
A ceasefire would only prolong the war – President

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By Nadia Fazlulhaq President Mahinda Rajapaksa has ruled out the idea of a government declaration of a ceasefire in the North, saying such a step would only give the LTTE an opportunity to drag out the war for another 25 years. The President was addressing, via satellite, yesterday's annual convocation of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL). In his address, President Rajapaksa invited all those in the legal profession to join the government in the nation-building process. "Our government and our armed forces will uphold humanitarian standards," the President said. "Our security forces are under strict orders to avoid harming civilians. Security forces personnel are risking their lives to protect civilians held hostage by the LTTE. Our economy has also been held hostage by terrorism." President Rajapaksa said every lawyer in the country should commit to helping the less privileged members of society. He made a personal appeal to lawyers to provide legal services free from time to time, and to charge the less affluent affordable fees. He said the country's legal professionals had a responsibility to maintain the highest standards of their profession. A lack of English should not be a barrier for any village student who wanted to pursue a career in law, the President said. He also emphasised that judicial independence should be maintained at all times. The Bar Association's 35th convocation saw the appointment of several senior officers for year 2009/2010. Attorney-General and President's Counsel Mohan Peiris announced the appointment of W. Dayaratne as president of the association. This is the second time Mr. Dayaratne has been elected president of the BASL. In his address, Mr. Dayaratne said two of his goals as president for the coming year would be to build office complexes for lawyers and set up a computer laboratory at the BASL headquarters. He said the association would organise a variety of programmes for the benefit of its outstation members. Titus Manatunga was appointed deputy president of the BASL, U. R. de Silva secretary, and M. U. M. Ali Sabry treasurer. Other speakers at the convocation were Justice Asoka de Silva and Court of Appeal president Sathya Hettige, PC. Courtesy: sundaytimes.lk