

Sri Lanka independence day

Our fortunate nation

Mahinda Rajapaksa
PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA

Our nation is fortunate to celebrate the 64th Independence Day with a genuine sense of dignity about freedom.

Today the national flag flutters pointing to a new country in the making. The way is open for an independent economy. It daily reinforces the nation's aspiration for a prosperous future. It has given us freedom to decide upon issues concerning the nation without bowing down before external powers. I strongly believe that this is the immense responsibility the nation entrusted to us. It is a great pleasure to see the steady consolidation of supreme independence.

The country's achievements will be secured when opportunities for peace, coexistence and



harmonious living are widened. The sacrifices made so far to reach those objectives have to be secured in the future, too. We will no longer hesitate to take decisions toward fostering national

unity through an indigenous program of action. We overcame diverse challenges the country faced with extreme patience. We have built productive economic, political, defense, trade and cultural links with the international community through friendly contacts. We must preserve all this by working more rationally, intelligently and patriotically than even before.

Similarly, the country should be brought forward by developing its value systems. It is only then that a prosperous life will emerge in a peaceful environment.

The nation's respect and felicitations should go to all patriots who paid the supreme sacrifice, laying down their lives to overcome the nation's challenges for the sake of supreme independence.

I wish for a bright future!



Cultural exchange: A Sri Lankan dance troupe performs at the Sri Lanka Festival held last Sept. 10 and 11 in Yoyogi Park in Shibuya Ward, Tokyo. EMBASSY OF SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka and Japan celebrate six decades of diplomatic relations

Hirofumi Hirano
MINISTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORTS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF JAPAN

It gives me deep pleasure to extend my best wishes on the occasion of the 64th Independence Day of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka on Feb. 4, 2012.

In addition to being the President of the Japan-Sri Lanka Parliamentarians' League, I have had the pleasure of experiencing extensive interaction with a wide spectrum of the population of the country, including political leaders and parliamentarians, for a long time. Our two countries have maintained and enjoyed the most cordial and congenial relations for several decades. This year, the two countries are commemorating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

After several years of conflict in Sri Lanka due to terrorism, nearly three years ago terrorism was comprehensively obliterated and eliminated, thus achieving permanent peace in the country. Today, one can witness the economic, commercial and investment dividends of peace, with the country recording GDP growth of more than 8 percent and being chosen as one of the most sought-after tourist destinations. I am pleased with and respect that the country is on an upward economic trajectory and has risen to being a midlevel income nation within the space of only a half dozen years. Sri Lanka and Japan have assisted and cooperated with each other in times of need, thus bolstering and strengthening their bilateral relations.

The Government and the people of Japan wish to extend their best wishes to the Government and the people of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka during their 64th Independence Day celebrations.



Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda
AMBASSADOR OF SRI LANKA

I have the honor to convey warm greetings and best wishes from the people and government of Sri Lanka to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as the friendly people of Japan and the government of Japan on the happy occasion of the 64th anniversary of independence of Sri Lanka. I also extend my best wishes to all the Sri Lankan nationals living in Japan on this auspicious occasion.

This year, Sri Lanka and Japan will commemorate the 60th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations. However, relations between our two countries date back many centuries.



In the year 1856, a Japanese vessel carrying 17 young intellectuals from Kyushu on their way to England to learn technical and scientific developments in the Western world stopped their vessel at the port city of Galle in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) to collect water and food. During their stay of three days, they observed the beauty of the city and wrote home to say that one day Japan also should develop its villages and towns in a similar fashion.

According to the available records, the first proper contact between the two countries was the visit of a Japanese priest to Sri Lanka in 1887 to learn the Pali and Sanskrit languages in order to study Theravada Buddhism. The priest stayed in a Buddhist temple in Galle in the southwestern part of Sri Lanka. He was known as "Shaku Kozen" and received his higher ordination at the Malwatte

Temple in Kandy, Sri Lanka, in 1890 under the name Kozen Gunaratana Thero.

