

Sri Lanka urges India to view the war in correct light

Sri Lanka Tuesday asked 'all those concerned' about the situation in the island nation to see the marginalisation of the Tamil Tigers 'in the correct light' and not view them as representatives of the Tamil community.

Making a suo moto statement in parliament, Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama referred to the summoning of a Sri Lankan diplomat by India's National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan Monday to convey New Delhi's 'grave concern and unhappiness at the growing casualties of unarmed Tamil civilians as a result of the military action'.

'In this regard, I wish to reiterate Sri Lanka's policy of maintaining a close dialogue with India, with whom we have a time tested relationship based on mutual goodwill and trust,' Bogollagama said.

According to the foreign office, Bogollagama told parliament that his government 'is deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation of civilians'.

The minister's comments came as military operations entered a decisive phase in the island's north, which the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has long considered a bastion.

Claiming that President Mahinda Rajapaksa's administration 'is acutely conscious and aware of its responsibilities towards all citizens', the minister said that the government had directed the military 'to adhere strictly to a policy of 'zero civilian casualty' -- as was done in the east.

'It is very important that all those who are concerned about Sri Lanka including the welfare of the Tamil community should perceive the marginalisation of the LTTE in the correct light. LTTE does not represent the Tamil community in Sri Lanka,' Bogollagama said.

'Therefore, military action against the LTTE should never be perceived as an action against our brethren, the Tamil community. We are concerned about them and will work with them to ensure their welfare, security and aspirations since they are our fellow citizens.'

Bogollagama said that at a time when the security forces 'are engaged in their present humanitarian operation to free our people from the fascist and dictatorial control of the LTTE terrorists, critics of Sri Lanka and sympathisers of the LTTE are attempting to portray a misleading and totally false notion that the government is opting for a military solution to address the problems of the minorities.

'It is unfortunate that some of 'our friends' too have been influenced by this malicious propaganda,' he said, adding that the government had been working closely with UN agencies as well as local and international NGOs to ensure effective adequate and safe delivery of humanitarian supplies.

Narayanan Monday summoned Sri Lanka's acting high commissioner G.G.A.D. Palithagenegoda and conveyed India's 'grave concern and unhappiness at the growing casualties of unarmed Tamil civilians' in the island's north.

'The escalation of hostilities in the north and the resultant fallout was leading to a great deal of concern in India,' Narayanan reportedly said.

Narayanan underlined the need for Sri Lanka to act with 'greater restraint and address the growing feeling of insecurity' among the Tamils.

New Delhi's move came after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh assured Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi that his government would take steps to stop the 'genocide' of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Karunanidhi has urged the people of Tamil Nadu to write a million letters to the prime minister seeking Indian intervention in Sri Lanka.

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