

10,000 Lankans in US sign petition

**From Lakshmi Pieris
in Los Angeles**

Nearly ten thousand Sri Lankans living in the United States have petitioned the State Department to curb LTTE fundraising activities, and provide assistance to the Sri Lankan government to fight terrorism.

The petition gives a detailed picture of LTTE atrocities in the past. It calls on the government of the United States to help the Sri Lankan government with equipment and technological know-how to fight the terrorist menace.

The massive size of the petition surprised State Department officials who commented this was the first time that they received a petition of such magni-

tude.

South Asian Affairs Director, Steven R. Mann and Sri Lanka desk officer Daniel J. Lawton later held a lengthy discussion with the Sri Lankan group on the matters raised in the petition.

The signing of the petition was launched during the demonstration Sri Lankans had outside the White House on February 24 to condemn LTTE terrorist activities. Nearly 600 Sri Lankans participated in that protest rally.

Mr. Mann revealed to the Sri Lankans that representations previously received by him originated mainly from the LTTE lobby and their supporters in the USA. He noted that the wheel was turning in the other direc-

tion now.

He stated that the State Department's annual report on international terrorism described the LTTE movement as one of the largest and deadliest organizations in the world. He also said the US government was now very much concerned about the spread of global terrorism. Petitioners called for the closing down of LTTE offices in the US which have been already identified by the US authorities.

Meanwhile a forum sponsored in Canada recently by the Tamil Eelam Society of Canada to encourage a dialogue with the Police and to foster a more favourable image of Canada's Tamil community was reported to have had a negative effect.

The police representative who attended, constable Tony Malcolm of the 42 division, walked away saying, he thought the organizers were "out to roast the Police".

"I just thought there possibly could be a confrontation", Malcolm was quoted as saying. "Discretion is the better part of the valor, so I walked out".

The Group's leader Sam Duraisamy, said money raised by the Tamil Eelam Society, about \$120,000 in the past 18 months, all went to non-political charities.

He said he did not think there had been even one case of extortion and that every cent the group raised was by voluntary donations.