

Sri Lanka independence day

Japan, Sri Lanka enjoy long-standing solidarity

Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda
AMBASSADOR OF SRI LANKA

On this special occasion of the 67th Anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka, I have the deep honour to convey my sincere and warm greetings and best wishes from the people and the government of Sri Lanka to their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and the people and government of Japan. I also wish to convey my warm sentiments to all Sri Lankan expatriates domiciled in Japan, to whom today is indeed a propitious and auspicious occasion.

The diplomatic ties between Japan and Sri Lanka date back more than 60 years, but recorded and documented history establishes that relations between our two countries date back many a century. Japan and Sri Lanka

have maintained and deepened relations over the past six decades, particularly since the formal establishment of diplomatic relations in 1952, soon after the San Francisco Peace Conference held in September of 1951. At this momentous conference, the then Minister of Finance and later the President of Sri Lanka, Hon. J.R. Jayawardene, spoke on behalf of the government of Sri Lanka and earnestly urged the participating countries to accept Japan in the spirit of the teachings of Lord Buddha. He quoted from Lord Buddha's teachings and convinced the comity of nations at the conference that hatred cannot be overcome by hatred, but only by love and compassion.

As a result of this initiative and proposition, Japan took resolute and courageous courses of action toward its post-war reconstruction process. It is most heartening to note that many people in Japan still recollect this occasion with a sense of gratitude. Sri Lanka stood by Japan, at the conference, be-

cause Sri Lanka was of the conviction that Japan had the inner strength and fortitude to revive from her devastation. This boundless strength of the peoples of Japan would, one day, become a beacon of promise, hope, optimism and opportunity that would make Japan an economic powerhouse not only in Asia, but in the entire world. I may further add that what our forefathers foresaw, then, has become a reality.

The year 2014 was unique for both countries as Japanese Prime Minister H.E. Shinzo Abe undertook a two-day official visit to Sri Lanka. The last occasion a prime minister of Japan visited Sri Lanka was in 1990. During this visit, Abe had several high-level meetings, including that of a high profile business forum. In July, the Vice President of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, Hon. Masahiko Komura, who is also the president of Japan-Sri Lanka Parliamentary League, visited Sri Lanka with a number of parliamentarians from the league,



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addresses the closing session of the Sri Lanka-Japan Business Forum on Sept. 7 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. EMBASSY OF SRI LANKA

thus deepening and strengthening the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Today, Japan is the largest donor country to Sri Lanka and has always stood by Sri Lanka in good times and in testing times, a friend in need, we say, is a friend indeed. In international forums, Japan has always supported our cause and looked toward the fundamental interests of Sri Lanka as a sovereign and vibrant democracy. Japan was also one of the first countries to assist Sri Lanka when the Indian Ocean tsunami struck the island in 2004. In the same manner, when the Great East Japan Earthquake struck in 2011, the govern-

ment of Sri Lanka was quick to assist Japan in every possible way. Sri Lanka is currently one of the safest places in the world, with permanent peace, stability and harmony. Similar to Japan in the post-war era, Sri Lanka also believes that our country and its people have the inner strength and tenacity to emerge and unleash a new era and a new chapter, paving the way to lead the future of South Asia as well as Asia.

Tourist arrivals from Japan to Sri Lanka have increased markedly in 2014. Japan is among the highest tourist generating countries in the East Asian region. Sri Lanka, being a safe haven for

Japanese travellers seeking a "power spot" and a peaceful location for inner revival, among others, is highly sought after by Japanese tourists. In addition, large corporations of Japan have expressed interest in committing investments and to being engaged in commercial and trading activity with Sri Lanka, which has become a bustling business hub in South Asia.

I eagerly look forward with confidence and optimism to the enduring friendship between Sri Lanka and Japan, being further enhanced and augmented in the coming years, and to strengthen and deepen the relations between our two countries.

Political, social policies to place high priority on peoples' needs

Maithripala Sirisena
PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA

The celebration of the 67th Anniversary of our Independence is of special significance as it sees the launch of a new era of good governance in the country.

