

Address by President Mahinda Rajapaksa at the Victory Day Parade and National Tribute to the Security Forces following the defeat of terrorism

Galle Face Green, Colombo

June 03, 2009

I declare with great pride and dignity that I have hoisted the national flag in a single country unified under a single standard. Before me are our armed forces who astonished the world by their skill in war, discipline, efficiency and valour. It is with great expectation for the future that I address the Sri Lankan nation that is having pleasant dreams of bringing about the dawn of a great and distinguished future.

(In Tamil)

Friends

This is the Motherland of us all.

We should live in this country as the children of one mother, as brothers and sisters.

There can be no differences here. The war fought against the LTTE was not a war fought against the Tamil people.

Our Heroic Troops sacrificed their lives to save the innocent Tamil people from the clutches of the LTTE. We cannot forget the great service rendered by them.

The victory we gained defeating the LTTE, is a victory for our entire land.

It is great victory you obtained.

It is a victory for all who live in our country.

My dear Heroic Troops,

The war against the terrorists is now over.

It is now the time to win over the hearts of the Tamil people.

The Tamil speaking people should be protected.

They should be able to live without fear and mistrust.

That is today the responsibility of us all!

(Tamil ends)

Friends

The great humanitarian operation that unified our motherland under a single national standard has opened the path to our nation that is eager to step forward to a future of greatness and distinction.

The events of the past few days have shown us that the whole world is surprised by the by this enormous victory achieved by our Motherland. Many countries congratulated us for having defeated terrorism.

Until now the world had not seen such a powerful terrorist organization. It had ships, aircraft, submarines, huge fire power, and most of all thousands of men and women suicide killers.

For this very reason the world and some in our own country believed that in order to defeat the most powerful terrorist organization in the world, the army of a world military power would be needed. Others thought it may be necessary to deploy forces of the United Nations.

It is frightening to see how, not for a short period, but for full thirty years the terrorists had our country in their clutches. They had terrifying plans to subjugate the entire country.

By 2005, the terrorist leader remained unharmed having waged war against four Heads of State and assassinating one of them. They fought the powerful Indian Army and in the end assassinated a great Prime Minister of India. A Commander of our Navy, Admiral Clancy Fernando, was also assassinated.

The LTTE was able to assassinate our valiant Generals from Lt. Gen. Denzil Kobbekaduwa, Maj. Gen. Wijaya Wimalaratne, and Maj. Gen. Lucky Wijeratne to Lt. Gen. Parami Kulatunga. It sank several Dvora vessels and had free rein at sea bringing in armaments at will, and also downed several aircraft and killed more than 35 pilots. Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne, and the Minister of National Security Lalith Athulathmudali who led the way to the Vadamarachchi Operation were also assassinated.

The LTTE had the ability to carry out major attacks in High Security Zones, on the venerable Dalada Maligawa, or any other place. Our Economic Zone inclusive of Colombo was easy prey to the terrorists.

As a result, quite apart from attacking the terrorists, there was the fear of them taking revenge for several generations if one even spoke against them. Yet, there was no one in the world who could stop this. Amidst all this, during the period of the ceasefire agreement the terrorists were able to develop to a dictatorial government. We had to provide protection to these terrorists who had killed our policemen and security forces by the thousands. Yet, for fear of provoking the terrorists the government did not give our troops even a piece of gunny bag to help build a bunker.

The orders to our forces were to be patient for the sake of peace, even if the terrorists came in front of their bunkers, raised their clothes and carried out provocative acts of indecent exposure. When I was elected President in 2005, our troops could move about in the North carrying weapons, but without ammunition. We must not forget that it was such an unarmed group of troops that was killed in an attack by the terrorists in December 2005.

Our troops had to suffer all this in silence.

This is a country with a people having a tradition of facing the most ruthless invaders through thousands of years, defeating them, and saving our Motherland. Our country is home to a people with a history of bravely facing up to invaders from the time of King Dutugemunu to the last king of the Sinhala Kingdom, Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe, and fearless patriots such as Keppetipola and Puran Appu.

The lessons we learnt from those great battles of the past are ingrained in our flesh, blood and bones. Our brave soldiers were not provoked, but waited with discipline till the proper time for action came.

