



The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) mourns the loss of Rajavarothiyam Sampanthan MP (Federal Party, Trincomalee District). Mr Sampanthan was one of the most illustrious and impressive parliamentarians of our republican age, who adorned Parliament with his scintillating oratory and considerable legislative ability.

In his 47 years as a Member of Parliament and public servant he dominated the proceedings of Parliament-on the floor of the House, in Committee and outside. His mastery of historical and policy detail; his fluency in all three languages; his knowledge of our parliamentary customs, procedure and the Commonwealth origins and heritage of our Parliament's history; his chairing skill over committees; his genial but firm ability to work with both fellow Members as well as parliamentary officials and civil servants made him an exemplary legislator. Over time, the rhetorical idiosyncrasies on his feet on the floor of the House, became the stuff of legend.

His elan was reminiscent of an earlier era of our legislature, now 191 years old. During the devaluation of Parliament in the period of the current presidential constitution, Mr Sampanthan was among a handful of parliamentarians who kept our traditions and idiom of parliamentary politics alive. Only few had the facility he had, to draw from Erskine May, Bryce, Dicey and Burke, as well as Jennings, Duraiswamy and Molamure for precedents. For this we must forever be grateful to him.

Mr Sampanthan was an indefatigable defender of the Tamil people as the leader of his party. He was one of the most articulate and intelligent defenders of the Tamil nation, its homeland and its right to internal self-determination in the form of a federal Sri Lanka. With his linguistic and cultural felicity, however he loved and delighted in the company of the communities in Sri Lanka. He was a true exemplar of a plural and united Sri Lanka. He served Parliament and our country as the Leader of the Opposition from 2015-2019 and was latterly recognized as the Father of the House, having been first elected in 1977 and never having lost his seat.

He was a friend of CPA and many members of CPA, actively participating in our activities both in the country and abroad, over many years. He was a superb raconteur, lunch and dinner companion, sharing (often rather long) stories with knowledge, wit and wisdom, with impeccable timing of the born story-teller. He had a healthy sense of humour and enjoyed being teased (within limits).

In his passing we have lost a patrician politician to whom civic duty was all. We have lost a great Sri Lankan of our times.

Our condolences go out to the members of his family and all those who like us, admired and appreciated the man.

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