This comes with a new commitment to the unity of our people, to safeguard freedom and democratic rights, and proceed to a future that moves further from the re-emerging forces of colonialism.

The strengthening and progress of peace in our country requires social, political and economic policies that give the highest priority to the needs of the people. This includes social welfare, economic progress and a determined move toward good governance, which is in keeping with the traditions of tolerance and understanding of our country.

The continuing strength of our freedom, which was won 67 years ago, requires the advance of our youth through the acquisition and development of new skills, access to new knowledge and technology and rekindling the spirit of freedom throughout our land.

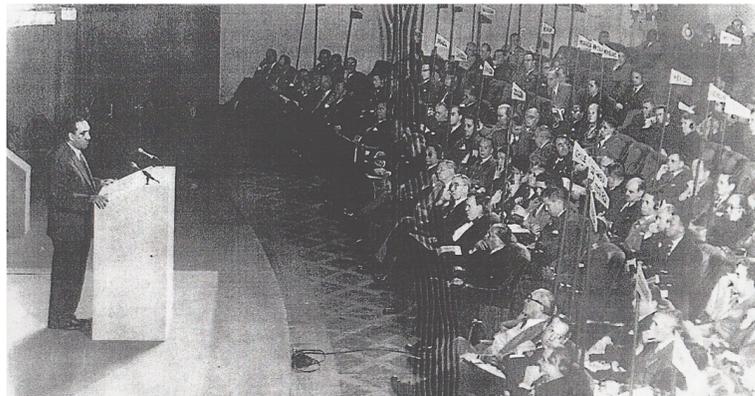
This celebration of freedom is the time to pay our tribute to the security forces that defended our sovereignty and territorial integrity with great sacrifice in the battle against terrorism. It also reminds us of the great freedom fighters of the past from all communities, religions and ideologies who carried on the struggle for freedom from colonial rule.

This is also the time to remember the spirit of unity that has prevailed in our land through the centuries, which drives us to work hard to achieve national unity in all its aspects, with reconciliation that comes through "metta," or loving kindness, to all.

We remain committed to our policy of nonalignment in our foreign relations, looking forward to greater friendship with the world community and international relations that will support our moves for peace, stability, democracy and prosperity.

The progress of our nation in unity and understanding calls for patriotism that not only transcends the barriers of geography and community, but also focuses on the elimination of corruption in all its forms and encourages genuine service to the people by their leaders.

As we move forward in freedom, let us ensure the strengthening of peace and harmony to bring every success to our children and future generations who will inherit this land. Let us join in a pledge to build a future of peace, freedom and prosperity in the shining light of honesty of purpose and good governance.



J.R. Jayawardene, then finance minister and later president of Sri Lanka, speaks at the San Francisco Peace Conference on Sept. 6, 1951. EMBASSY OF SRI LANKA

Continued development of friendly relationship

Yasuo Fukuda
HONORARY PRESIDENT OF THE
JAPAN-SRI LANKA ASSOCIATION

I am pleased to express my heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of the 67th Independence Day of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1952,



Japan and Sri Lanka have enjoyed an extremely good relationship for more than 60 years.

Sri Lanka backed Japan's return to international society from the devastation it suffered after World War II, and continued to support its rehabilitation following the San Francisco Peace Conference 64 years ago.

Japan has also for many years contributed to the societal and economic development of Sri Lanka with the aim of moving these historical friendly relations forward.

The Sri Lankan presidential election held in January saw new President Maithripala Sirisena elected. I wish to express my congratulations on Sirisena's inauguration and I hope the people of Sri Lanka will unite and achieve further development under the new leadership.

I will extend my fullest support and make the utmost efforts for further development of the goodwill and friendly relations between Japan and Sri Lanka as an honorary president of Japan-Sri Lanka Association.

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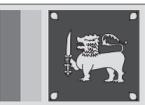
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Best Wishes to the Government and the people of Sri Lanka on the occasion of the 67th Anniversary of Independence

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The Sri Lanka Business Council of Japan (SLBCJ) was established in line with the policy directions given by the Overseas Business Promotion Program launched by the Ministry of Commerce & Consumer Affairs of Sri Lanka. Its mandate is to expand, develop and encourage bilateral trade between Sri Lanka and Japan while also promoting Japanese investment in Sri Lanka. Its membership is open to Japanese and Sri Lankan business entrepreneurs.

