

# Political campaign grows bitter on Sri Lanka

United Press International  
COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — With less than a week to go before Sri Lanka's eighth general election, the two main political camps are in the midst of a bitter campaign that reflects recent events in neighboring India.

Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, leader of the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom party, and Junius Richard Jayewardene, head of the opposition United National party, have been touring every nook and corner of this 25,000-square-mile island nation by car and helicopter to pound home their differing views of the Indian elections and their parallels in Sri Lanka.

Former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay have become such a big issue for next Thursday's elections that Mrs. Bandaranaike and her son Anura — who is also contesting for a seat in parliament — are stoutly defending the Gandhis.

Jayewardene says the situation here is exactly the same as that which prevailed in India before the April elections that toppled Mrs. Gandhi's regime. He claims that autocratic rule by the Bandaranaike clan, in a manner reminiscent of the Indira Gandhi clique, with the big jobs in government and government corporations going only to the clansmen, has antagonized the people.

Bribery and corruption, Jayewardene says — again drawing a parallel — are rife among government parliamentarians and members of Mrs. Bandaranaike's Freedom party.

He accuses Anura of behaving like a crown prince, going about the country escorted by police bodyguards — just as Sanjay did in the Indian campaign that led to disaster for himself and his mother.

Mrs. Bandaranaike counters with claims that Jayewardene has insulted all womanhood by attacking an illustrious lady such as Indira

Gandhi. And Anura says now that Mrs. Gandhi's Congress party has been defeated, prices of food and other essentials have again begun to rise in India.

Another big issue in the elections is turning out to be the high cost of living and the shortage of milk for children. The United National party is capitalizing on this issue, comparing the prices of food and textiles when it was in power from 1965 to 1970 with present prices, some of which are almost 200 per cent higher.

Mrs. Bandaranaike, forced on the defensive, blames the hikes on price

trends in the world market and focuses her economic pronouncements on development. She repeatedly refers to her government's completion of the first stage of the massive Mahaveli Sri Lanka's longest river Development Project, through which it has been able to irrigate thousands of acres of rice land in the water-starved zone.

Mrs. Bandaranaike has the backing of the country's largest newspaper chain, the Lake House Group, which was put under government control by Anura.

The United National party is being supported by the Indepen-

dent Newspaper Group which was allowed to reopen only about eight months ago after Mrs. Bandaranaike lifted the state of emergency clamped down during a youth uprising six years ago. It was closed down by Mrs. Bandaranaike about four years ago because it was critical of her government.

Mrs. Bandaranaike, who entered politics with a soft feminine image after the 1959 assassination of her husband, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike — then prime minister — has toughened considerably in her 18 years of political battle. Recently she warned, "I know what to do

with that independent newspaper group when I return to power."

She has also proved calculating in withholding some of the privileges of national campaigning from her opposition. Jayewardene has now been refused a helicopter for electioneering by the Sri Lanka Air Force whereas until recently he was provided one on payment of charter fees. Mrs. Bandaranaike, however, continues to use an air force helicopter for her campaigning.

Jayewardene protested to Mrs. Bandaranaike. His telegram read: "It amounts to an election offense if

you use government-owned property for election purposes and deny its use to members of other parties who will pay for the use of these aircraft."

It has been a keenly fought election, with the full might of govern-

ment machinery being thrown against a formidable opposition. Observers said the election here that rocked India could be decided just how close the parties are.

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