

Sri Lanka and India focus on relief for IDPs



Sri Lanka and India are agreed that with the end of military operations in Sri Lanka, the time was opportune to focus attention on issues of relief, rehabilitation, resettlement and re-conciliation including a permanent political solution in Sri Lanka.

This understanding was reached when President Mahinda Rajapaksa met with the India Foreign Secretary Mr. Shiv Shankar Menon and National Security Advisor Mr. M.K. Narayanan at Janadhipathi Mandiraya, this morning (21).

The Government of India committed to provide all possible assistance in the implementation of a plan for early resettlement of IDPs in areas such as de-mining, provision of civil infrastructure and re-construction of houses. All these activities will be implemented in close consultation and co-operation with the Government of Sri Lanka

Here is the text of the Press Statement issues after the meeting:

“Mr. M.K. Narayanan, National Security Advisor and Mr. S. Menon, Foreign Secretary of India visited Sri Lanka on 20 and 21 May. They called on His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka and met with senior officials, including Hon. Basil Rajapaksa, MP, Mr. Lalith Weeratunga, Secretary to the President and Defence Secretary, Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa. They also interacted with a number of political parties in Sri Lanka.

Both sides agreed that with the end of military operations in Sri Lanka, the time was opportune to focus attention on issues of relief, rehabilitation, resettlement and re-conciliation including a permanent political solution in Sri Lanka.

Following their agreement of 26 October 2008, both sides have been co-operating in providing humanitarian relief and assistance to IDPs in Sri Lanka. This includes medical assistance in the form of a field hospital, urgently needed medicines and medical supplies as well as food, clothing and shelter material.

Both sides emphasized the urgent need to resettle the IDPs in their villages and towns of habitation and to provide to them necessary basic and civil infrastructure as well as means of livelihood to resume their normal lives at the earliest possible. To this end, the Government of Sri Lanka indicated that it was their intention to dismantle the welfare villages at the earliest and outlined a 180 day plan to re-settle the bulk of IDPs to their original places of habitation. The Government of India committed to provide all possible assistance in the implementation of such a plan in areas such as de-mining, provision of civil infrastructure and re-construction of houses. All these activities will be implemented in close consultation and co-operation with the Government of Sri Lanka.

Both sides also emphasized the urgent necessity of arriving at a lasting political settlement in Sri Lanka. To this, the Government of Sri Lanka indicated that it will proceed with implementation of the 13th Amendment.

Further, the Government of Sri Lanka also intends to begin a broader dialogue with all parties, including the Tamil parties, in the

new circumstances, for further enhancement of political arrangements to bring about lasting peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Policy Research & Information Unit
Presidential Secretariat of Sri Lanka.

21 May 2009