

Sri Lanka independence day

Friendship with Japan continues to grow

Esala Weerakoon
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES OF SRI LANKA IN JAPAN

I have the honor to convey warm greetings and best wishes from the people and the government of Sri Lanka to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as to the friendly people of Japan and the government of Japan on the happy occasion of the 62nd anniversary



of Sri Lanka's Independence. I also extend my best wishes to all the Sri Lankan nationals living in Japan on this auspicious occasion.

Our National Day this year has a special significance since it also marks the re-election of His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa in the recently concluded Presidential Election in Sri Lanka. The historic victory of President Rajapaksa in the election, which for the first time in decades covered the entire country, as a result of the defeat of terrorism, will enable the consolidation of peace and rapid economic de-

velopment throughout the country.

Sri Lanka is a long-standing friend of Japan. Our countries being two of the oldest democracies in Asia have enjoyed excellent bilateral relations on a broad front. Culturally, our countries have been influenced by the teachings of the Buddha whose philosophy has moulded the outlook of our peoples. This cultural affinity has contributed to our close and enduring relationship. These relations have expanded over the years not only on the level of governmental ties but also on the level of people-

to-people exchanges. I express my appreciation to all the individuals and institutions connected with Sri Lanka who have played an important role in furthering our friendly relations. We can take delight in the fact that they stand poised to improve even further in the coming years.

Sri Lanka and Japan established diplomatic relations in 1952. Our bilateral relations have grown stronger with every passing year. Japan's continued support on issues affecting Sri Lanka's interest at regional and international fo-

rum has been a great source of encouragement for us. Sri Lanka and Japan cooperate closely within regional forums such as the Colombo Plan, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue.

I recall with gratitude the government of Japan's continued support to Sri Lanka over the years in the field of development assistance and technical cooperation. That support has covered many areas such as transportation, telecommunications, irrigation, agriculture, fisheries and power and energy. In recent years, our relations have assumed a new impetus as a result of growing economic collaboration. We expect further growth in the coming year in the areas of tourism, investment, trade, educational exchanges as well as interparliamentary visits.

An important landmark in recent bilateral cooperation was the construction funded jointly by both governments of a museum at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Sigiriya. The Sigiriya Museum, which opened in July, will greatly encourage visitors to learn more about the historical importance, natural beauty and cultural splendor of Sigiriya. The Sigiriya Museum will remain a special symbol of the cultural relations between Sri Lanka and Japan. The museum will be a repository of our heritage in literature, architecture, sculpture and painting.

A new era of peace in Asia's oldest democracy

Mahinda Rajapaksa
PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA



The 62nd anniversary of independence we mark today has special significance being the first such celebration of our freedom since the defeat of terrorism in our country last year and as it takes place soon after our people have expressed their firm and resounding commitment to democracy.

The freedom from colonial rule that we gained 62 years ago is now more meaningful because we have been liberated from the forces of separatist terrorism that marred our freedom for nearly half the period since independence and gravely threatened the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country.

As much as we recall with gratitude the great contributions made by our patriots of the past in the struggle for independence, it is also fitting that we pay tribute in full measure to all our heroic troops and their families for the sacrifices made in the battle against terrorism, as well as all sections of our people for the patriotism they showed in putting up with the hardships during this battle to restore freedom and democracy to our entire country.

We are particularly grateful for the courage shown by the people as we were confronted with the armed might of the

forces of terrorism from within, as well as forces from outside who sought to pressure us into conceding to the aims of those who used terrorism as a political weapon.

We are also grateful to all friendly nations, from East and West, those near and far, who understood the true nature of the struggle we were engaged in and extended to us all support to achieve our objective of true freedom for our country and people.

As we move into the new era of peace in our country, we are ready to face the challenges of the future. It is necessary that we give equal priority to the tasks of national reconciliation and the building of trust among all sections of our people, as well as to development that will take us to our rightful place in the community of nations. The fruits of peace and the aspects

of development that were not neglected despite our major occupation with the battle against terrorism are already seen in the many projects initiated and completed in the power and energy sectors and in infrastructure development.

As our forefathers did in the glorious days of our past, and the more recent leaders in the struggle for freedom showed us, we remain committed to a single, unitary Sri Lanka, where all our people, irrespective of differences of ethnicity, religion or political persuasion, can enjoy the full benefits of freedom, development and equal rights in a democratic society.

The new and even stronger mandate you have given us gives greater confidence to move ahead in building the "New" Sri Lanka, which we envisage as the hub of economic activity and a beacon of progress in our region; together with a full commitment to the Rights of Man which are integral to the heritage bestowed on us from the past.

