

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 14.7.2013 addressed by **Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Dr.Manmohan Singh**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below:-

"I write to you on an issue of serious concern regarding the political future of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka – the possible dilution or even repeal of the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution.

I had written to you on several occasions conveying the strong sense of outrage and anguish amongst the people and political parties in Tamil Nadu and Tamil people all over the world regarding the ethnic pogrom and genocide by the Sri Lankan Army against the Tamil population in Sri Lanka in the closing stages of the civil war and the failure of the international community to hold the Sri Lankan regime accountable for these acts. I had also pointed out that human rights abuses against the Tamil population continue and Tamils in Sri Lanka are being subjected to harassment, discrimination and torture. I had drawn attention to the fact that there were no signs that Tamils would be given equality of status with Sinhalese and devolved autonomy and democratic rights.

It was in this background that the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly had passed a Resolution on 27th March, 2013, calling for, *inter alia*, a referendum on a "separate Eelam" amongst Tamils in Sri Lanka and Tamils displaced from Sri Lanka and resident in other countries. While the aspirations of the Sri Lankan Tamils can be realised only through a Tamil Eelam, the process of securing the right to self determination, through the devolvement of democratic decentralisation by the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka, should not be jeopardised in any manner. There are disturbing signs that the Sri Lankan Government is not serious about rehabilitating and restoring the lives of the Tamil minority.

It appears that our worst fears regarding the intentions and motives of the present Sri Lankan regime are coming true. The Sri Lankan President, Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse, has announced the setting up of a Parliamentary Select Committee to review the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution. The hawkish Sinhalese right wing groups have been resorting to agitations and protests to pressure the Sri Lankan Government to repeal the 13th Amendment prior to the elections to the Northern Provincial Council proposed to be held in September later this year. In public statements, the Sri Lankan Defence Secretary, Mr.Gotabhaya Rajapakse, has directly called for the repeal of the 13th Amendment. A recent delegation led by Mr.Basil Rajapakse, Minister for Economic Development, Sri Lanka, had also met the Union External Affairs Minister of India, presumably to justify their stand in this matter.

You will appreciate that the people of Tamil Nadu are justifiably alarmed and dismayed over what appears to be a clear attempt to set the clock back and to renege on an international agreement, namely the Indo Sri Lankan accord, 1987, which was entered into in order to resolve the ethnic strife in Sri Lanka, to bring peace to the surcharged security environment in the region and to secure equality and dignity for the Sri Lankan Tamils.

It is a fact that the Government of Sri Lanka has never been serious about genuine devolution of power to the Tamils and that it has regularly gone back on

assurances and reneged on promises made in this regard. The merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces into one administrative unit as contemplated in the Indo Sri Lankan accord was, in fact, dismantled by the Government of Sri Lanka in January, 2007, following an order of the Sri Lankan Supreme Court nullifying the merger. It is significant that this order was obtained by the sustained pressure and petition of the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna Party to form a separate council for the East, in which no other interested parties were allowed to be heard. The demerger of the North Eastern Council has to be construed as a serious setback to the Indo Sri Lankan accord and, perhaps, as a sinister first step leading to the eventual abrogation and repeal of the 13th Amendment, which has starkly appeared on the agenda now.

We are of the considered opinion that India cannot afford to be a passive bystander at this juncture. We have a commitment to protect the life and liberties of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, whose distinct identity and cultural presence in Sri Lanka, particularly in the Northern and Eastern regions, was the guiding principle behind the Indo Sri Lankan accord that led to the notification of the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan constitution. We also have a commitment to ensure that the process of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the broken lives of the Sri Lankan Tamils, by the establishment of democratic institutions of Self-Government, is not derailed by the insidious attempts now being made by the Sri Lankan Government to jettison the 13th Amendment. Such a development will spell doom for the lives and liberties of the Sri Lankan Tamils, who will again face the prospect of a return to thralldom under the Sinhalese military and majority. This will seriously impact the peace process itself and again endanger the security environment of the region.

Tamils in Tamil Nadu and the Tamil Diaspora spread across the world are justifiably outraged and incensed over the impunity with which the Sri Lankan Government is ignoring international sentiments and binding Resolutions relating to reconciliation and rehabilitation and the ongoing gross human rights abuses against Sri Lankan Tamils. For Tamil Nadu, this turn of events will also mean a threat to its coastal security, the internal security environment of the State and the prospect of a renewed influx of refugees into the State.

I wish to reiterate the Resolution of the Tamil Nadu Assembly dated 27th March, 2013, regarding the holding of a Referendum on Eelam. In the present turn of events, when the Sri Lankan Government is acting with impunity to take away even the limited political rights available to the Tamils, I strongly urge the Government of India to take all possible steps to bring pressure to bear upon the Sri Lankan Government not to take any steps to repeal or even dilute the 13th Amendment in any manner. The Government of India should ensure that the process of democratic decentralization, which is integral to the survival of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, is in no way jeopardised. This should eventually lead to the Tamils of Sri Lanka realising their legitimate aspirations. I hope that the Government of India, as a leader in the region and as a champion of human rights and democracy, will decisively take a bold stand in support of the much discriminated against and long suffering Tamil minorities in Sri Lanka."
