
Sri Lanka ready for devolution to Tamil areas

Thursday, 21 May 2009

Last Updated Thursday, 21 May 2009

Colombo (PTI): With LTTE out of its way, Sri Lanka on Thursday assured India that it will implement a law for devolving powers to Tamil-dominated areas as both the countries agreed on the need for a lasting political solution to the ethnic conflict. The assurance was contained in a joint statement issued after National Security Adviser M K Narayanan and Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon met President Mahinda Rajapaksa here, three days after LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran was eliminated and the country was declared free of terrorism.

Sri Lanka and India agreed that with the end of the military operations, the focus should be on issues of relief, rehabilitation, resettlement and reconciliation, including a permanent political solution in Sri Lanka. Mr. Menon told reporters after the meeting that Sri Lanka appeared willing to go beyond the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord which for the first time set up a devolution plan for the ethnically-divided nation. "Our discussions were within the framework of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace agreement. The President is not only willing to implement the 13th Amendment (set up under the Rajiv Gandhi-Jayawardene accord) but is willing to go the extra mile," he said. Mr. Menon and Mr. Narayanan, who arrived here on Wednesday, had a breakfast meeting with the President at his 'Temple Trees' residence. The two also met with senior officials and Basil Rajapaksa, President's Senior Adviser, Lalith Weerathunga, President's secretary and Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa. The two envoys said the Sri Lankan Government outlined a 180-day plan to resettle the tens of thousands of civilians who were displaced due to the fighting between the security forces and the LTTE. India was willing to cooperate closely with the Sri Lankan side in reconstruction and rehabilitation as well as demining of areas for resettling civilians in their towns and villages. The Sri Lankan side said that India had offered support for the huge reconstruction effort and was keen to ensure that civilians returned from the camps for the internally displaced persons at the earliest. Both sides emphasised the urgent need to resettle the IDPs in their towns and villages of habitation and to provide them necessary basic and civic infrastructure as well as means of livelihood to resume their normal lives at the earliest possible. To this end, the Government of Sri Lanka indicated that it was its intention to dismantle the relief camps at the earliest. Courtesy: Hinduonnet.com