

## NEWS

# Indian arrests, visa refusal to suppress Eelam support

SEVENTEEN lawyers and approximately 50 students were arrested for protesting against Congress party's support for the Sri Lankan state and its failure to protect Tamil civilians in the neighbouring island. The arrests came as All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary Rahul Gandhi, toured major cities in Tamil Nadu to rejuvenate the party at the grass-roots level in the state. On Wednesday September 10, approximately 50 law students were arrested in Madurai for demonstrating against Gandhi's visit to Tamil Nadu.

The students flayed Congress for being "indifferent" to the 'sufferings' of Sri Lankan Tamils and demanded the ban on LTTE to be lifted and India to recognise separate Tamil Eelam, police said.

On Thursday September 10, the day Gandhi was scheduled to arrive in Coimbatore, 17 lawyers were arrested by the police for staging a black flag demonstration over the visit Gandhi to Tamil Nadu, accusing Congress of failing to protect the lives and property of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The lawyers, carrying black flags, shouted slogans such as 'Rahul Go Back' and 'Do not enter Tamil Nadu,' near the District Court Complex.

At a press meeting held at Chennai, Gandhi was cornered by the media on the Congress government's lack of response to the plight of Tamils lodged in camps in Sri Lanka, according to local media reports. Answering a flurry of questions that bordered on accusing the Congress of inaction despite large scale civilian deaths in the island nation, Rahul vehemently denied the charge and said he and his family had always stood for Tamils' rights and maintained that India would not tolerate any violation of their rights, according to reports.

Frustrated at the unrelenting media, at one point, Gandhi was quoted as asking "What answer do you want?" and adding "I want to make something very clear. My family has always had utmost admiration and respect for Tamil people. My grandmother and my father were involved in this. We've deep sentiments for Tamil people".

"The government and the Prime Minister would not tolerate anything other than this."

"The central government is applying as much pressure as possible on the Sri Lankan government. Congress wants the rights

of the Tamils guaranteed. There is absolutely no question about it. We will do everything to protect them," he was quoted as saying.

Gandhi did not make any specific comments on the internment of 300,000 internally displaced Tamils in camps.

However, responding to Gandhi's comments Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) leader V Gopalswamy (Vaiko) said that Gandhi was ignorant of the plight of Tamils and his assurance has come too late for Tamil refugees.

"Rahul Gandhi stated that the Indian Government would not let down the Tamils. Already the Indian government has enabled them (Government of Sri Lanka) to disseminate (divide and isolate) the Tamils. So, Rahul Gandhi, I pity him for his ignorance," Vaiko said.

Meanwhile, the Indian embassy in New York denied a visa to US-based humanitarian worker and a critic of the Sri Lanka government, Dr Ellyn Shander to travel to New Delhi to address the Delhi Tamil Sangam on 20th September, the Deccan Chronicle reported.

"Her [Shander's] Indian host M.Natarajan, Chennai-based political activist and husband of Sasi-kala, close friend of AIADMK leader Jayalalithaa Jeyaram, has accused both the Central and state governments of curbing free speech in the country," the paper said. Natarajan organised a series of meetings in Chennai, Bangalore, Coimbatore, Madurai and Delhi till Sept. 20 with Shander as main speaker, the paper added.

Natarajan said that the Chennai police had denied permission to conduct an indoor meeting with Shander as the guest on September 16. "We have moved the Madras high court against denial of permission," the paper said quoting Natarajan.

Shander told TamilNet that she will protest against the visa cancellation. "My only hope and desire is to see the Tamils of Sri Lanka liberated from the hell of the concentration camps. They are being brutalized, killed, raped and deprived of even basic human rights, by their own government, all because they were born Tamil in Sri Lanka," Shander told TamilNet, adding, "The Indian government has the ability to be a shining example of humanitarianism and save the Tamils of Sri Lanka. India will then go down, on the right side of history."



Indian's nuclear missile programme landed it in trouble with the international nuclear community, and now India says it is willing to share this knowledge, which is contrary to non-proliferation agreements

## India to share nuclear technology with Sri Lanka

INDIA is willing to share its nuclear technology with Sri Lanka for power generation using Thorium as the main source of energy according to Sri Lanka's Science and Technology Minister Tissa Vitharana.

The news of India's willingness to share nuclear technology comes as both countries are in the process of finalising a joint venture to build coal power plant at Sampur in Trincomalee.

Professor Vitharana told the Daily Mirror newspaper on Friday, September 4, India is prepared to support Sri Lanka with setting up a nuclear power plant and that he had requested IAEA support for the project.

Professor Vitharana also told the paper he had invited Indian nuclear scientists to conduct a feasibility study on the use of Thorium deposits - said to be found in abundance along Sri Lanka's southern coastal belt - as a source of nuclear energy for power generation.

"I had fruitful discussions with the Indian delegation in Geneva when I attended the IAEA's annual sessions recently. They are prepared to assist us in utilizing Thorium as a source of energy for a future nuclear power plant and to share the necessary technology as India has successfully developed the use of Thorium for nuclear power generation," Prof. Vitharana told the Daily Mirror.

He said the feasibility study would include such matters as cost effectiveness, safety in use of nuclear material and safety in waste disposal and added that he had spoken to the IAEA request-

ing its support for the project.

He said India had successfully developed a pilot plant using Thorium instead of Uranium and were now on the verge of commissioning a major nuclear power project with Thorium as the source of energy.

"While we could get the benefit of the new technology developed by India to utilize Thorium as a source of energy, we also need to conduct a proper survey to determine the full extent of Thorium reserves in Sri Lanka. This will be a part of the feasibility study before a final decision is taken to determine whether we turn to nuclear energy to supply power to the national electricity grid," Prof. Vitharana said.

He said with the world in the throes of a fuel crisis because of increasing demand and diminishing fuel resources, Sri Lanka too would confront major problems in obtaining sources of energy and added that with the defeat of the LTTE, the need for economic development and the reduction of poverty have become major problems for the government.

"This cannot be achieved without adequate and affordable energy and power supply. At present, most of the income derived from the export of tea and rubber is spent to import petroleum products," Prof. Vitharana said.

He said this situation would get much worse in future and it was essential for Sri Lanka to explore the possibility of utilizing locally available fuel resources.

The Alternative Energy Division of the Science and Technology Ministry together with the

Sustainable Energy Division of the Power and Energy Ministry have been promoting alternative sources of locally available energy resources for power generation -- mini-hydro power plants, wind, solar and bio-gas.

But these sources cannot completely replace fossil fuel. The 'Inter Ministerial Committee for Generation of Bio-Fuel' set up by the Science and Technology Ministry explores the possibility of increasing the use of bio-fuel like Ethanol and Bio-Diesel (Jatropha) for vehicles.

"It is essential to have a major source of energy for the electricity grid in the future. More and more countries are now turning to nuclear energy as a suitable additional source for supplying the electricity grid considering it will take at least 10 years after the decision is taken to develop nuclear energy before it can be generated," Prof. Vitharana said.

Meanwhile an Indian delegation arrived in Sri Lanka to finalise the paper work for a proposed coal power project at Sampur. According to Sri Lankan government sources the paperwork is expected to be completed by October this year.

The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) of India has invested US\$500 million in the power project to be launched as a joint venture with the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) with both parties to be equal partners.

Whilst India is funding the Sampur power plant in the eastern province, China is funding a similar project at Norochcholai in Northwestern province.