

Lankans must be realistic about interdependence. (1994, September 03). *The Island*.

## Lankans must be realistic about interdependence

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(by Aloy Perera)

Deshamanya Dr. Neville Kanekaratne yesterday reiterated that from India's point of view it has the right to know about Sri Lanka's attitude to the LTTE and future moves. The Indian demand for Prabhakaran's extradition was a legal one.

The former distinguished diplomat speaking at the BMICH on Thursday evening on Indo-Sri Lanka relations explained that with India as a neighbour, the fact is that Sri Lanka must always be realistic regarding interdependence.

Dr. Kanekaratne who introduced himself as one who tried to be very candid as against the normal accepted

deviousness, pointed out that even the United States too at times was overwhelmed by Japan.

He clarified that from his point of view the LTTE problem is an internal one, but that it was causing legitimate concern to India as a result of smuggling of arms.

On the question of interdependence, he said that there is no Indian domination. There is no way we can be independent. There can be no individual islands. If the Indian economic progress continues the neighbouring SAARC countries will be 'well way'. The seven SAARC sisters, he projected, would

have to cooperate but it does not prevent bilateral development. India had perception problems not only with Sri Lanka but with other SAARC countries too.

Citing the J. R. Jayewardene and Ranasinghe Premadasa presidential eras, he said mistaken perceptions in both views caused rifts in relations with India. Mistakes were made, he emphasised but we should continue to strive for progress. In the early eighties India was smarting under the perception that a larger ethnic crisis would hit her if Tamil Nadu got involved had not India intervened with the IPKF. Whether the Vadamarachchi opera-

tion could have taken Jaffna was another question, he said.

President Premadasa's decision to send back the IPKF was born of national pledges. India misunderstood it and so was hurt. But the 100 houses built at Buddhagayagama by the late president saw India change its perceptions about him. Later there was three-day mourning in that state which according to Dr. Kanekaratne went to prove to Indians that President Premadasa was not hostile to India by intent.

He went on to express hope that India would lead with wisdom. He saw no reason to fear India and he saw no danger from India.