



Insight



Reconciliation



In recent decades, reconciliation has become one of the "hottest" topics in the increasingly "hot" field of conflict resolution across the globe. It refers to a large number of activities that help turn the culmination of violence that ends hostilities into a lasting end to the overall conflict itself.

Through reconciliation and the related processes of restorative and/or transitional justice, parties to the dispute explore and overcome the pain brought on during the conflict and find ways to build trust and live cooperatively with each other.

Reconciliation is a rather new concept in the new field of conflict resolution.

As is the case with any new concept, there is no standard definition that all scholars and practitioners rely on.

However, almost everyone acknowledges that it includes at least four critical components identified by John Paul Lederach -- **truth, justice, mercy, and peace.**

In recent years, reconciliation has also become an important matter for people who approach conflict resolution from a secular perspective. For them, the need for reconciliation grows out of the pragmatic, political realities of any conflict resolution process.

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Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Meets Prince Saud Al Faisal



With Prince Saud Al Faisal Bin Abdulaziz (FM in KSA)

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama, who wrapped up a day's visit to the Kingdom on May 10, 2009, stated that Saudi Arabia will send an evaluation team to the areas affected by the war against the rebels to consider the volume of assistance that could be rendered to rehabilitate the Internally Displaced Persons in the country. He added that the Saudi team will comprise mainly of officials from the Saudi Fund Development.

The Foreign Minister said that the Government has already provided its fullest assistance to the civilians who have fled from the No Fire Zone. "We want to see that 150,000 civilians who fled from the LTTE are given maximum care and the international community's assistance is sought to further boost the facilities already provided by the Government". "Food is not a issue there. The facilities in terms of shelter, water and sanitation have been provided and these facilities would be further enhanced with the support of the international community", he stressed.

Minister Bogollagama was here on an invitation from his counterpart Prince Saud Al Faisal. On arrival, he was received by the Chief of Protocol Alawdeen Al Askar, Saudi Ambassador in Colombo Abdul Rahman Al Jammaz, Sri Lankan Ambassador Abdul Ageed Mohammed Marleen, Consul General Abdul Latiff Mohammed Lafeer and prominent members of the Sri Lankan community here.

During his brief stay in the capital, the visiting Minister held talks with Interior Minister Prince Naif, Prince Saud Al Faisal, Prince Waleed Ibn Talal, Chairman of Kingdom Holding Company, GCC Secretary General Abdul Rahman Al Attiyah and SFD Vice Chairman Mohamed Al Arefi.

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More Haj Pilgrims After Liberation

With the end of war against terror, Sri Lanka expects more Haj pilgrims this year, according to Abdul Hameed Mohamed Fowzie, Minister of Petroleum, who wrapped up a week long visit to the Kingdom yesterday.

"With the successful restoration of peace following the liberation of rebel-held areas, more Muslims from the Eastern and North Central provinces of the island will feel free to travel," Fowzie told Insight. He added that the new developments in the country, had paved the way for free movement of people within the island.

The visiting minister, who signed the Haj agreement following the talks with Haj Minister Dr. Fouad Al-Farsy, said that he had made a request for an increased quota of pilgrims to accommodate the anticipated new pilgrims from the areas liberated following the war against rebels. "Muslims were also victims of terror. They were chased out from the North by Tamil rebels and they had to abandon their lands and wealth sequel to terror." Saudi minister had agreed to consider the request favorably considering the latest developments in the island, Fowzie noted.

Last year, 5,500 pilgrims had performed Haj from Colombo. "This year, we have appealed for an enhanced quota of 8,500." Fowzie said. Western Province Governor Alavi Mowlana and Rizmi Reyala from the Traveler Globe,

who accompanied the Minister took part in the discussions. The island's ambassador Abdul Ageed Mohamed Marleen and Consul General Abdul Latiff Mohammed Lafeer accompanied delegation during its meeting with Haj officials.

In response to a special request made by the country's President Mahinda Rajapaksa, the Saudi authorities increased the number of pilgrims from 4,500 to 5,500 in 2007. Around seven percent of the island's 20.2 million population, are Muslims. He stressed that under the leadership of President Rajapaksa, the island has become a peaceful place for people from all three communities- Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims, to live as members of one family.

He said his government does not impose any restrictions on Muslims willing to come for the pilgrimage." Adequate foreign exchange and other facilities including the quick issuance of travel documents by the immigration and emigration department are also made at the other end to assist the pilgrims," Fowzie said.

Minister Fowzie also said that the Haj operations are streamlined through a network of 62 reputed Haj operators. "We have blacklisted 18 errant operators and inquiries are being conducted against a few more such operators whose licenses would be cancelled if they are found guilty of the charges leveled against them."

