

Copy of letter sent to HE the President by the Hon' Chief Minister, Northern Province

09.07.2018

May it please Your Excellency!

Appointment as a Member of the Presidential Task Force to Direct, Co – ordinate and Monitor development activities in the Northern and Eastern Provinces

Your Excellency's letter dated 14.06.2018 with copy of the Directive issued, to hand on 05.07.2018, twenty one days later!

The Task Force to be chaired by Your Excellency has the Prime Minister, 15 Government Ministers from the Centre, Governors of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, self as Chief Minister of Northern Province. Chief Minister of Eastern Province (vacant now), one State Minister, one Member of Parliament, Central Government Secretaries to Prime Minister and other Ministers, Chief Secretaries of Northern Province and Eastern Province, Commanders of the Army, Navy and Air Force, IGP, Jaffna Security Forces' Head Quarters Commander, Eastern Security Forces Head Quarters Commander and Director – General, Civil Security Dept as Members

Apart from me and our Chief Secretary none else represent the Northern Province. Of course the Secretary is a Tamil but a Central Government Official.

It is stated that the development process is essential to ensure National Unity and Integration and creation of a balanced socio – economic and income growth.

Tasks assigned to the Task Force are as follows –

- a. To review status of progress of various sectoral plans, programmes and projects now being implemented in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.
- b. To initiate and formulate new plans, programmes and projects targeting sectors and groups that need priority attention and facilitate finances for projects/ programmes and other actions.
- c. To intervene and direct as necessary, in matters relating to all development activities in the Provinces.
- d. To encourage and enlist the support and participation of the private sector, bi – lateral and multilateral development institutions, for investing and implementing development projects and programmes in the two Provinces.
- e. To coordinate work between the Government and Provincial administrations and between Public and Private Sectors and non-governmental and civil society sections.

- f. To carry out overall monitoring of the implementation of the development activities in the regions.
- g. To identify any constraints which impede expeditious implementations of development programmes in the regions and advise the relevant authorities on speedy solutions to overcome them.

The Task Force is asked to direct, co-ordinate and monitor the development activities in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

Firstly let me thank Your Excellency for including the Chief Minister of the Northern Province and the Chief Secretary of the Northern Province into this Task Force. Though Members of Parliament who are heads of their respective Central Ministries have been included, the Provincial Ministers have been left out. So too the Secretaries of Provincial Ministers. This seems a glaring error in choice!

Secondly Your Excellency's expectation that the development process (whatever that might mean) is essential to ensure National Unity and Integration and creation of a balanced socio – economic and income growth seems to be misplaced. National Unity and Integration cannot be forged by foisting so-called development on the politically affected people of the North and East. The political settlement of the problem of the Tamil speaking people of the North and East should precede any such development processes. In South Africa the political settlement preceded the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Any attempt to inform the World Community whether in Geneva or elsewhere that so much of development activities have been undertaken by the South in the North and East would not erase the fact that successive Governments for the past 9 years and over have failed to solve the basic political problem which necessitated the war and political agitation on the part of the Tamil speaking people of the North and East. All economic benefits so far granted to our people were reparations for the wanton damage and destruction unleashed on our people by successive governments who would not accept the genuine political assertions of a group of people who have from pre Buddhist times occupied defined territories and had been majority in the North and East. It is the refusal to admit the rights and claims of the Tamil speaking people of the North and East which led to war.

Thus the expectation that the development process would forge National Unity and Integration presupposes that our people could be enticed to accept such developments in exchange for our People's Political and Human Rights!

Thirdly the constitution of the membership in such Task Force is amusing. The Centre wants to ensure National Unity and Integration by establishing an almost Pan - Governmental Task Force consisting of Government Ministers and Secretaries of Ministries and the Military not to forget the Government nominated Governors of the two Provinces.

I have been time and again informing Your Excellency as well as successive Central Governments that development processes must not be foisted on the North and East by the Centre. The people of the North and East are best suited to choose what they want, to state what their needs are. Money is retained by the Centre, projects are chosen by the Centre, implementation is given to officers of the Centre but our Provincial Officers are asked to do their bidding. And Your Excellency expects Peace, Tranquility, Unity and Integration by such one sided activities.

It is no secret that while you are reviewing the progress so far made in the economic field the Govt is actively supporting preplanned colonisation in the North and East to change the ethnic ratio. While forest areas in other Provinces are not maintained up to the expected ratio, even people's lands in the Northern Province are being brought under the Forest Department, Wild Life Department, Archeological Department and Other Central Government Departments making sure the Armed Forces and Central Govt Departments control vast acreages of lands belonging to the People of the area.

If the Government wants to review development projects there is no need for the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary to be present at such meetings. All the Central Ministers and their Ministry Secretaries and the Military together with the Government Agents would be able to gather the necessary particulars.

The acceleration of the development underway in the Provinces would refer to processes that are top to bottom exercises undertaken unilaterally by the Centre.

I find the Task Force unnecessary unless we want to impress the world community how much economic benefits successive Central Governments have showered on the peripheral North and East.

I am unable to accept that all these activities and the so called development process would ensure National Unity and Integration and creation of a balanced socio economic and income growth.

I shall therefore thank Your Excellency to instruct the Task Force to review, accelerate and provide guidance to whomsoever necessary and send us their Report within a specified time so that my Ministers and I would check on their veracity and adequacy. I find it unnecessary for me to be admitted as an appendage to such an august assembly of Ministers and Secretaries, Governors and Military Officers.

It is my view that all development activities in the North and East must be performed indigenously by the People/ People's Representatives and Provincial Officers and the Central Government should provide the necessary wherewithal, guidance and advise where necessary. Devolution means that.

Otherwise development and devolution would become (as it already is) a mockery.

Our Party the TNA as stated by its leader Hon' Sambandan recently, expects the resolution of our political problems before the end of this year as a precursor to any such development processes to be undertaken. Hope Your Excellency would pave the way for a political solution soon so that we could sit as equals and develop this Country together.

Thank you.