On this historic and significant anniversary of freedom, let us rededicate our nation to the ideals of peace, tolerance, mutual trust and progress, in the democratic tradition our people have cherished and protected as the oldest democracy in Asia.

I wish you a prosperous future.

May our nation be blessed by the Noble Triple Gem.



Resplendent land: A Sri Lankan dance troupe performs at the Sri Lanka Festival held Sept. 12-13 at Yoyogi Park in Shibuya Ward, Tokyo. EMBASSY OF SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka stands today at a historic moment of tremendous opportunity and begins a new chapter in nation building following the end of more than three decades of terrorism. Peace has now been bestowed on our country. The aspirations of all our communities to live in peace and harmony as one nation has materialized. As peace and prosperity beck-

on our country, the development assistance given by the government of Japan is of vital importance.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to our valiant security forces for the sacrifice they have made and their courage and determination that has today ensured that on this 62nd anniversary of Independence Day we stand to-

gether as one united nation that is free of the threat of terrorism.

The Northern Development Program "Waddakil Wasantham" will ensure that the internally displaced will be resettled in their original places of habitation in the shortest possible time and that large-scale development programs that are already under way in

the Northern Province will bring about a massive transformation of that region.

I look forward with confidence to the enduring friendship between Sri Lanka and Japan being further enhanced in the coming year and to continuing friendly collaboration and dialogue with the government and people of Japan.

Congratulations
to the People of Sri Lanka
on the 62nd Anniversary of
Their Independence

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**Best Wishes to the Government and
People of Sri Lanka
on the occasion of the
62nd Anniversary of Independence**

SRI LANKA BUSINESS COUNCIL OF JAPAN

Sri Lanka Business Council of Japan (SLBCJ) is formed in line with the policy directions given by the Overseas Business Promotion Program launched by the Ministry of Commerce & Consumer Affairs of Sri Lanka. Our prime objective is to develop, expand and encourage bilateral trade between Sri Lanka and Japan.

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Ratnasiri Wickramanayaka
PRIME MINISTER OF SRI LANKA

Freedom is desired by all living beings.

Sri Lanka, enriched by Buddhist values, is a nation that gives importance to the freedom of the individual.

Inhumane acts of a few in the society violate the freedom of the entire society. The value of freedom is deeply felt when it is lost, more than when it is enjoyed.

History shows that there was a period when Sri Lan-

kans were longing for freedom. And during that period great national personalities have emerged, who surmounting all barriers had achieved the coveted goals for the nation.

We recently passed an era when freedom was limited to a word. During that bleak period the society had to live in fear and with uncertainty of the future. However, the country was fortunate enough at that juncture to be blessed with heroes who sacrificed their lives to bring freedom and happiness to the nation by ending the scourge of terrorism that lasted nearly 30 years.

Freedom that was achieved in February 1948 became more meaningful in 1972. It is strengthened to an absolute freedom in 2010, with the results of the recently concluded presidential election where Sri Lankans freely expressed their democratic rights.

I believe that all the citizens of this country will now unite to bring a brighter future to our motherland.

Emerging as a 'Wonder of Asia' is within reach



Rohitha Bogollagama
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Rising from the shackles of colonialism 62 years ago and annihilating an almost three-decade-long grip of terrorism from our shores eight months ago, we celebrate this anniversary of independence in 2010 with a great sense of oneness and pride. Nearly half of our country's contemporary independent history has witnessed a struggle against the brutal forces of terrorism, which sought to tear asunder the very sovereignty of our great nation gained by our forefathers.

The successful humanitari-

an operation to extricate our motherland from the jackboot of terrorism under the committed leadership of President Mahinda Rajapaksa has brought a new Sri Lanka to its people and the world at large. The vote at the recent presidential election is an overwhelming endorsement by the people of this country of President Rajapaksa's achievements for their betterment, and providing a firmer foundation for the further strengthening of national unity, progress and prosperity of our nation as envisioned in the "Mahinda Chintana" (Mahinda Vision).

The defeat of the separatist terrorists, one time thought to be invincible, has been achieved, thus eradicating the plague of terrorism. I pay tribute to our heroic forces who valiantly fought to eliminate terrorism to secure our blessed country, and the people of Sri Lanka, for the resilience demonstrated by their sacrifices through those dark days of uncertainty.

A new era of peace and hope has dawned for the country with a renewed mandate for the continued leadership of President Rajapaksa, which also comes with the beginning of another decade. Sri Lanka is now wholly poised as a free country to achieve prosperity, which the people so richly deserve. This freedom, I believe, enriches the achievement of our independence in 1948. While in the clutches of terrorist conflict, unprecedented development work has been undertaken by the government, with the last four years recording an exceptional increase in per capita income, enabling sustained economic growth. Sri Lanka is a land of plenty, fertile in

rich resources that provide the very basis for the country's economic resistance to a turbulent world economy, exacerbated by having to defend the onslaught of terrorism domestically.

