

NEWS

Muthukumar triggers off mood of defiance in Tamil Nadu

ABOUT a hundred thousand people, including college students from all over Tamil Nadu, cadres of various pro-Eelam political parties, women organizations, mediapersons and members of the public participated in the funeral procession on January 31 Tamil Nadu journalist Muthukumar, who burnt himself to death in front of the Shastri Bhavan, the Indian Central Government's Chennai Head office two days earlier.

Muthukumar, from Thoothukkudi, who wrote for Pennea Nee feminist magazine, doused himself with petrol and set himself afire, condemning the futile visit by Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who failed to stop the war in Sri Lanka and save Eelam Tamils.

Before he died, he distributed a distributed a 4-page statement in Tamil (see separate translation) that addressed the people of Tamil Nadu directly and set out the reasons for his actions.

The Liberation Tigers saluted the sacrifice of the 26-year-old.

"The LTTE salutes the sacrifice of Muthukumar, who carried the emotional message of the 70 million Tamil Nadu people against the genocidal war by the Sinhala chauvinism in Tamil Eelam," said the condolence message from LTTE Political Head B. Nadesan.

The uprising of Tamil Nadu people has shaken the conscience of the global humanity, Mr. Nadesan said and added that the Heroic Tamil Son Muthukumar would have a permanent place in the global Tamil history.

The intensification of student uprising as an aftermath of his sacrifice has made the state government to close colleges indefinitely, reports a journalist from Tamil Nadu.

Muthukumar's mortal remains were placed on a decorated and modified hearse at 3:00 p.m.

Law college students turned pall-bearers and carried Muthukumar's coffin to the hearse.

The vehicle carried the photographs of Muthukumar along with that of LTTE leader Pirapaharan.

Apart from public unrest, tension and street violence, the deeper manifestation of the changes wrought in the Tamil Nadu psyche by the actions of Muthukumar were in the open public defi-

ance of the Government of India ban against the LTTE, which the people demonstrated carrying LTTE flags, placards and images of Pirapaharan in the funeral procession.

It took eight hours for the three-kilometer long procession to traverse a mere distance of six kilometres from Muthukumar's sister Tamilarasi's home in Kola-thur to the Moolakoththalam cremation ground.

All shops in the district had downed their shutters as a mark of solidarity.

Members of the public welcomed the procession and saluted Muthukumar's sacrifice by lighting torches.

College students from all over Tamil Nadu, and members of the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam (PDK), Revolutionary Youth Front (RYF), Revolutionary Students Front (RSF), and other Tamil organizations took part in the procession.

Prominent Tamil nationalist leaders Vaiko (General Secretary, MDMK), Thirumavalavan (President, VCK) and Nedumaran (President, Tamil Nationalist Movement) and leading film personalities like Bharatiraja, Cheran, Seeman, Maniratnam, Selvamani and Mansoor Ali Khan took part in the procession.

Also present were the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State General Secretary Tamilsai Sounderajan, Traders Union President T Vellaiyan and Tamil National Alliance MP Srikantha.

Tension prevailed when hoardings of Sonia Gandhi, Jayalitha and Karunanidhi were torn; and wall-writings displaying their names were damaged by the youth taking part in the rally.

Heavy police and paramilitary presence could do nothing to dampen the courageous spirit of the students.

Slogans raised in the meeting were in support of a separate Tamil homeland Eelam, and in praise of National Leader Pirapakaran and the Tamil Tigers.

For the first time in recent years, such a public display of the Eelam flag and Pirapakaran's photograph has taken place in Tamil Nadu, a journalist taking



Thousands attended the funeral of Muthukumar, which also saw pictures of the LTTE leader and LTTE flags flying, in defiance of the Indian proscription on the organisation

part in the event observed.

Even before the funeral procession entered the cremation ground, news reached the students that the Tamil Nadu Government had ordered indefinite closure of all colleges and hostels.

This led to students vigorously voicing their protests and venting their anger by raising anti-government slogans and threatening dire consequences if the ruling class failed to respect their sentiments.

As a result of their frustration, law college students spontaneously protested by sitting in the mid-

dle of the procession and blocking the roads.

They vowed to prevent the funeral from taking place until the government paid heed to their demands.

This stalled the procession by two hours.

Only after they were cajoled and convinced by several leaders, they agreed to allow the procession to move.

The funeral procession carrying Muthukumar's body entered the Moolakoththalam cremation ground at 10.30 p.m. The last rites were performed subsequently.

At 11:10 p.m. his funeral pyre

was lit by his father Kumaresan.

Condolence speeches were made at the Moolakoththalam cremation ground itself.

Political leaders Vaiko and Thirumavalavan eulogised Muthukumar and saluted his bravery in their fiery speeches.

Veteran CPI leader Nallakannu, Traders Union President T Vellaiyan and director Cheran also spoke on this occasion.

The last of the speeches ended at exactly 12.07 a.m. on Sunday.

About five thousand people stayed in the burial ground till the end of this tense and teary ceremony.