



Swamy seeks more Indian engagement in Sri Lanka

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Colombo: Describing India's Sri Lanka policy as "too north-centric", Janata Party chief Subramanian Swamy Tuesday sought more Indian engagement in developmental projects in this country, even as he advocated the need for a political solution to the Tamil issue.

"Peace in Sri Lanka is not only in the interest of Lankans but also of India. But peace can come only with a political solution to the national (Tamil) question," Swamy said.

Calling Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa a "determined and resolute leader" for militarily defeating the LTTE, Swamy said the Tamils must be made to feel that the defeat of the LTTE was not the defeat of the Tamils as a minority in the island nation.

Citing the multi-million-dollar Hambantota port project, the Janata Party leader claimed that laxity in Indian policy had allowed other nations to step in. "Sri Lanka first approached India for assistance over Hambantota. They only turned to China after India became disinterested."

Developing Hambantota, the home base of Rajapaksa, is a pet project of the President. The Chinese dominate development of the port, airport and other infrastructure in the region.

Swamy, a known opponent of the LTTE, is on a private visit to the island.

"I have a lot of friends in Sri Lanka," Swamy said, acknowledging his popularity among the majority Sinhala community for publicly opposing the former rebel group.

He had held talks with political leaders representing people of Indian origin living in the island's central hill plantation areas.

"The Indian policy in Sri Lanka has been too north-centric," Swamy opined, adding New Delhi needs to take closer scrutiny of the issues facing the Indian-origin plantation Tamil community.

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