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Srilankan Holidays
A world of memories



Conflict resolution professionals use a number of techniques to try to foster reconciliation. By far the most famous of them is South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission that held hearings into the human rights abuses during the apartheid era and held out the possibility of amnesty to people who showed genuine remorse for their actions.

There is at least one common denominator to all these approaches to reconciliation. They are all designed to lead individual men and women to change the way they think about their historical adversaries. As a result, reconciliation, occurs one person at a time and is normally a long and laborious process.

Reconciliation matters because the consequences of not reconciling can be enormous.

At the most basic level, reconciliation is all about individuals. It cannot be forced on people. They have to decide on their own whether to forgive and reconcile with their one-time adversaries.

By its very nature, reconciliation is a "bottom up" process and thus cannot be imposed by the state or any other institution. However, as the South African example shows, governments can do a lot to promote reconciliation and provide opportunities for people to come to grips with the past.

It is probably even harder for outsiders to spark reconciliation than it is for governments.

At the end of the day what matters most is for the individual to be able to sincerely accept his fellow countryman as his everlasting and true friend.



Saudi Arabia-Sri Lanka Friendship Society Formed



The Saudi Arabia-Sri Lanka Friendship Society (SSFS) was formed on May 10, 2009 at the Faisaliah Hotel in the presence of a large group of Diplomats and prominent Saudi Businessmen and Sri Lankan expatriate professionals in the Kingdom. "This is a society that would foster friendship and fellowship at people's level between the two countries", Sri Lankan Ambassador AAM Marleen said at the inauguration of the new body. He added that such a relationship will pave the way for new areas of cooperation between the two countries in trade, investment, tourism and culture. He said that a team of Saudi members from the society will visit the island shortly to meet the Board of Investments and the members of the Sri Lanka-Saudi Arabia Friendship Society in Colombo, a similar body which was established in 20 years ago.

The Sri Lanka-Saudi Arabia Friendship society was formed in Colombo in 1989 with the present Ambassador, AAM Marleen as its founder Chairman. Sri Lanka established its embassy in the Kingdom in November 1981 and it was reciprocated with a Saudi Embassy in Colombo in 1995 and subsequently was upgraded to Ambassadorial level in 2001. According to the SSFS constitution, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka will be the Patron and Ex-Officio Member of the Executive Committee of the newly formed society.

The Ambassador named a set of office-bearers to the society, who included, Waleed Al-Yahya, Chairman RANA Investments and also advisor to the Governor of SAGIA – (President), Priyan Attygalle, Chief Executive Officer of American Express – (Vice President), Sabarullah Khan, Head of Chancery – (Vice President), Jamal Raibi, Head of ANB Telemoney, Waseef Ahmed Al Kadil, Chairman Al Kadi Group, (Vice Presidents), Fazli Sameer – (Secretary), Yasanthe de Silva – (Asst Secretary), Sarath Kumara – (Treasurer), Lookman Samsudeen – (Asst Treasurer), and a five-member Committee comprising, Jayantha Kandasamy, Zawfir Ziyard, Lalith de Silva, AbdelQader Al Mashoor and AbdulKarim Najeeb.

According to the Charter, the society will encourage and increase opportunities for promotion of friendship between the peoples of Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka and provide the Saudi Arabian people with a better understanding of the Sri Lankan people, their country's history, culture, economy, society, environment and modern life. The society will also promote cultural exchanges, travel and tours between the peoples of Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka.

Accepting the post of President, Waleed Al Yahya said that the organization will afford a good opportunity for the members of the two communities to interact with each other. He added that Sri Lankans are friendly people who have stretched their hands of friendship toward building better Saudi Arabia-Sri Lanka relations between the two peoples. The new President thanked the Ambassador for making the initiative to bring the two communities together based on a common understanding. In his brief speech, Priyan Attygalle hoped that the new body would boost bilateral cooperation between the people of the two countries in non-traditional areas.

Members of the Diplomatic Corps including Ambassadors from Australia, Bangladesh, Nepal and Maldives were present at the function. Prince Faisal Ibn Mohamed Al Saud and Professor Sadaka Al Fadhil, Shoura Council Member were also present. The newly appointed secretary Fazli Sameer proposed the vote of thanks while Rushdi Ibrahim was the master of ceremonies who managed the evenings proceedings. The event concluded with a gala dinner hosted by the Sri Lankan Ambassador at the hotel.

Catalogue Show in Jeddah



Mustaffa Kamal Sabry, Secretary General of the Jeddah's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI), 5th left, inaugurates a catalogue show on Sri Lankan products and services, at the JCCI headquarters in Jeddah. ALM Lafeer, Consul General is seen 4th left

The Catalogue show is the most effective way of promoting foreign products and services in the Kingdom, Mustaffa Kamal Sabry, Secretary General of the Jeddah's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) said yesterday at the inauguration of a two-day catalogue show on Sri Lankan products and services, at the JCCI headquarters

The show which is being organized by JCCI in cooperation with the Sri Lankan Consulate in Jeddah.

