

Federation of All Mosques and Organizations in Eastern Province had sent an appeal to the President Rajapakse, on various Muslim Issues last week.

01.10.2007

His Excellency, The President Mahinda Rajapakshe,
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka,
Presidential Secretariat
Colombo – 01.

Your Excellency,

We sincerely congratulate your Excellency and your government for the commendable programmes of work undertaken during this period of time when Your Excellency are nearing completion of the 2nd tenure of the office as the President of Sri Lanka.

When the government was formed soon after your assumption of office, majority of Muslim parliamentarians were taken into the government. Ninety Nine percent of them were appointed as Ministers. We the Muslims, convey our deep felt gratitude in this regard.

However, as a minority in this country, it has become necessary for us to state the following grievances although they may sound bitter. One of these matters is that during last presidential election, the UNP was campaigning that “Azan” call for prayers would be banned from mosques if Mahinda Rajapakshe becomes president. But we had great trust in you as one of the closest friends of the Muslim community. In spite of all this, suspicion is emerging over the government’s new news announcement a few weeks ago that seeks to impose time limit on the use of amplifiers in places of worship. It is feared that it may be an attempt to ban “Azan” calls and other related activities in mosques.

The other matter is the subtle settlement schemes now taking place in Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts of the Eastern Province. This activity pursued in such haste in Muslim areas as Oluvil Alim Chennai, Pothuvil, Sengamam, Sasthiraveli, Sammanthurai, Ismailpura in the Ampara district and Muthur Town, Arafat Town, Kiranthimalai, Pulmoaddai in the Trincomalee district together with thousands of acre of land belonging to the Muslims liberated from the Tigers along the A5 route in the Batticaloa District; in all these the plight of the Muslims comparable to that of falling “from the frying pan to the fire”. Furthermore, this has come to be regarded as an attempt to expel the Muslims from their places of residence for ages.

Also the government does not seem to have taken any action or given assurance for the safety of the Muslims in this regard, it would be the innocent Muslims who would be affected if there was going to be any further repetitions of the incidents that occurred in Pothuvil, Ullai areas. The Muslim political leaders are unable to do anything regarding the attempts initiated by majority community for its settlements. It is true that not only their hands but also their mouths are tied up.

As a result of the efforts made by Marhoom Dr. Badi-udin Mahmood under the SLFP government under the premiership of Madam Srimavo Bandaranaike, Arabic Teachers were appointed in Muslim schools in the country. We still remember with gratitude the enormous interest shown by Madam Srimavo Bandaranaike in this regard. Since the Arabic teachers appointments have not been made for the last several years although all important Muslim organizations including the All Ceylon Muslim League and Muslim Education Conference have appealed the successive governments for such appointments.

Finally, at a meeting of Muslim Education Conference held in Temple trees in your present of Excellency, the authorities were given instructions to effect these appointments immediately. Thereafter, the conference was concluded and the Muslim community left with great confidence. However, nothing has happened even after a lapse of one and half years. Your Excellency's instructions have not been acted upon. This still remains a great puzzle.

The last matter we wish to submit about the flag for the Eastern province. The symbol of lion in the flag represents the Sinhalese, Pisces (Fish) Tamils. It is assumed that the Muslims are left behind without any mark of representation in the flag. However, the flag contains as a symbol of Eagle was assigned to Muslims to represent them.

We Muslims have been living in this country as one of the communities constituting the Sri Lankan nation. But it is of regret to observe that the feeling of nationalism is being estranged from Muslims by recent occurrences.

Therefore, we appeal to Your Excellency to kindly afford us an opportunity to meet you by giving us a date and time with sufficient notice so as to bring these matters for your personal attention please.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

(Signed)

Assheik S.L.M. Haniffa Madhani,

President,

All Mosques Federation in Eastern Province,

Akkaraipattu.