



Press Release

The leader of the Opposition and the Tamil National Alliance R. Sampanthan along with TNA Spokesman M.A. Sumanthiran met with the visiting Australian Foreign Minister Hon. Julie Bishop today at the residence of the Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka.

Hon. Sampanthan briefed the Foreign Minister on the current situation of the Constitutional making process and highlighted the fact that both UNP and SLFP must work together at this crucial time to overcome barriers and obstacles that are threats to the process. He also emphasized the fact that this country never had a Constitution based on national consensus. This is an opportunity to frame a Constitution based on national consensus which should not be missed.

He cautioned that if these efforts fail there will be consequences which will have an adverse impact on the country. Sampanthan pointed out that a Constitution based on national consensus is vital for the economic development of the country, failure in framing such a Constitution will add more economic burden to this country he said.

Stating the TNA's position Sampanthan said, "We don't want a Constitution that divides the country, but a Constitution that will address the root causes of the national question and eventually be a resolution to the same, and we are committed to working on these lines to frame a new Constitution" he noted. He further said, "We are confident that if the UNP and the members of SLFP in the present government work together we can achieve this task and eventually it will be approved by people at a referendum".

TNA spokesman Sumanthiran highlighted that people generally will go along with the opinion of their political parties on the new Constitution, therefore, it is very vital that the two main parties agree on these process to see a positive end.

Speaking on the key issues faced by the Tamil people in post war context TNA leader expressed that though certain steps were being taken by the government to address some of the issues the processes have been very slow. Government's inaction and slow progress in some of these matters have been the main reason for our people to lose hope he said.

Citing examples, he stated that the delay in repealing of PTA despite government's commitment to the International community remains a major concern. Likewise, the release of political prisoners, issues related to missing persons and the release of the civilian lands are issues faced by the Tamil people which could have been resolved without delay. He also noted that it is 8 years since the war came to an end yet our people are not able to resume their normal life, and people are frustrated over these delays. "This cannot continue and the Government must take immediate steps to address these issues and find proper solutions to the same" he stressed.

Australian Foreign Minister Hon. Julie Bishop confirmed Australia's continuous support to Sri Lanka in implementing the reconciliation agenda and in the Constitutional making process. In addition, she also assured that she will highlight these key issues when she meets with the Prime Minister today.

Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka His Excellency, Bryce Hutchesson along with other officials were present at the meeting which lasted over forty-five minutes.

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