

Prime Minister functioned as the secretary to the commission.

## Gandhi 'almost agreed' to Tamil eelam

MADRAS Thursday, (PTI) Former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi and Shri Lanka's Tamil Tigers, accused of killing him, had reached an amicable settlement for a separate state for Tamils there at a meeting with LTTE chief Prabhakaran's emissaries in Delhi a few weeks before his assassination, the Designated Court trying the Rajiv assassination case was told today.

Opening his arguments on the discharge petition of some of the accused before presiding judge S. M. Siddickk, defence counsel T. Ramadoss said some prosecution witnesses in their statements to the Special Investigation Team had said Gandhi had 'almost agreed' for formation of Tamil eelam at the meeting if he came to power again.

This disproved prosecution's theory that the LTTE were involved in the assassination, he said.

When the crucial talks were held at Delhi, there was no talk of Gandhi visiting Sriperumbudur (where he was killed by a human bomb) or even the state of Tamil Nadu on May 21, he said, adding that the

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LTTE had no idea of Rajiv's visit to Sriperumbudur at that time.

There was no smoke-screen to the talks as alleged by the prosecution, he said.

Ramadoss alleged that the SIT had not investigated the reasons for the sudden snag developed by Gandhi's special plane at the port city of Visakhapatnam on May 20 before he left for his fateful visit to Madras.

"We believe that the conspiracy was hatched there and needed a detailed probe, he said.

Ramadoss, representing six of the 26 accused said Gandhi's visit to Madras was cancelled due to the snag, but the plane was found fit for travel in 30 minutes and the aircraft left without any security.

How did the plane suddenly develop trouble, he asked, adding that the SIT should also investigate whether leaders of another Sri Lankan Tamil group, EPRLF, were involved in the assassination.

Investigation must be through the elimination process and that process had not been applied to the case, he said.

Like his colleague and counsel for the other accused Doraisamy, he too was involved in protracted legal arguments with prosecution lawyer P. Rajamanickam over confining defence arguments to the materials and records of the case.