

Voice of Shakthi Thursday 22 June 2000

The Indian minister for external affairs, Mr. Jaswant Singh visited [Sri Lanka](#) recently to appraise the situation in the country. During his visit he reiterated [India's](#) commitment to a peaceful, negotiated settlement to Sri Lanka's ethnic problem within the framework of a unitary state. What Mr. Singh's re-statement of what had been India's policy on Sri Lanka for a long time shows is that our biggest and most important neighbour is fully committed to a solution other than a military solution. This is something which people who have been calling for foreign support to end the "terrorist problem" in Sri Lanka should realise.

In recent weeks, the voices of these individuals who only a few months ago vehemently opposed any foreign intervention and a few years ago were up in arms against Indian intervention, have been growing shriller in their calls for foreign - particularly Indian - intervention to solve the ethnic problem. But their call has not been for foreign intervention to bring about a negotiated settlement but to impose a military solution. What Mr. Singh, and indeed all international leaders, who have shown the slightest interest in Sri Lanka, have so far maintained is that the international community is just not interested in a military solution. It will support Sri Lanka's territorial integrity but it will not support a war to maintain it, no matter how badly some people may crave it.

This is what those people who have lately taken to faxing and e-mailing foreign embassies around the world should take account of. Their childish e-mails which call upon foreign governments to help safeguard democracy in Sri Lanka from a "terrorist group" shunned by the entire world does not take into account the fact that the world has shunned the LTTE not because they believe, like our e-mail enthusiasts, that there is only a terrorist problem in Sri Lanka which should be eradicated militarily, but because they believe that although the LTTE is a terrorist organisation, there are deep seated problems that gave rise to the LTTE and which needs to be addressed through a political solution.

Hence their continuing opposition to a military solution. What our e-mail warriors should really do is to e-mail their position on the ethnic problem to the foreign embassies and see how they will respond. No need to write rubbish about the problems facing the democratically elected Sri Lankan government. Just state your position on the ethnic problem, plainly and clearly. We are sure the response from the international community will show that as far as they are concerned, our Sinhala e-mail warriors are no better than the LTTE.

The duty of real Sinhala patriots among the expatriates now is to support the move towards a political settlement. Like many people we do not have much [confidence](#) in the present government's or the Opposition's commitment to provide a lasting solution. That is exactly why we need to maintain pressure on them to maintain momentum and do something more than talking about peace.

But the Sinhala expatriates cannot work for peace alone. They should be supported by their counterparts in the Tamil community. Over the last few weeks, the LTTE has shown that it is only interested in a military solution. It is almost as if the LTTE believes that once Jaffna is captured all its problems will go away. Such an attitude, at a time when the entire international community is putting pressure on the Sri Lankan government to start negotiations, is little short of stupidity. Continuing militarism will only strengthen the hand of right wing elements in the government and even push the international community in the direction which our e-mail warriors want - that is towards supporting a military solution. That will be disastrous for the LTTE. Frankly, we cannot care less about the LTTE's demise, just as we cannot care less about the demise of any of the major political [parties](#) in Sri Lanka.

All have contributed immensely to the suffering of Sri Lankans of all races and creeds. But we fear that under the present circumstances the imposition of a military solution will destroy any vestiges of dignity left for the Tamil people in the north. The duty of Tamil expatriates who genuinely desire the welfare of their people in the north of Sri Lanka should be to do everything possible to make the LTTE see sense.