



Independence Day of Sri Lanka



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Message

It is with a great sense of happiness and joy that I am sending warm greetings to my compatriots in Sri Lanka and abroad on the occasion of Independence of our motherland.

Today we are celebrating the Independence Day in a historically changed political environment. We have entered into a new era in our post independent history.

The recent election has provided a historic opportunity for the two major political parties of Sri Lanka now both in government, through the Presidency and the Cabinet to evolve new systems of constructive co-habitation and collective action for the resolution of the separatists conflict. For this both sides must learn to put country before narrow political or personal interests. We have to attempt to replace the conflictual political culture with one that is consensual. We must develop leaders and states persons in place of self-interested street fighters and pundits.

My first Government, elected in 1994, started the process of political negotiation to end the conflict, rather than solely employing military methods. We attempted to deal with the root causes of the problem, arising from the marginalisation of the Tamil and other minority communities of Sri Lanka. While we have not succeeded in ending the conflict, we have made much progress towards peace.

I am happy to state that the new government elected in December last year is also taking action to continue the process. My presidency remains committed to the process of peace that I initiated seven years ago and shall continue to give leadership and guidance to the government in this regard.

We also face continued challenges in the fields of democracy, human rights and social development. We have failed to realise the dreams of our freedom fighters to build a strong and united nation. I have heard various reasons being attributed to this state of affairs. Namely that these problems were caused by colonial rulers and such like.

But we have enjoyed independence for more than half a century. The freedom we have won 54 years ago will not be complete until we find solutions to the problems. The time has come for us to realise the dream of our forefathers who struggled tirelessly for the unity and prosperity of our motherland.

And together we must relentlessly strive to build a new nation, a united strong nation brimming with the vitality and joy of renewal where all of us whatever race, religion or caste we belong to shall together built one nation drawing strength from the richness of our diversity.

With the great Indian Poet Tagore I shall say 'In to that heaven of freedom let my country awake'.

Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga
President of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka -- the natural springboard for investment in Asia

SRI LANKA, with its long democratic tradition throughout its 53 years of independence, has demonstrated the resilience and stability of its democratic governments, with transition of power being effected with the minimum of disruption. The economy has proved resilient to political change, demonstrating in concrete terms its ability to achieve positive and sustained economic growth.

The country has the distinction of being the pioneer in free market reforms in the South Asian region, having embarked on a programme of liberalizing its economy in late 1977. Exchange controls have been progressively lifted, tariffs have been reduced and a large number of state enterprises have been privatized. The country has made vast strides in creating a more liberal trade and foreign exchange regime. The basic irreversibility of the reform process pursued by successive governments since 1978 and the broad consensus across the political spectrum in pursuing these policies, underlines the continuity of the economic reforms programme being implemented in the country.

Sri Lanka leads the South Asian region in terms of human development indicators, with its high literacy rate of 91 per cent placing it way ahead of other South Asian countries and on par with those of South East Asia. Its national health indicators are comparable with those of the developed world.

Sri Lanka was placed 81st (medium human development category) in the Human Development Index constructed in the year 2001, ahead of China (87th), Indonesia (102nd), Pakistan (127th) and Bangladesh (132nd).

The country has achieved relatively high ranking in terms of GDP per capita, adjusted to reflect pur-

chasing power parity -- over US\$3,270. During the past 5-year period, the economy has undergone fundamental changes with its per capita nominal income rising from US\$473 in 1990 to US\$856 in 2000. Consequently, Sri Lanka has moved up from the 'low income' group and is currently recognized as a 'lower middle income' country. Among the other Asian nations in this category are Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand & China.

The Sri Lankan economy has remained resilient despite the destabilizing trends both external and internal. The heavy reliance of the economy on the agricultural sector, tea in particular has declined steadily with the growing promi-

nence of manufactured exports as the most dynamic component of the country's merchandise trade. Apparels, the leading sub-sector contributing to 52 per cent of total exports cater to an up-market clientele in the fast paced global apparel industry including Marks & Spencer, Victoria's Secret, Calvin Klein & Ralph Lauren. Exports of other industrial products viz. electronic products such as magnetic recording heads & head stack assemblies for Sony & Compaq are a measure of the wide consumer acceptance these products enjoy in sophisticated markets.

Board of Investment of Sri Lanka -- a dream and vision turn into

reality: The Board of Investment of Sri Lanka (BOI) formerly the CGEC the statutory body charged with the responsibility of promoting and approving foreign and domestic investment in the country, has played a key role in the implementation of Sri Lanka's export-oriented industrialization strategy.

