

CHOGM-2013 : SRI LANKA



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Introduction:

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2013, commonly known as CHOGM 2013, was the twenty-third meeting of the heads of government of the Commonwealth of Nations. It was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka between 15 and 17 November 2013, and was hosted by that country's President, Mahinda Rajapakshe. The meeting was overshadowed by controversy over Sri Lanka's human rights record and alleged during the final stages of the civil war. The meeting was boycotted by the Canadian, Indian and Mauritian prime ministers. This was the first time in 40 years that Queen Elizabeth II, the Head of the Commonwealth, was not present at the CHOGM.

Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly had passed two resolutions with about India's participation in CHOGM conference going to be held in Sri Lanka. The first resolution was that Indian Government

should stop all kinds of Ministry level interactions with Sri Lanka to oppose the violation of human rights of Tamils in Sri Lanka and the next one was Prime Minister or any other Minister should not participated in this conference . It seems that in future there will be deep impact of this agreement.

Prime Minister Dr. ManmohanSingh decided not to attend the conference because of political pressure from Tamil Nadu for the question of Sri Lankan Tamils. Another reason was Congress had a fear to be lonely in the Tamil Nadu State. In this circumstances External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid was present for the conference without consideration of the resolution of Tamil Nadu Assembly Which was to boycott the CHOGM conference. Recently elected in North Sri Lankan election the Provincial Government desired Indian P.M. should visit Jaffna to know the situation . It means the Provincial Government was not against of Indian presence for CHOGM.

India neglected the feelings of Provincial Government of Sri Lanka by not attending the conference. At the same time India showed faith on terrorism of Indian Tamils and strengthen the supporters of LTTE. These supporters want to end the coordination movement and to promote the divisible tendency.

Participants:

Out of the 53 Commonwealth members, only 27 heads of Government/State (Nine Presidents, 16 Prime Ministers, one Sultan and one Governor General) attended the meeting, the lowest in decades. 22 other members sent other delegates such as Foreign Ministers, Vice-Presidents, Deputy Prime Ministers and High Commissioners. Three members - Grenada, Kiribati and Maldives - did not attend and Fiji was suspended from the Commonwealth.

Boycott:

There were significant calls from many bodies not to host the summit in Sri Lanka and to boycott the event, because of the country's alleged poor human rights record and reported atrocities against the Tamil population in the country. The Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, stated that he would not attend the meeting as a protest at Sri Lanka's alleged failure to improve its human rights record. The Prime Minister of Mauritius, Navin Ramgoolam, stated that he would not attend the meeting as a protest at Sri Lanka's alleged failure to improve its human rights record. In Malaysia, Lim Guan Eng, Chief Minister of the state of Penang, and the Secretary General of the Democratic Action Party called on the Malaysian government to boycott the summit as a protest against alleged human violations committed by the island republic against ethnic Tamils there. The New Zealand Green Party also

placed similar calls for a boycott and for the replacement of Mahinda Rajapakse as the Commonwealth Chairperson-in-Office for the next two years. Similar views were floated by South African anti-Apartheid campaigner and Nobel laureate archbishop Desmond Tutu who suggested that the boycott of the CHOGM could be "one of the screws that the world has to apply to help the Tamil population."

Visit of David Cameron:

The Prime Minister of England David Cameron had come to Sri Lanka for the conference also visited Jaffna. Cameron has discussed with the representatives of newly elected Tamil Alliance Government in Jaffna and because of this Sri Lanka has disgraced its host ship of CHOGM. In between External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid also visited to Jaffna. Sri Lanka got independence in 1948 after that Cameron is the first P.M. to visit Jaffna from other country. So the visit of Cameron was subject of discussion than the inauguration of CHOGM. Cameron meet with C.V. Vighneshwaran the Chief Minister of North Province of Tamil National Alliance. In front of Cameron's fleet both Tamil and Sinhalese community demonstrated. Cameron visited the office of 'The Sun'(Tamil News Paper) . In the Civil War this press was destroyed. There had been frequent attacks on this press and Journalists, Press reporters. So the visit of Cameron was very important. He also declared that his visit was to focus on the problem of war affected area. And to highlight on oppressional events in this area.

In Jaffna around one lack people were victims of the struggle between Tamil terrorism and Sinhalese Government. In this way the President of Sri Lanka Rajapakse got an opportunity by this conference to point out the World

community to show the development of the country. But today Jaffna is on limelight because of the visit of Cameron.

