

"We should live in this country as children of one mother"- President

**Address by His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapaksa
at the ceremonial opening of Parliament,
Sri Jayawardhanapura - Kotte
May 19, 2009**

I declare open this fourth session of Parliament at a time the people of our country, as well as the entire world are celebrating a great victory.

I address this session of Parliament at the historic occasion when the hopes and expectations of the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, Burgher, Malay and all people of our country for several decades, to see a Sri Lanka that is free of murderous terrorism, have been realized.

Friends, (In Tamil)

This is our country

This is our mother land

We should live in this country as children of one mother

No differences of race, caste and religion should prevail here

Over the last thirty years, the LTTE has killed many people

Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslims - many have been killed

The war against the LTTE is not a war against Tamil people

Our aim was to liberate our Tamil people from the clutches of the LTTE

Our heroic forces have sacrificed their lives to protect Tamil civilians

The victory we have gained by defeating LTTE is the victory of this nation,

and the victory of all people living in this country.

Protecting the Tamil speaking people of this country is my responsibility

That is my duty

All the people of this country should live in safety without fear and suspicion

All should live with equal rights

That is my aim

Let us all get together and build up this nation (Tamil ends)

As you already know our Motherland has been completely freed from the clutches of separatist terrorism. From now on it is only the laws enacted by this sovereign Parliament that will be that will be in force in every inch of Sri Lanka.

For almost three decades the laws enacted by this legislature were not in force in almost one-third of our land.

When I won the Presidential Election in 2005 there were LTTE police stations in the North and East. There were Tiger courts. What was missing was only a Tiger parliament. Today we have finished all that forever.

Today, this session of Parliament opens in a country where the writ of this august legislature spreads equally throughout the 65,332 sq. km of territory of Sri Lanka.

Hon. Speaker

This will give you great cause for satisfaction. The 225 Hon. Members of this House have cause for great satisfaction about this. The entire population of the country can enjoy that satisfaction. All sections of the people; and all political parties that contributed to my victory in the Presidential Election in 2005 can share this satisfaction.

Hon. Speaker

It is necessary to recall at this time the statements in the historic Mahinda Chinthana that policy statement that was placed before the people three years ago. "The freedom of our country is supreme. I will not permit any separatism. I will also not permit anyone to destroy democracy in our country ...I will respect all ethnic and religious identities, refrain from using force against anyone and build a new society that protects individuals and social freedoms" This is the objective of the Mahinda Chinthana.

Hon. Speaker

It is necessary on this historic occasion to inquire as to how it was possible to obtain the proud victory we have achieved today by defeating the world's most ruthless terrorist organization.

We are a country with a long history where we saw the reign of 182 kings who rules with pride and honour for that extended more than 2,500 years. This is a country where kings such as Dutugemunu, Valagamba, Dhatusena and Vijayabahu defeated enemy invasions and ensured our freedom.

As much as Mother Lanka fought against invaders such as Ditiya, Pitiya, Palayamara, Siva and Elara in the past, we have the experience of having fought the Portuguese, Dutch and British who established empires in the world. As much as the great kings such as Mayadunne, Rajasingha I and Vimaladharmasuriya, it is necessary to also recall the great heroes such as Keppetipola and Puran Appu who fought with such valour against imperialism.

In looking at this unconquerable history there is a common factor we can see. It is the inability of any external enemy to subdue this country as long as those to whom this is the motherland stand united. That is the truth. Another common factor we can see is the inability to establish any savage or dictatorial regime on this land. In the history of my motherland, the people have always risen undefeated against any arbitrary, savage or brutal rule.

I must express my gratitude here to those heroes of our past who have given us the strength and courage to fight against savage invaders and enemies not only today, but in the future too.

Hon. Speaker

The LTTE terrorists began the march to own half of this country, having assassinated the Mayor of Jaffna in 1975, and began their journey to divide the country into two. At that time the terrorists did not hold a single inch of land in the entire north and east.

When the people handed over this country to me the LTTE had control over 15,000 sq. km or one-fourth of the territory of this country, and two-thirds of its coastline.

It was not only territory that we lost during that period. The nation lost several thousand lives and much property and assets. Hundreds of religious dignitaries, as well as national leaders such as R. Premadasa and Rajiv Gandhi, and great ministers such as Lakshman Kadirgamar, Gamini Dissanayake, Jeyaraj Fernandopulle and AHM Ashroff were lost to us.

By the last Presidential Election terrorists had gone much further than anyone had believed possible. As a massive international organization, they had established an unmatched that no other organization in the world enjoyed.

They had acquired ships, aircraft, submarines, and the most advanced weaponry in the world. They controlled city administrations, international frauds and scams, banks, web sites and radio stations, and had also issued currency.

