

NEWS

Tamil Nadu opinion poll calls for independent Eelam

AN independent Tamil Eelam is the solution to the Sri Lankan crisis, decided a majority of voters in a Tamil Nadu poll last week.

54.25% of the respondents said that they have always supported the Tigers and their goal of a separate Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka, in the results of a survey published in last week's Ananda Vikadan, which tops the circulation among weeklies in Tamil Nadu, said that

Although it is known that support for the Tigers is rising in Tamil Nadu, as seen from the large attendance of people, especially youths in meetings addressed by pro-Tiger leaders like Vaiko, the amount of support for the banned outfit, revealed in a survey conducted by a media group, which is considered respected for its neutrality is quiet stunning, reported The Statesman.

The fact that the magazine chose to publish the results showing support for a banned organisation is itself surprising, the Indian published Statesman publication noted.

The outcome of the poll and its appearance in an influential media, foretell shifting paradigms in Tamil Nadu scenario, assessed TamilNet.

Out of 12 issues raised by the weekly, 4 gained absolute majority opinions: India to retrieve Katchatheevu from Sri Lanka (65.76%), urging India to involve in Sri Lankan crisis (62.9%), independent Tamil Eelam as correct solution (55.44%) and support to LTTE (54.25%).

To a question on continuing the ban on the LTTE, 47.65% respondents wanted the ban to be lifted, while 27.43% were for continuing it.

The rest of the respondents said that the central Indian government should wait for some time before thinking of lifting the ban.

83 percent of the respondents held LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran responsible for the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi.

However, about 50% of those convinced of LTTE's hand in the assassination felt that Prabhakaran should be condoned, the survey claimed.

To a query on the growth of LTTE as an organisation with air capabilities, 46.24% of the people

felt that it was a matter of pride for Tamils, while only 18.59% said that it was dangerous for India's security. The rest did not have any opinion.

While 55.44% favoured a separate Tamil homeland for Sri Lankan Tamils as the only solution for the conflict in the island, 34.63% of respondents said that an autonomous state for Tamils within a federal structure would solve the problem.

Only 13.61% of the respondents said that the pro-LTTE stand of Tamil Nadu leaders like Vaiko and Nedumaran was dangerous, while 49.36% of them felt that it was correct.

About the stand of Tamil Nadu's leading DMK on the Sri Lankan issue, 47.48% said the ruling party should support the Tigers without worrying about losing its government, while 22.71% of the people said that the DMK should oppose the Tigers.

A considerable number of voters (43.14%) disagreed with LTTE's assassinations of dissenting Tamil politicians, while the remaining either felt that it was inevitable or that they were not in a position to pass a judgment.

Most of the respondents, 62.59%, favoured India's intervention in the conflict. An overwhelming majority of 79.28% favoured release of Nalini, convicted in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

The survey taken at a time when resentment against the Sri Lankan government was high due to the killing of Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan navy, found that a large number of people, 65.76%, supported the retrieval of Katchatheevu island, ceded to Sri Lanka, and 29.65% said the Indian navy should attack the Sri Lankan navy if Tamil Nadu fishermen were fired at.

On the fishermen issue, 34.89% of people favoured a dialogue with the Sri Lankan government, while 35.44% said that India should raise the issue at the international forum.

The weekly said that it approached 4195 people, selecting them from various areas and sections of the state.

As such, it asserted that it is a true reflection of the people's mood in Tamil Nadu about issues concerning Sri Lankan Tamils.



Pro-Eelam rallies in Tamil Nadu draw huge numbers, reflecting the popular support in the state

Sri Lanka doesn't have Tamils on side - India

TamilNet

SRI LANKA may win the battle against the Tamil Tigers but not the war as 'they haven't got the Tamil population on their side', India's National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan said in an interview with the Straits Times newspaper published Tuesday.

Saying India understands the Tamils, Mr. Narayanan asked of Sri Lanka, "Do they want a situation like many countries have faced?"

His comments come after a survey in a leading Tamil Nadu weekly suggested the majority of

people there support the LTTE and want Indian intervention in Sri Lanka.

"The (Sri Lanka Army) has made a lot of progress in the last few weeks. But even if they win the battle I am not sure they will win the war. I think they haven't got the Tamil population on their side," he said.

"I know the Sri Lankan government will be unhappy (at this advice) but we are not interested in preaching to them and that is the best advice they could get. India can give this advice better than the Norwegians or any other country."

"These are people that we

know, we understand. Do they want a situation like many countries have faced?"

"Obviously the Tamil Tigers have been weakened, they have met with heavier casualties than previously."

"What the Sri Lankans are not factoring in is the great deal of sullenness in the Tamil man. There are accusations of profiling even in Colombo."

"Our argument is: unless you give Tamils a feeling they have the right to their own destiny in many matters you will not succeed. LTTE's capacity to carry out terrorist attacks is not diminished."

'We always have support of the people of Tamil Nadu'

THE latest edition of the 'Ananda Vikadan', an influential weekly from Tamil Nadu, carried an exclusive interview with the head of the LTTE political wing, B Nadesan. Extracts of the interview follow:

What is the current situation in Sri Lanka?

The Sri Lankan government and the security forces have unleashed genocide on the people of Tamil Eelam in a never before seen scale. Tamil homeland is being subjected to aerial bombardment and artillery fires. Tamils are being killed everyday. There is severe shortage of food and medicine here. Sri Lanka thinks it can destroy the liberation struggle by starving the Tamils.

Over hundred thousand people have been displaced in recent times. Against all these odds, the LTTE is fiercely fighting for the liberation of the Tamils.

For how long will this struggle continue?

You cannot define timescales for liberation struggles. However, with the full support of the people we will soon win our freedom.

How is the international community viewing Sri Lanka and the LTTE?

The international community has a good understanding of Sri Lanka. Recently Sri Lanka was evicted from the UN Human Rights Council. Both the international community and human rights groups continue to voice

their concern relating to the continuing human rights violations in Sri Lanka. The international community also has a good understanding of our struggle. They recognise that ours is a legitimate struggle against oppression.

Has India's policy towards Sri Lanka changed?

Sri Lanka's diplomatic manoeuvres have always been detrimental to India. Sri Lanka continues to maintain historic links with forces against India. The foreign policies of Sinhala political parties have always been anti-Indian.

At present the war is moving towards a decisive phase. At this juncture, we are hopeful of a change in India's policy towards Sri Lanka.