

Sri Lanka independence day

Developing stronger ties

Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda
AMBASSADOR OF SRI LANKA

On this special occasion of the 65th anniversary of the independence of Sri Lanka, I have the honor to convey my sincere and warm greetings and best wishes from the people and government of Sri Lanka to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the government of Japan and the warmhearted people of Japan. I also convey my best wishes to all the Sri Lankan expatriates in Japan to whom today is indeed an important and auspicious occasion.



Japan and Sri Lanka have maintained and strengthened relations over the past 60 years, since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1952, soon after the San Francisco Peace Conference in September 1951. At this conference, Sri Lanka's then finance minister, the Hon. J.R. Jayawardene, 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 convinced the world that hatred cannot be overcome by hatred, but only by love and compassion.

Following this initiative, Japan took the initial steps 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. Sri Lanka stood by Japan when the entire world demanded war reparations because we believed that Japan had the inner strength to revive

from its wounds and this great strength would one day lead the future of Asia. I must say that what our forefathers foresaw then, is today a firm reality.

In 2012, Japan and Sri Lanka commemorated the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Japan on behalf of the government of Sri Lanka organized events in selected cities in Japan to commemorate this special anniversary. Sri Lankan cultural shows were held in Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Nagoya, Nara and Suzuka, Mie Prefecture, displaying Sri Lankan culture and these events awakened a feeling and sense of closeness among both our countries and our people. Many of the friendly Japanese who participated in these cultural events were fascinated by the cultural affinity that both our countries shared.

Although our diplomatic ties date back 60 years, recorded history shows that 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 visited the port of Galle in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) and were fascinated by the beauty of the city. They believed that one day Japan also should develop its villages and towns in a similar fashion.

Also, the first formal contact between the two countries was the visit of a Japanese priest to Sri Lanka in 1886 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 Gunaratna



There as a mark of gratitude to his sponsor, Mudliyar Gunaratna, a Sri Lankan philanthropist residing in the city of Galle.

In 1989, 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, Ana-

garika 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.

Today, Japan is the single largest donor to Sri Lanka and has always stood by Sri Lanka in good times and bad. A friend in need, we say, is a friend indeed. In international forums, Japan



Friendly cultural exchanges: The Sri Lanka Festival was held last Sept. 8 and 9 in Yoyogi Park, Tokyo. Organized by the Sri Lankan Embassy and companies and other organizations in Sri Lanka and Japan, the festival has been held every year since 2004, attracting around 100,000 people annually. Clockwise from top left: During the festival last year, Sri Lankan Ambassador Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda (right) and Yasushi Akashi, former United Nations administrator who serves as the representative of Japan for peace-building, rehabilitation and reconstruction in Sri Lanka, participate in the traditional oil lamp lighting ceremony; a Sri Lankan dance troupe performs at the festival; the crowd watching the entertainment; and a performer wearing a carved wooden mask entertains visitors at the venue. EMBASSY OF SRI LANKA

has always supported our cause and looked toward Sri Lanka's interest as an independent democracy, especially in the face of Sri Lanka's humanitarian operation against LTTE terrorism. 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 on March 11, 2011, the government of Sri Lanka was quick to assist in every which way possible with contributions of cooked,

warm meals to people in evacuation centers, consignments of tea, assistance to the Japan Red Cross and a disaster relief team to assist in the Ishinomaki area of Miyagi Prefecture.

Sri Lanka, which is today reviving after a 30-decade conflict, is currently one of the safest places in the world, providing peace and harmony to all its citizens. Just as in the case of Japan in its postwar era, Sri Lanka, too, believes that the country and its people have the inner strength to move forward and awaken a

new era, paving the way to lead the future of South Asia.

Tourist arrivals from Japan to Sri Lanka have increased by almost 50 percent in 2012 compared to 2011. Japan still provides the highest number of travelers to Sri Lanka from the East Asian region, Sri Lanka being a safe haven for the Japanese traveler seeking a "power spot" and a peaceful location for inner revival.

In addition, the large corporations of Japan have expressed interest to commit investments

and to be engaged in commercial and trading activity with Sri Lanka, which is today a booming business hub in South Asia. I am confident that these developments will further deepen and strengthen the bilateral relations between our two countries.

I look forward with confidence to the enduring friendship between Sri Lanka and Japan being further enhanced in the coming years and to strengthening the bonds of friendship with the government and people of Japan.

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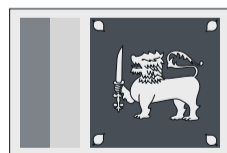
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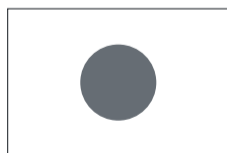
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60th Anniversary
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The Sri Lanka Business Council of Japan (SLBCJ) was established in line with the policy directions given by the Overseas Business Promotion Program launched by the Ministry of Commerce & 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

Meaningful freedom with the people's help

Mahinda Rajapaksa
PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA

We Sri Lankans who have sacrificed immensely to ensure the sovereignty of the nation, celebrate this 65th National Independence Day anniversary with utmost pride.

The nation has embarked on a path of development that has made freedom really meaningful. This is a very difficult and challenging task, the fulfillment of which would bring both justice and prosperity to the nation. The time has now dawned when you and your children need not think with fear and suspicion about the future.