There is no one yet able to fully measure their assets. The world had so far not seen such a powerful and large organization. The biggest danger was that the north and east of this country were brought together and gifted through a deed of peace to this destructive terrorist organization.

As result, in 2005 what we took over was a country with grave challenges. Not only in the jungles of Thoppigala or the Vanni, the shadow of terrorism was also cast on all political activity in the country. You are aware that the Norochcholai Power project was due to be established several decades before this. But the construction of this power plant was delayed because of thinking of the fear that the location of this power project would some day come under the control of the terrorists. These are bitter truths to the nation. My Motherland has had to face even more bitter realities.

The terrorists worked continuously to mark the area that should belong to them on the map of Sri Lanka and establish the Eelam state. But the terrorists had created a situation under which there was even fear to respect the principle of the unitary state that has been established in our Constitution.

Even the powerful countries of the world showed fear before the terrorists; some countries were shaken and went on their knees in the face of terror.

Our people began to face a defeatist mentality, whether we could face up to a problem that many countries in the world the world did not seem able to face. Terrorism is like a venomous serpent that draws the most dangerous qualities from politics, economics, science and all subjects in the world.

What terrorism draws from politics is racism. It builds an economy through drug trafficking. What it draws from technology is the manufacture of explosives. The defeat in Sri Lanka of the world's most ruthless terrorist organization in the world that is made up of all these deadly qualities can be considered second to none.

Therefore, we did not attempt to respond to the terrorists in their own language. When the terrorists were calling for war, we responded with a humanitarian operation. Our troops went to this operation carrying a gun in one hand, the Human Rights

Charter in the other, hostages on their shoulders, and the love of their children in their hearts.

That was an incomparable chapter in the history of war. It is truly a miracle to go to a battlefield where civilians have been turned into human bombs, and carry on the battle without shedding the blood of civilians. It is a great skill to face up to the heaviest monsoon rains and major floods and not retreat a single step. It needs the ability of a Vishvakarma to defeat battle tanks and artillery with small arms.

There was no school of war in the world that could face up to the savage military strategies used by the terrorists of the LTTE. The world had not seen military sciences able to face a combination of land mines, claymore mines, small suicide vessels, light aircraft that can evade radar, and suicide killer jackets.

Through thirty years the Security Forces of Sri Lanka were compelled to find ways and means to face up to all this. By the end of its successful march the Security Forces of Sri Lanka had become the most disciplined and capable military in the world.

Our security forces were able to defeat the most ruthless terrorists in the world due to their strict discipline, commitment, and creative use of military strategy.

Hon. Speaker

What is it that we have now acquired having defeated the most ruthless terrorists of the world?

What we now have is another powerful challenge in the world.

The Tamil people who have a great history are today in a tragic and helpless state due to the terrorists of the LTTE. When did it ever happen in the history of the Tamil people that parents forced their young daughters to get pregnant to save them from being dragged into war? Who was it that brought Tamil children who are protected by the Goddess Pattini to this fate? Who was it that abandoned in tents the Tamil people who worshipped the Deity Ganesh at Kataragama, and cared for their health with the antiseptic qualities of saffron water and margosa leaves?

Hon. Speaker

It is the LTTE that has put the Tamil community to their lowest position in history. Those who raised their voices for the protection of the terrorists, and all those who helped the terrorists should now fall at the feet of these Tamil mothers and seek their pardon. Those who live abroad and supported the terrorists with funds, if they have any love for their own people, should not help terrorism again.

The day is not far when the hearts and feelings of the mothers and daughters who have today been rendered helpless became the collective conscience of the Tamil people. Their hearts are now with us who liberated from the slavery they had been forced into. Facing up to and winning this challenge is like building a strong bridge over Eelam. What was seen in the past days at Pudemathalan area should forever remain seared in the minds of the Tamil people.

Hon. Speaker

The defeat of the LTTE and the breakdown of their armed strength will never be the defeat of the Tamil people of this country. What have the Tamil people inherited from the gun that was used to assassinate Alfred Duraiyappah to the armed tanks used to attack the innocent Tamil people who were fleeing Pudemathalan, and all other weapons of the LTTE?

What was the LTTE able to win for the Tamil people from the force of its arms?

The complete defeat of the LTTE is an even greater victory for the Tamil people.

Hon. Speaker

The Tamil people were never a people who had faith or trust in weapons. It would be sufficient for them to know of just one incident that took place when the LTTE was powerful.

One clause in the Indo-Lanka Accord was that the LTTE should hand over its weapons to the army. When the LTTE announced to the people of Jaffna that it would be handing over its weapons, they received a resounding cheer and applause from the people. The LTTE was also surprised by this response. It is, therefore clear that the Tamil people are not a people who like to bear weapons.