Mega development programs are being actively pursued in the country with the initiation of the construction of harbors, airports, roads, electricity generating stations, etc. Investments are flowing into the country with new employment avenues being generated, further empowering the people with the accruing benefits which the government has sought to spread equitably with the distribution of equal resources throughout the country. The surge toward the country's development and glory has now begun in earnest, which we must sustain to emerge as a "Wonder of Asia" in the near future.

Guided by the principles of nonalignment and being friends with all in the conduct of foreign relations has earned Sri Lanka a pivotal position in the global community. The bedrock of our engagement with the international community has been one of moderation, engagement and peaceful coexistence, which have facilitated Sri Lanka to continue to play an important role in the United Nations and other multilateral forums, culminating in currently being chair of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) and endorsed to take the top slots of the G-15 this year and Commonwealth in three years. The diverse interests of Sri Lanka have been served through its membership in multilateral forums, which also include BIMSTEC, IORARC, G-77,

Shanghai Cooperation Dialogue and the ASEAN Regional Forum. Sri Lanka has never been bereft of friends in the international community and this is an appropriate opportunity to extend our appreciation for the assistance rendered to us in countering terrorism to safeguard the sovereignty of this nation and enhancing economic development.

On this momentous anniversary of independence, with the added significance of it being in immediate succession of the first post-conflict national election, let us Sri Lankans all come together in a spirit of trust and understanding, leaving aside differences to rededicate ourselves to be united as a single nation, community and citizenry, and embark on a journey to lead Sri Lanka into new vistas for a brighter future. Following in the footsteps of those Sri Lankans who freed our country from colonial domination, it is time that we banished any hatred and mistrust among us, and let no force quell the pitch of democratic institutions being reinvigorated that has begun in order to create an equal political space for us all.

I reiterate the call of President Mahinda Rajapaksa for all Sri Lankans living overseas to return to Sri Lanka and join in being true stakeholders of Sri Lanka's economic and social advancement. As we celebrate our anniversary of independence in this new decade of the 21st century, let us all march forward united, to secure and begin an era with a greater vibrant democracy and spiraling development for the country, while achieving our own aspirations.

It is a "New" Sri Lanka that is before us today.



Cultural heritage: The Sigiriya Museum, which opened in July, showcases the results of nearly three decades of archaeological research at the Sigiriya UNESCO World Heritage site and the Sigiriya-Dambulla area.

Economic policy sustains progress

Sumitaka Fujita
CHAIRMAN, THE JAPAN-SRI LANKA
BUSINESS COOPERATION COMMITTEE

On behalf of the Japan-Sri Lanka Business Cooperation Committee (JSLBCC), it is my great pleasure to extend our most heartfelt congratulations to the people of Sri Lanka on the occasion of the 62nd anniversary of their independence.



The JSLBCC was established in August 1979 with the objective of expanding trade, investment and tourism, as well as promoting other productive bilateral business ini-

tiatives. In addition to periodic joint meetings, the committee organizes events and assemblies to facilitate active interaction among Japanese and Sri Lankan government and business leaders.

Last November in Colombo, JSLBCC conducted our 15th joint meeting. Senior Sri Lankan government officials, business leaders of both countries and a large number of parties involved in bilateral trade, investment and new business promotion participated in this successful event. Through this interaction, Japanese businesspeople gained a clear understanding of the high quality, flexibility and adaptability of Sri Lanka's labor force, as well as the geo-

graphical advantage the country enjoys located in the heart of the enormous South Asian market and its roughly 1.5 billion regional consumers. Moreover, this first joint meeting in three years provided an opportunity for participants to renew old friendships and establish new ones. In Colombo, I felt a sense of high expectations for the strong future growth and development of the Sri Lankan economy.

As we are all aware, Japan and Sri Lanka have a very long and rich historical relationship, particularly in terms of cultural exchange involving our shared Buddhist traditions. Thanks to growing commercial relationships, Japa-



Ancient city: The exhibits at the Sigiriya Museum will give visitors an understanding of the history of Sigiriya from prehistory to the present.

nese firms have become familiar with the special characteristics of the Sri Lankan people, valuing their diligent nature and remaining grateful for the warmth they extend to

Japanese people. In closing, we trust that Sri Lanka's continuing policy of welcoming foreign companies will sustain and enhance its remarkable progress. Please be

assured that the JSLBCC will continue to promote active economic exchange and ever-closer commercial ties between Japanese and Sri Lankan businesses.

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