European Commission places conditions for Sri Lanka to avail of grant

Eighteen million Sri Lankans will do a better job of helping their Tamil brothers and sisters and the European Commission must understand that Sri Lanka will neither creep nor crawl for favours.

By Samanthi Ranawickrema

Five million Euros allocated by the European Commission to provide humanitarian assistance to internally displaced people following the civil war is welcome. In the overall handling of this kind of assistance whether foreign or local, these efforts should be on a partnership basis dove-tailing into whatever the Government of Sri Lanka has undertaken on such a massive scale. Any novice will understand that this not something for any Tom, Dick or Harry to get involved solo without a definite plan, a master plan that is central to this project.

The areas where the European Commission would prefer to extend its help such as water, sanitation, health, nutrition and basic non-food items are welcome but they have to be channeled in such a way that it helps the people in the camps to have the best results. As the commission rightly said this allocation was intended to “compliment the efforts of the Sri Lankan authorities in meeting the enormous humanitarian challenge,” something that has not yet appealed to the pro-LTTE Tamil Diaspora. After all it was the LTTE that brought about this horrendous tragedy.

The European Commission however has indicated a condition. These funds will not only be channeled through the Commission’s Humanitarian Aid Department but the projects will be implemented by non-governmental relief organizations and specialized UN agencies and will be the responsibility of Commissioner Louis Michel. And he was quick to indicate that “in order to properly implement assistance, European Commission relief experts and international aid agencies must have regular and consistent access to the displaced."

Experience has indicated without any doubt that representatives of such types of organizations have played foul and are known to have helped to sneak out certain individuals from the camps without they being screened. Since some of them also have had close contacts with the Tigers in Wanni and even helped them in various ways with their knowhow, it would be foolish to allow these people to have unrestricted and unsupervised access. There is every chance that some of these people are quite likely to feed carrion to the paparazzi vultures bent on blacking Sri Lanka on the international scene.

The European Commission must appreciate and respect Sri Lanka’s interests. Sri Lankans are not people who will accept such strings that make them puppets of some overseas interests. The European Commission that represents several nations where democracy thrives must realize that we cannot allow ourselves to be stomped by such demands. We won’t stooge and sycophant and if that is what is required by Sri Lanka to make the funds available for the displaced people, there are 18 million people from all nooks and corners of the country who can ensure that their fellow Tamil brothers and sisters are well provided even if they have to give up what little they may have to spare.