

66th Anniversary of Sri Lanka's Independence

ADVERTISING FEATURE
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Building peace and freedom for the future generations

A message from His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

ON this day, as we celebrate the 66th anniversary of our independence, we restate our commitment to safeguard the freedom and rights of our people, and decide on our future free of dictates from the re-emerging forces of colonialism.

With our freedom strengthened by the defeat of separatist terrorism, we proceed on our journey towards progress. This requires new social, political and economic strategies that include modern infrastructure such as ports, airports, highways, power and energy, and the latest trends in industry, commerce and trade, and education. While most of this is already in place, in the new drive for development, much more remains to be achieved offering exciting challenges ahead.

It is our belief that the strength of our freedom largely depends on developing indigenous skills and knowledge, to restore the glories of our past and move ahead to the victories of the future.

As we celebrate our freedom today we should remember with deep gratitude the members of our security forces who courageously stepped forward to defend our sovereignty and territorial integrity when they were under grave threat. We shall always honour and pay tribute to the great sacrifices they made to ensure that we live in freedom and unity.

Our policy of non-alignment, with a commitment to justice and humanity, has brought us friends in the global community who understand our tri-



Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

als in recent decades, and who are ready to help us go forward in freedom with the assurance of support in international fora.

I share your dream to strengthen the Sri Lankan nation under a single flag as a united country. Achieving this requires hard work, with diligence and honesty of purpose – it calls for patriotism that transcends the barriers of geography and community, with reconciliation in a rich unity of purpose.

This will lay the foundation for the success of our children and the future generations who will inherit this land, to live in peace and harmony bringing the glories of new achievements that inspire us from our past. Let us together pledge to build this future for our land and people in the peace and freedom we have won.



Union: Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott presenting an Australian sporting shirt to His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa at the bilateral meeting in Sri Lanka last year.

Celebrating Sri Lanka

**A message from Dr D.M. Jayaratne,
Prime Minister of the Democratic
Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**

SRI Lanka celebrates her 66th anniversary of independence at a time when the country has gained remarkable achievements in the economic, social and cultural spheres ushered in by the present government during its eight year tenure.

The war-devastated economy and the social fabric of the north and the east of the country are being speedily restored through the implementation of a multitude of physical and social infrastructure projects. Rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced persons were completed quickly. The livelihood of the people was strengthened by resuscitating agriculture, fisheries and other small industries.

A record number of major development projects in sectors including power generation, water supply, irrigation, shipping, aviation, telecommunication, housing, information technology and transport, were implemented within the eight year period of the visionary leadership of H.E. the President.

Among these projects, power generation plants at Norochcholai and Upper Kotmale, Hambantota Port, South-Colombo Port, Mattala International Airport, and two expressways take pride of place. Five new thrust



**Dr D.M. Jayaratne, Prime Minister of the
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri
Lanka.**

sectors of the economy – maritime, aviation, knowledge, commercial and energy, referred to as 'new hubs' – have been established to propel the country's economic development to greater heights.

The country is poised for further advancement in the economic, social and cultural spheres by implementing many more ambitious projects. It is therefore incumbent on all of us, the patriotic citizens of the country, to extend our unstinted support, cooperation and commitment to the government in its endeavor to achieve this objective. On this day, we resolve to dedicate ourselves to contribute collectively to this laudable task of nation building.



Cooperation: Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott being welcomed by Mr Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Secretary Ministry of Defence and Urban Development, and Vice Admiral Jayantha Colombage, Commander of the Sri Lankan Navy, at the Port of Colombo in November, 2013.

Reflecting upon great achievements

A message from Prof. G.L. Peiris, Sri Lankan Minister of External Affairs

THE anniversary of the 66th Independence Day of Sri Lanka is an opportune moment for us to reflect with a sense of gratification upon the many things the country has achieved within a brief span of time.

As a country, we are proud of the significant progress that has been made since the defeat of terrorism four years ago, and people are enjoying peace in a united Sri Lanka.

Over the past several years, an extraordinary development drive has been undertaken by the government. Numerous mega development programs are being implemented, with the construction of harbours, airports and roads bringing economic development to rural areas and connecting them to the larger economic development of the country.

The government is committed to ensuring that the opportunities gained as a result of these developments are available to all communities, across the country, to promote the betterment of their lives.

Free elections have been held in the Northern Province, bringing communities into the political process for the first time. Internally displaced persons have been able to return to their homes and been reunited with their families, and fishing, agri-

culture and a multitude of other industries have been reinvigorated to provide livelihood opportunities to people.

The National Action Plan of the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission is being implemented steadily, and substantial resources are being allocated to ensure its objectives. A national policy is underway to transform the country into a trilingual society.

