Aussie Police in Colombo

Since the illicit asylum seekers issue the Australian government maintains a permanent police presence in Colombo to coordinate with Sri Lankan officials as part of a strategy to stem the flow of illicit immigration from Sri Lanka.

McCarthy, a veteran diplomat told the media “"We are working closely with Sri Lanka and who had visit by Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's Special Envoy John McCarthy was evidence of increased cooperation between the two countries” she said.

Defence and the Foreign Ministries said Sri Lanka would support Australian efforts to curb human smuggling. Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa was the view that it should be part of their efforts to thwart attempts by the Tamil Diaspora to politicize a purely security issue.

Former adviser to the Australian government Peter Woolcott, has been appointed as the first full-time ambassador to tackle illicit immigration. His responsibility involves combating people-smuggling, human trafficking and transnational crime.

Australia reached an agreement with Indonesia, the key transit point for illegal immigrants to intern so-called boatpeople in Indonesia at Australia's expense about two weeks ago. But, the agreement had not produced the desired results. Investigations revealed that the majority of boatpeople had been living in Indonesia and perhaps Malaysia for more than a year.

The crisis involving illegal immigrants had dominated Australian politics as well as the international media in the past few weeks. The Australian Opposition has been accusing the Rudd government of turning soft on border protection. The present Australian Government vehemently denied this accusation.

The Australian government has asserted that a surge in asylum seekers was due to worsening conditions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia and Sri Lanka.

But the Sri Lankan Government sources emphasized that nothing could be as misleading as Australia's position with regard to Sri Lanka.
The Colombo-based diplomatic community could not be unaware that a 30-year-old war against the LTTE had come to an end last May. Since then there is no reason for anyone to leave Sri Lanka on grounds seeking asylum as Tamils.