
Sri Lanka and Fiji seek wider areas for bilateral exchanges

Tuesday, 22 September 2009

Last Updated Tuesday, 22 September 2009

Foreign Minister Bogollagama proposed that Sri Lanka and Fiji seek wider areas for bilateral exchanges in human resources in the fields of legal and medical services and technical cooperation, in keeping with Sri Lanka's policy of a more Asia centric focus on international cooperation, when the Foreign Minister of Fiji, Ratu Inoke Kabuabola called on him today (21/09) in New York. The Fijian Foreign Minister was thankful for the six Sri Lankan judges who had been recruited to serve in Fiji when their Chief Justice had visited Sri Lanka. They exchanged views with regard to the procedure of processing the Continental Shelf applications which both Sri Lanka and Fiji have filed and underlined the need to seek a fast tracking of this process.

The two Foreign Ministers also discussed the envisaged way forward following the suspension of Fiji from the Commonwealth. In keeping with the position President Mahinda Rajapaksa has advocated for Fiji, Minister Bogollagama informed that Sri Lanka took the position that countries should not be punished by exclusion from international platforms and groupings and underscored the imperative need to address national issues in accordance with domestic compulsions whilst respecting international norms which includes a realistic time frame. He observed that while the Fiji interim government was unable to fulfill the bench marks of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), the undertaking that engagement would continue with the Commonwealth, demonstrated and acknowledged the intended cooperation by Fiji which was gratifying. Foreign Minister Bogollagama opined that Fiji should be seeking in making changes to its political agenda to create political pluralism through Constitutional reforms in a timely manner. The Fijian Foreign Minister conveyed the appreciation of his Prime Minister for the understanding of the situation in Fiji which was reflected in the position taken by Sri Lanka during the recent deliberations of the CMAG and this issue. We explained the difficulties in meeting the time lines established by CMAG in respect of reactivating the political dialogue of the leaders and the elections to be held by 2010. The Fijian Foreign Minister informed that the interim government is seeking to initiate a national dialogue with the participation of the countries citizens. Further, it is his Government's wish to ensure socio-economic reform prior to the holding of elections which would take at least three years. He referred to the interim government seeking bring about reforms on land use and the Constitution in order to bring about a system of equality to both the indigenous people and Fijian Indians. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Colombo 21 September 2009