In 1889, following an invitation from the Japanese authorities, a Buddhist delegation comprising Col. Henry Steel Olcott (a Christian American who converted to Buddhism and became a very strong Buddhist activist) and Anagarika Dharmapala, a young Sri Lankan Buddhist activist, visited Japan to propagate the teachings of Lord Buddha. Subsequent to this visit, Anagarika Dharmapala arranged for four young Sri Lankan men to visit Japan for training in the fields of ceramics, safety matches, textile and flower making. Once they returned to Sri Lanka, industries in each field were established and made a significant contribution to Sri Lanka's economy.

However, the highlight of relations between Japan and Sri Lanka was at the San Francisco Peace Conference held in September 1951, at which Sri Lanka's then-Finance Minister, Hon. J.R. Jayawardena, who later became president of Sri Lanka, spoke on behalf of the Sri Lankan government and urged the participating countries to accept Japan in the spirit of Lord Buddha's teachings. He quoted from Lord Buddha's teachings and showed the world that hatred cannot be overcome by hatred, but only by love and compassion.

Jayawardena urged the representatives of all the countries taking part in the conference to show forgiveness and love toward Japan following World War II and declared that Sri Lanka renounced its right to demand reparations from Japan. He stressed that a completely independent and free Japan was necessary for the future of Asia. This gave the Japanese people great encour-

agement, and from then on Japan took the first step toward postwar reconstruction. It is extremely heartening to note that many people in Japan still remember this incident with gratitude. This paved the way for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and Japan in 1952.

In the recent past the government and the people of Japan assisted Sri Lanka when the Indian Ocean tsunami struck Sri Lanka in the year 2004. Japan was the first country to send medical teams to assist in relief work. Japan gave an \$80 million grant for immediate relief work. The assistance went a long way to help rebuild schools, hospitals and roads that were damaged by the tsunami.

Since 2004, Japan has been the single-largest aid donor to Sri Lanka. In the international arena, Japan stood by Sri Lanka, particularly during Sri Lanka's

humanitarian operation to rescue the Tamil population from the grips of LTTE terrorism. Though Sri Lanka is a smaller country with a very small economy compared to Japan, the people of Sri Lanka have large hearts, particularly when it comes to showing gratitude. This is exactly what the Sri Lankans did when the Great East Japan Earthquake caused destruction to Japan in terms of human lives and property. The Sri Lankan government and the people sprang into action to help Japan during this difficult time and showed their solidarity with the people of Japan in numerous ways.

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.



Seasonal event: Held each summer in the ancient capital of Kandy, Esala Perahera is a Buddhist festival that features dances and costumed elephants. It has become a symbol of Sri Lanka. SRI LANKA TOURISM PROMOTION BUREAU

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*to the People of Sri Lanka
on the 64th Anniversary of
Their Independence*

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60th Anniversary
of Japan-Sri Lanka Diplomatic Relations

Best Wishes to the Government and the people of
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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

Sri Lankans mark independence anniversary by looking ahead

D.M. Jayaratne
PRIME MINISTER OF SRI LANKA

It is with great expectations that we look forward to celebrating the 64th anniversary of independence on Feb. 4, 2012.



May 19, 2009, marked the historic day when the country succeeded in eradicating LTTE terrorism that had debilitated the economic, social and cultural fabric of the country for 30 years. It was the far-sighted vision, guidance and leadership of H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa that contributed to the achievement of this historic feat. With the defeat of LTTE terrorism, our Tamil brethren in the North and East as well as the general public of the rest of the country could heave a sigh of relief. They are now enjoying peaceful lives devoid of fear and anxiety.

The government has successfully completed reconstruction of government buildings, roadways, houses, places of religious worship and other

infrastructure facilities in the north and east that were destroyed or damaged during the war. Many new infrastructure projects have been completed and have changed the landscape of the north and the east. The resettlement of displaced persons in their usual habitat brought contentment to these long-suffering people. A series of development projects that are now in progress have revived the economy of the north and east, which was badly battered by the 30-year war.

