

Sri Lanka shaves off Muslims, Tamils ahead of CHOGM

Sri Lanka wants to use the upcoming Commonwealth summit to showcase its economy and ethnic unity, but a government website has re-engineered demographics by "killing" off a few million to make the island's vitals even more attractive.

The "Sri Lanka Fact Sheet" unveiled by the organisers of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) later this year in Colombo may have crossed out millions of Tamils and Muslims and reduced the life expectancy of all Sri Lankan men by at least eight years.

The Sri Lankan government's official CHOGM2013.lk website says Sri Lankan Tamils account for just 3.9 percent of the population, a whopping 1.44 million less Tamils than what was established by the Census department in their latest 2012 population report.

Sri Lanka Fact Sheet is emphatic that the "Indian Tamil" population in Sri Lanka is 4.6 percent, and bigger than the 3.9 percent

"Sri Lankan Tamil" community.

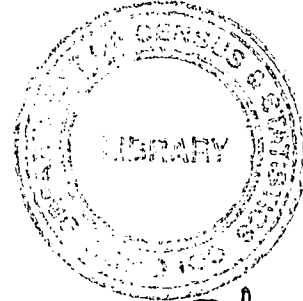
If you thought Tamils were the largest single ethnic minority in Sri Lanka, think again. According to the CHOGM2013.lk, it is a group called "Unspecified" who account for a whopping 10 percent of the population, higher than any other minority.

Coincidentally, the country also has an "unspecified" religious group that also accounts for 10 percent of the population.

The CHOGM2013.LK reduced the number of Muslims to 7.2 percent of the population, down from 9.7 percent in the 2012 census. The number of Hindus was also reduced to 7.1 percent from 12.6 percent. The basis for this drastic change in vital statistics is unclear.

The stunning demographic errors were corrected only five days after the official launch of the website and that too after a Colombo-based foreign correspondent drew attention in a string of tweets.

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However, the Fact Sheet did not correct other muddled economic data. So the amount of money Sri Lankans sent home annually remains at \$1 billion when in fact it had exceeded five times that in 2012.

The website had also debunked theories of an aging population, a problem faced by more affluent economies. CHOGM2013.lk asserts that life expectancy of Sri Lankan males is now down to 64 years. This remains uncorrected as of Friday.

After the 2012 census, the health ministry boasted that the average lifespan of Sri Lankans exceeded 72 years, or closer to the figure of developed nations.

But we are now assured that men are dying much younger. Costly welfare measures may no longer be neces-

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sary to care for an aging population.

Men may die younger, but they are procreating more according to CHOGM2013.LK website. According to them, the country's population growth rate had shot up to 1.3 percent, much faster than the figure of 0.7 percent in the 2012 census report.

Another summit with a few more heads of state and Sri Lanka may be able to bring down life expectancy an even more sustainable level and at the same time have a higher population growth, truly becoming the wonder of Asia.

In the meantime, no one can be blamed for thinking that Sri Lanka is a country that is heavily into construction. Much of the pages on the CHOGM2013.LK are still under construction.