
US Deputy Secretary of State appraised on the current situation of Sri Lanka

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Colombo, 04 June, (Asiantribune.com): Foreign Minister Bogollagama briefed the newly appointed US Deputy Secretary of State, James Steinberg, on the current situation of Sri Lanka at a meeting last week on the sidelines of the 8th Shangri - La Dialogue in Singapore. He explained to Mr. Steinberg the latest political developments in the country and thanked the US Government for its assistance and cooperation in combating terrorism.

The Minister elaborated on the support extended by the US with regard to money laundering by LTTE activists, proscription of the LTTE by the US in 1997, sharing of intelligence and prosecution of certain LTTE offenders by the US law enforcement authorities. He also highlighted the holistic security dimension of the country in the aftermath of the defeat of the LTTE. He pointed out the fact that defeating the terrorist group was a "home-grown" operation. He spoke of the recent visit of the UN Secretary General to Sri Lanka and the efforts taken by the Government on the 180 day program for the rehabilitation and resettlement of IDPs and referred to the assistance given by the UN system and INGOs. Foreign Minister Bogollagama emphasised that the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord on devolution of power would be implemented in the form of a 13th Amendment plus plan. He stated that Sri Lanka wished to have a wider and more comprehensive engagement with other countries in the post-conflict era. He added that the Tamil political leaders in the country today have greater freedom after defeating terrorism. Deputy Secretary Steinberg stated that the US understands the challenging tasks Sri Lanka is confronted with and complimented the devolution process. Minister Bogollagama stated that it would be vital for the US to disseminate information on the post-conflict development process. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister touched upon other important issues such as maritime security and the safety of sea lanes in the region. He stated that both the countries are members of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) where issues of maritime security and piracy are currently being addressed as high priorities. He further stated that Sri Lanka is the current Chair of the SAARC and would assume the Chairmanship of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) next month. These initiatives would obviously enhance the position and the profile of Sri Lanka both regionally and internationally. - Asian Tribune - Courtesy: asiantribune.com