
Navi Pillai makes talks difficult for Sri Lanka

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By Dianne Silva Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe said the newly appointed United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillai was making it difficult for Sri Lanka to engage in dialogue with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

“Her statements have not made it easier for us to gather the support of the people of this country to work closely with her office, which I want to do, or facilitate a visit to Sri Lanka,” Minister Samarasinghe told the Daily Mirror. The Minister also said these sentiments had been expressed to the High Commissioner at his meeting with her in Geneva recently, while expressing his hope that matters would improve in the future. “I said you are not helping us to facilitate a programme by your office where you could compliment the efforts of the government to promote and protect the Human Right of its people,” he said. The Minister said however these matters Sri Lanka needed to work towards a closer relationship with the High Commissioner and the High Commissioners Office. The Human Rights Minister also stressed on the fact that although the establishment of an office of the High Commissioner was not warranted, the activities of the High Commission within Sri Lanka were in no way being hampered. “I made it clear to her that an Office of the High Commission of Human Rights was not warranted in Sri Lanka at the moment. There is a senior advisor representing the High Commissioner’s Office working within the ambit of the UN country team and sending regular reports to the High Commissioner’s Office. We have not stopped any of this just because Ms. Navi Pillai made some unwarranted and subjective comments about Sri Lanka,” the Minister said. Mr. Samarasinghe also said India had stressed the importance of Navi Pillai accepting the outcome of the special session. “The Indian permanent representative took the floor and reminded the High Commissioner that as much as she welcomed the special session on Sri Lanka it was also incumbent on her to respect an inter-governmental decision and also welcome the outcome of the special session. The Indian representative didn’t do this on the prompting of Sri Lanka but he was speaking on principle,” the Minister said. The Human Rights Minister revealed there was suspicion within the members of the Human Rights Council with regard to the activities of the High Commissioner’s Office and was calling for greater transparency within this office. “There is a feeling among a lot of key players that there should be greater transparency in the High Commissioner’s Office. That we should know as to where the funding is coming from, on what basis this funding is being obtained, whether there is a reporting obligation tied to this funding, whether there is a monitoring system which is put into place and whether information is shared with the selected countries and not the entirety of the membership,” the Minister said. Courtesy: dailymirror.lk