

# Thonda: talk to LTTE

SUNDAY TIMES 3.9.95

Minister and CWC Leader, S. Thondaman has reiterated that the LTTE should be involved in the Peace Process here and opposed any move to extradite LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran to India.

In an interview with the "Hindu" newspaper in India, Mr. Thondaman said: "The extradition of Prabhakaran, is not practicable, not realistic and not in line with the thinking that there will be peace in Sri Lanka."

When asked whether any fresh approach was made by the Government of India for extradition of Prabhakaran after it had specially assigned the task of speeding up the investigation into the case of assassination of Rajiv Gandhi to the Union Minister of State for Commerce, P. Chidambaram, Mr. Thondaman said: "Anyone who wants peace in Sri Lanka should not go against

the two basic factors, i.e., the LTTE is holding a key position as far as Tamils on the island are concerned, and, that its involvement is necessary in the peace process."

Mr. Thondaman further said if the constitutional reforms proposed by the Sri Lankan President, Chandirka Kumaratunga had to take a concrete shape the above "two things" must be part of it. Therefore, at this point of time the talk of extraditing the LTTE chief was only a matter of "academic interest," he said. If a solution to the ethnic strife ought to be found, the Sri Lankan government must accept the role of the LTTE, and "if some one says that one cannot work with the LTTE it can be said that the person is not serious about peace. Anyone serious about peace must get the LTTE involved."

Referring to the constitutional reform measures, Mr.

Thondaman said that for the first time the Sri Lankan Government had placed a proposal taking into account the aspirations of the Tamils, which it should take to the logical end. President Kumaratunga was bold enough to come out with such a proposal and she should be equally bold to involve the LTTE, he said.

Asked about the killings of Tamil Nadu fishermen on Sri Lankan waters, Mr. Thondaman said that both governments of Sri Lanka and India must hold talks to sort out the issue.

When his attention was drawn to certain political parties in Tamil Nadu staking claim to Kachchativu and demanding that the island should be re-claimed, the CWC leader said. "The agreement on the island had been endorsed by both Parliaments as such, I do not think the issue can be re-opened."