

UN going ahead with HR probe against SL – Ranawaka

Island, Tuesday, March 09, 2010

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka yesterday said that the United Nations Organization General Secretary Ban Ki-moon would appoint a Committee to investigate the alleged human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

Despite President Mahinda Rajapaksa requesting him last week not to interfere with the internal affairs of other countries, the UN would still go ahead with the appointment of the Committee; Ranawaka told a press conference at the Mahaweli Centre. Ranawaka said President Rajapaksa spoke to the UN Secretary General over the phone last Thursday.

He said that the international Tamil Eelam Movement had brought to the notice of UN General Secretary alleged flagrant violations of human rights in Sri Lanka. It was in response to that allegation that the UN General Secretary would appoint a Committee to launch investigations, the Minister said.

He pointed out that the UN would never appoint committees to investigate human rights violations in Afghanistan and Iraq, but was in the process of appointing another committee to investigate human rights violations in Israel. It was true that around 2 million refugees in Afghanistan had been suffering from various health complications due to warfare, he said.

Ranawaka emphasised that the UN Charter did not include the provision of legal authority to the UN to appoint committees to investigate the internal affairs of other countries.

Petroleum Resources Minister A. H. M. Fowzie said that SLMC leader Rauff Hakeem had made wrong statements about the UPFA government to the Muslim community and as a result the UPFA government could not receive the expected Muslim votes during the Presidential election. This time around the Muslim community had realised that they had been misled and had vowed to support the UPFA in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

Construction and Engineering Services Minister Rajitha Senarathne said that the UPFA government would receive a steamroller majority at the next election. The government had formulated a set of plans which would develop the country. The educational system would be changed and the system would produce students to seek job opportunities in the international job market.

He added that the government anticipates alleviating poverty by 2016 as the country was making headway both economically and socially. It was apparent that the UPFA government would receive a two-third majority to facilitate the amendment to the Constitution. Proportional representation would be cancelled and instead the old electoral system would be reintroduced to enable the people to elect their favourite candidate to Parliament, he said.