Speaking further, Sabry who had led a trade delegation to the island in April last year, said that Sri Lanka is a country which can find easy access to the Kingdom's market to some of its products.

Abdul Latiff Mohamed Lafeer, Consul General, stated that this is the first ever Sri Lankan Catalogue show to be held in the Western Province. "The idea of such a show generated from a meeting of heads of Sri Lankan Heads of Missions held recently under the Chairmanship of the island's Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama in Dubai", he said.

As many as 40 Sri Lankan companies are participating in the display which exhibit the island's products such as precious stones, aquamarines, jewelry, artificial flowers, medicines, herbs, furniture, agricultural products, plants, tea, rubber, footwear, furniture, mineral water, tires, ceramics, spices, marine products, textiles, construction, kitchens, foodstuffs and sweets.

The volume of trade between Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka has amounted to SR 5 billion. Saudi Arabia and the Middle East are major markets for Sri Lanka's tea exports. The Kingdom imports 34 percent of Sri Lanka's bulk tea, the largest slice of the island's bulk tea. It also remains the largest importer of Sri Lanka's dessicated coconut.

Foreign Minister

The Minister said that he was here to strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries. "We value our friendship with the Kingdom since it is home to 550,000 Sri Lankans and is blessed with the Two Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah which hosts millions of Muslim pilgrims from all parts of the world including Sri Lanka". He recalled that, recently, SFD has given a grant of SR 40 million and SR 75 million for the construction of the National Neuro-Trauma Center in Colombo and for an Epilepsy Hospital in Colombo.

Regarding his talks with Prince Saud Al Faisal, the minister said that the two parties exchanged their experiences on the subject of counter terrorism. "Saudi Arabia is one of the countries which successfully wiped out terrorism from its land. Sri Lanka will also follow suit in days to come". He also said that the ministerial talks were focused on regional cooperation between the GCC and the SAARC countries. Minister Bogollagama said that the Saudi Minister had stated that the SAARC Food.

He also pointed out that the GCC Secretary had agreed to offer its membership support to enable Sri Lanka to gain an observer status in the Organization of Islamic Countries. He added that they discussed the areas where the GCC and the Asian bodies could cooperate with each other.

Inaugurating a cultural festival at the Sri Lankan Embassy here, the Minister told his countrymen that he was pleased to see that the day was celebrated in a fitting manner in this part of the world. He said, President Mahinda Rajapaksa is making every effort to wipe out terror from the island which is now on its final stages. "Sri Lanka has been a victim of terror for several years, we have lost some of our finest leaders under the hands of terrorists," he said.

He congratulated the Riyadh mission for the efforts taken to help the displaced refugees who are coming out from the rebel-held areas". The Government is providing adequate food for the civilians and even terrorists are also consuming the food sent to the innocent civilians held as captives by terrorists.

On May 9, the Minister was hosted to a dinner at the prestigious Globe Restaurant at Faisaliah Hotel by the Marketing Director Mohammed Fazal, a Sri Lankan.

Following the dinner, the Chief Executive Officer of Unique Choice International, Zawfir Ziyard presented the maiden copy of his company's brochure to the Minister and guests.

UNIQUE CHOICE LAUNCHES BROCHURE



Unique Choice launched its bi-lingual brochure on Sri Lanka in the GCC For the 13th Consecutive year in Riyadh recently .

The first Copy was handed over by Zawfir Ziard, CEO Unique Choice, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, Rohitha Bogollagama who was on a brief visit to the Kingdom .

Ambassador of Sri Lanka in Saudi A .A. M Marleen along with other dignitaries and embassy Officials were present at the prestigious Globe restaurant located at the Al-Faisaliah hotel in Riyadh.

"The brochure distributed through a network of agents caters to the demand of Arabic speaking clients which is one of a kind in the Middle East demonstrates our long standing commitment to provide our partners in the GCC to promote Sri Lanka effectively," said Ziard .

"The Arabia Travel Mart (ATM) in Dubai each year along with the Brochure gives us a great opportunity to promote the country and has been instrumental in helping Unique Choice cater to over 3000 Travellers to Sri Lanka last year.Unique Choice local partners are Walker tours Ltd."

"We also look forward to the annual GCC Road show commencing on 30th May in UAE Abu Dhabi & Dubai followed by Qatar and KSA in the cities of Damman, Jeddah and Riyadh to highlight and promote the culture of the country and its world class properties."



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