

Sri Lankan President planning release of Tamil political prisoners

Friday 15 November 2024, by [Daily FT](#) (Date first published: 11 November 2024).

- **Says Govt. will take necessary steps on advice of AG to release Tamil political prisoners**
- **Commits to returning land in North taken over for security purposes to rightful owners**
- **Pledges to defend rights of Northern fishermen whose livelihoods have long been threatened by Indian poachers**
- **Promises to review renewable energy project contracts to ensure agreements have not been entered into under unfair terms**

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has announced that the Sri Lankan Government is prepared to take necessary steps, under the guidance of the Attorney General (AG), to release Tamil political prisoners currently incarcerated.

Speaking at a National People's Power (NPP) rally in Vavuniya over the weekend, Dissanayake emphasised that, unlike in the past, this move would not face opposition from the South, as the nation now stands united under the NPP banner.

"There was a war in the North, causing great destruction. But there are political prisoners who remain. On the AG's advice, we are ready to take necessary steps for their release. Will the South object? No, as today we have a united South," Dissanayake affirmed.

He noted that previous Governments might have faced resistance due to divisive politics, but the NPP's inclusive vision has won the trust of all communities, Sinhalese, Muslims, and Tamils alike, uniting them under one flag.

At the rally, the President also addressed the issue of land ownership, a divisive matter often creating tensions between Northern and Southern communities. He confirmed the Government's commitment to returning lands in the North, which were previously taken over for security purposes, to their rightful owners.

"When land was allocated to the North, there was once an outcry from the South, and vice versa. But leadership that represents all communities can resolve these issues," Dissanayake remarked, expressing confidence that a united approach will lead to a future where resources and rights are equitably shared, fostering national unity.

Additionally, Dissanayake also made a bold pledge to defend the rights of Northern fishermen, whose livelihoods have long been threatened by Indian poachers. He noted that poaching activities in areas like Pesalai, Mannar, have led to the overharvesting of fish stocks and damage to breeding grounds through destructive fishing practices.

"We will take every step necessary to protect the rights of the Northern fisher community. If we fail,

they will think that Southern Governments do not care for them. We must therefore strengthen their security," he said.

The President also announced plans to review existing contracts with private companies over solar energy projects, expressing concern that sunlight, a vital renewable resource, is being commercialised under unfair terms.

"Sunlight is the source of all creation, and now it is being treated as a mere commodity. This sunlight is our power, and we will not allow it to be sold cheaply," Dissanayake said. He emphasised the Government's commitment to ensuring that renewable resources like solar energy serve national development and benefit the people directly.

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