
President who won the war can also win the peace - Manmohan Singh

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President Mahinda Rajapaksa had won the war against the LTTE and its terrorism, and can now win the peace. His enormous talent should help solve the long drawn out issue in Sri Lanka permanently, said Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to the Sri Lankan President yesterday.

These sentiments were expressed when the two national leaders of India and Sri Lanka met for bi-lateral discussions shortly after the conclusion of the 15th Non Aligned Summit at Sharm El Sheik, Egypt, yesterday (16). The Indian Prime Minister said he had the highest confidence in President Rajapaksa's capability in resolving the tasks presented in the post-conflict situation in Sri Lanka, as he had a clear vision of what had to be done in the current situation. The discussions between the two leaders covered a wide range of issues of mutual interest such as the IDPs in the North, proposals for devolution of power and a political solution in Sri Lanka, the issue of fishermen in the waters north of Sri Lanka, the current Development in the North and East, and continued cooperation between India and Sri Lanka. President Rajapaksa assured the Indian Prime Minister that the Government was taking all steps to keep to its target of re-settling the IDPs in 180 days, which programme was first announced to the high level Indian officials who visited Sri Lanka for exchange of views shortly after the defeat of the LTTE. The government was keen to expedite the process of resettlement and rehabilitation, but had to also be conscious of the need to ensure the safety of these citizens, especially from land mines and other dangers, as well as provide them with the necessary infra-structure facilities and new livelihood opportunities. He also explained the priority being given by the government to development activities in the North and East, with special impetus on development of the North, in the context of the enormous losses suffered by the people of the North under terrorism, and the lack of any progress in development activity in areas that were once held by the LTTE. Sri Lanka saw both the North and East as new areas for economic development, with the many opportunities available for investment, now that they had been cleared of the grip of terrorism. The possibility of Indian investment in these areas, mutually beneficial to the two countries, was discussed with the objective of further exploring the opportunities that are now being worked out. Both leaders were agreed on the need to prevent conflict involving the fishermen of the two countries in the waters North of Sri Lanka, and the need for humanitarian approaches in dealing with this matter. On the issue of a political solution to the current issued in Sri Lanka, President Rajapaksa restated in Lanka's policy of moving ahead with implementing of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which had not been fully implemented so far, mainly due to the obstacles placed by the LTTE, although it had at first agreed to its provisions. The government was looking forward, with a great degree of confidence, to obtaining consensus among all sections on the proposals envisaged in this regard. In discussing the need for reconciliation among the communities in Sri Lanka, after the separatist terrorist war that lasted thirty years, President Rajapaksa said moves had already been initiated in this regard with his calling an All Party Committee on Development and Reconciliation. He expressed satisfaction that this committee had a very large representation, including that of the Tamil National Alliance, whose representatives had said they are now prepared to be partners in the progress of Sri Lanka. The process of reconciliation was being actively pursued on many fronts, with the need for inclusive policies for political and economic development. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that India would continue to give all support to ensure the early resettlement and rehabilitation of the IDPs in the North. President Rajapaksa thanked India for the understanding it had shown in the need to defeat the terrorism of the LTTE, the assistance it had already given in bringing relief to the IDPs, the offer of continued support in this regard, and for the strong support extended to Sri Lanka in the Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. It was also agreed that both countries continue with the periodic contacts at a high level to ensure good understanding between the two countries on matters of mutual interest. The Indian Prime Minister invited President Rajapaksa to visit New Delhi at the earliest opportunity for the further strengthening of good relations between the two countries, which invitation was reciprocated by President Rajapaksa to Dr. Manmohan Singh. (President's Media Unit) Courtesy: news.lk