

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Federalism and peace experts discuss post-tsunami Sri Lanka *Bob Rae and Rohan Edrisinha to present advantages of federalism*

For Immediate Release

March 09, 2005
25-05

Contact: Dr. Amali Philips
Professor, Department of Anthropology
(519) 884-0710 ext. 3490

or Deborah Currie
Manager, Cultural Affairs
(519) 884-0710 ext 3800

WATERLOO – Two federalism experts and peace facilitators will explain the challenges associated with continuing the peace process in Sri Lanka after the tsunami and will suggest how a federal system might offer a viable political framework.

Bob Rae, president of the Forum of Federations and chancellor of the University, will join Rohan Edrisinha, director of the Centre for Policy Alternatives and law professor at the University of Colombo in Sri Lanka, for a discussion entitled Prospects for Peace in Sri Lanka Post Tsunami. The public forum will begin at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, March 16 in the senate and board chamber at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Both speakers have long been involved in efforts to end the internal conflict through a federal system in Sri Lanka. Rae has advised both the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the peace negotiations and helped draft the Oslo Declaration of December 2002 that committed the two parties to explore a federal solution within a united Sri Lanka. The people of Sri Lanka buried their political differences and worked together in the first days following the tsunami, though many believe old divisions have started to reemerge.

– more –

“We need to keep in mind that the tsunami hit Sri Lanka against the backdrop of a cease fire and a fragile peace process,” said Amali Philips, event organizer and a professor in the department of anthropology. “The disaster saw all Sri Lankans work together and the international community must now do what it can to encourage continued cooperation.”

Along with providing context, Philips says the public forum is an opportunity to show support to the efforts of the Canadian Government and the Forum of Federations towards achieving peace in Sri Lanka. The discussion is being organized by Laurier’s department of anthropology and the Forum of Federations.

The Forum of Federations is a non-profit, international organization based in Ottawa. It engages in a wide range of programs of mutual cooperation designed to help develop best practices in countries with federal systems of government around the world. The forum works with countries and organizations of the North and of the South, with established federal countries and newly-emerging federations. It also works with countries that are exploring the possibilities of a federal political system.

The Centre for Policy Alternatives is an independent public policy institute engaged in research and advocacy on conflict resolution, constitutional and law reform, human rights and governance-related issues. As well as being its director, Edrisinha is a founder and head of its legal division. In recent years, his research and advocacy efforts have involved exploring options for a political solution to Sri Lanka’s ethnic conflict.