Mr. Speaker

At this victorious moment, it is necessary for us to state with great responsibility, that we do not accept a military solution as the final solution. Similarly, when we see the sad faces of the people who have been fleeing from the Puthumathalan area, we can realize that a document offered on a tray as a political solution could also not be the final solution. Therefore, the responsibility that we accept after freeing the Tamil people from the LTTE is a responsibility that no government in the history of Sri Lanka has accepted.

When we accept the responsibility for the people who have been liberated, we receive many proposals from various countries and institutions. They ask us to look after our own Tamil people well.

Hon. Speaker

All the people in the country from Dondra Head to Point Pedro are our own people.

The government saw to it that we did not shirk our responsibilities even to the people who were under the yoke of the LTTE. In brief, the terrorist leader who was killed yesterday, until that time had his meals with the food and drink that the government supplied.

Mr. Speaker

We are a country with unique precedents. According to the tradition established by kings such as Dutugemunu, we should respect even the enemy that has surrendered or been killed in combat. That is a quality of greatness that is found not only with the government, but also with the people of this country.

This is a country with a people who when thousands lost their homes and were made destitute from the Tsunami, took care of all those people, not letting even a single victim go hungry for even one meal. We who are schooled in the Buddhist tradition of loving kindness and compassion, and nurtured in the Hindu, Islam and Christian traditions, do not need to be taught how we should treat and care for the innocent and helpless. We shall resettle all those who have been freed from being hostages in very welcome surroundings. People who have not had electricity and not seen modern roads will be resettled in environments complete with all facilities. I ask you to compare the living conditions of the people in the East three years ago with what it is today.

Although we engaged in a massive struggle to defeat terrorism, we did not make that a cause to delay development and welfare services. We launched development projects throughout the country that had been ignored for 30 years. We created new employment. They were not confined to the South. While carrying out massive humanitarian operations in the North, the Vanni and the East, we were also engaged in development work in those areas.

At no time since independence have the development work now being done in the East and Mannar been undertaken. A Presidential Task Force has already been appointed to expedite development work in the Vanni and the North. As much as we defeated deadly terrorism and freed the innocent people held by terror, we are committed to carry out accelerated development in the areas that were under terrorism, within the next three years. While bringing the lives of the people within a democratic political structure, the government will also provide education and health facilities, and launch the Northern Spring by providing the infrastructure such as irrigation, highways, electricity and such facilities necessary for the agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors.

We have now removed terrorism, the biggest obstacle that the private sector in our country faced in participating in the Northern Spring. Therefore, the environment has now been created to carry out their investments and engage in business. I especially call on our business community to make a commitment to invest in the North and East of our country. What we need is not advice; but the cooperation to bring a better life to these people. I believe that the world community will also extend that cooperation to us.

I call on all who have left our motherland due to terrorism, especially the Tamil people, to return. I made this request when addressing an Independence commemoration event on an earlier occasion, too. Similarly, I call on our engineers, doctors, accountants and other professions living in various countries abroad, to return to your motherland and contribute to its development.

Mr. Speaker

It is necessary that we give to these people the freedoms that are the right of people in all other parts of our country. Similarly, it is necessary that the political solutions they need should be brought to closer to them faster than any country or government in the world would bring. However, it cannot be an imported solution. We do not have the time to be experimenting with the solutions suggested by other countries. Therefore, it is necessary that we find a solution that is our very own, of our own nation. It should be a solution acceptable to all sections of the people. We expect cooperation for it from the international community and not obstruction. Should the international community doubt our capability to find such a solution, when we have successfully overcome a challenge that that the world was unable to achieve? No. We can achieve this.

I believe that the solution that we who respect valued the qualities of Mettha (loving kindness) Karuna (Compassion) Muditha (Rejoicing in others' joy) and Upeksha (Equanimity) based on the philosophy of Buddhism can present, can bring both relief and an example to the world. Similarly, I seek the support of all political parties for that solution.

Mr. Speaker

We have removed the word minorities from our vocabulary three years ago. No longer are the Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays and any other minorities. There are only two peoples in this country. One is the people that love this country. The other comprises the small groups that have no love for the land of their birth. Those who do not love the country are now a lesser group.

Mr. Speaker

This small group questions as to whose victory this is. Our answer to that is that this is not a victory by President Mahinda Rajapaksa alone. The people are gathering around the National Flag. What we have done is to make the people of this country line up behind the National Flag. Therefore, this victory belongs to the people so lined up behind the National Flag. It belongs to the mothers, fathers and wives who gave their children and husbands to the armed forces; to the people who thought not of their stomachs but of their country. The blood shed by those people have enriched the soil of our land.

Mr. Speaker

Remember this country was saved by the blood, eyes, limbs, flesh and lives of our young people. Thousands of our youth faced shells on their heads, land mines at their feet, bullets in their hearts and sacrificed their lives to protect this land. We cannot allow such a land be grabbed by thieves, fraudsters, and the corrupt. This land cannot be betrayed or allowed to be sold. We should pay tribute to the children of the motherland who protected it with such sacrifice, by ensuring peace, development and good governance in this country.

