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India's former National Security Adviser and Foreign Secretary, Shivshankar Menons' new book

Sri Lanka's internal war cost US\$ 200 billion

By P.K.Balachandran (NewIndianExpress.com) - Sri Lanka's internal war which ended in May 2009, had cost the country around US\$ 200 billion according to India's former National Security Adviser and Foreign Secretary, Shivshankar Menon.

In his book Choices: Inside the Making of India's Foreign Policy, Menon says that this estimate does not include the "opportunity cost" to Sri Lanka which was once the fastest growing and the most open economy in South Asia.

About deaths, the veteran Indian diplomat turned security expert says that between 1983 and 2009, 80,000 to 100,000 people, including combatants from both sides, lost their lives. Among them were 30,000 to 50,000 civilians, 27,693 LTTE cadres, 23,790 Sri Lankan army personnel, and 1,155 men of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF).

The final stages of the war had created a little over 300,000 refugees or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The war had also left 1.6 million land mines in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

Torn Society
But the real casualty of the war was Sri Lanka's composite society, something that the LTTE and Sinhala chauvinism are "equally responsible for", Menon says.

"Sri Lanka's democracy was flawed by

disappearances, killings, torture, detention, and widespread human rights abuses committed by all sides in the war. Civil-military relations were skewed, Sinhala society was militarized, and the brutalized remnants of Tamil civil society were

leaderless, without direction or hope. Nor was there any sign of an attempt to come to terms with the legacy and result of the war, to undertake real reconciliation," he observes grimly.

Menon points out that LTTE chief Prabhakaran had left his Sri Lankan Tamil community "gutted and brutalized" by his war.

"The Jaffna Tamils, who had once fed, led, ruled and thought for Ceylon, were reduced to a group of refugees in their own country and abroad, dependent on aid and the dole, their best and brightest dead or in exile. In death and in life, Prabhakaran's baleful impact on his people continued to take its toll."

Menon appreciates Sri Lanka's successes in post-war rehabilitation, but adds that "peace is more than an absence of violence and the presence of basic infrastructure. It is also in the mind." And this is where Sri Lanka has failed since the war, he points out and adds that both the Sinhalese and the Tamils have failed to grasp the nettle.

"A victorious regime under Mahinda Rajapaksa and the Sinhala majority did not show the magnanimity in victory that true peace requires.

Equally, the Tamil community does not have leaders left, who can make peace. A Mandela needs a De Klerk and vice versa. Neither is visible in Sri Lanka."

"In Sri Lanka, politics is stunted on both sides. Nor has either side, or the international community, managed to get past the arguments of the past. How relevant those arguments of the past are today, is debatable," he says.

Harping on the past and the solutions offered in the past "shows a paucity of leadership and thought" in both the Sinhala and Tamil parties, Menon points out.

He recalls that India had urged Rajapaksa that if he was to be the "leader of all Sri Lankans" he should reach out through devolution of political power, restore human rights, and give a "sense of dignity to the victor and the vanquished alike." But Rajapaksa could not bring himself to be politically magnanimous in victory, Menon says. However, the Indian diplomat admits that Rajapaksa was correct in telling India that there was no one he could work with on the Tamil side.

"Such Tamil politicians as had survived the war in the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) were either complicit with, or indebted to, the LTTE and the most radical elements in the Diaspora. But Rajapaksa did not use his effective and overwhelming power to promote a moderate Tamil leadership. Instead, he relied on turncoat Tamil militants like Douglas Devananda and his Eelam Peoples' Democratic Party (EPDP), and deployed 14 of his 21 Army Divisions in the North in large military zones expropriated from Tamils, thus appearing as an occupying power rather than as

the legitimate government of the people," Menon points out.

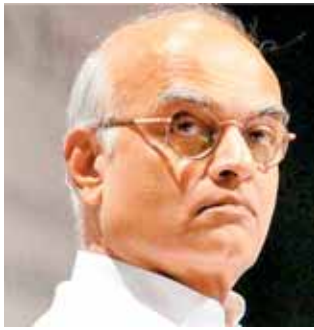
Dim View
The Indian diplomat seems to have a dim view of the current efforts to bring about reconciliation and a political settlement.

"While rehabilitation was possible and fast, reconciliation has been virtually impossible. And as time passes, it seems less likely that there will be a reckoning that satisfies all concerned," he says.

"The world is ready to move on, and so are the victors, the Sinhalese. But the Tamil sense of grievances unaddressed makes the return of separatism and radicalism in another form a matter of time," he feels.

However, much will depend on how politics and society develop in Tamil Nadu, "the true land of the Tamils", in the years ahead, he says.

"For the present, there is a declared sympathy but little support in Tamil Nadu for the causes or the methods ... SEE P12



India's former National Security Adviser and Foreign Secretary, Shivshankar Menon.

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LANKAN CRICKETERS LEAVE FOR SOUTH AFRICA



The Sri Lanka cricket team left on a two-month tour of South Africa yesterday where they will play a series of three Tests, five ODIs and three T20Is. An official photograph of the team captained by Angelo Mathews was taken at SLC headquarters before their departure.

Sri Lanka Cricket has appointed Ranjith Fernando as the Team Manager for this month's tour of South Africa, SLC confirmed today. Fernando will replace

Charith Senanayake, who was appointed for a second stint in 2015. Senanayake's contract is due to expire in September. Squad: Angelo Mathews ©, Dinesh

Chandimal (VC), Dimuth Karunaratna, Kaushal Silva, Kusal Janith Perera, Dhananjaya de Silva, Kusal Mendis, Upul Tharanga, Dushmantha Chameera,

Suranga Lakmal, Lahiru Kumara, Nuwan Pradeep, Vikum Sanjaya Bandara, Rangana Herath, Dilruwan Perera.

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