he wrote all his properties to the public and said that I have no generation to protect, no legacy to safeguard and nor do I have any lord or leadership waiting to be crowned with reigning glory.

## Mesmerised

Although J.R. mesmerised his story of the past through relatively towards the Tudugala generation with great pride, it was once proclaimed by a UNP leader that it is from a generation of Thambi Madiyane (Muslims) that J.R. actually hailed from.

M.D.H. Jayawardena bearing no relationship to J.R.'s lineage whatsoever thus remaining to be just another Jayawardena, nevertheless was able to capture J.R.'s popularity and fame during his era in 1977 all the same in 1956.

"Today, the most dearly and beloved person is M.D.H.I have no doubt," Government Agent of Ratanapure Jolly Moriyoda -1956,11.07 Daily News. M.D.H. has further stated at the same meeting that the lapses on the part of politicians, people keep in mind and most of it is eventually released along with other information, yet the good the politicians do are buried under or soon forgotten similarly to the ballot box soon after the elections.

Although various oppositions and contradictions emerged later in the political era, M.D.H. was truly valued and highly appreciated by J.R. himself. Later on, realising that although the Land Reform Commission was being given a massive quantity of land extent yet it was not under proper management J.R. asked Bradman Weerakoon whether he was willing to take up duties as the Secretary concerning the plantation industry.

"I have knowledge in tea to a certain extent, towards which J.R.'s abrupt answer was that it is more than enough and further stated that he knew the best person to work with him referring to M.D.H. Jayawardena who was appointed Plantation Minister at the time.

Having closely worked with M.D.H., Bradman too stated that M.D.H. knew so much about the plantation industry as he himself had properties to call his own; also he was well versed with the procedures of a government as he had formerly been the finance minister.

He was very speedy in correspondence matters and was a man of few words, to have been able to closely work with someone who has been truly invigorating! Hewigam Korallaya, the home-town of King Rajasinghe the 1st who ruled the kingdom of Seethawaka also an area dampened by Duminda Silva's victorious battles of Mahinda Chinthana, that initiates alongside of Muller-

dered his services as an unofficial Magistrate before producing himself for the General Election in 1952.

## UNP Minister

M.D.H. was elected as the UNP Minister for the Horana electorate by a majority of 13,500 votes. In 1952, he was offered the deputy finance minister post during the era of Sir John Kotelawala.

Soon after Sir Oliver Goonetilleke was adjudged as the Governor, M.D.H. at the age of 39 was appointed the finance minister of the Ceylon Government. He was also the youngest finance minister for the Commonwealth Federation it was believed.

Jayawardena who engaged in massive task of developing diversifying ways of the Horana district which was one of the biggest electorates thus thereby initiated upon many public services of high standards class housing project and so forth.

M.D.H. was defeated by the existing electorate of Kotla-wa in 1960, nevertheless in 1965 he was reelected and back on his feet again by defeating Robert Gunawardena. The Emergency Care Unit of the General Hospital was a historical building constructed by M.D.H. Jayawardena who was the health minister at the time (during the era of Dudley Senanayake) and it was this ECU that saved many a lives injured by force strikes that has been taking place within the country ever since.

It was M.D.H. who took over with great determination the position of General Secretary which was rejected by many in 1956 when the UNP was all out and at a dead loss land held the respective position from 1958 up until 1972 similarly to Ranjita Vicerine taking over the position of General Secretary at Sirisiksha considering J.R.'s adjuce at a time when UNP strong pillars were shattered apart.

M.D.H. was not a man eager for any high title, fame or status. In fact, he was a man who faced many a hardships struggling to expedite the International Development Project known as the Colombo plan, towards the best interests of the South-East Asia that he had to face much of a critical situation challenging the world bank so to say.

"The Finance Minister of Ceylon Government M.D.H. Jayawardena arrived at Ottawa and Washington and took up his appointment as the Governor of the Reform and Development Bank of International Monetary Fund on 24th Sept. 1954 and from there he will proceed towards Ottawa thus will take up duties as the Head of the Advisory Committee for Ministers to be scheduled for 04th October" (1954 - Observer).

M.D.H. was in the practice of using his future plan as an election propaganda at each election held.

