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கோத்தாபய ராஜபக்ஷ  
**Gotabaya Rajapaksa**

Venerable Maha Sangha and religious dignitaries from the Christian, Hindu, Islamic and other faiths. 5<sup>th</sup> Executive President of Sri Lanka, HE Mahinda Rajapaksa, Honourable Members of Parliament and other public representatives, Party Leaders. Professionals, War Heroes, Artistes, Media Personnel, Representatives of National Organisations, Trade Unions. Those of you who represent every corner of our motherland. All patriotic Sri Lankans. My friends.

At this historic conference that marks a decisive juncture in our nation's politics, I am deeply honoured and humbled to accept the nomination made by the 5<sup>th</sup> President of Sri Lanka, HE Mahinda Rajapaksa for me to represent the common aspiration of many political parties, independent groups and organisations led by the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna, as their candidate at the forthcoming Presidential election.

I consider this nomination as a noble mission entrusted to me by people oriented, progressive forces that are destined to create a political revolution in this country.

I thank all who supported the 5<sup>th</sup> President Mahinda Rajapaksa in making this decision, especially the venerable Maha Sangha and other religious leaders, politicians, national organisations, media personnel, social leaders and activists, and the citizens of this country led by the youth, who spoke on behalf of the country.

I extend my special gratitude to the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna for entrusting me with this signal honour.

I love my country. I am proud of my country. I have a vision for the future of my country.

I consider it a tremendous privilege to have been given this opportunity to work towards the peace, wellbeing and prosperity of my country.

I have always discharged every responsibility that been entrusted to me to the best of my ability, and I assure you that I am fully prepared to provide the leadership needed to succeed in this challenge as we go forward.

During my 20 years of active military service, and nearly 10 years of service as a Government official, I successfully discharged all the responsibilities entrusted to me.

I always make every effort to deliver results that go above and beyond expectations.

35 years ago, when I was a young Army officer, General Cyril Ranatunge, the most senior military officer at the time, bestowed on me a commendation in which he described me as “an officer who takes initiative over and above the normal call of duty”.

It is this quality that enabled me to provide the strategic guidance and administrative support to the Armed Forces led by Commander in Chief President Mahinda Rajapaksa, to end 30 years of terrorism in just three and a half years.

It is this quality that enabled me later on, as Secretary to the Ministry of Urban Development, to drive the transformation of Colombo into Asia’s fastest developing city, and to create an environment that attracted significant investments that changed the skyline of city.

I never allowed any external forces to obstruct the fulfilment of my responsibilities to my country.

I never bowed my head to anyone who opposed my country.

I will never allow anyone to infringe upon the sovereignty of Sri Lanka.

What the country requires today is leadership that has a vision for the future, plans to develop the country, and the ability to execute those plans. The public expects disciplined, corruption free, people oriented and patriotic leadership from its President.

I trust that I have proven my ability to provide this leadership through my actions, and the results I have delivered.

If entrusted with the stewardship of this country by the people, my first task will be to ensure complete safety and security throughout the nation.

I have complete confidence that we will once again be able to make Sri Lanka one of the most peaceful, secure and safe countries in the world.

I will accept responsibility for your safety, and the safety of your children and your loved ones.

Buddhism teaches us to respect all religions.

People of many ethnicities and religions have lived freely and practiced their faiths freely throughout the history of our country.

We are a nation that has lived together in friendship, with respect for each other's religious beliefs and cultural identities. This unity has to be our strength.

I pledge to create a safe and secure environment in which all Sri Lankans, irrespective of their race or religion, will be able to live in peace.

I will never allow extremist terrorism in this country.

The people of the North have aspirations which we understand well, and our government will strive towards solving these issues.

There was tremendous development in our country during the 2005-2014 period under the Mahinda Chinthana vision. What we must do now is to resume the progress of our country

I look forward to presenting my vision for this progress, taking into account the prevailing global economic trends.

This vision will incorporate the insights gained from our discussions with the general public by the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna's "Gama Samaga Pilisandarak" programme, as well as the studies undertaken by professionals, entrepreneurs and intellectuals of Viyath Maga.

Our goal has to be the creation of a prosperous nation through the development of productive citizens, families that live happily, and a society that is disciplined.

Every citizen has the right to enjoy economic stability, have opportunities to improve their status, and to live with dignity.

I will introduce people centric economic principles to create this environment.

Developing our human resources will be one of the main responsibilities of our government.

We need to enable our future generations to become productive citizens through giving special attention to their education and to the development of their skills and abilities.

We will ensure that the youth will be given more opportunities to pursue tertiary education and technical education. We will improve the necessary infrastructure facilities for this within a short period.

This will help generate more job opportunities and encourage new entrepreneurs who can contribute to the vibrant economy we hope to create.