Sri Lanka independence day

Diverse groups work to build better nation



Members of the Japan-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship League visit the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage in Sri Lanka in July 2014. EMBASSY OF SRI LANKA

Ranil Wickremesinghe
PRIME MINISTER OF SRI LANKA

Today, we are celebrating 67th Anniversary of Independence while a civilized political culture is being created in our beloved motherland.

When the Father of the Nation, Rt. Hon. D.S.Senanayake, the first prime minister of Sri Lanka, launched the independence struggle, the main weapon he used was the unity and brotherhood among the communities that lived in harmony in our country. Once we gained independence, the challenge that we had to face was to safeguard that unity and march toward development of the country.

However, it was unfortunate that we could not achieve that goal successfully.

We have now, once again arrived at a period during which we could realize that objective. Groups that represent diverse communities, following different religions, political parties, civil organizations and various others came together onto one platform, shedding their differences to achieve a common objective for the benefit of the nation.

Our aim is to emulate the dignified tradition of King Lichchavi, whereby people would meet peacefully, discuss issues peacefully and disperse peacefully, in order to ensure good governance and build a united and prosperous nation.

Let us resolve today, to achieve that noble objective, to give a real meaning to our independence.



Reforms aim to create modern democracy

Mangala Samaraweera
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF SRI LANKA

On the 67th Anniversary of Independence, Sri Lanka, one of the oldest democracies in Asia, has in the face of many challenges, again proved its commitment to freedom and democracy through yet another peaceful transition of power.



Unlike in the Arab Spring where change was brought about by bullets, pellets and stones, Sri Lanka's "rainbow revolution" was achieved by the power of the ballot, paving the way for far-reaching constitutional reforms that will make Sri Lanka a modern 21st-century democracy.

Sri Lanka's civil war ended 6 years ago. The challenge now is to win the hearts and minds of all Sri Lankans and create a Sri Lankan identity based on the cultural diversity of its people. If Sri Lanka

is to harness its true economic potential it must meet the aspirations of all its different communities to live in ethnic harmony, religious tolerance and in a free and democratic society.

We must take this opportunity to ensure a just society where the rule of law prevails and no one is above the law. Sri Lanka, despite its modest means and even smaller size, has always played an important role on the world stage. The time has now come to restore the respect and dignity

Sri Lanka once commanded.

Sri Lanka must harness this goodwill for the betterment of her people. All Sri Lankans, both on the island and abroad, must bury their differences and create a new Sri Lanka that will meet the hopes and aspirations of our people.

On the occasion of our national day, let us all collectively rededicate ourselves to building a new multicultural Sri Lanka where freedom, equality and justice prevail for all.



Ancient frescoes at the ruins of Sigiriya, a UNESCO World Heritage site, depict women known as "Sigiriya Ladies." SRI LANKA TOURISM PROMOTION BUREAU

Looking forward to ongoing, favorable bilateral rapport

Masahiko Komura
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-SRI LANKA PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

I am pleased to express my heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka's Independence Day.

Situated to the south of India and surrounded by the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka is, similar to Japan, an island nation. Since the end of civil conflict in 2009, Sri Lanka achieved economic growth of more than 7 percent, and the number of people seeing the potential of Sri Lanka as an emerging country has increased. Tourism has grown rapidly as visitors are attracted to Sri Lanka's beautiful nature and abundant historical heritage.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1952, close ties have developed between the country and Japan. Last year Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Sri Lanka, the first time in 24 years that a Japanese Prime Minister has done so, further promoting bilateral relations between the two countries.

I am quite confident the ties of friendship and cooperation between Japan and Sri Lanka will be further strengthened under new President Maithripala Sirisena in the future as well.

As president of the Japan-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship League, I will protect the friendship maintained by my predecessors and devote myself to reinvigorating the bilateral relations in order to deepen the cooperative relationship further between our two countries.



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