The policy framework of the government, Mahinda Chinthana: The Vision for Future, is steadfast in guiding our development efforts and harnessing the tremendous potential of Sri Lanka. It is helping the country to emerge as a regional hub on aviation, commerce, maritime and knowledge.

With these developments, increasing linkages and strong growth, Sri Lanka is a world-class travel destination poised to move towards being an upper middle income country. The climate of peace and stability which is now prevailing in the country is an essential condition for this enhanced economic activity.

Sri Lanka continues to have a strong vibrant foreign policy and healthy relations in the global arena, guided by principles of non-alignment and friendship with all. We are steadily expanding our diplomatic relations



Prof. G.L. Peiris.

and are opening new diplomatic missions around the world, deepening our ties of friendship in the international community.

On the international stage, Sri Lanka hosted the 23rd Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November 2013 and will serve as the Chair in Office of the Commonwealth for the next two years. This event was a great opportunity for world leaders to see the tremendous progress and unprecedented post-conflict developments taking place in Sri Lanka.

At this time, I express my gratitude to the expatriate community that has continued to contribute towards the development of the country. On this occasion, let us rededicate ourselves to collectively intensifying our commitment towards supporting the motherland in all challenges ahead, in order to lead the country towards a brighter future.

A great and auspicious occasion

A message from Admiral Thisarra Samarasinghe, RSP VSV USP ndc psc, High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in Australia

TODAY, we celebrate the 66th anniversary of independence and the national day of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. On this auspicious day, I have great pleasure in extending my heartiest greetings and best wishes not only to those with Sri Lankan roots but also to all of you who call Australia your home and to the government of Australia.

On February 4, 1948, Sri Lanka attained its independence from the British rule of 150 years and celebrates every year with pride and honour.

Sri Lanka has now entered an era of peace and stands undivided, under one flag, committed to showing solidarity and unity as a noble nation. We have enjoyed independence and honourable peace since May 2009, achieved through many sacrifices from our leaders as well as our brave armed forces that were determined to unite the country. Let us pay respects in remembrance of all those who dedicated their lives for the cause of independence and peace.

Sri Lanka is a nation with a great and ancient civilization, characterised by multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural communities, and our multi-party system accommodates ethnic and religious diversities.

Sri Lanka's foreign policy has been guided by non-alignment, so Sri Lanka enjoys close and friendly relations with all member states of the United Nations.

Sri Lanka proudly and successfully hosted the 23rd Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November, 2013. It was the first multilateral summit of

this magnitude held in our country since the Non-Aligned Conference held in 1976. Sri Lanka is looking forward to hosting the World Conference on Youth in collaboration with the UN in May, 2014, which will be the first held in Asia.

Sri Lanka is one of the few countries in the world which has been offering free education from grade one to university level and providing scholarships to needy students and undergraduates. This allows children to pursue their education irrespective of their social or economic background.

Sri Lanka's accomplishments in healthcare include an infant mortality rate of 9.4 per 1000 live births, highlighted by UNICEF as a success story.

Sri Lanka has now entered into a new era of peace and prosperity under the visionary leadership of His Excellency Mahina Rajapaksa. Three decades of brutal terrorism is now a closed chapter in Sri Lanka's history.

Today, the government has enabled a rapid transformation from the pre-conflict emergency phase to a development-oriented phase transforming Sri Lanka into an economic centre of the world.

The close relations Sri Lanka and Australia enjoy today were established in 1947, and were further strengthened by the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1949.

The recent visits of Hon. Prof. G.L. Peiris, Minister of External Affairs, and Hon. Namal Rajapaksa MP to Australia, and the supportive stance taken by Australia at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings in Sri Lanka in November 2013 are clear evidence of a strengthened bilateral relationship between our two countries. I thank the



Admiral Thisarra Samarasinghe, RSP VSV USP ndc psc.

government of Australia for the support displayed at CHOGM and for the improved relationship.

Trade, investment, tourism, education, people-to-people contact, and cricket are the some of the areas which further promote our bilateral relations. The development assistance and education assistance offered by Australia are noteworthy and invaluable.

Australia is an important trading partner for Sri Lanka both as a significant market for exports and supply of raw material and intermediate goods.

As we celebrate this anniversary, I thank the Consul General of New South Wales, Consul General of Victoria, Honorary Consuls of Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide and the Sri Lankan community residing in Australia for the invaluable assistance they have provided over many years.

I appeal in earnest, to all Sri Lankans living in Australia to join hands in harmony and to contribute your invaluable knowledge to make Sri Lanka a safe, secure and a prosperous nation.

May the longstanding and deep friendship between Sri Lanka and Australia grow from strength to strength.