

★ Tamil youths forge unity for common cause of Eelam

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★ People's involvement essential to win liberation war

NEWS TODAY

# 'Armed struggle' only way

EPRLF leader talks to News Today on Tamils cause

Madras, Apr. 28:

The various groups of Tamil youths, which believe in "armed struggle with people's active involvement" to achieve Eelam in Sri Lanka are coming together. This is in response to the appeals on all sides to them to unite and spell out their demand in precise terms.

The latest of these appeals came to them from Tamilnadu Chief Minister MGR who, in his address to the Madras conference on human rights, suggested "combining the power of revolution with that

of people".  
A major initiative for unity has already come from three groups. These are: Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) led by K. Padmanabha, Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) led by S. Srisubaratnam and Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS), led by Balakumar.

For this first unity, the mass-based EPRLF has taken the initiative. The EPRLF is well-organised on

a seven-tier hierarchy that includes Eelam Peoples Liberation Front which is a mass organisation and Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), its military wing. The EPRLF has separate front organisations for peasants, fishermen, youth, students, women and plantation workers. It does not neglect any section and is entrenched among the Tamils in Sri Lanka, not necessarily confined to Jaffna and Batticaloa alone.

**Basis of unity.**  
In an exclusive interview to News Today Friday, Padmanabha explained the basis on unity. It is simple enough. "Only through armed struggle, with the active backing of the masses can Tamils get their goal of national recognition in their own Eelam. And this is the crux of the unity of the three organisations", Padmanabha said. Eelam means homeland.

**By 5 groups**  
According to Padmanabha, there are only five major groups that should count in the basic structure of unity. Apart from these three which have now united, the two other major organisations are the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) led by Prabhakaran and the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamils (PLOT) led by Umamaheswaran.

"Our endeavour would be now to bring these two organisations also into the united front. There are certain difficulties which are historical in their origin. The Prabhakaran-led LTTE had fallen out in the past with PLOT and our efforts would now be to bring them also into the fold so that our goal is reached", Padmanabha said.

In a frank talk with News Today, Padmanabha

## By Our Staff Reporter

said that goals and means could not be totally divorced. "The three organisations which have united are clear about their goal and the goal is the creation of a socialist Eelam which will defend primarily India's security and fight the U.S. imperialism and its designs", Padmanabha said.

The ways in which liberation can be achieved are the tried and tested ways of revolutionary resistance and fight. Individual acts of terrorism may frighten even the friendly masses. All revolutions must have to be people-oriented and have to be sustained by the broad masses", he added.

Once unity is achieved, Padmanabha said, the United Front of Revolutionary Groups could jointly take their message to the masses and organise them to resist and fight back the State-sponsored violence.

### Outside support

When News Today asked him whether he would expect support from other countries in the battle ahead, Padmanabha was candid and practical. "In the ultimate analysis the battle has to be fought only by the concerned party and we alone are the directly concerned party. Such help as may come depends on various other circumstances. If it should come we should be happy but we should have to proceed on the basis that it is for us and for us alone to keep the flag flying".

According to this dedicated EPRLF leader, the nature of the fight has not been fully understood in India and elsewhere. Many were inclined to think that the fight of the Tamils was for mere separation. This was not so. "The struggle is for national identity, and more important than this, it is a fight against neo-colonialism and imperialism," he said.

It is no secret that under the UNP regime Sri Lanka has become a floating base for the American domination over the Indian Ocean region. Only the creation of a Socialist Tamil State would stop the advance of the American strategic concept in the Indian Ocean," he said and added: "We have certainly our national interest as our immediate goal. We do also have a global perspective of our cause namely the basic need for the progressive humanity to fight against imperialism, colonialism and capitalism."

### Socialism is goal

A popular war for national liberation and struggle for a socialist set-up cannot be separated, Padmanabha said. Only through a clear-cut socialist image can the masses be mobilised for the struggle, he added.

According to Padmanabha, the killings by the Sri Lankan army and the navy in Jaffna have led to a radicalisation of masses in the North and the East. "Driven to the wall, the Tamil masses are now ready to fight back because there is no alternative to fighting back. And this is the time for the progressive groups to unite and give leadership to the masses. "If we fail now, we will become irrelevant", Padmanabha said.

## Unity with TULF

Asked how far these predominantly youth organisations could be united with the TULF, Padmanabha said that they (three united groups) had taken a decision not to criticise or find fault with the TULF. At the same time, TULF itself would soon be driven to accepting the position that there is no alternative to armed struggle.

It is not as if the Tamils had taken to armed struggle, but it is being thrust upon them, he said.

Over long years the TULF tried the methods of conciliation, talks, more conciliation and more talks. At the end of it the TULF itself has been forced to admit that the Jayawardene Government was only bent on gaining time and was not serious on solving the problem.

"Once this conclusion is reached, the next step becomes inevitable. And the next step can only be armed struggle." He hoped that the TULF would also join the united front by endorsing the method of armed struggle.

### Sri Lanka different

Asked how non-violence could be considered irrelevant in Sri Lanka when it had succeeded in India, Padmanabha said that the Sri Lanka situation differed in fundamentals. Sri Lanka gained its independence from British colonialism by and large only through non-violence, because of the impact of the freedom struggle in India.

After Independence the State power passed into the hands of a major racial group which, in turn, has gone into the politico-religious hegemony of the Buddhist clergy. "The State-sponsored violence is backed by the clergy. In such circumstances, self-defence has to be advanced to the next degree of gaining independence," he said.

Padmanabha said that the Tamils had never been obsessed with any racial hatred. The Tamils, in fact, recognised the importance of having some dialogue with the progressive sections even among the Sinhalese. "Unfortunately, if there are any progressive sections among the Sinhalese, these have been dwarfed by the dominant current of racial intolerance and anti-Tamil animus. It is therefore that the Tamils have been demanding national self-determination."

After all, Lanka has never been through history a single-race nation. Tamils have as much right to the soil as the Sinhalese. And in a situation where there can be no equality, it has to be obtained only through seeking separate identities for both Tamils and Sinhalese, in their respective regions. This should be good for both communities", he said.

The EPRLF leader said that all along his organisation had been content to function among the people and organising them. It had failed so far in projecting its image outside Sri Lanka. For obvious reasons its armed wing, the Peoples Liberation Army, could not be a broader organisation. "Now that we have achieved unity, to start with, among the three major groups, it should be our task to win the support of the international community, especially the fighting humanity in the socialist bloc, for our cause," he said.

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