

British Foreign Secretary calls defeat of LTTE a massive achievement for GOSL



Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama who is on a two day visit to the UK had talks with David Miliband, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs yesterday [05 June 2009]. Foreign Minister Bogollagama said that elimination of terrorism from Sri Lanka has paved the way to take the political process forward as well as holistic engagement with the international community and his first visit to the United Kingdom is a part of such a process. While extending warm greetings to the Sri Lankan Minister, Foreign Secretary Miliband stated that after the conclusion of 28 years of armed conflict now the time was now opportune to reflect on the basis for rebuilding and reconstructing of the war ravaged areas of Sri Lanka. He said that the defeat of the LTTE was a massive achievement by the Sri Lankan Government and none in the British Government would shed any tears for these terrorists.

Foreign Minister Bogollagama at the outset outlined the Government of Sri Lanka's priorities as being to keep improving conditions of the Internally Displaced People (IDPs), resettle the displaced at the earliest which would be an integral part of the reconciliation process. The Minister also briefed his UK counterpart in detail on the situation in the welfare centres where around 300,000 IDPs are being housed. He recalled that after the visit of Foreign Secretary Miliband that the conditions and the functioning of the welfare centres are being consistently reviewed and improved. As for the immediate challenges Foreign Minister Bogollagama stated that it is the policy of the government to re-settle the IDPs for which a programme is being initiated termed as 180 days.

On the question of accessibility to the welfare centres by the UN and other Non-government organisations, Foreign Minister Bogollagama briefed his counterpart that a total of 52 agencies are currently engaged in providing humanitarian assistance.

The involvement of the Sri Lankan community abroad as in the UK was deemed to be imperative and Minister Bogollagama outlined that a programme is being put in place with a view to obtaining the involvement in developing the north and east provinces. He said that agitations by the diaspora need to be turned to an inclusive process in solving their concerns.

Further Foreign Minister Bogollagama briefed Foreign Secretary Miliband on the political process, while underscoring the importance of it having to be inclusive. The Government of Sri Lanka is working closely with the other Tamil political parties to strengthen the democratic alternatives he said. In this connection the Foreign Minister briefed the progress achieved by the APRC process and explained the devolution model under the 13th Amendment of the constitution.

Having inquired on the progress of de-mining process which is fundamental for the re-settlement of IDPs, Foreign Secretary Miliband offered further British expertise to assist the de-mining.

Responding to the question on the status of UK's Special Envoy, Minister Bogollagama stated that the position of the Government of Sri Lanka remains unchanged.

The Minister recalled the longstanding and deep rooted bilateral relations with the British Government and outlined the necessity for a strategic partnership between the two countries subsequent to the elimination of terrorism from Sri Lanka. He further said

that it is in this spirit he undertook his visit to the United Kingdom.

Permitting the international network of the LTTE to continue its activities abroad unabated would result in this organisation existing in exile and thereby its resurgence cannot be discounted warned Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama when he met Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in London earlier yesterday (05 June 2009).

He referred to the many front organisations operating in the UK continuing to espouse the cause of carving out a separate state from the territory of a sovereign nation. The Minister pointed out the need for the British Government to discourage the Sri Lankan origin community in the UK to pursue such an objective as it has proved to be futile. He observed that agitating for a separate state was a misnomer on the part of some of the misguided elements of this segment of the community and that with their skills they could seek to give a leadership to the north both on the economic and political fronts. Lord Malloch-Brown pointed out that this component of the diaspora is from the middle class and having a radical agenda, to the point of idealising the terrorist group as a liberation movement. He agreed to assist in seeking out the Sri Lankan origin community in the UK, in the commencing of a dialogue with the Government of Sri Lanka as an important part of the reconciliation process following the defeat of terrorism.

Lord Malloch-Brown acknowledging President Rajapaksa's unique strength and stated that it be seized at this juncture, which he was confident that the M Government would take the required action. Further they exchanged views on issues relating to the IDPs, the envisaged reconciliation process and the necessity for a well structured bilateral relationship with extensive engagement. They both agreed to work closely in the interest of the two countries.

Sri Lanka High Commission
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