

Mahinda's woes not over with two thirds victory

Monday 26 April 2010, by [KARUNARATNE Vickramabahu \("Bahu"\)](#) (Date first published: 25 April 2010).

Parliamentary elections ended with the government of Mahinda Rajapaksa winning nearly two thirds majority in the parliament. However, it is with only one third of registered votes that he managed to achieve this landmark victory. He had to use all possible state resources, entire election machinery and thuggery and colossal amount of money to obtain this result. It is apparent that more than 20 % of registered voters abstained from voting. That is calculated after assuming that only around 80 % will vote even in a free and fair election. People abstained from voting and showed no interest whatsoever. As one candidate indicated, the silent boycott is more powerful than a violent protest. If there was an open protest, one can judge the strength and the direction of the protest. But abstaining and remaining silent could mean anything. In the coming period the government will be pressed by international money lenders to cut expenditure and strengthen debt payments. They have already started putting pressure by putting in line economic restrictions. On the other hand India is demanding a political solution to the national problem, to satisfy at least their agents in this country. In the meantime the war has created too many problems with resultant economic burdens.

Sinhala peasantry

I am not talking of the misery of the Tamil people. I hope the Tamil bourgeois leaders will at least pay attention to that. I want to expose the misery of the Sinhala peasantry. An AFP report in Google news said -" Sri Lanka's leaders have hailed the end of the island's long civil war as the start of a new era, but for soldiers injured in battle, the future is far from rosy...nearly 30,000 government troops were injured and 6,200 killed during the last three years of Sri Lanka's decades-long war with the separatist Tamil Tigers...Among those injured, many lost their limbs, eyes or their hearing, and more than 300 troops were left with severe paralysis...Around 80,000 men and women joined the army during the past two years, according to military figures, boosted by major military victories..."The military is an escape route from poverty. They look after us, our families, even if we are dead," said soldier Ananda Tennakoon, 40, who lost his right leg due to a landmine in the northern town of Vavuniya in 1991...Family members of the dead or missing are immediately paid between 750 and 1,200 dollars through an insurance payout. Thereafter, the soldier's salary is paid to his next of kin for life...Those injured get an insurance payout, plus a monthly salary, allowances and a pension. But it is still not enough to cover the prohibitive cost of specialized medical treatment..."I'm told a specialized wheelchair costs about 10 million rupees (90,000 dollars) and no local organisation here makes such equipment," said Lakshman, (Manju Lakshman, 32, an injured soldier)...Sri Lanka's army chief Jagath Jayasuriya said looking after severely disabled soldiers was one of the military's top priorities."-. The report did not give a figure of the number of disappeared soldiers; it may be more than the figure of those who are known to be killed.

Responsibility

The AFP report continued -"Their families are too poor to care for them. It is our responsibility to care for these war heroes throughout their life," Jayasuriya told AFP. Sri Lanka raised its record 1.6 billion dollar Defence budget for 2008 by 20 percent last October, to recruit more troops and pay for hardware, medical supplies and compensate those who were injured or who died in combat.

Jayasuriya admits that the extra cash was insufficient to pay for specialized medical treatment that hundreds of his men need. The army is now on a fund-raising drive to raise 10 million dollars for hospices for quadriplegics. But the first of the four facilities, which will be ready in about two years, can accommodate only 25 patients, Jayasuriya said. "I admit, that's not good enough," he said. "We need much more money and effort to improve their quality of life.

At least it is a start." Until he secures a place at the hospice, Captain Danushka Perera, 33, will spend his days at the Ragama hospital. "My family is too poor to look after me," said Perera, a quadriplegic with bullet injuries in his neck and spine. "My parents live off my army salary. We don't even live in a house made of bricks. I have nowhere to go, so I stay here."

Clearly Mahinda's one third mobilization of masses will not be sufficient to face the coming challenges.

P.S.

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