The BOI is vested with wide ranging powers through an act of parliament to extend special incentives and concessions to projects in priority sectors as well as modify, exempt and waive identified laws. These laws include Inland Revenue, Customs, Exchange Control and Import Control. (Abridged)



Message

"EACH race contributes something essential to the world's civilization in the course of its own self-expression and self-realization. The character built up in solving its own

problems, in the experience of its own misfortunes, is itself a gift which each offers to the world". These are the words of the great Sri Lanka intellectual Ananda Coomaraswamy writing in 1924.

Sri Lanka gained her independence in 1948, and now, as we step into the twenty-first century, we look at the large reservoir of experience that we have acquired in the process of our self-realization as a multi-cultural nation.

It is the avowed intention of the new government to leap frog into the future taking with us the best from our past, based on the enlightened self-interest of all our people.

As we celebrate the anniversary of our Independence, we seek the cooperation of Sri Lankans and the well-wishers of Sri Lanka where ever they

may be, to help us in our endeavours to ring back the balance in our lives. A balance that was an essential characteristic of Lanka, which resulted in our fair land being known as Dhammadipa -- the Island of Balance.

As we chart of policy of sustainable development with equity to all, I appeal to our friends everywhere to communicate with us directly at minister@forin.gov.lk to help us in this process.

May Sri Lanka be resplendent once more.

Tyronne Fernando
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka



Message

OVER fifty-four years ago, the main obstacle to independence was the disunity amongst the different ethnic communities in the country. Our first Prime Minister, the Rt Hon. DS Senanayake, through his strenuous efforts brought together these communities and steered us to a free and independent Sri Lanka on the 4th of February 1948.

Unfortunately, through the succeeding years, the divisive influences of various social, economic and political forces have weakened the unity of spirit amongst these communities and eroded our strength of a common purpose. Once again, an environment of suspicion mars relations between Sri Lanka's people. This is at the core of the North East problem that we are grappling with today.

We are dedicated to restore this fractured unity and awaken the hope of peace. It is no easy task. Let us all determine on this Day of Independence to surmount the most arduous of challenges, and usher in an era of long-lasting peace, where all segments of our society can live in harmony.

Ranil Wickremesinghe,
Prime Minister of Sri Lanka



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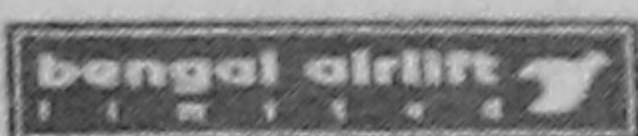
From last week, Sri Lanka's leading cement company has been re-born with the name **Holcim (Lanka) Ltd**. This is the proud continuation of sharing the Holcim spirit worldwide.

On the occasion of Sri Lankan Independence Day, Holcim (Bangladesh) Ltd heartily wishes the people of Sri Lanka a prosperous time ahead.

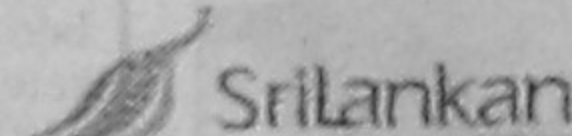
Holding the spirit



Our heartiest felicitations and best wishes on the auspicious occasion of the 54th Anniversary of the Independence Day of Sri Lanka



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occasion, I extend my heartiest greetings to the government and friendly people of Bangladesh and to the Sri Lankan expatriate community in Bangladesh.

The relations between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh dates as far back as 6th century BC. This historical identity developed into more valued political, economic and socio-cultural ties, specially after the birth of Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign nation in the year 1971. Being in the same sub-continent, both our countries share more or less a similar political history. Foreign invasions, colonial subjugation and struggle for independence are some of the common features that characterised our political history. Both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are working closely along with other neighbours to promote the welfare and improve the quality of life of our peoples. The SAARC, the initiative for which was taken by Bangladesh, was borne out of this desire. Both countries have also made notable and distinct contributions as members of the UN, the Commonwealth and NAM and more recently BIMSTEC.

As regards, bilateral relations, we have already established very close ties in the political, economic, social

and cultural fields. A number of Sri Lanka companies have successfully invested in Bangladesh in diverse fields. Sri Lankan entrepreneurs continue to show interest in Bangladesh to expand their industries and business ventures. Large number of Sri Lankans are employed in the management of the ready-made garment sector. The increase in people to people contacts between the two countries no doubt points to growing relations between us.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and profound gratitude to all expatriate Sri Lankans in Bangladesh who have contributed immensely to project Sri Lankan interests in Bangladesh. They have generously given their time and energy towards creating a favourable image of our country in Bangladesh. I look forward to their continuing support.

I wish, the very warm and friendly relations that exist between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh be further strengthened in the years ahead. May the peoples of our two countries enjoy peace, happiness and prosperity.

Neville Piyadigama
High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Bangladesh

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National Day

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045