
Sri Lanka on verge of defeating terrorism - Hillary Clinton tells President Rajapaksa

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The US Secretary of State Mrs. Hillary Clinton acknowledged that Sri Lanka is now on the verge of defeating terrorism, and that this presented a great opportunity to restore peace, leading to reconstruction and rehabilitation in the country. These observations were made when Mrs. Clinton spoke to President Mahinda Rajapaksa by telephone this evening. The telephone discussion which was warm and cordial was originated by the US Secretary of State, who initially expressed her condolences for those killed in the terrorist attack at Akuressa earlier this week. She stated that terrorists should not be permitted to destroy the lives of people in such manner. Speaking on current developments, Mrs. Clinton appreciated the assurances given by Secretary Defence that civilians would not be subjected to any attacks by the military, stating that the US looked forward to working with Sri Lanka once the current conflict ends. President Mahinda Rajapaksa thanked Mrs. Clinton for the condolences expressed for those killed in last Tuesday's terrorist attack, and informed her of the situation regarding the ongoing humanitarian operations by the security forces, to defeat terrorism in the north of Sri Lanka. He said there were about 50,000 to 70,000 people still remaining in a very small area held by the LTTE, where the LTTE was preventing the people leaving for safety outside. The Government hoped to clear the LTTE from this enclave within the next few days, the President told Mrs. Clinton. He also said the people who had managed to come over to government held areas were being looked after in welfare villages. The government was regularly sending food and medicines to all persons in the affected areas, including those held by the LTTE, with the assistance of the ICRC and the World Food Program. In the conversation, President Rajapaksa noted that the LTTE had fired on a ship carrying food for these civilians two days ago, but the government was continuing to send supplies despite these obstacles by the LTTE. President Rajapaksa told the US Secretary of State that reconstruction and rehabilitation in the north would start as soon as the fighting ended there. He also told Mrs. Clinton of the political process that had been initiated through the All Party Representative Committee seeking consensus on a political solution to the problems of the minorities. He also told the US Secretary of State that the Government was prepared to hold elections to local government bodies in Jaffna as soon as possible, and that he looked forward to working with the elected representatives of the people of the north in the near future. Mrs. Clinton said she was thankful that the long conflict in Sri Lanka was coming to an end, and that the United States looked forward to working with Sri Lanka in the building of peace. Courtesy: defence.lk