



Sunday, 15 of November 2009

## Religious leaders who went to Europe to request GSP+ returns empty handed

(Lanka-e-News 14.Nov.2009 7.45PM) The Combined group of religious leaders who went to the Europe Union, addressing a media briefing yesterday (13) to reveal their experience following the tour said, their efforts to get a further extension for the GSP+ benefits to SL was a flop.

Sabaragamuwa University campus Professor and Kam burugamuwa Vajira Temple Prelate said , the European Union is making various accusations against SL claiming that there is no Democracy in the country . The economic problems aggravated by the war must be put on track by an organized effort.

They added that in this tour they were able to get an insight into the opinion the European countries nurse regarding SL. There are organized groups which are making attempts to mislead the EU Ministers.

Sri Jayawardena University campus Professor Bellanvila Wimalaratne Thero stated, though the EU has decided not to extend the GSP+, as the Govt. has forwarded a report requesting the GSP+, explaining that if the GSP+ is denied the country will be plunged into a great economic disaster, some representatives of member countries are lobbying in favor of granting the GSP+ at least for another year.

Colombo Ven. Reverend Dr.

Malcolm Ranjith pointed out, if the GSP+ is deprived , hundreds of thousands of workers will lose employment. The loss will not only affect the Garment Industries, but even other Industries.

SL Establishment of Caritas Director Damion Fernando and Brahma Sri Kuhananda Sharma Kurukkal who were members of the religious group who made the tour also participated at the media briefing held at the Abaiyarama Vihara.

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## Religious delegation from Lanka confident of positive outcome

**GSP + concession -**

**By Yohan Perera**

The delegation of religious leaders who toured Europe recently to request the EU leaders to grant the GSP + concession to Sri Lanka said they were confident that there would be a positive outcome of their visit despite the adverse propaganda carried out by the Tamil diaspora. A member of the delegation said this campaign of the Tamil diaspora created a negative picture of Sri Lanka in the minds of the European leaders. The sources said the European Union should have an understanding on the current situation in Sri Lanka especially on the progress of the resettlement processes. "We have presented our case and are confident that we will get the GSP + concession," he said stressing that they did not come empty handed.

It was earlier reported that the Sri Lankan religious leader's delegation had told the European leaders that the Sri Lankan government did its best to get the LTTE to negotiate and had explained to them the withdrawal of the GSP concession would cost much hardship to poor masses in Sri Lanka.

Sources said the Pope Benedict XVI too had assured his support for Sri Lanka to get the GSP + concession. It was explained that this was the reason why the Pope publicly called on the international community to support Sri Lanka recently. The delegation also met the Pontiff during their visit to Europe. The delegation to Europe included Ven. Bellanwila Wimalarathana Thera, Ven. Kumburugamuwe Vajira Thera, Rt. Rev. Archbishop of Colombo, Malcolm Ranjith, Caritas Sri Lanka SEDEC National Director, Fr. Damien Fernando, Moulavi Niyas and Kuhananda Sharma representing the Hindu religion.

*N.B. We note the different stances adopted by two news agencies about the visit of the religious dignitaries, which in turn reflect differences in ideologies.*