

Newsletter

Maldivian Democratic Party

15 - 31 January 2004

MDP Meets The British High Commissioner

A delegation of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) met with His Excellency Stephen Evans the British High Commissioner for Maldives and Sri-Lanka on the 8th of January 2004 at Galle Face Hotel, Colombo.

The comprehensive discussion focused on the current social, political and economic situation in the Maldives. The MDP delegates were heartened with Britain's abiding and sincere concerns about the welfare of the people of the Maldives.

International recognition of the MDP follows from a consensus that the party represents a force within the Maldives for democratic liberal values, political pluralism and ethical governance.

Political and diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and the Maldives are rooted in history. Official relations between the United Kingdom and the Maldives were formalized on 16

December 1887 with an agreement signed between Sultan Mohamed Mueenuddine II acting on his own behalf and Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon, British Governor in Ceylon on behalf of the Queen Victoria.

The Maldives was granted independence by the British through the agreement signed between the two countries on the 26th of July 1965. This agreement was signed by Prime Minister Ibrahim Nasir Rannabadeyri Kilegefaanu on behalf of the government of Maldives while Sir Michael Walker British High Commissioner designate to the Maldivian Islands signed on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom. The Ceremony took place at the British High Commissioner's Residence in Colombo.

Recognition of the MDP by the United Kingdom and other democracies would have a profound, positive impact on democracy, stability and the rule of law in the Maldives.

MDP Appoints Denzil Gunaratne as Legal Adviser

On 10th January 2004, MDP appointed Shri-Lanka's well known lawyer Mr. Denzil Gunaratne as the Party's legal advisor.

Gayoom's regime has on different occasions engineered the removal of Maldivian citizens from Shri-Lanka. The removal of Ahamed Didi, a former parliamentary candidate is a recent example. Didi, like others before him was tried under a Gayoom-controlled court, pronounced guilty after a sham trial, imprisoned and ill-treated by Gayoom's subordinates in the National Security Services.

During the past two months members of MDP have been harassed by unidentified men posing as officers of CID in Shri-Lanka. MDP has filed a formal

complaint with the Shri-Lankan police. MDP will take necessary precautionary measures to protect its members both in Maldives and abroad. The party will not be deterred by acts of intimidation in its singular pursuit of establishing the rule of law in the Maldives.

Mr. Gunaratne would give legal advice to MDP in these and other matters.

Threats of persecution from Gayoom's regime has forced some members of MDP to seek protection from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR]. We are pleased to announce that UNHCR has given them certificates as asylum seekers.

Newsletters in custody

300 MDP Newsletters were illegally confiscated by NSS early this month. In an earlier incident the MDP website was blocked by Gayoom operatives.

Article 25 of the Maldivian constitution enshrines freedom of expression as a fundamental right of the Maldivian people. Furthermore Article 20 explicitly states that "letters, messages, telephonic conversations and such other means of communication shall be inviolable".

Gayoom's regime blatantly and routinely violates the constitution of Maldives in its unrelenting pursuit of the suppression of free thought and free expression. Maldives, ranked 145, is at the bottom of Reporters Sans Frontier's list of countries violating press freedom.

Crimes against humanity

It is unlikely that Gayoom would deny the numerous instances of custodial deaths and the endemic torture that takes place in his prisons and detention centers. The acts have been too well documented and too many people – including those close to Gayoom – have raised the issue of human rights abuse for him to pretend it does not exist.

It is important to understand that, as Commander in Chief, Gayoom exercises effective command, control and authority over the NSS perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

One may reasonably expect Gayoom to at least take responsibility for his culpably negligent omission to prevent atrocities by his subordinates.

MDP does not intend to embark on a process of witch-hunting. We firmly believe that a policy of reconciliation would best serve the national interest of our small, close knit, homogeneous society. However, we need to accept the reality that true harmony and national reconstruction could only start after the nation comes to terms with the fact that horrendous atrocities have indeed been perpetrated by subordinates working under Gayoom.

Bringing perpetrators of human rights abuse and crimes against humanity to justice – irrespective of how high a rank such a perpetrator may hold – would have a cleansing, cathartic effect on the Maldivian psyche.

Letters

... I understand very well the importance of the endorsement by the British Government of the MDP will have on your Party's activities and functions. However, I am afraid to say that the Political pressures, if any, that you apply to the current Maldives Government by proxy or otherwise will reciprocate incontrovertibly on the Maldivian Economy and society. ... I would like to hear MDPs stand on the religion?". In which regard do you intend to promote secularism Sir? ..if your sponsors price your Political Freedom at the expense of Islam and Culture, I would employ my entire valor to oust whatever forces, be it political or otherwise, to retain our heritage. This being said, I trust that this will also be your position without prejudice. ..[On mechanism to check MDP Members] .. The guidelines that are set out in the MDP's memorandum of association needs to ensure that its members cannot use their authority, ... to either impede or obstruct the constitution of Maldives... it is not the characteristics or the professions, or the net value of capital of the MDP members per se, that can deliver policy; but it is the extent and accuracy to which these politicians can UTILISE the aforementioned credits to represent, promote and

uphold the citizens' interests that does the job. I gather that the MDP will be more transparent in its political framework and outline its agenda and how it hopes to achieve it favour of the common citizen. There should be independent observation and jurisprudence by the Secretariat and the speakers of the party to ensure that MDP's members exercise their authority only to the benefit of the citizens they represent. ..My final note ends on your Economics status quo. You need not be more than a Layman to tell the ghastly disparity between the Community in Malé and rural counterparts in the Islands. ... In order to assure that you have more substance than symbolism in your cause, only detailed information about what your members' policies towards market reformation, public spending, taxing and regulation (among many other things) would suffice. Instead of melodramatic pledges, I urge you to provide nothing less than educated and fact-based opinion to be presented by the MDP so that Maldivians can make an informed decision to ensure that they do not stoop even lower from where they are now. I look forward to a brighter future for my Country and for my people.

Perversion of HRC of Maldives

Touted earlier as an institution that would be built on the Paris Principles, this Commission is now exposed as no more than a toothless tiger controlled by Gayoom. The Commission's, constitution does not reflect even the most basic criteria promoted by the Paris Principles. Like the parliament, the judiciary, the defense establishment, government financial institution and other institution's of power, the HRC of Maldives is just the most recent tool to legitimize Gayoom's autocratic rule.

Gayoom's decision to limit the Commissions investigations to cover abuse perpetrated only a year before its formation, exposes the HRC as an agency formed to legitimize and white-wash the atrocities committed by his regime in the previous 24 years. Part-time government servants meeting once a month under a Gayoom-controlled umbrella does not inspire much confidence in the commission as a promoter of a culture of respect for human rights in the Maldives.

This arbitrary manipulation of the Commission would mean most of the murderers, rapists and tortures would go unscathed. It is sad that a president of a country can be so naïve as to think his countrymen or the international community could be fooled by such 'cosmetic commissions'

MDP will be ethical in its dealings with external stakeholders and will not in any way compromise our political, social or economic integrity. The promoters of MDP are people of excellence not so much because of their education, wealth or popularity in society as much as their willingness to work for a more free, democratic and just society based on the basic tenets of Islam and the rule of law – MDP Secretariat.

My suggestion for a logo



Congratulations! I feel that this de facto recognition is something that is very sellable to the general public. We should strive to make maximum out of the new development. In this respect, I feel we should emphasize more on spreading the word. With the limited means we have I think we are doing fine. I will continue to promote MDP and work towards increasing members. We will become a formidable force in a very short time.

Please mail feedback to:
secretariat@maldiviandemocraticparty.org

