



President Mahinda Rajapaksa addressed a massive rally at Kurunegala on January 16.



The President visited Malwatta and Asgiriya chapter temples. Here the President with Chief Incumbent of Malwatta Viharaya Ven. Tibbotuwawe Sri Suman-gala Thera and Chief Incumbent of Asgiriya Temple Ven. Udugama Sri Buddhakkhitha Thera.



# President confident of people's mandate

ASELA KURULUWANSE and BANDARA PILAWALA

President Mahinda Rajapaksa said he is confident that the people will once again grant him a unique mandate to enable him to establish a country free from racism and malice after abolishing the pact between Sarath Fonseka and Sampanthan which has the hall-marks of separation of the country. The President was speaking at a ceremony at President's House in Kandy last Friday.

A large number of traders, artists and UNP supporters were also present.

The President said: "When I took over office as President there was a divi-

**“ We were able to finish the war which lasted for 30 years in four years. I used the executive powers to ban the LTE and abolish the secret pact they had entered into. We are always against the country being divided ”**

sive agreement in the country. The terrorists had boasted of an army, police, courts and a bank system. They had also issued national identity cards.

"We also led a government which could not appoint even its own Speaker in Parliament.

"I spoke to Ranil Wickremesinghe and asked him to support for the common good of the country. He forgot Sri Lankan politics and

was engaged in international politics. He was in Norway during the final stages of the war. Some people tried to stop aid to Sri Lanka. However we overcame all these challenges and fought the war to the finish.

"Some say that they have kept a room ready for me at Bogambara prison. I wish to ask them one question. Are they trying to imprison me for what I have done to

develop the country," President Rajapaksa said. "We carried forward the war against terrorism despite several sacrifices. Even my family members faced innumerable threats," he said.

The President said: "The TNA put forward their conditions to support me. These demands included self-rule and merger of the North and East. We could have readily acceded to these conditions without waging war for 30 years. I rejected them outright. I then asked them if they submitted these demands to the other candidate. They replied in the affirmative and said he agreed to meet them. However, they said it was of no use since I would be the winner.

"We were able to finish the war which lasted for 30 years in four years. I used the executive powers to ban the LTE and abolish the secret pact they had entered into. We are always against the country being divided. Sarath Fonseka's policy statement has diluted the unitary status of the country. We rejoined the country that was split into two. People will never allow that to happen once again. We don't want persons like Hitler, Idi Amin or Polpot in our country, the President said.

Land Development and Ransawiru Welfare Minister Johnston Fernando, and Power Minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage also spoke.



President Mahinda Rajapaksa participated in a religious ceremony at Thirukkovil Murugan Temple in connection with Thai Pongal celebrations. He later addressed the gathering at Thirukkovil. Ministers Vinayagamurti Muralidaran and Ferial Ashraff were also present.



President Mahinda Rajapaksa opened a new swimming pool funded by the Tarunayata He'tak program and a sports pavilion at Dharmaraja College, Kandy on January 16. Principal S.M. Keerthirathne presented a memento to the President. Ministers Keheliya Rambukwella and Chief Minister Sarath Ekanayake were also present. Here the President with the Principal.



A section of the massive gathering braving the rains at President Mahinda Rajapaksa's Kurunegala rally



President Mahinda Rajapaksa addressed leaders of the Kandy district SLP women's organizations at President's House, Kandy on January 16.



President Mahinda Rajapaksa addressed a large gathering at the Akurana junction on January 15. Ministers D.M. Jayaratne, Keheliya Rambukwelle and Mahindananda Aluthgamage, Deputy Minister Faizer Musthapa, Central Province Governor Tikiri Kobbekaduwa and Chief Minister Sarath Ekanayake were also present. Pictures by Kamal Jayamma, Sudath Silva and Chandana Perera