

Prabhakaran will be the winner if we give undue weight to his threats. (1993, December 01). *The Island*.

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Prabhakaran will be the winner if we give undue weight to his threats

— Prime Minister

(by Shivantha Fernando)

By ensuring peace and stability in the country in the aftermath of the Pooneryn attack, the government of President D. B. Wijetunga has reiterated its pledge to uphold the rights of the minorities in Sri Lanka, stated Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe at a mass rally in Nivithigala on Monday.

The PM said that many people were anticipating trouble last week and were unduly worried. In fact last Friday several mercantile firms in Colombo were

closed in fear of mob attacks and bombs. Several people who condemned the Government for its war strategy were hiding in their homes on that day. Prabhakaran will be the ultimate winner if we inflate his threats unduly and stop our day-to-day work, he added.

The government provided adequate security to ensure peace in the country. We are not only committed to safeguard the majority Sinhalese in this country but also have to look after the Tamils who are not terrorists. In fact

all but a handful of Tamils in Colombo detest the LTTE and are dead against it. There are many Tamils in Colombo who have been in the city for decades. There are also several Tamils who have come to Colombo due to the atrocities of Prabhakaran. As a government we have to look after the interest of both these groups. We won't let people harm them in revenge for what is happening in the north. We believe that the people in Colombo are intelligent enough to understand that they are going to get no-

where by harming these innocent people, the Prime Minister said.

If the Government is to defeat the LTTE it will have to adopt a three-pronged attack. First, we will have to stabilize ourselves by ensuring that the rest of the country attains economic prosperity. We will ensure that the youth are provided with jobs. Every person must receive a decent salary. The Tigers are strategically trying to sabotage efforts to attain economic prosperity, so that the masses will be disgruntled and create further problems for the

government. We must not fall for their ploys. If we are on stable ground we can eradicate the Tiger menace, the PM said.

Secondly, we will have to break the political power of the LTTE. We have already achieved considerable success in this aspect in the eastern province. Elections will be held soon and the power will be vested in the people of the area. We must enhance the support of the anti-LTTE people in the eastern province. The government will be holding mobile ministerial units to consolidate

its political power in the area. This is the most important move that the government should make if it is to ensure political stability in the eastern province, the Prime Minister said.

He added that the third step in eradicating terrorism is to weaken the LTTE militarily. That is done by the army. The Tigers are carrying on two separate wars in the northern and the eastern province. In the east their tactics are similar to what the JVP adopted in the south a couple of years ago. The terrorist come in

groups of about 15 or 20 and attack randomly an out of the way police camp or army detachment. Once they attack they go back to the jungles. The army has now trained a commando unit that specialises in these kinds of warfare. We will give them a taste of their own medicine, the PM said.

These commandos will stay in the jungles for several weeks and comb the entire area to capture the guerrillas.

In the North the PM said that the terrorists adopt a more conventional style of warfare.

They attack in large numbers. In Pooneryn, for instance 2000-3000 guerrillas were involved in the attack. They killed hundreds of army personnel and captured several weapons. But we must remember that they too suffered heavy losses. The Tigers would have lost about 5 percent of their entire cadre which is a big loss in a single confrontation. In fact they lost several of their leaders which will be a severe blow to them. They will certainly take quite a while to get over this setback, Mr. Wickremesinghe said.