The Speech Delivered By His Excellency The President At The 72nd Army Day Celebration (Anuradhapura, Saliyapura, Gajaba Regiment)

The economy had fallen due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, a large number of works have been done for the benefit of the people during that period. The armed forces in the world are committed not only to war but also to nation building. Our Tri-forces extended their support to the health sector in carrying out the vaccination drive and quarantine process in order to control the spread of COVID-19. President Rajapaksa expressed gratitude to everyone for their commitment in this regard. The President made these remarks at a ceremony held at the Gajaba Regiment Headquarters, Saliyapura, Anuradhapura, to mark the 72nd Anniversary of the Sri Lanka Army. Especially, you have established a new regiment dedicated to agriculture. I thank you for these endeavors and I extend wishes to you for a prosperous future!



President Gotabaya Rajapaksa accompanied by Chief of Defence Staff and Army Commander General Shavendra Silva.

The Speech delivered by His Excellency the President

It was a great pleasure to participate in today's parade and other ceremonies, which were held to mark the 72nd Army Day. As a young person, I started my life serving in the military. I served in the Army for 20 years. Subsequently, I served as the Secretary of Defence for 10 years. I began my military career in the Signal Corps. Next I served in the Sinha Regiment. After that a new regiment called 'Rajarata Rifles' was established at this place when General Denis Perera was the Army Commander. I came to that regiment as a Founding Officer. I also chose this premise for the headquarters.

Today, I can see that some buildings have changed a lot. After sometime it became the Gajaba Regiment. As a young officer, I spent most of my time serving the Gajaba Regiment. Coming to this place makes me feel like I came home.

Particularly, when we served in the Gajaba Regiment, under the leadership of General Vijaya Wimalaratne, who led the Regiment, the Defence Secretary, the Commander of the Army and other Senior Officers, learned what do we mean by Army? What is leadership? How to fight without fear? How to train an army? How to lead an army for the country?

I am very proud of this place. For the first time in the history of our country, I am proud to say that I was able to become the Commander-in-Chief and the President of the country without being a politician. I was able to do that, because as an army officer I fulfilled my respective duties towards the country. As the Secretary of Defence, I rendered my service to the country. That is why the people trusted me and elected me as the President of this country. I believe that all of you too can be proud of that.

Especially today we have to thank the Tri-forces in recognition of their service rendered to the country over the past two years. The commitment you showed to control the COVID-19 pandemic we faced. The service you rendered in collaboration with the health sector and others, especially in the quarantine process and vaccination drive, is excellent. It is because of your service that we have been able to become one of the top countries in the world in vaccination to control the COVID-19 pandemic. I will be grateful to everyone for that. Also, when I came to power I said that I would give priority to the national security of this country. I have taken the necessary steps to ensure national security, taking it as a matter of policy. I have also taken steps to appoint most suitable officers for their respective appropriate places as the Secretary of Defence or as the Commanders of the Armed Forces or as Intelligence Officers. Also, I have elevated the mentality of the Tri-forces and the intelligence services. Levelling allegations against military personnel and intelligence officers have been stopped and they have been given the necessary powers to carry out their duties. It is our paramount responsibility to ensure that there is no room for recurrence of terrorism in this country. We defeated the separatist terrorism. Now we need to stabilize the security thus achieved.



His Excellency delivering the speech while Chief of Defence Staff and Army Commander General Shavendra Silva looks on.



President Gotabaya Rajapaksa being welcomed by Chief of Defence Staff and Army Commander General Shavendra Silva.



First lady Ioma Rajapaksa being welcomed by Sujeewa Nelson, President of Army Seva Vanitha Unit.

We need to address the issues that caused terrorism. We should develop those provinces. It is necessary to raise the living standards of the people in those areas.

Next one, the extremist religious terrorism, is a global phenomenon. We have to face it. We have to act in a way, which will obstruct any room for such a thing in this country, it is not an attack on any religion, and it is a situation that we all and the entire world know today. We have to face it. We need to protect our country. I have promised it to the people. I am committed to fulfilling that promise.

The people elected me as the President of this country with high hopes. From the day I was elected, during the last two years we had to face such a situation that the world has never seen before in its history. We have been fighting for the last two years to control the COVID-19 pandemic. We were compelled to take various measures such as lockdowns and implementations of various restrictions to control the spread of this disease, these measures had a huge impact on our economy. But,

I do not make any excuses.

However, we have done a lot of work for the people under these circumstances. The people may have a sense of displeasure towards me and the government for not delivering as they expected. I accept that. Not only me but all ministers and MPs should accept it. However, I promise on behalf of the people that we will move the country forward with new vigor by controlling the COVID pandemic and by opening up the country under new normalcy. Everyone needs to work together for this purpose.

Especially the bringing in of a new Constitution, as I promised then, will be delivered within the next year. In particular, I will also establish the new electoral system that the people have been expecting.

As I was ascending the steps to worship the Ruwanwelisaya, a young monk told me that; “the President said ‘one country one law’ will be introduced and that we were waiting for it”. I will fulfill that promise within this year.

Establishing green agriculture in this country was something I promised. It’s a difficult change. I know that many of you have come from the villages. I know that parents and relatives are engaged in agriculture. I was influenced to create a green agriculture using organic fertilizer because it was a promise that I made and also because that’s the right thing to do. That is what we must do for the people and for the future generation. It’s difficult. I always work with dedication towards the farming community, as about 75 percent of the population lives in rural areas. The livelihood of most of them is agriculture. Who has kidney disease? Who has various other diseases?

Especially in the areas where these farmers live, we need to move away from chemical fertilizers and embrace green agriculture on behalf of our future generation.



President Gotabaya Rajapaksa reviewing the army parade at the 72nd Anniversary of the Sri Lanka Army.

I was the one who made available free fertilizer to the farmer. I was the one who increased the guaranteed price of paddy to 50 rupees. I want to increase the income of this majority of the people engaged in agriculture, the farming community, and provide them with better living standards. Place your trust in me. Let us fulfill this task together.

I also promised that we would take the country forward in terms of renewable energy. We do not possess oil, gas, or coal. We have water, solar power and wind. We need to enhance our energy through these sources.

If someone says a new coal power plant should be built, it’s hilarious. I’m not ready for that. Today, the entire world is moving away from that. We have to commit to it.

To uplift the living standards of the people; especially the tourism industry that has

been collapsed. Large numbers of people depend on the industry. We do receive large foreign exchange revenue. We need to control COVID-19 for this. Gradually foreigners have begun to arrive. We will work with commitment over the next few years to uplift our economy.

The people expected me to end corruption. It was with that hope that I appointed military officers to senior positions in various departments. It’s a big challenge but we have to do it. At all levels, whether ministers, MPs or officials, we must eradicate corruption for the sake of the country. I have set an example. I am not engaged in any corruption and will not engage in such activities in any way in the future as well.

As the President, I have reduced expenditures as much as possible. I have set an example. I requested the Cabinet to set the same example.

I urge the people to help prevent this corruption. I urge the officials to work efficiently in the public service on behalf of the people. We look forward to the support of everyone in moving this country towards prosperity in the next few years.

A good parade was held today. It deserves my praise. As an Army, it’s about services as well as the training. All the armies in the world today are engaged not only in combat but also in nation building. You fulfill many tasks towards that and I hope you will continue to do so in the future as well.