

NEWS

Vaddukkoaddai...

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tive government of the diaspora, standing for the global unity, cultural identity, development and global status of the diaspora. The move for this government needs not to bother about anyone in proclaiming the independence and sovereignty of Eelam Tamils in the island and requesting a mandate from the people in the diaspora.

Self-determination, as it is understood in contemporary times is a vague term when applied to people or ethnicities. According to UN charter 1(2), self-determination is interpreted as existing only in state-to-state relationship. Legally, it protects only states.

"Self-determination does not entail the right to be independent, or even to vote for independence" (Geoffrey Robertson, Penguin 2008, p165).

"International law provides no right of secession in the name of self-determination" (Rosalyne Higgins, Peoples and Minorities in International Law, 1995, p33).

"At best, the people's right to self-determination connotes the right of all citizens to participate in the political process, but this gives power to majorities and not to minorities (Robertson, *ibid*).

The diaspora needs to seriously peruse and correct the course of any proposal that stops just at self-determination.

The Tamil National Alliance in the island, operating under constraints of Colombo and India, should not on its own, denounce the independence and sovereignty of Eelam Tamils and should not agree for experimenting anything other than a confederation with the right to secede, is an opinion strongly felt in the diaspora.

Emerging Tamil politics needs to act with far sight. The present scenario of geopolitics is not going to remain the same. The

national aspiration for independence and sovereignty, which is a hard reality for Eelam Tamils today, may also get re-defined. In any future possibility of shared sovereignty, either regionally or globally, the Eelam Tamils should be able to find their niche smoothly without again facing the tragedy they have undergone for ages.

It is with sadness most of the Eelam Tamils look at a few Marxists among them, especially of the former 'Peking Wing', who denounce separate nationalism for Eelam Tamils. The Marxist Communist Party of India also has adopted a similar line.

It is hard to understand that if national liberation of Eelam Tamils oppressed on ethnic grounds and 'Eelam' as a political unit is not acceptable to them, in what way the united Sri Lankan nationalism and Sri Lanka as a political unit upheld by them is ideologically justifiable. While viewing Tamil national struggle as serving imperialism, they practically serve the very imperialism by weakening the struggle.

Ironically, many Sinhala Marxists see justice and recognise the Tamil national struggle in the island.

The Marxists contributed immensely to the social progress of Eelam Tamils in the past. They have a duty in structuring and strengthening the Tamil nation further, through achieving social equality. The democratisation of politics is an atmosphere conducive for them, but they should not deprive Tamils getting their contribution by keeping Tamil national liberation as an untouchable topic, by not participating in it and by not recognising that their goals can be better achieved by accepting Tamil nationalism as a unit to apply their progressive ideas and shaping it at home and in transnational governance.



Lynn Pascoe, the UN envoy to Sri Lanka visited the internment camps in which Tamils civilians are being held and says the government is not making sufficient progress in plans to allow the people to return to their homes and that freedom of movement in the camps is insufficient

Investors cautious ...

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project in Colombo late last year. The hotel chain declined to comment.

"Economic investments that we thought would come are not, for the moment, coming because of the global financial crisis," Dissanayake told The Associated Press during a recent trip to Mumbai to rally investor interest.

The government is increasingly looking to Asia to underwrite an economic recovery.

"We feel as a small developing country that our investment will be more heavily coming from China and India. Their companies are aggressive and bullish on out-bound investment. And we have

good political relations," Dissanayake said.

He said he's gotten a "very positive" reception in Asia, but so far just one big project has kicked off since May: a \$75 million luxury beach resort near the north-western town of Kalpitiya, to be managed by Thailand's Six Senses hotel group.

Mohan Weragoda, chief executive of Inventures Pvt Ltd., an investment advisory firm based in Colombo, said he's working on foreign investment deals worth \$250 million with several Asian companies he declined to name because negotiations are ongoing.

Last year his firm brought \$40 million in foreign investment into Sri Lanka, he said. "The country

needs large projects and they wouldn't have come when the war was going on," he said.

Milan Zatakia, chief executive of Millennium AeroDynamics Pvt. Ltd., an airport design, operations and logistics firm based in Mumbai, said he hopes to help upgrade and expand Sri Lanka's airports, some of which are in former conflict areas.

Zatakia said he's been approached by a half dozen hedge funds, which he declined to name citing confidentiality agreements, who are interested in funding his expansion into Sri Lanka.

"There's a crying need for infrastructure in our part of the world and there's money available for it," he said.

Missing the enemy ...

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sympathizers. However, there are reports that the IDPs are being relocated from one camp to another - from the Menik Farm camp complex to "transit" camps elsewhere in the north and east. Clearly the "decongestion" of the Menik Farm complex, which houses double the number of human beings it was built to accommodate, is being prioritized on account of the onset of the monsoon at the expense of the freedom of movement of our fellow citizens. A case in the Supreme Court taken by the Centre for Policy Alternatives and this columnist in the public interest on the rights of the IDPs is still to be concluded, on way or another.

Other aspects of the situation

of the IDPs relate to the legal status and fate of those who have been identified as LTTE cadres, supporters and sympathizers, access and basic facilities. Other human rights issues that are the focus of international concern are the Tissainayagam verdict, the expulsion of the UNICEF spokesperson James Elder and the fate of UN workers held by the regime.

Human rights issues are stubborn ones. They will not go away. They cannot be dealt with by denial, bravado, defiance, conspiracy theories or neglect. Moreover they are indubitably in the national interest and to the detriment of no one other than the perpetrators of violations. At the same time, foreign policy cannot be conducted through allegation

and counter allegation, shrill incoherence and what increasingly looks like incomprehension and incompetence. Most importantly governance cannot be served or sustained by conflict and conspiracy, fear, paranoia and insecurity. We are part of an international community. Human rights and the international community have to be dealt with maturely, responsibly, constructively.

Surely this is not beyond a regime, which enjoys such unprecedented popularity?

This is surely not the time for enmity, but for peace, reconciliation and unity to realize the full potential of this country and capitalize on the military defeat of the LTTE.

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of her background. Initially though she made a comment that was news to me. Most of the food, dry rations and other essential needs of the IDPs are provided by UN agencies and NGOs she said.

It is not GoSL but these organisations that foot the bill; the work in the camp is done by NGO volunteers and GoSL's expenses, other than paying for the military, are small. Nimalka's main grouse however was framed in these questions. "Do mothers have the right to take a fevered child to hospital? Can a woman who is bleeding seek emergency medical help?" The questions are rhetorical, the answers obvious. Why must the military be in control of the camps, why not civilian agen-

cies? Herman Kumara of the Fishermen's Welfare Association was quite pointed in his repetition of the question on many people's mind. Why can't visitors enter the camps? Why are journalists barred? Why are international agencies kept out? Why is it taking the courts so long to make a straightforward order to allow members of parliament to visit the camps? As Mangala added "I can walk into any prison at will and meet any criminal, but I am not allowed to meet these people held in detention for no reason." The reasons offered for this paranoid secrecy varied from the need to hide human rights violations to calculations relating to the upcoming elections. I think it will be some time before the real reason comes seeping out.