

The Iranathivu island belonging to the Grama Niladhari Division of Iranathivu within the Divisional Secretaries division of Punagari in the Kilinochchi district **consists of two parts**. i.e., the Northern and Southern Islands. These two parts are connected to one another by a sand dune of about 0.5km in width. The northern Iranthivu island is larger in size and is approximately 4.22 Square Kilometers while the smaller Southern Island is approximately 1.17 Square Kilometers in size.

There have been permanent settlements in this island from the time of Portuguese and Dutch eras up to the year 1992. All institutions including a school, church and Pradeshiya Sabha office had been established in this island. While around 245 fishing families had been residing in this is village by the year 1992, paddy and land farming as well as animal husbandry (Cattle and Goat) had taken place in the central regions of the island.

The residents of this island had casted their votes too from a polling station established within the island. Around 178 families residing in the island had owned the '*Swarnabhoomi*' deed.

At the height of war in the year of 1992, the entire island population had vacated the island and settled in areas such as Mannar and Iranamaatha Nagar. Thereafter, from time-to-time, groups of fishermen had gone to the Iranathivu islands to engage in fishing activities and subsequently 49 fishermen had been arrested and detained with their boats by the navy. Thereafter these fishermen in detention had been assaulted by the navy. For this reason, during the period of war, fishing activities in the Iranathivu island had been completely abandoned.

After the war ended, in the year 2009, the navy had taken over the entire island and established naval camps in 4 places. In addition, police station too has been established. Thereafter, while fishing families were prohibited from entering the northern islands by the navy, only 36 families were permitted to permanently reside in the southern island.

As result of the navy's interference with the fishing activities of Iranathivu Island and as it was notified by the Divisional Secretariat and District Secretariat offices that there was no official prohibition on fishing in the area, in the year 2018 the fishermen had entered the island forcefully and begun the fishing industry. Currently there are about 63 families residing in the temporary shelters and engaging in the fishing industry. However, the navy has not permitted anyone to carry out any permanent construction or to transport construction material to the island.

In the year 2019, even though the **ඔනෘජ** company was able to provide a solution to the drinking water issue that was prevalent in the island, currently all of it has been destroyed as result of not having being reconstructed. The navy has not permitted the transportation of the drinking water filtration system received as a grant from Italy to the island up to date. This apparatus is currently stored at the At Fisherman's Wharf Cooperative Society Hall at Iranamatha Nagar.

The people of the Iranathivu island who were engaged in the fishing industry have managed to get the '*Swarnabhoomi*' deed for 19 people from among those who already owned the same by influencing the divisional secretary and the district secretary in the past few years. Deeds could not be granted to others because those deeds have been in the name of the parents of the current residents. Most of the older people who were '*Swarnabhoomi*' deed owners have passed away and as a result it has not been transferred in the names of their children.

Currently there are 2 fishing families who have constructed houses and are permanently residing in the main island, that is the Northern Island. However, the navy has not given the opportunity for the other '*Swarnabhoomi*' deed owners to enter the island to construct houses or reside permanently.

Although the Divisional Secretary and District Secretary state that there is no such hindrance for the people, the fishing community state the contrary. According to them, the Navy does not permit to take any construction material into the island. "We like to build our homes and do our farming and fishing in our lands and live happily. But the Navy does not allow us to do so because an Indian company called Adani is planning to build a solar and wind power plant on this island. Our lands, our island and our sea have been taken away from us because of the need of an Indian company. Because of the Adani company the Navy and the government are not allowing us to enter our own lands and live in it. As of now, many Indian fishermen come in boats and engage in illegal fishing by trawling of the waters around the Iranathivu Island. This causes great damage to the sea. Without controlling any of these, they have taken away our opportunity to enter the island and we are now helpless." These are the views of the people of the Iranathivu island.

The navy cannot act in a way that interferes with the right to engage in a legitimate profession, industry or the right to live in a place of choice, which are the basic rights of the people living in Iranathivu village as shown in the fundamental rights section of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Moreover, the navy cannot oppress the people by coercion, except on the basis of the rights that the application and implementation of the law

and the protection of the law should be fair as stated in the fundamental rights section of the constitution.

It is also important to note several points mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. As a country that became a member of the United Nations Organization in 1955, Sri Lanka is obliged to comply with these basic human rights. According to Article 1 of this declaration, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. According Article 6, Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law. And also, according to Article 7, All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. However, the navy has deprived the fishing community of Iranathivu of all of this.

The government, not knowing that all these deprivations will lead to the breakdown of support between nations as well as that of the country's democratic governance structure and the creation of economic and political crises, is using the navy to try to keep the land away from the people's use and has planned to give it to companies. For this reason, it is the duty and responsibility of every citizen of this country to act against this situation in order to secure the rights of the people of this country.

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