

EU oxygen for sinking Tigers

There are different languages that trainers use in handling different animals. A dog does not understand, so to speak, a mahout's lingo. Similarly, terrorists do not understand the language of the civilised people. It took nearly three decades for Sri Lanka to realise this simple truth. Today, she is speaking the language that terrorists understand most and results have been quite impressive. Terrorists are offering to talk peace!

Regrettably, the international community is convinced otherwise. Powerful nations want their less fortunate counterparts afflicted by the scourge of terrorism to use the language of peace in dealing with savage terrorists who are hardly human.

Yesterday we reported that the EU Parliament had called for an immediate ceasefire in Sri Lanka to allow civilians trapped in the LTTE-held areas to move to safe areas. The EU's concern for those unfortunate people should be appreciated but it is nothing but naiveté to expect that a ceasefire will help them escape. Isn't the EU still aware that the LTTE is holding them at gun point as a human shield?

Ceasefire or no ceasefire, the LTTE will never release civilians in its clutches as it is convinced that if they escape by any chance, the army will march on Puthukudiyiruppu within hours. Therefore the evacuation of civilians is a frightening proposition for the LTTE. In fact, the LTTE has been using brutal violence against fleeing civilians. It has even killed infants in a desperate bid to prevent people from crossing over to the government-held areas.

So, an attempt to help civilians escape is tantamount to driving the beleaguered Tigers to suicide. Is this the real objective of the EU in calling for a truce 'to allow civilians to leave the war zone'? No! The EU does not want the LTTE to destroy itself; nor does it believe that a ceasefire will translate into an evacuation of civilians. It only wants the LTTE to be given a breather!

The LTTE is desperate for a truce. If the government agrees to a 'humanitarian ceasefire', the LTTE will try its damndest to have it extended by resorting to dilatory tactics such as releasing civilians in small batches etc. until enough international pressure builds up against the government's military campaign. And the LTTE will use time so gained not only for regrouping but also for infiltrating the army-held areas. The LTTE owes its survival to ceasefires beginning from the one India forced on Sri Lanka in 1987, when the army was about to wipe out the LTTE together with Prabhakaran.

Countries that advocate a ceasefire at a time the LTTE is teetering on the brink of elimination could not be Sri Lanka's friends. They are only attempting to give the dying Tigers some oxygen.

Now that the EU has come forward to take the Tigers off the hook on some flimsy pretext, the question is what purpose the EU ban on the LTTE serves. Proscriptions not coupled with follow up action are of little use in battling terrorism. The EU might as well lift that useless ban!