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NEWS BAR >>

News: I

- HOME
- DAILYNEWS ONLINE
- News
- Editorial**
- Business
- Features
- Political
- Security
- Sport
- World
- Letters
- Obituaries

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ROLE OF THE UN

The UN yesterday issued a statement welcoming the escape of tens of thousands of civilians from the conflict Zone. One could assume that this is an endorsement of the measures taken by the Government forces to secure the safe exit of civilians caught in the grip of the LTTE.

It was the perennial fear of the UN as well as Western Governments that the civilians in the No Fire Zone would be vulnerable to any sudden outbreak of fighting in the small pocket the LTTE is presently confined to.

The UN is not unaware of the various measures taken by the Government to ensure safe passage of the civilians such as the opening of corridors and rescue missions by sea. The Government also voluntarily declared a 48 hour ceasefire during the New Year period to permit the LTTE to free the civilians.

The UN is also cognisant of welfare measures arranged for the escapees. All these and the fact that the LTTE was never willing to free the civilians made the UN's call for an extended ceasefire untenable.

All it's appeals to the LTTE to ensure the safe passage of civilians to Government controlled areas were in vain. The Government for it's part could not prolong the stalemate.

It had a duty to free the civilian population held hostage by the LTTE. The President had utmost faith in the security forces that they were up to this monumental task. They did not disappoint their Commander-in-Chief.

The UN's fear vis-à-vis security forces were proved to be unfounded with troops succeeding in engineering perhaps the biggest human exodus in known history, without harming a single civilian. On the contrary the LTTE started firing at the fleeing civilians and used heavy weapons in the No Fire Zone to block their exit not to mention the multiple

'SRI LANKA FIRMLY COMMITTED TO FULL PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY'

Addressing the widely publicized UN world conference against racism and racial discrimination under the theme 'United against Racism, Unity and Justice for all', currently under way in Geneva, Sri Lanka's most senior ethnic Tamil Cabinet Minister said that Sri Lanka's President Rajapaksa was firmly committed to the full implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution which gives substantive autonomy to the provinces. He also called upon the international community to put pressure on the LTTE to allow the civilians in its captivity to leave unconditionally

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PETROGRAD CONNECTION, PLANNING AND STATECRAFT - PART II:

Saving nations from financial raiders

In consequence, the help of people like Glasgow Professor Adam Smith, was enlisted. One task was to smooth ruffled feathers and restore the majesty of the king and the loyalty of his ministers. Another task was to protect the financiers and condemn Benjamin Franklin and supporters everywhere of the competing debt-free currency as profane before the Almighty, as follows.

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suicide attacks which killed nearly 20 civilians and wounding scores.

It is in this light that the concern expressed by the UN towards the remaining civilians should be viewed. It's view in the statement that there is potential for large-scale casualties following the initial exodus cannot be discounted. These casualties can only be inflicted by the LTTE since the security forces have demonstrated through the finesse of their operations that it had always striven for zero casualties.

The UN therefore has to prevail on the residue of the LTTE leadership that the onus is cast on them to ensure the safety of the civilian population still held by the outfit. By deploring the LTTE for using force to prevent the departure of civilians the UN has firmly placed the blame on the plight of civilians at the doorstep of the LTTE.

It was not long ago that Western Governments were breathing down the neck of the UN to intervene to halt the offensive to spare the lives of civilians. We wonder what the position is now with these International forces who always saw the Government's security forces as the principal villain in the conflict.

No doubt there will be more entreaties to the Government to call a halt to the offensive or to declare a ceasefire by certain parties who have now lost the plot, with civilians moving out on their own accord.

But with President Mahinda Rajapaksa determined to wipe out terrorism once and for all from Sri Lanka's soil it is doubtful if their efforts would succeed. Besides after the whole world witnessed the rescue operation there is bound to be a sea change in the attitude hitherto displayed towards the forces. It will be difficult now to convince Governments that the armed forces are as black as they are painted since what was witnessed was a humanitarian operation in the true sense of the word.

The onus now lay with the President to execute this humanitarian operation to it's logical conclusion by providing all the support and wherewithal to these people to get on their feet and begin life anew. This admittedly is a Herculean task and would require the full backing of the international community. Things will have to start from scratch with the people made to feel their way into a new existence.

The resettlement program alone would be a mind boggling one since it would be well neigh possible to identify the land and homesteads of the people in a charred war ravaged landscape. Above all, the biggest challenge

RANDOM
MEMORIES OF
TISSA
ABEYSEKARA
:

Remarkable contribution to film industry

Tissa with all his ups and downs in life had the good opportunity of being groomed under the master filmmaker Lester James Peries.

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D. B.
WELAGEDARA
:

Far-sighted democrat in Kurunegala

The 20th death anniversary of the late D.B. Welagedara will be commemorated by the people of Kurunegala today (22). The memory of the late Dingiri Bandara Welagedara remains green in the minds of thousands of constituents whom he served forever four decades as a Divisional Revenue Officer, Member of Parliament, Mayor and the Minister of Plan Implementation.

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would be to heal the scars of war and set up livelihoods and a means of existence to these multitudes who were virtually consigned as jetsam and flotsam during the three and half decades old conflict.

The Government cannot afford to keep these people in temporary shelters eternally. The sooner they are released to their new environment the better it would be for the process of national reconciliation and integration.

Besides a lingering refugee problem would bring in it's wake other problems and open another flank for meddling foreign busybodies who are bent on undermining the sovereignty of this country.

The UN would have a bigger role to play in the post conflict scenario of Sri Lanka especially in the areas of resettlement. It is heartening to note that despite the global economic recession the World body set apart a substantial chunk of funds for it's habitat program at a Council session in Nairobi early this month.

It is hoped that Sri Lanka would be a recipient of a generous slice of funding for it's resettlement program which no doubt is going to be a task of gargantuan proportions.

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