

## **Akhila Ilankai Tamil Mahasabha Leader Dr.K.Vigneswaran Criticises Govt, Army, LTTE and UN for Conduct During War at Colombo Colloquium.**

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By Shamindra Ferdinando

Former EPDP MP, Dr. K. Vigneswaran on Friday (Aug 29) alleged that LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran had facilitated the then Premier, Mahinda Rajapaksa's victory at the Nov. 17, 2005 presidential election as he believed the new president would create a situation conducive for him to speedily achieve Eelam.



(L-R) Dr. Godfrey Gunatileke (one of the authors of '3rd Narrative'), UPFA National List MP Prof. Rajiva Wijesinghe, Dr. K. Vigneswaran, Sri Lanka's one-time top diplomat in Geneva Dr. Dayan Jayatilleke, Dr. Lloyd Fernando, Chandra Jayaratne and Dr. Kumar Rupesinghe. Dr. Jayatilleke's successor in Geneva, Ms. Tamara Kunanayakam didn't turn up, though she was scheduled to address the gathering

(Pic by Dharmasena Welipitiya)

One-time Chief Secretary of the Indian backed EPRLF administration in the then temporarily merged North-Eastern Province, Dr. Vigneswaran asserted that the LTTE had

probably felt it could take advantage of a crisis caused by the new president.

Dr. Vigneswaran was addressing a colloquium on '3rd Narrative' Issues of Truth and Accountability (The Last Stages of the War in Sri Lanka) at the BMICH.

The former EPDP advisor was among those invited to address a gathering, including diplomatic representatives from western countries as well as Pakistan and India. Dr. Vigneswaran opined that it was a major blunder on the part of the LTTE leadership.

Dr. Vigneswaran is the chairman of the Akhila Ilankai Tamil Mahasabha (AITM), formerly the Akhila Ilankai Tamil United Front, which secured recognition by the Election Secretariat in February 2006. The Election Secretariat also recognized the revised name on September 13, 2013.

The AITM leader was referring to the LTTE ordering Tamil speaking people not to exercise their franchise at the Nov 17, 2005 poll. The declaration was made public by the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) on behalf of the LTTE on Nov 10, 2005 in Kilinochchi. The then UNP Chairman Malik Samarawickrema told The Island that the LTTE-TNA move deprived UNP

presidential candidate, Ranil Wickremesinghe of approximately 450,000 votes, hence missing an opportunity to become the president.

The panel included Dr. Godfrey Gunatileke (one of the authors of '3rd Narrative), UPFA National List MP Prof. Rajiva Wijesinghe, Dr. K. Vigneswaran, Sri Lanka's one-time top diplomat in Geneva Dr. Dayan Jayatilleke, Chandra Jayaratne and Dr. Kumar Rupesinghe. Dr. Jayatilleke's successor in Geneva, Ms. Tamara Kunanayakam didn't turn up, though she was scheduled to address the gathering.

The other panelists didn't challenge Dr. Vigneswaran's assertion.

Had the LTTE surrendered after having been evicted from the first No Fire Zone (NFZ) on the Vanni east front, many lives could have been saved, Dr. Vigneswaran said, blaming Western powers for not intervening on behalf of those civilians trapped in the war zone. According to him, the LTTE had believed that a major humanitarian crisis on the Vanni east area after the Kilinochchi debacle during the first week of January 2009 would lead to international intervention. The pro-LTTE Tamil Diaspora too, felt the same way, he said, asserting that the LTTE should have surrendered in April 2009.

The SLA brought operations on the Vanni east front to a conclusion on May 19, 2009 immediately after troops recovered the body of Prabhakaran with a heavy caliber gun shot through his head. The body was found on the banks of the Nanthikadal lagoon.

Dr. Vigneswaran alleged that the SLA strategy on the Vanni east front (area east of the Kandy-Jaffna A9 road) had been different to its tactics in the area west of the same road. The politician alleged that the change of tactics had caused heavy loss of lives.

Faulting the UN for quitting Kilinochchi in September 2008, Dr. Vigneswaran asserted that the global agency should have negotiated with the government in a bid to remain in the Vanni region instead of withdrawing.

Dr. Vigneswaran blamed the government for not consulting the LTTE before it declared NFZs on the Vanni east front. Had the government discussed NFZ with the LTTE, the UN could have discouraged the group from forcing civilians to accompany retreating LTTE units, he said.

The AITM leader questioned the SLA's decision to establish a second NFZ after the LTTE refused to recognize the first. The official expressed the opinion that there shouldn't have been a second NFZ due to the LTTE exploiting the first. Dr. Vigneswaran accused the SLA of firing at the NFZs believing those trapped within the area held by the LTTE would breakout. The SLA plan never materialized, he said. Blaming government forces for even targeting hospitals, Dr. Vigneswaran pointed out that the military knew what was happening on the ground as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) operated over the battlefield.

Dr. Vigneswaran also blamed the government for not providing adequate medical supplies to medical facilities in areas east of the A9 road, though it was fully aware of the ground situation. The government should have prepared for worse case scenario, Dr. Vigneswaran said, adding

that the government expected civilians to flee areas affected by fighting and seek refuge elsewhere.

The former MP ridiculed the LTTE for believing that a Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) victory at Indian election in May would be to its advantage.

Dr. Vigneswaran claimed that he called for the deployment of an Indian medical team to treat those who had been wounded on the front and brought to Trincomalee in early 2009. He said that the call was made after he visited the government hospital at Trincomalee, where about 2,500 wounded civilians were accommodated.

Strongly condemning the government for not doing enough for those who had been held at Menik Farm against their wishes, Dr. Vigneswaran accused the SLA of deploying Tamil collaborators to identify LTTE cadres taking refuge among civilians.