

SC grants leave to proceed in rights petition

by Rodney Martinez

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The Supreme Court has granted leave to proceed in a fundamental rights petition filed by Miss Surani Sahabandu, the only daughter of slain deputy commandant of the STF Upali Sahabandu, claiming she was denied admission to the Medical Faculty of the University of Colombo, although obtaining the highest marks for eligibility under the criteria reserved for the children of the armed forces.

The Bench comprised Justices R. N. M. Dheeraratne, A. S. Wijetunga and Dr. Shirani Bandaranayake.

The petitioner is G. A. Surani Sahabandu of BR6F2, Manning Town Flats, Martha Road, Colombo 8. She has cited Prof. S. Thilakaratne, Chairman, University Grants Commission, the Vice Chancellor of the University, R. K. Chandrananda de Silva, Secretary, Ministry of Defence, IGP Lucky Kodithuwakku, Prof. Bertram A. Bastianpillai, Ombudsman and the AG as respondents.

The petitioner states she is 20 years old and the

only child of the late Upali Sahabandu, Deputy Commandant of the Special Task Force (STF) and Mrs. Cecilia Sahabandu.

The late Mr. Sahabandu was killed whilst on duty by a bomb attack in Amparai in December 1996.

The petitioner pleads that she has qualified for the bio-science stream of obtaining a total aggregate of 282 marks offering zoology, botany, chemistry and physics for the Advanced Level examination in 1997.

She also pleads that several students have gained entry to the university, under the criteria of 'Armed Force' with the highest marks obtained being 201 while the petitioner has received 282 marks.

The petitioner states that the callous and discriminating actions of the respondents have caused the petitioner great pain of mind especially in view of the fact that her father sacrificed his life for the country.

Romesh de Silva, PC with Hiran de Alwis appeared for the petitioner.