



Dhanapala: It was the right thing at the right moment

by Namini Wijedasa

Jayantha Dhanapala, who pulled out his candidacy for the post of UN secretary-general, said yesterday that withdrawing had been "the right thing to do at the right moment in the interest of securing a consensus around an Asian candidate".

"Naturally, one is disappointed that the international community did not recognise my experience and qualifications, which were readily conceded by everybody," Dhanapala told the Sunday Island, on his return to Sri Lanka. "It seems to me that decisions (at the Security Council) are more politics-based than merit-based... and I think analysing the politics of it must wait a while."

"I am content that we conducted a very professional, dignified, ethics-based and low-budget campaign focusing on my merits as a candidate," he added. "A withdrawal at this stage was the right thing to do at the right moment in the interest of securing a consensus around an Asian candidate, which has been our principled position from the beginning."

Asked whether the entry of Indian candidate Shashi Tharoor into the race had cobbled his chances, Dhanapala replied: "The absence of a South Asia consensus was certainly a deficiency in my campaign. I don't think it helped India or Sri Lanka."

He also said that South Korea was a country which had the size and population fitting the profile of countries that have provided secretaries-general in the past.

Dhanapala also had to contend with a concentrated LTTE campaign against him while the political and military situation in the country had attracted considerable attention. "The situation in the country got a disproportionate amount of attention while similar events were also occurring in Kashmir, Assam, Gujarat and southern Thailand," he commented.

"Right now I'm planning to have a long rest," Dhanapala said, when questioned about future plans. "I will continue with my international obligations while mulling over my future plans."

Dhanapala declined to make a more detailed statement—or analysis of the politics behind his poor performance at Security Council straw polls—saying this would come later. "I think it is premature for an analysis of the reasons," he said. "I will make a detailed statement after the election process is completed."

"I would like to thank President Mahinda Rajapakse for his unwavering support of my candidature, Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera for his hard work and tireless canvassing on my behalf, to the foreign ministry staff led by the able Foreign Secretary S. Palhikaara, and to all our diplomatic missions, especially to those accredited to the UN in New York and Geneva," Dhanapala said.

Source: <http://www.island.lk/2006/10/01/news2.html>