

India worried by Sri Lanka arms buying

India said Wednesday that it wanted Sri Lanka to treat Tamils with dignity and also voiced concern that Colombo's arms purchases may upset New Delhi's 'pre-eminent position' in South Asia.

'We are facing a situation where the ceasefire (in Sri Lanka) could collapse. This could lead to a flashpoint,' National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan said while delivering the 25th Air Chief Marshal P.C. Lal memorial lecture here.

'We want the Sri Lankan government to treat its large Tamil minority with dignity,' he said.

'(But) the (Sri Lankan) government would seem to have the single objective of a military victory (against the Tamil Tigers) without any devolution of power.'

Narayanan also added: 'We have to ensure that India's pre-eminent position in the region is not compromised by Sri Lanka seeking arms from elsewhere.'

'We need a national consensus on how much (military) assistance we should provide and how much pressure we should put on the (Sri Lankan) government.'

Thousands of people have died in Sri Lanka in the past two years in escalating fighting between the military and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

India opposes any military solution of the ethnic conflict and wants Colombo to devolve autonomy to the minorities.

And while India continues to train Sri Lankan military personnel, it has refused to provide what it dubs as offensive military hardware.

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