Government firm against Special Envoy – Sri Lankan President tells UK premier Brown

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The request by British Prime Minister Gordon Brown for a pause in military action was deemed as unnecessary by President Mahinda Rajapaksa considering the unexpected exodus of 35,000 civilians to the cleared areas from the No Fire Zone (NFZ). This was said by President Rajapaksa during a telephone conversation initiated by the British Prime Minister, yesterday – April 20.

President Rajapaksa observed that this movement of civilians had evoked a completely new situation and he had instructed that additional consignments of food, medicine and other essentials be dispatched to these civilians are now sheltered. He explained that the people took to fleeing to the cleared areas amidst shooting and other forms of intimidation by the LTTE, now holed up in the NFZ. Subsequently by evening hours, another 5,000 people had moved out of the NFZ along the beach front to the North, he said. President Rajapaksa pointed out that he has a responsibility to take care of the welfare of these civilians and is committed to providing the required facilities and conditions. He assured the British Prime Minister that these displaced persons would be re-settled in their areas of habitation within the shortest possible time, following the clearance of landmines, which is being done with the assistance of the UN, and when the environment is secured. He also referred to the need for infrastructure development in Kilinochchi and other areas that had been under LTTE control all these years. With regard to the political process, President Rajapaksa outlined that once terrorism has been eliminated, political proposals in terms of the Sri Lankan agenda, which are at present being formulated will be presented. He elaborated that already steps had been taken to implement the 13th amendment to the Constitution. He hoped that the Tamil National Alliance which had hitherto rejected his invitation to participate in political consultations would participate in this process in the near future. The President also explained to the British Prime Minister that he envisages the holding of Local government elections in the district of Jaffna within the next two months.

On inquiry by Prime Minister Brown with regard to the status of his Special Envoy to Sri Lanka, President Rajapaksa informed that Sri Lanka’s position on the non-acceptability of the said appointment remained unchanged. The President stated that this situation had been further compounded with the participation of the appointee at a Conference held in London recently where it was resolved to establish a sovereign state of Tamil Eelam, which is the doctrine of the LTTE, and the remarks he had made therein. He stated, however, that in deference to the traditional warm relations between the two countries, that while there is a standing invitation from Sri Lanka to the UK for a high level visit, a cross-party parliamentary delegation could also undertake a visit for which the timing could be worked out through diplomatic channels.Courtesy: News.lk