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Ceylonese Officials Implicated in Bandaranaike's Assassination

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[New Prime Minister Dahanayake's government will be seriously weakened and possibly deprived of its slim parliamentary majority as a result of a government party official's arrest on 14 October in connection with the inquiry into former Prime Minister Bandaranaike's assassination. The official, a prominent Buddhist priest and member of the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom party's executive committee, allegedly knew in early September of plans to assassinate Bandaranaike.]

[The latest issue of a publication which was the Sri Lanka Freedom party organ under Bandaranaike implies in a front-page story that Prime Minister Dahanayake and at least six other prominent figures were implicated in the assassination. Public suspicion of top government involvement will be intensified by the close association of the arrested priest with several cabinet ministers and by the simultaneous arrest of the brother of one of these ministers. The growing suspicions may force the implicated cabinet members to resign from the government. On the day prior to the arrest, three government members reportedly asked Prime Minister Dahanayake to request the resignation of Minister of Local Government Vimala Wijewardene because of her well-known association with the priest. The three members also requested an emergency meeting of the government parliamentary group and suggested dissolution of parliament and new elections if necessary. Dahanayake apparently is considering having the cabinet decide whether the implicated ministers should take leave pending the outcome of investigations.]

[Should the issue become the subject of heated public debate or should Dahanayake attempt to protect the suspected members, some of his parliamentary support may defect to avoid being identified with the controversy. Senior cabinet member C. P. de Silva reportedly arranged to meet on 14 October with Dudley Senanayake, leader of the moderately conservative United National party. De Silva's move suggests that his irritation over not being named Bandaranaike's successor, together with the deepening cabinet rift, may provoke him to seek alignment with conservative opposition elements.]

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