There are thousands of heroic troops who sacrifice their lives from 1980 buried in our motherland today. We remember all these heroic troops with respect. We show them our gratitude. On this special occasion, the parents, wife and children of Lt. Colonel Lalith Jayasinghe, brave officer of the Long Range Reconnaissance Unit who fought fearlessly and sacrificed his life are present here today. The immense gratitude of our nation goes out on this occasion to all parents who brought forth the heroic troops who sacrificed their lives, and to their wives who gave them strength to serve the motherland.

WE have among us today a large number of heroic troops whom suffer many disabilities since 1980. Lance Corporal Bandara, a heroic trooper who was injured twice in the northern humanitarian operation and returned to active duty, and later lost both his legs at Puthukudiruppu is also a participant at this historic occasion. I extend by gratitude him on this occasion, symbolic of the gratitude and honour extended to all disabled and heroic troops.

I also extend the honour and gratitude of the nation to Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the Chief of Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Donald Perera, the Army Commander General Sarath Fonseka, Navy Commander Admiral Vasantha Karannagoda, Air Force Commander Air Chief Marshal Roshan Gunatilleke, as well as the Inspector General of Police Jayantha Wickremeratne, and the Director General of the Civil Defence Force Sarath Weerasekera, who worked tirelessly to give this great victory to the motherland.

All heroic troops who shouldered battle for freedom obtained great encouragement from their families. But for the help of the parents, brothers and sisters, wives, children and other family members of these heroes of war, we would not have been able to achieve any of these victories. Similarly, the blessings and encouragement from my wife Shiranthi, and my sons Namal, Yoshitha and Rohitha, as well as my brothers and sisters was a great strength to me. I thank all of them as I express the gratitude of the nation to the families of all families of our heroes of war.

Mr. Speaker

There is no era in before this when the international community has paid as much attention to my motherland as in the present times. When went to the front against terrorism with a firm determination, many foreign states made many requests of us.

But although we were able to listen to all these requests, we were not able to implement all of them. That is because I was bound to make real the expectations offered by me and carry out the mandate given to me in 2005. This was also because we had because I considered the freedom and sovereignty of my motherland as being of more value than my life.

Yet, I must state that the Sri Lankan nation will always remember the help given to our country by many countries.

We will not forget that such assistance was given on behalf of world democracy. Ending terrorism in Sri Lanka means a victory for democracy in the world. Sri Lanka has now given a beginning to the ending of terrorism in the world.

Mr. Speaker

All this time what we had to tell the world was about our great, heroic and glorious history. But today we have brought about such greatness and heroism to present day Sri Lanka. Till now we gained strength to rise as a nation from the past built by our heroic ancestors. Today, as much as we have added a new pride and honour to that past, we have created an era of new strength for the future of our nation. In the future when our nation has to engage in a glorious and invincible struggle the achievements of this era will be recalled.

Mr. Speaker

Having defeated the most ruthless terrorists who made the world helpless, we rise today as invincible citizens; as a national with a great and imposing personality.

What we thought so far was that we could not achieve success in many things. After our fall in 1815, we were unable to revive that lost nation pride and dignity. But, today, we have achieved victory in a challenge that no other country has been able to overcome. It is the both your duty and mine to safeguard that dignity. It is the responsibility of us all.

As we have been victorious in the battle to defeat terrorism, we should also take to the required successful end the struggle to build our land. It is necessary for us to take the required clear decisions for this. We must now be ready to direct our motherland to that new era of national revival.

I must specially mention here that this great battle for national revival will be waged with the aim of raising the lives of the Tamil people who live in the North and East of our land, too.

In the past several decades those people did not have the right to a meaningful life. They were denied the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to development. I shall give all of that to those people. I accept that responsibility.

Hon. Speaker

I do not believe that we have a right to be engaged in politics if we are unable to accept the responsibilities thrust upon us by time. I have accepted that responsibility. We have been victorious in facing one challenge. Time is now raising a new challenge before us. It is the challenge of building the motherland. From now all, everyone should change in keeping with the needs of facing up to that challenge, too. Just as I accepted the earlier challenge, I accept this new challenge too. In doing so, I look forward very much to the fullest cooperation of all Members of Parliament and Ministers, and of my dear people in our motherland.

AS a special mark of respect to the heroic troops who contributed to this great victory I hereby declare tomorrow as a national holiday.

Mr. Speaker

I value my motherland first, second and third. This should be so to you and to the entire nation. It is only our beloved motherland that we should all cherish and value.

May you be blessed by the Noble Triple Gem.

Note: This is the English translation of the address