
Rajapaksa committed to devolution: Manmohan

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Special Correspondent In a letter to Karunanidhi, he also refers to condition of Tamils in island nation CHENNAI: Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa “very recently affirmed his commitment to a devolution package, which he said would fully satisfy the Tamils,” Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said in a letter to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi.

“He [the Sri Lanka President] has also said that steps in this direction are being initiated immediately. We may wait and see what steps area actually taken,” said the letter dated March 19, a copy of which had been released to the press. Dr. Singh, who recalled the efforts of the Union government on the issue, said New Delhi had urged Colombo to fulfil its commitments to the Tamils in that country and come up with a proper devolution of powers to the provinces. “We have indicated that this should also include assurances of equality and equal rights for Tamils, as is the case for other citizens of Sri Lanka,” he said. Dr. Singh noted that “the plight of thousands of innocent Tamils, who have become unfortunate victims of the on-going conflict, is indeed pitiable. There are, in addition, thousands of others outside the war zone who live in makeshift camps, where conditions are hardly any better,” he said. Field hospital Engagement with the Sri Lankan authorities was on at different levels and one outcome of the multi-level engagement was the establishment of a field hospital. “Contacts are being maintained at several levels, including at the very highest level…Our concerns regarding the plight of Tamils were explicitly reiterated. Certain suggestions to ameliorate their conditions were proposed; the most important being an offer to set up a field medical unit/hospital to cater to the civilians and internally displaced persons evacuated from the war zone. The Sri Lankan side has responded enthusiastically to our offer. The field hospital has been set up and is functioning well.” India had repeatedly stressed the need to temporarily stop the war. “We have consistently proposed a temporary cessation of hostilities, which could be utilised to facilitate the movement of the Tamil population out of the war-affected areas to the safety zones, where proper rehabilitation facilities could be arranged,” he said. Personal touch Adding a personal touch, Dr. Singh said he had resumed work after his recent surgery and hoped that Mr. Karunanidhi was well on the road to recovery. “Tamil Nadu and India require your services for many more years to come,” he said.Courtesy: Hindu.com