We will also introduce educational reforms that will foster the innovation and technological aptitudes of our youth.

Our long-term goal should be to be one of the world's leading nations in innovation.

The acceleration we intend to create in our country's development will be catalyzed by the technology-based improvements we will introduce to every field.

Our economic principles will support domestic industries whilst encouraging them to explore new market opportunities in the global economy.

Nearly one third of our population is engaged in the agriculture and fisheries sector.

We can use technology as well as the experiences gained from other countries to improve the productivity of these sectors and improve the economic status of those engaged in them.

Another primary responsibility of any government is to create a public service that is efficient and people oriented.

The first step in this regard is to ensure that public servants are freed from political interference.

We will work to ensure that honest public servants who carry out their duties in good faith and take the proper decisions will receive the fullest legal protection.

At the same time, those in government service will be given the local and overseas training required to deliver the highest standard of service to the public.

The services afforded to the public will also be improved by increasing the use of technology in government institutions.

We will introduce new processes including e-Government systems to reduce the dependency on individuals for obtaining public services, thereby reducing the risk of corruption.

Unplanned and haphazard urbanization has been one of the main causes of several social issues. This is a problem that needs to be addressed creatively.

Sri Lanka has a climate that allows people to live in any part of the country. Therefore, we must ensure that development spreads to every part of the nation.

Instead of people needing to come to cities in pursuit of jobs or business opportunities, we must ensure that jobs and business opportunities are taken to the people.

Rapid improvements in the transport services must be introduced, connecting every part of the country through road and rail links.

Through improving essential requirements such as electricity, water, schools and hospitals throughout the country, we can encourage industries and businesses to reach the villages without being confined to cities.

We will work to improve the internet and telecommunication facilities in every part of the country. This will give our youth the opportunity to interact with and even explore business opportunities with the rest of the world from their homes.

A problem affecting many middle-class families is the lack of suitable housing. We will introduce a rapid solution to this issue at a national scale.

Safeguarding the natural environment for our future generations is a responsibility we all share. We will work towards implementing the urban beautification and green city concepts that I introduced in the past throughout the country.

We will take steps to ensure that all the forest reservation areas will be protected, and those that are under threat of deforestation will be restored. We will also implement programmes to ensure the proper utilization of abandoned lands.

Our country has been reputed for millennia for its proud culture, traditions and respectable society.

However, when we look at the way in which people drive on the roads, dispose of garbage, or treat women, some deterioration in these characteristics is evident.

Every resident of this country has a responsibility to live in peace without disturbing others.

Discipline must be encouraged through example by the leadership of the country.

I look forward to a time when Sri Lanka will once again be the sort of country where women can travel without any fear of harassment at any time of day or night.

We have always given special attention to injured war heroes, the differently abled, and others who have special needs.

In consideration of their requirements, I will ensure that they are given priority in obtaining services from the state and private sector.

Our values, traditions and culture, patriotic thinking, and national sovereignty are of tremendous importance to us.

We must maintain healthy relationships with all friendly countries. However, we will never betray our independence at the behest of any foreign power.

Through resuming proper diplomatic relationships with other countries, we will ensure that we will interact with other nations on equal terms, and maintain our national sovereignty and our dignity as a nation.

We must work towards achieving our long-term objectives whilst undertaking necessary course corrections swiftly and correcting the mistakes that have been made in the past.

Instead of focusing on personal objectives, we will act to engage likeminded patriotic, creative and intelligent groups to work towards our common objectives.

The forthcoming Presidential election will be a decisive one for the country and its future.

I hope that the people of this country will think of what is best for future generations at this moment, without being confined to divisions of race, religion or political party.

I would also like to make a special request from you on this important day.

What we are commencing today is another new journey in our nation's history.

This is a dignified objective, and I believe we must conduct our election campaign in the same spirit of dignity.

We must behave in the same manner we would now, as we would in governing once we are elected.

As such, we must ensure that the entire election campaign will be a disciplined, law abiding and dignified one.

Being mindful of the environment, we should also be an example to all political parties by completely avoiding the use of polythene and plastics in our election campaign.

We should also use this opportunity to change the prevailing political culture of attacking political opponents, taking personal revenge and misleading the public with lies.

I request you to respond to our opponents' false allegations with reasoned and logical truths.

Today's voters are very politically sensitive, and we should foster an honest political culture for them.

We are a young nation.

All of us want to create a country where our future generations can live with freedom, dignity and prosperity.

I believe we have the vision to make this future a reality. I also believe we have in place the plans and the team that we need to deliver this vision.

Just as I have fulfilled every responsibility given to me to the highest standard, I pledge that I am ready to undertake the national duty that this country needs, and that all of you desire, from me.

May the blessings of the Noble Triple Gem be with you.