China's Help to Sri Lanka:

China has been taking the benefit of India's internal politics. China always trying to create its existence more effective in Sri Lanka last 10-15 years China is aggressive to provide basic facilities. China always thinks at wide range. Sri Lanka is developing country and under the pressure of racial conflict and financial investment in this country will be really beneficial. In 2009 the fourth Tamil Eelam war against LTTE china helped Sri Lanka by providing arms. Because of this China is becoming impressive in Sri Lanka in politics and economic field. This is the present situation while thinking relations between India and Sri Lanka . Now China cannot be avoidable . Mighty China has prepared Tri-fold policy for India. i.e. a) Entanglement- To siege India from all sides, b) Envelopment- To bring neighboring countries together through economic relations, c) Entanglement- To take advantage of inconsistency in foreign policy of India.. Now China is trying to implement this policy to siege India at every stage.

As per first policy Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Maldives in this area China is increasing its participation. China is interested in the investment of the countries of Indian Ocean . In this way the situation in Sri Lanka is more beneficial to China. So China is trying to make economic relations more strong and it is clearly reflecting about Sri Lanka.

China is not the member country of Commonwealth still the movements of China about the CHOGM conference are noticeable. Bandaranayke Memorial International Conventional Hall was innovated for CHOGM and China afforded

1.5 Crore dollars for this work to Sri Lankan Government. The reflection of Sri Lanka the Trade exhibition was organized for CHOGM in which 83 foreign companies were participated in which 42 companies were Chinese, where as 21 companies were Indian. It means at International level comparatively less important programmes also China have different attitude. Now it is clear that China's help to Sri Lanka is not charitable there is a foresight vision beyond this. India should think these all aspects while deciding policy about Sri Lanka.

Indo- Sri Lanka relations in Post independence period is considerable as South Asian countries policy about India is hetread and fearful and neighbor countries policy about India was always to check with India. Sri Lanka was also having the same attitude about India and was under fearful environment. Because of this habitual fear Sri Lanka kept close relation with Britain , America, China, Pakistan, Israel till today. After 1984, Rajeev Gandhi became Prime Minister of India. He had friendly relation with America in his tenure. So Sri Lanka also developed its relation with China. Last 25-30 years this relation became more strong.

In Post independent period the Congress Government had coercion policy for South Asian countries and continued British legacy. On the other hand Janata Party, Janata Dal, United Alliance , National Democratic Alliance these non Congress governments had flexible role with these countries and tried to develop the relations. The External Affairs Minister in Devegauda Government. Mr. Indrakumar Gaujral presented 'Gujral Doctrine' in which he extended India's role will be as elder brother in South Asia. This Doctrine has given new meaning for

India's relations with South Asian countries.

Need of Change in India's Policy:

Sri Lanka is unique important to India as it locates in Indian Ocean at significant place. So even though Tamil question is important, the relation between two countries we should think beyond this question. On the base of the challenges of 21st century it is necessary to think at high level. Apart from many reasons, to create good relations with Sri Lanka, India have been failed continuously . In this difficult situation to give scope for good relation is one kind of good hope, but in this matter also we are remaining back.

It is not possible to UPA Government to take benefit of boycott on CHOGM in coming elections. The question of Sri Lankan Tamils cannot be a subject matter of Indian election. By supporting the Sri Lankan terrorist Tamils . India has deceived co-coordinative. Tamil people. Tamil people in Sri Lanka trying to develop their economical status as well as the role in Sri Lankan politics but India has in dignified it. India could have created the image of liberal country by remaining present at CHOGM conference. India could get an opportunity to make strong cultural relations between Sinhalese and Tamils. But unfortunately Indian Government showed lack of foresight vision In fact India have given grand cooperation for Tamil rehabilitation who lost every thing in Sri Lankan racial war. Around 50 thousand houses built at war affected area. India's contribution is also in construction of roads. It was expected P.M. Manmohan Singh should attend the CHOGM conference and visit this region so many people had given invitation but P.M. of India had lost this opportunity. But one thing was clear the visit of Cameron brought Jaffna in the lime light

once again and Rajpakshe have forced to start census immediately in Tamil majority North Sri Lankan area first time after 1981.

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