Side by side the development activities in the north and east, the government has undertaken a number of megaprojects that will usher in unprecedented economic development throughout the country. Several high-profile projects, such as the Norochcholai Power Plant, the Upper Kothmale Hydro Power Project and Hambantota Harbor that previous governments never dared to undertake were started and successfully completed by the Rajapaksa government. Meaningful steps have been taken to promote the tourist industry, such as attract-



Commercial hub: Colombo is Sri Lanka's largest city and the country's business center.
SRI LANKA TOURISM PROMOTION BUREAU

ing foreign investment for construction of tourist hotels and resorts under a well-developed tourism plan. A major part of the Southern Express Highway has already been completed and is

now open for use by the public. Construction work on Mattala Airport is now in progress, and foundations have been laid for the Colombo South Harbor and Colombo-Katunayake Express

Highway. In this way, development projects that have already been launched and those that are in the pipeline will bring accelerated economic development in the areas such as agri-

culture, industry, fisheries and tourism. It is a matter of pride and delight that the current economic growth rate of the country exceeds 8 percent. The pragmatic economic policies of the government have led to balanced economic growth both in the rural and the urban sectors in the country. With the rapid socio-economic development that the country is now experiencing, we are optimistic that Sri Lanka will emerge before long as the Wonder of Asia.

To sustain and consolidate the success that the country has achieved in various sectors and to march toward continued progress, cooperation, commitment, right attitudes and sacrifice by the people of this country are essential. Unity among all ethnic groups in the country is vital in terms of achieving this laudable objective.

On this 64th Anniversary of the independence of our country, we all must make a firm resolution and commitment to work with unity, peace and harmony to make this beautiful country a happy and a prosperous nation.

Sri Lankans are building a peaceful society

Prof. G.L. Peiris
MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF
SRI LANKA

We Sri Lankans celebrate Sri Lanka's 64th anniversary of independence with the realization of peace, social harmony and economic prosperity of the motherland.



Since May 2009 Sri Lanka has significantly moved toward building a peaceful society with economic prosperity in the South Asian region. During this period, Sri Lanka has been able to record a growth rate of over 8 percent for two consecutive years, and is expected to sustain a further higher rate of growth in the coming years. Peace and political stability are being identified as core contributors for the expansion of economic activities, including inward movement of foreign direct investment, increasing inbound tourists, and expansion of the construction industry in the fields of infrastructure and the country's hotel and leisure sectors.

On the economic front, the "Mahinda Chintana: The Vision for Future," which is the policy framework of the government, envisages the transformation of Sri Lanka into an economic



Green gold: Tea production is very important to both the Sri Lankan economy and the world market.
SRI LANKA TOURISM PROMOTION BUREAU

hub of South Asia focusing on Aviation, Commerce, Maritime, Energy and Knowledge, and also doubling the annual per capita income to \$4,000 by 2016. In this context, the government has already initiated a number of infrastructure development programs along with various multifaceted social and economic development activities such as "Gamaneguma,"

"Divi Neguma," "Maganeguma" "Gamidiriya" in the country's rural areas to raise the people's standard of living.

In keeping with the "Mahinda Chintana: Vision for the Future," the Ministry of External Affairs, with the assistance of Sri Lankan missions abroad, has been vigorously pursuing a nonaligned foreign policy aimed at promoting and nurturing friendship and cooperation with members of the international community, including the United Nations and members of international organizations. In this regard, the active role played by our missions abroad, Sri Lankan agencies, Sri Lankan associations and the Sri Lankan community for the promotion and protection of our interests abroad and for the well-being of our people is much appreciated.

The government of Sri Lanka under the leadership of His Excellency, President Mahinda

Rajapaksa, has adopted the Parliamentary Select Committee as a platform to reach a national consensus for a durable solution acceptable to all segments of society while focusing on the benefits of the people in the northern and eastern regions of the country. The government has also declared a 10-Year National Plan for Trilingual Sri Lanka aiming at durable peace and harmony among all Sri Lankan communities.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for your invaluable contribution to Sri Lanka's success in rebuilding the country over the years. On this memorable occasion, I appeal to all Sri Lankans to join hands with the government in its nation-building efforts.

As we embark upon a journey towards lasting peace, unity and prosperity of our motherland, let us work together to make Sri Lanka the "Wonder of Asia."



Historic site: The ruins of the 5th-century fortress and palace of Sigiriya are one of Sri Lanka's eight UNESCO World Heritage sites and a major tourist attraction.
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