An extract of his philosophy is as follows: "The duties



or enforced, hastily it has however been dealt positively during the past years; the policy which was evident in 1953-54 budget- Which is developing the economy while keeping the financial standards stabilized. This policy was taken ahead even during the period 1954-55. The main highlight on this aspect was the entire expenditure of the government to somehow be controlled and balanced making sure that it does not exceed the annual income- the loans taken.

During the short period I held my position as the Minister of Finance I managed to participate in several highly distinguished international meetings thus thereby was enabled to give the international leaders the sense of true perception of our country. We managed to receive support from the World Bank towards Lakshapana Hydro-Power. Furthermore we were able to gain membership of International monetary Fund through same.

We have received facilities towards the economy centre also specialized and technical advice towards our general development projects. We have also been granted Financial and Technical support under the Colombo Plan. During this period locals in large scale are benefited by free education abroad achieving professional qualifications in terms of administrative aspects, police training, medical and health services, nursing techniques, science sectors, agriculture, internal affairs, technical skills, irrigation development and so forth in many diversifying ways.

Also foreign professionals arrived in Sri Lanka to provide advice and training to locals on diversifying aspects pertaining to many commercial aspects."

## Fulfilled

M.D.H. fulfilled all what he promised during his election campaign, thus as the finance minister it is hereby stated a few of his accomplishments towards the betterment of the country:

- 1) 150,000 of land extent was duly developed and distributed among 30,000 families.
- 2) 33,000 acres of land extent in Gal Oya valley was diverted towards standards suitable for farming purposes.
- 3) 120,000 acres of land extent which was reserved in terms of expansion was duly distributed among 100,000 families.
- 4) Preparation of 25,000 acres of land extent in terms of agricultural products towards commercial purposes thus thereby setting 7000 of family units.
- 5) 120,000 acres of land extent distributed among middle class families.
- 6) By way of improving the small scale domestic industry investing sum of 15,531,000 towards the government handloom industry thus thereby offering employment opportunities for 25,000 workers.

J.R. had in M.D.H. did not break pertaining to matters concerning the organisational aspects of the party.

## Pleaded

The Bentara-Epipitya by-election was also entrusted on him. When M.D.H. was just about to leave to Bentara for an election campaign, a voter came to him arriving hastily at M.D.H.'s residence at Paulukka and pleaded saying that his father has been admitted to hospital and needs surgery and as such he needs a letter to be given to the doctor.

Towards which M.D.H.'s reply was I don't do such things and that it is inappropriate to hand out a letter to a doctor and that he needs to look into some other means although he was the health minister at the time.

The man left saying that he will never ever come to see the minister again. After a while M.D.H. realising that he has done something very wrong, sent for him through one of his workers and he was found to be seated in the bus, refusing to come saying that I will never ever go to that place again.

On hearing this M.D.H. was quite disheartened and drove to this person's residence and went to the hospital with him and took care of everything and it was then he proceeded to the Bentara-Epipitya by-election.

It was the lamentable destiny of not only M.D.H. Jayawardena but all who followed him; the period soon after the exaltation of receiving 5/6th of the power when Romnie de Mel was presenting the third budget of the UNP. By that time due to the policies M.D.H. held in his own unique way towards the government service, government servant and on tax policies of a country he completely disagreed upon Romnie de Mel's mathematical solutions.

This time the budget has been recovered by the international funds together with the Employees Provident Fund and also the fact that he had not catered for contingencies as such he was rebelliously accusing Romnie de Mel.

The daily wage of 14 lakh food beneficiaries is only Rs.10 and it should be increased to Rs. 15, he said. Romnie de Mel has poked his hand to the foot of the Money Pipe, he humorously added.

Romnie de Mel was taken aback by this harsh statement. Parliament Affairs Minister M. Vincent Perera addressed the gathering, said that M.D.H. has violated the collective responsibility while de Mel made J.R. aware of the critical situation.

M.D.H. on realising that he was out of the track and realising the depth of the situation immediately stated that the speech delivered was with good intention and he would clarify once more on certain aspects at the Parliament and thus thereby will solve whatever inconvenience it had accidentally caused the government, he stated.

Towards which J.R.'s reply was that he is left with no other alternative but to proceed on the decision that M.D.H. should no longer remain as a Member of the Cabinet. Similarly to the Greek philosopher Socrates who had to swallow poison due to his outspoken attitude, M.D.H. who had been debating the budgetary proposal for one hour and 20 minutes, resigned from his post.

"M.D.H. on meeting me at his office this very next day