We have acted with a firm commitment to defeat local and foreign forces ranged against the country. Even



when the leadership is faced with difficult and challenging situations we have a principled

commitment not to betray the country. In doing so, we derive immense strength from the enormous cooperation we receive from the people.

Unity among communities and religious harmony are vital factors for the development of the country. Divisions among us will strengthen various hostile forces seeking to deny us our freedom. When all communities rise in unity, the forces hostile to the country will be weakened and freedom further strengthened. We celebrate the 65th anniversary of independence with firm determination and clear commitment to national unity.

We salute and pay our homage to all patriots who have made the supreme sacrifice to safeguard the freedom and sovereignty of the nation.



Sacred mountain: Sri Pada, also known as Adam's Peak, stands in central Sri Lanka and is revered as a holy site by Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians. SRI LANKA TOURISM PROMOTION BUREAU

The nation's rapid development

D.M. Jayaratne
PRIME MINISTER OF SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka's 65th anniversary of independence, which falls on Feb. 4, brings utmost pride and happiness to all Sri Lankans. During the past six decades the country's advancement in the socioeconomic field had been phenomenal. Though there had been a few setbacks, they were overcome with the bravery, courage, determination and commitment of our people. The ruthless LTTE terrorism that plagued the country for nearly three decades was one such formidable threat that disrupted the peace and economy of the country. That, too,



was overwhelmingly defeated through the wise leadership and the guidance of our President H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa.

With the defeat of LTTE terrorism many ambitious development projects have been launched in the north and the east. The resettlement of displaced people has been completed. The damaged houses, schools, hospitals and roadways have been repaired. There is resuscitation of agriculture, irrigation facilities, fisheries and industries in these areas. The visiting foreign dignitaries, especially those of the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and foreign diplomats are amazed at the rapid socioeconomic development taking place in these areas within three years.

The benefits of rapid socioeconomic development that

have taken place in the country after the defeat of terrorism has trickled down to every part of the country. The programs such as, Gama Neguma, Gemi Deriya, Divi Neguma, etc., under the Mahinda Chintana vision for the future contribute immensely for the uplifting of the economic and living standards of the people. The network of roads, expressways, high-rise buildings, shopping malls, residential towers and hotel complexes testify to the growing strength of the country's economy. The peace and tranquility prevailing in the country have attracted tourists into the country in large numbers. The increased interest shown by foreign investors in the stock market is ample testimony to a robust economy. Mega-projects like Hambantota Harbour, Colombo Harbour De-



Prized crop: Tea plantations in the central highlands of Sri Lanka. SRI LANKA TOURISM PROMOTION BUREAU

velopment Project, Southern Express Highway, Norochcholai Power Plant, Upper Kothmale Project, Airport at Mattala, Colombo-Katunayake Express Highway and large irrigation projects that are under way evoke pride to the entire nation. During a period when such unprecedented development

activities are in full swing in the country it is incumbent on all citizens to cooperate and assist the government in its development effort. Let us resolve ourselves on this Independence Day to join hands to work together as patriotic citizens for the common good and advancement of our motherland.



Ecclectic structure: Gangaramaya Temple in Colombo features a mix of Sri Lankan, Thai, Indian and Chinese architectural styles. SRI LANKA TOURISM PROMOTION BUREAU

Rising steadily in socioeconomic improvement for all Sri Lankans

G.L. Peiris
MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OF SRI LANKA

Today, we celebrate Sri Lanka's 65th anniversary of independence with the realization of a sustainable peace supplemented by comprehensive economic and social development programs benefiting the people in all parts of our motherland.



The government under the visionary leadership of President Mahinda Rajapaksa continues to strengthen the extensive socioeconomic development process that envisages the betterment of its people while achieving an 8 percent annual growth rate since the eradication of separatist terrorism from the island. Large-scale infrastructure projects with newly built roads, airports and seaports amply demonstrate the robust economic agenda of Sri Lanka.

Being mindful of the welfare of its people and giving priority

to alleviating poverty and achieving social equity in the country, the government has launched the Divi Neguma program encompassing livelihood development activities to, *inter alia*, ensure food security for each individual and family; to improve the living standards of people; to mobilize and empower people for national development; to upgrade physical and social infrastructure facilities; and to create a social security network for those who are in need of economic uplifting.

In its efforts on reconciliation, the government is progressing steadily in implementing the National Action Plan emanating from the recommendations in the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) report. This transparent and vibrant process is being further enriched by a substantial resource allocation from the government.

The key challenges relating to Sri Lanka's national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and economic and cultural diplomacy, as enunciated in the



Beauty and tradition: A woman undergoes ayurveda treatment. Right: Ancient frescos at the ruins of Sigiriya, a UNESCO World Heritage site, depict women known as "Sigiriya Ladies." SRI LANKA TOURISM PROMOTION BUREAU



to infrastructure development and the enhancement of tourism, trade and direct investment benefiting our people. Notwithstanding the many challenges the country experienced in the recent past, the resilience shown by the Sri Lankan economy and the confidence the country commands in the international community are remarkable.

The expatriate Sri Lankan community plays an important role in contributing to the development of the Sri Lankan econ-

omy, enhancing the country's image abroad and promoting its culture.

On this auspicious occasion of our National Day, I extend my sincere gratitude to the overseas Sri Lankan community for contributing immensely to these endeavours. We as Sri Lankans, while renewing our commitment to safeguarding the hard-earned peace, must redouble our efforts to achieving economic prosperity for all persons in our beloved motherland.

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