
President Rajapaksa meets Tamil and Muslim political party leaders

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By Ravi Ladduwahetty in Colombo Colombo (Asiantribune.com): President Mahinda Rajapaksa last night assured eleven minority political parties that their democratic rights will be restored soon. In wide ranging discussions at a meeting which commenced at 6.30 p.m. and lasted over two and a half hours, President Rajapaksa had given this assurance. Following a request from the minorities as to whether Local Government elections could be held in the Vanni District, the President had assured that he will respond to the request following his consultations with the Commanders of the Security Forces. "I will assure you that the democratic rights of all the minorities of the North will be restored soon”, the President told all minority political parties present, barring the TNA which ducked the meeting claiming and alleging that there was a humanitarian crisis and they could not attend the meeting until and unless the issues were sorted out. Tamil political parties had also expressed concern about the civilians who were trapped by the LTTE in the combat zones to which the President had said that all essentials including food and medicine had already been sent by the Government for 300,000 persons. The President has also told all these parties that he wants to have a continuing dialogue with them. The major part of the discussions was centred round the civilians who were trapped in the LTTE areas and concern was also expressed by the political parties as to what type of assistance was offered to the sick and the wounded. The President responded by saying that he had directed the health authorities to provide all the medical assistance required to the sick and the wounded. He said that the Government was conscious of the fact that the trapped civilians were also Sri Lankan citizens and that all assistance was provided without any discrimination. Commenting on the absence of the Tamil National Alliance at the meeting, President Rajapaksa said that the meeting was meant for all political parties who had concerns for the minorities and who represented them and that he thinks that the absence of the TNA suggests that their interest was not on the Tamil people but some one else, an obvious allusion to the LTTE! The Government delegation led by President Mahinda Rajapaksa to the talks comprised Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, Leader of the House and Minister of Healthcare and Nutrition Nimal Siripala De Silva, Minister of Human Rights and Disaster Management Mahinda Samarasinghe, Presidential Advisor and UPFA National List MP Basil Rajapaksa, Minister of National Integration Vinayagamoothri Muralitharan (alias Karuna) and Eastern Province Chief Minister Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan (alias Pillayan). The minority political parties represented at the meeting were: Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), the Ealam People’s Democratic Party, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), People’s Liberation Organisation of Tamil Ealam (PLOTE), the Ceylon Democratic Unity Alliance, the National Congress, the National Unity Alliance, The Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal, (TMVP), the Up Country People’s Front (UCPF), the Democratic People’s Front (DPF) and the Padmanabha Ealam People’s Revolutionary Front. - Asian Tribune - Courtesy: Asiantribune.com