
LEFT PARTIES OF UPFA FOR DEVOLUTION

Sandun A. Jayasekera

The combined Socialist Alliance (SA) yesterday strongly supported the appointment of a Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) as a means of finding a lasting solution to the North-East conflict and said the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) report could be used as a launching pad to start talks.

Lanka Sama Samaja Party leader and senior minister Tissa Vitharana told a media conference that it was sad to see some members of the government and the opposition having a misconception that development alone could resolve the longstanding ethnic conflict.

“They think an ethnic conflict does not exist in post war Sri Lanka and the problems of Tamil-speaking people, can be resolved by constructing a road or a culvert,” the minister said.

He said no country could achieve sustainable development without peace and harmony among the people and where Sri Lanka was concerned peace and harmony among all ethnic groups would come only through genuine power devolution. “The Tamil people must be convinced that they are part and parcel of good governance,” the minister said.

He said the alliance expected to talk to the constituent parties of the government and the opposition about the PSC and urged them to take part in the PSC.

“Especially the United National Party (UNP) has a big role to play in this exercise. All parties must take part in the PSC discussions and they can leave if they feel it is a futile endeavour,” he added.

The minister warned that extremists both in the government and the opposition may attempt to disrupt the functioning of the PSC and added that administrative, financial and political power must be devolved to the grassroots level using the ‘Gam Saba’ as the base.

He said the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has received an overwhelming mandate from the Tamil-speaking people and should participate in PSC discussions with an open mind now that it was not a proxy of the LTTE.

Communist Party General Secretary and senior minister D.E.W. Gunasekara said President Mahinda Rajapaksa had gone on record saying he would accept whatever recommendations suggested by the PSC and as such the devolving of police and land powers would not be a stumbling block to the PSC.

“It is extremely dangerous, a suppression of reality and anti-progressive if anyone thinks that the war is over and there is no ethnic problem and development can bring solutions to all national problems,” the minister said.

“Economic development is extremely vital but it will not fulfill the aspirations of ethnic communities. All left parties from the 50s kept saying that the grievances of minorities have to be addressed and the ‘Sinhala only’ Act will bring disaster to the country.” ■

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