

Joint Press Conference chaired by Presidents of Iran and Sri Lanka

April 24, 2024



Iranian President Dr. Ebrahim Raisi, and President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe emphasized that Global South countries must capitalize on their strengths and collaborate effectively. He underscored the importance of their voices in tackling global challenges like climate change, food security, debt management, digitization, technological advancement, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe, expressing delight over Sri Lanka and Iran's collaborative efforts towards fostering peace, security, and regional prosperity through diplomatic engagements, highlighted the significance of President Raisi's visit to Sri Lanka. He anticipated mutual benefits and fresh opportunities for collaboration between the two nations, expressing confidence in the potential cooperation.

Addressing the Palestinian matter, the President affirmed Sri Lanka and Iran's acknowledgment of the legal and inalienable right of the Palestinian people to establish their state. Furthermore, he reiterated Sri Lanka's steadfast commitment to advocating for a just and comprehensive political resolution to the Palestinian issue, aligning with the United Nations' proposals for the creation of two neighboring states within the 1967 borders. The President highlighted the Uma Oya project as a testament to the ongoing collaboration between Iran and Sri Lanka in energy generation, irrigation, and water management. He expressed satisfaction that the project is a model of cooperation among Global South countries in these vital sectors.

Addressing the audience, Iranian President Dr. Ebrahim Raisi emphasized the limitless potential for enhancing political, economic, trade, and cultural ties between Sri Lanka and Iran. He stressed the mutual advantages inherent in deepening bilateral relations, highlighting both nations' considerable potential and capabilities. He noted that exchanging these opportunities would benefit both countries and contribute positively to their respective regions.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe added that, "I sincerely thank Dr. Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for accepting my invitation to visit Sri Lanka and declare open Uma Oya Multipurpose Project. We jointly declared open the Uma Oya Multipurpose Development Project, which is designed to generate and add 120 MW to the national electricity grid and also to address water scarcity in the southeastern part of the country, contributing towards increased economic activity, food production, and steady power supply and employing the youth in the area."

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Islamic Republic of Iran for extending financing for the Uma Oya Project and for sharing their know-how in engineering and technology. We have jointly handed over the benefits of this project to the people of the area. As I mentioned, this is the coming together in the modern era, of the two ancient irrigation traditions of Persia and Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. I congratulate the people of the Islamic Republic of

Iran on their remarkable achievements in other sectors, such as science and technology, agriculture, and power generation, which are essential requirements in the modern world.

I am pleased that the Uma Oya Project, declared open, symbolizes cooperation between the two countries in power generation, irrigation, and water management,

as an example of collaboration in this field between the countries of the Global South.

During our discussions, I extended our appreciation for the support provided by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the debt restructuring process of Sri Lanka following the economic crisis last year.

I conveyed to President Raisi the recent economic stabilization and recovery in Sri Lanka, and President Raisi has expressed his confidence in Sri Lanka's future progress and prosperity.

We agreed that the Global South should work collectively to ensure its voice is heard when addressing current global challenges such as climate change, food security, debt re-payment, the digital and technological divides, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The countries of the global south should build on its strength.

I am pleased that Sri Lanka and Iran stand united in our pursuit of peace, security, and prosperity for the region and all over the world through diplomacy and discussion.

Further, during the deliberations, we addressed key areas of mutual interest, including political, economic, and cultural collaboration.

With the expectation of further enhancing our relations, the Government of Sri Lanka and the Government of Iran have signed five agreements in the fields of Culture, Education, Youth Affairs, Media, and Tourism and Film Industry. We see great potential to enhance bilateral cooperation and people-to-people contacts in these areas. We are glad that both countries continue to work closely in the multilateral and regional fora, including at the United Nations and other groupings such as the NAM, G-77, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). We have engaged in an open and constructive dialogue on current global challenges, emphasizing the importance of multilateral cooperation.

We agreed that the Global South should work collectively to ensure its voice is heard when addressing current global challenges such as climate change, food security, debt re-payment, the digital and technological divides, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The countries of the global south should build on its strength. Global South nations need to capitalize on their inherent strengths.

We share the serious concerns on the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the immense suffering of the Palestinian people. Given the need to find peaceful solutions to conflicts, Sri Lanka and Iran recognize the legitimate and inalienable right of the people of Palestine to statehood. Sri Lanka remains committed to supporting a just and comprehensive negotiated political settlement to the Palestine issue in line with the relevant UN resolutions, leading to the two States living side by side based on the 1967 borders.

Any such solution requires first stop killing in the Gaza Strip. Secondly, the establishment of that Palestine State within five years. Thirdly, respect for their Sovereignty and, fourthly, the security of all states. Unless these are addressed and immediately the deaths in Gaza come, it will be challenging to find that solution. Immobilizing the United Nations system will only cause a loss of confidence in the system, similar to what happened to the League of Nations. We are at a critical moment in history.

We call for an urgent and immediate ceasefire and a coordinated effort to ensure unfettered humanitarian access to the people of Gaza. The government of Sri Lanka established a “Children of Gaza Fund” and donated USD million to UNRWA on April 1, 2024, to assist the affected children in Gaza.

I am confident that the visit of His Excellency will open new opportunities for collaboration, benefiting both our nations. May I also convey good wishes for the health and well-being of Dr. Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and for the continued progress and prosperity of the people of Iran.