We can now see how much determination is born from the pain one suffers... What was considered the most ruthless and most powerful terrorist army for thirty years was shattered and destroyed in less than three years.

Terrorists are no more invincible. It is only you, the valiant troops and our Motherland that are invincible. I recently went down on my knees and worshipped the glorious Motherland that obtained its freedom through the sacrifice of the lives of thousands of our heroic troops.

This great and glorious victory was achieved because of the younger generation that stands before us today. Young men and women from the four corners of Sri Lanka joined the Security Forces to free their Motherland. Some mothers and fathers gave all of their children to the armed forces and the police. When the eldest child had already sacrificed one's life for the country, they gave more children to the armed forces.

Friends

If anyone were to ask me what the secret of the victory is, I would extend my hands and show our beloved people, who include these mothers, fathers, wives who gave their closest and dearest for this battle. Our entire nation owes an immense debt of gratitude to these mothers, fathers and wives. They sacrificed their children and loved ones for the nation, to save the lives of others.

In order to defeat racist terrorism the people of the country have a mature knowledge of the threat before them. The fortune of a nation lies in such knowledge and maturity.

As much as the Government, the people too had a good awareness of who the enemy was. Some mothers offered the treasured golden necklace they had inherited through generations for the security forces. While doing so, some mothers of our country also prepared meals to be sent to the displaced people from the North. Where else can one find a people who have sent their children to the forces to battle an enemy, and at the same time, send humanitarian assistance to the people in the areas where their sons are fighting?

Our valiant troops went to battle carrying the gun in one hand, the Charter of Human Rights in the other, and their hearts filled with love for their children.

Meanwhile, the people, while making sacrifices to the armed forces on the one hand; showed kindness and compassion to those displaced by war, and all the while were on the battlefield in their hearts. They protected the country by forming civil defence committees and carrying out inspections of villages, towns and vehicles. It was not only the troops that we deployed against the terrorists; we deployed the people of this country too against terrorism.

Friends

The sacrifices by the children in our forces in order to obtain this freedom for the people are incomparable. Our children continued their advance while artillery shells were falling, land mines were exploding at their feet, anti-air craft ammunition was aimed at their hearts, and their comrades were dying around them. Poison gas could also not stop them. Even in the face of age-old military strategy they did not retreat. How many of our children sacrificed their lives on huge earth bunds and the banks of huge tanks. They faced torrential rain and suffered under massive floods and kept moving forward with sore feet.

In the end the advantage of territory, climate and weather, and many other factors were on the side of the terrorists. Our children only had their morale and unlimited commitment. When the terrorists were keeping the innocent Tamil people as hostages and using them as human shields, when the terrorists were using the most modern artillery and heavy weapons to attack them, our brave soldiers using only small arms saved the lives of several lakhs. My Dear friends, this is true valor in battle.

Savagery is not bravery. Being humane is to be brave. I extend the respect and gratitude of the entire nation for their brave leadership to the Defense Secretary, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Chief of Defense Staff Air Chief Marshal Donald Perera, Army Commander General Sarath Fonseka, Navy Commander Admiral Vasantha Karannagoda, Air Force Commander Air Chief Marshal Roshan Gunetilleke, the Inspector General of Police, Jayantha Wickremaratne, Director General of the Civil Defense Corps Sarath Weerasekera, the Brigade Commanders who bravely led the fighting till the end, all company commanders and the troops of all ranks for displaying such bravery in giving leadership and carrying out this battle.

Today, nearly 24,000 brave children of our land have fought for freedom and are resting for ever in their motherland. Similarly, nearly 5000 children of Sri Lanka are wholly disabled. The last breath of our heroic troops must be blowing in the wind where the national flag I hoisted today, flies proudly. Therefore, with every breath we take we must remember these heroic sons and daughters of our land. I also offer my respect to the high morale of our valiant troops who have been disabled but courageously participated in this event on their wheel chairs. There is a unique value in the sacrifices made by our heroic troops. Those great sacrifices have not been in vain. You have lost your feet in enabling a nation to rise on its feet. You have lost your hands, eyes, flesh and blood in providing a pleasant and prosperous land to this world. Our responsibility is to honour those great sacrifices by joining to build a great nation.

