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### **National Day Message**

Today, we celebrate Sri Lanka's 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of independence with renewed hope and vigour.

In the past years, Sri Lanka was able to sustain its economic growth, even under trying circumstances. Despite encountering many challenges, our foreign reserves grew and our foreign exchange increased.

With the advent of a durable peace after the successful elimination of terrorism in Sri Lanka, our principal focus has been on steering the nation on the right course to achieve accelerated social and economic development across the country, which would benefit people from all parts of the country.

Earnings from exports increased significantly by 36.0 per cent, year-on-year, to US dollars 834 million in November, 2010. This is the highest monthly increase since October 2004. Earnings from exports increased by 7 per cent to US dollars 760 million in August 2010, recording the highest monthly value thus far in 2010. Cumulative earnings from exports during the first eight months of 2010 increased by 11 per cent to US dollars 5,040 million compared to the corresponding period of 2009. This data amply demonstrates that the economic growth in Sri Lanka has remained robust and broad based.

The Government of Sri Lanka, under the exemplary and resolute leadership of His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapaksa, was able to move forward in many areas of development across the country, by building new roads, air and sea ports among other infrastructure developments which have contributed towards enhancing Sri Lanka's existing infrastructure facilities, thereby providing a highly favourable economic climate, which now prevails in the country. This environment has presented the people with opportunities which were not available to them during the past three decades, due to the scourge of terrorism. The Government is determined to ensure that the opportunities we now have should not be missed and the fruits of these developments and its prospects should be equitably distributed among all the people in Sri Lanka, in order to ensure that all sections and communities are benefitted and can live in dignity.

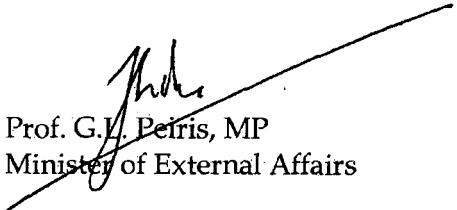
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Small and medium scale industries, international hotel chains and other commercial ventures are no longer confined to cities and townships but now encompass the villages as well. This has provided the people with more avenues for employment. In order to meet reap the benefits of these opportunities, we have also placed emphasis on technology and IT skills to ensure that the people are adequately equipped to derive maximum benefits of these opportunities that are now available across the country.

The Government of Sri Lanka has placed great importance to achieve equity with regard to the distribution of income and wealth in the country. The Government, being mindful of the welfare of the people continued its efforts by launching new welfare schemes while further enhancing and improving the existing schemes for the benefit of the public.

On this occasion of celebrating our Independence, I would also like to invite the diaspora in the western world and elsewhere to seize this opportunity and play a dynamic role without distancing themselves from the exciting developments which are taking place in Sri Lanka today. We recognise the importance of the diaspora which can play a pivotal role in improving and building infrastructure in the North and the East, as well as in other parts of the country.

Sri Lanka is now on the threshold of reaping its peace dividends and the prevailing climate in Sri Lanka is conducive for enhanced socio-economic development. We are optimistic that we will be able to continue our development drive and take Sri Lanka forward, towards greater prosperity.



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