Elections to be held in Lankan areas freed from LTTE: Envoy

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New Delhi (PTI): With war in Sri Lanka's north coming to an end, the Mahinda Rajapaksa government is planning to hold provincial elections in the Tamil-dominated areas freed from LTTE control, a step which India has been repeatedly underlining.

"Our country is now free of terror. The president (Mahinda Rajapaksa) has already made it clear that the concerns of Tamil diaspora will be addressed. We will hold provincial council elections in the northern region," Sri Lankan High Commissioner C R Jaisinghe told PTI here on Thursday. To press his point, he pointed out that Sri Lanka had already held provincial elections in the country's east in last May after LTTE rebellion ended there. "A young gentleman (S Chandrakanta) from the Tamil community who renounced the ideology of LTTE was elected the chief minister of the province," the envoy said. As the war came to an end with the killing of LTTE chief V Prabhakaran, India has been pressing Sri Lanka to undertake devolution of powers giving political powers to Tamils and hold provincial elections in the Tamil-dominated areas freed from the rebel control. Asserting that LTTE is "no more", the Sri Lankan envoy said his country "appreciates" India's assistance to the displaced Tamil civilians in the aftermath of the ruthless war. India has prepared a Rs 500-crore rehabilitation package for the displaced people in Sri Lanka. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had already announced a Rs 100-crore relief package for Lankan Tamils in addition to the Rs 25-crore aid given by the Tamil Nadu Government. When asked whether it will now give access to Rights agencies to the northern region, Mr. Jaisinghe maintained that "specialised agencies of UN have always been permitted to carry out relief operations there." Meanwhile, All India Anti-Terrorist Front Chairman M S Bitta met the Lankan High Commissioner "to appreciate the tremendous efforts of Rajapaksa whose emboldened decision brought down LTTE and killed its leader Prabhakaran who assassinated former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi". Mr. Bitta said a delegation from his organisation will travel to Colombo to present an award to Sri Lankan President for the feat. Courtesy: hinduonnet.com