Therefore, we cannot allow the land that was won with such great sacrifice to be divided or even a shadow of separatism to fall on it. In the solutions that we offer there will not even be an iota of space for racism and separatism. We shall, as soon as possible, move towards our own solution of not dividing the land that is now made one and ensuring that there will be no threat to peace in our region.

Friends,

As a nation we have to go very far to make our independence complete. Terrorists were able to get the world to bring pressure on us, a free and sovereign State. That was possible because the terrorists had the capability to bring pressure on those governments.

Therefore, it is necessary to begin a new era in foreign relations to safeguard my motherland. Having won the freedom of our motherland, we must next establish our freedom and sovereignty internationally.

We have honest, close, and friendly relations with our neighbouring countries in Asia. We have also been able to build genuine good relations with the International Community. These honest friends have carried out the greatest responsibility towards our freedom and sovereignty in this era. We value very much the assistance we received from all these countries at this moment. Our people who enjoy the satisfaction of freedom together with them must always have in their hearts the friendship extended by these friends

Our nation that has been a symbol of courage to the world must now stand on our own feet. We must build a nation that is second to none.

One of the biggest challenges we faced was to remove the border villages from the map of Sri Lanka. Next was the need to remove the threatened villages from our map. Having overcome these challenges what is left is to remove the villages stricken with hardship from our map. We have already initiated action in this direction. I am aware that due to the defeat of terrorism, the reduction in the budget deficit, economic development, and raising the level of investment are all targets that are well within reach.

Friends,

In the past three years we too obtained loan facilities. But, such facilities were not obtained by selling the national assets. From all such loan assistance we obtained the national wealth has been enhanced. Through this wealth, power projects, harbours, airports and expressways are being built.

Firstly, it is necessary for us to provide all facilities that were denied to the people of the north for 30 years. There is no doubt this will be a massive development exercise, similar to the operation carried out to end the terrorism of 30 years within two and half years. The northern spring is not only to be dawned but also to spread with speed across the north.

We are not a carbon copy of any other country. Our country that gave courage to Asia by defeating terrorism that could not be defeated elsewhere in the world should have made the Pride of Asia.

Friends,

When development is undertaken there are many obstacles due to ideological differences and attitudes of vision. These lead to delay. Ideology, political principles, issues of vision should be for the country. Instead, we cannot commit this country for the success of political, visionary or any other ideologies. We must emerge from ideological differences and look towards the country. It is not the struggle that should go forward but the country.

It is necessary to remember that carrying out higher education, providing electricity, doing urban development and many other matters on the basis of populist political decisions is a grave enemy to the country. We were able to construct the Norochcholai and Upper Kotmale power projects by moving out of the frame of populist politics and thinking more of the country. We took the necessary decisions. What was important was not whether they were popular, but whether they were important and correct. This country cannot be betrayed to drugs, corruption, and fraud and overwhelming laziness.

Venerable Sirs,

Three years ago many were the dreams of Sri Lankans.

There was a dream that we destroy the world's most savage terrorist leader and all other terrorist leaders, do not let terrorism own one inch of our land, and make this a single unitary State. Today, that dream has come true. With regard to the development of our country too, it is the same that I have to say. We are now living in times when dreams are turning into reality.

Friends,

There is an important aspect we should not forget at this hour of victory. That is our children. They looked at our victorious march with great love and anticipation. They obtained great pleasure by seeing on television screens, the brave march of their fathers, brothers and sisters to save the motherland. Those who were most satisfied the moment the news of the freedom of the motherland was known were our children. Thereafter our Lion Flag waved most in the hands of our children.

My Dear Son and Daughter,

I am the proudest Head of State in the world for being able to see with my own eyes a future generation such as you who love your country so much. I am the proud father of such generation. I told you earlier, that we will not handover to you the problems that we face today. Today, my sons and daughters, we have not left a terrorist problem to be faced by you.

Therefore, it is your duty to grow up as true heroes who with your wisdom, good qualities and strength to love and protect this country, that is now being brought together under a single National Flag. I wish to emphasize again that I am not the owner of this land but only its custodian. Therefore, this unitary country which is without fear and mistrust, I now entrust to you.

I wish you all a prosperous future.

May you be blessed by the Noble Triple Gem!