Iranian President Dr. Ebrahim Raisi: I’m very pleased, Mr. President, to visit the friendly country of Sri Lanka and to find this opportunity to accompany my collaborators in this country. A great project has been completed in Sri Lanka upon the knowledge expertise and high take of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

We established excellent cooperation between our two countries regarding this multi-purpose project. This was not a normal project. This project was done with high take, and it was created with the knowledge and expertise of Iranian experts for the sake of the welfare of the beloved people of Sri Lanka.

Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution in my country, we established a new project. We established excellent bilateral relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Sri Lanka. Of course, these excellent relations have been expanding and

developing over the years. We established perfect rounds of negotiations and discussions with Mr. President, my team, and his team. We agreed to continue and further consolidate our bilateral relations in political, economic, trade, cultural, agriculture, tourism, scientific, and technological segments for the sake and benefit of our two nations and countries. Several good potentials and capacities exist both in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the friendly country

of Sri Lanka. I believe that sharing and transferring these capacities and potentials mutually within our two countries would benefit our two countries, nations, and regions.

I would also like to thank the minister of Foreign Affairs for holding the next round of the Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation between our two countries as soon as possible to review and study different mechanisms for further expansion of economic, trade, agriculture, science, and technology cooperation between our two countries as soon as possible.

For the information of the beloved people of Sri Lanka and the distinguished officials of these countries, I would like to inform you that no threats or sanctions could stop the great people of Iran, and they could never disrupt the development and progress of the country.

We can claim that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a country of technology and development. We stand ready to export our technical and engineering services to Sri Lanka. We stand ready to export our expertise in engineering and technology to Sri Lanka, and exporting these services to Sri Lanka would bring about economic development. So we stand ready to ensure cooperation between our two countries. So, the opening of the great construction project Uma Oya multipurpose development project was a perfect example of this. One of the most critical concerns and challenges of not only the Muslim countries and Muslims but all the people living in different parts of the world is Palestine. So, a great oppression, a significant threat to the country.

It is a huge crime against the people of Palestine and Gaza. And this horrific crime which is a crime against humanity has changed into a source of concern for all people. And this question is made in the minds of all people. But why do the international bodies and organizations and those who are in charge them do not stop the genocide and child killing which is carried out in Gaza and in Palestine.

It is very regrettable for humanity to see that such extent of crimes and child killing is carried out in Gaza. Of course, this is not only a source of concern for Muslims, but followers of different religions with different inclinations are condemning these atrocities and these killings.

They believe that some individuals in the form of human beings, they are committing some crimes that even animals would not commit that crimes. And even more regrettable is the fact that following a couple of months, support by the United States and the Western countries from these child killing and genocide and atrocities, so the people are asking themselves that what is the logic behind this support?

Unfortunately, more regrettable is the fact that the United Nations, the United Nations Security Council, and all human rights bodies and organizations have lost their efficiency and function, and they are not taking any concrete action to bring this genocide and bring these crimes and atrocities to an end.

In our discussion with the Sri Lanka side and the President, we share positions on at least two issues. First of all, to bring an immediate end to the bombings and attacks of the Zionist Israeli regime against the innocent people of Gaza, and secondly, to immediately dispatch and send humanitarian assistance, including water, food, medicine, and medication, to these innocent people. And the third point I want to add is the solution to settle the issue and question of Palestine. The Islamic Republic of Iran has initiated a totally and fully democratic solution, and that is every Palestinian's right to vote. By this, I mean that Palestinians, whether Muslims, Christians, or Jewish, will have one right to vote at the ballot boxes so they can decide about their next coming and upcoming state of government. This is an altogether just and democratic initiative.

When it comes to oppressing and when it comes to usurping the Zionist Israeli regime has been committing oppression against the people of Palestine for 75 years. They have been seizing their territories. So, when it comes to usurpers and oppressors, we should not let them to let them to have more space and more room to carry out their operations. But first of all, we need to expel the oppressors. Secondly, we should make them pay for all the damages they have caused. Second and third, we must bring the oppressors and usurpers to justice. Again, the usurper and oppressor are not brought to justice.

So, in the world, there is no guarantee that any other group would not use or

occupy the lands and territories belonging to different people. If we do not bring them to justice, they will occupy some new groups and regions.

They will force their people, their women, and their children to get out of those territories. We should prove that there is a just space system in the world. We should ask the international tribunals and courts to hold the criminal Zionist Israeli regime accountable for its measures and actions in a very just manner. So that no one, no individual or group or country would kill women and children and force out the inhabitants of the territory.

I would like to express my appreciation cordially and thank you for receiving us, welcoming us, and hosting us. Thank you very much, and thanks to your government. And beloved people of Sri Lanka, on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there are no restrictions or limitations for the expansion of political, economic, trade as well as cultural connections between our two countries. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the government of Sri Lanka are mutually decisive and determined to promote their bilateral relations in the political, economic, trade, and cultural sectors and arenas. And we believe that our mutual benefits and interests lie in expanding our bilateral relations.



Tharaka Balasuriya, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka; Pavithra Wanniarachchi, Minister of Irrigation, Wildlife and Forest Resources Conservation; Kanchana Wijesekera, Minister of Power and Energy of Sri Lanka; Bandula Gunawardane, Minister for Mass Media of Sri Lanka; Ali Sabry, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka; Susil Premajayantha, Minister of Education of Sri Lanka; and Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Agriculture and Plantation Industries of Sri Lanka.