

***Sri Lanka wants to take back all Sri Lankan Tamil refugees who are now in India, country's High Commissioner to India Austin Fernando said on Friday***

"With around 5,000 of these refugees having already returned, we now want to take the rest of them back to their original places," Fernando said while delivering a speech on "Post 2015: Reconciliation Milestones in Sri Lanka", organised by the Foreign Correspondents' Club.

According to Fernando, who took charge as the new Sri Lankan High Commissioner in November last year, there are around 100,000 of these refugees who had come to India during the civil war in the Indian Ocean island nation that ended in 2009.

He said that while some 20 to 30% of these people would like to stay on in India, the rest would like to go back, adding that he would soon be going to south India to meet them.

"We will tell them that we will look after them," the High Commissioner said."

They need a roof over their head, they should be safe, their children should get education," he stated.

"They must also get employment after returning.

"Asked whether Colombo has a deadline to take back these people, Fernando said there is no time frame as such but "we would like to take them at the earliest".

"There are many logistical problems as well," he said. Stating that the Sri Lankan Deputy High Commissioner is in close touch with these people, he said that Colombo and New Delhi need to have a serious dialogue on this issue.

Fernando also assured that immigration will not be a problem for those who are returning.

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