
Lanka rules out any talks with defeated Tigers

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Shamindra Ferdinando The LTTE couldn't be party to any future political dialogue with Sri Lanka, authoritative government sources told The Island. Sources emphasised that President Mahinda Rajapaksa's government wouldn't accept Velupillai Prabhakaran as a party to any settlement. Nothing could be as ridiculous as allowing the LTTE representation in the proposed negotiations after it had lost its so-called conventional fighting capability, sources said.

Sources said that a statement issued by the US State Department on Sunday on behalf of the Tokyo Co-Chairs to the Norwegian-led peace initiative had revealed their failure to comprehend the ground reality. The US while urging the LTTE to hand over arms to a neutral third party, urged Sri Lanka to offer an amnesty to the LTTE to the majority of LTTE cadres and devise a resettlement plan to pave the way for a political dialogue. The US hasn't identified the third party. Sources said that the involvement of a third party was out of the question. The US statement coincided with an LTTE declaration of unilateral ceasefire which was immediately rejected by the Defence Secretary. The 58 and 55 Divisions continued operations yesterday on the Mullaitivu front as the government stepped up its efforts to wipe out the LTTE leadership. The 58 Division is poised only 3.5 km away from the place where Prabhakaran is believed to be hiding, highly placed sources told The Island. Sources said that it wouldn't be advisable to allow any foreign representatives to meet LTTE leaders as the possibility of their being taken hostage by terrorists couldn't be ruled out. Sources said that the LTTE would do anything to force the Sri Lankan government to suspend the offensive and if they believed taking foreign dignitaries could help their cause, they would do it, sources said. Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa told The Island that the army was on the verge of finishing off the LTTE. Responding to our queries, he said that the LTTE now on its knees on the Mullaitivu front was trapped in a about a 10 sq. km area. He said that the LTTE had lost the vast majority of its arsenal over the past two and half years after and there was absolutely no need for a third party to take over what was left of the LTTE's arsenal on the Mullaitivu coast. Tamil political party sources said that the LTTE had always been against the government talking with any other group except it. Sources said that when the so-called sole representative of the Tamil speaking people had its way, it demanded the overall control of any mechanism to run a merged north-east province. Rajapaksa, formerly of the Sri Lankan Army, emphasised that the LTTE had its chance to negotiate with the government and come to an amicable settlement. But it had refused to negotiate as long as it had the wherewithal to challenge the armed forces, he said, strongly opposing any effort to throw a lifeline to the group. He said that since the army stormed the civilian safe zone, over 111,000 men, women and children had escaped the LTTE controlled area and reached safety with the government forces. Senior serving armed forces officials told The Island that continuing attempts to halt the offensive was evidence of Prabhakaran's presence in the civilian safe zone. The LTTE leadership is believed to be still in touch with various foreign governments through their agents both in Colombo and overseas in a bid to work out an escape route. Sources said that armed forces had taken additional measures to thwart any attempt to rescue the LTTE leader, his intelligence chief Pottu Amman, Sea Tiger leader Soosai and other hardcore cadres. As part of these measures, jets had been positioned at a base closer to the Mullaitivu front, the sources said, adding that the LTTE leadership couldn't make a move without being quickly detected. The SLAF has also stepped up surveillance by UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) targeting the area of operations while the navy patrols the Mullaitivu coast. The army said that about 50 LTTE cadres had surrendered to the 58 Division after troops last Saturday (April 26) liberated Valayamadam, a village situated about six kms away from the last LTTE stronghold at Vellamullivaikkal. The army said that their progress was slow due to the presence of civilians. Had all civilians escaped the area dominated by the LTTE, what is left of the group entrapped north of Mullaitivu wouldn't last 48 hours. Courtesy: asianewsnet.net