

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 22 June 2010 05:17

Your Excellency Srimathi Pratibha Devisingh Patil, President of India, Your Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The distinguished gathering this evening and the elegant setting of Rashtrapati Bhawan, bring back memories of the warm goodwill of my first State visit to India in 2005 soon after my first election. Today, I have the pleasure of being here after being re-elected for a second term of office, with the strength of the historic mandate conferred on my Government.

Bonds between our two countries go back to the mists of history. Since the days of Emperor Asoka, whose kindness led to Sri Lanka receiving the noble Message of the Buddha, the value systems and wisdom of the Indian sub-continent, have been a source of inspiration and counsel for our people. The contemporary economic, geographic and strategic imperatives compel us more than ever before to stand together.

Excellencies,

On behalf of the Government and the people of my country, I express appreciation to the Government and the people of India for their understanding and substantial support for our efforts to establish peace. We look to your continued cooperation and encouragement, and we recognize with gratitude that in the provision of medical aid, in de-mining, humanitarian assistance to the displaced and infrastructure restoration, the Government of India has been in the forefront, complementing and supporting our own efforts.

Excellencies,

The recent national elections enabled the people living in the North and the East of our country to exercise their franchise freely after several decades. We are committed to strengthening this democratic process. Provincial Council elections were held in the East, no sooner the province was cleared of terrorists. We now intend to hold Provincial Council elections in the North at the

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earliest.

I am fully aware that the measures for economic progress and for the revival of democratic governance, must be paralleled by measures to heal the hurt in the minds of our people arising out of conflict. We are determined to introspect and learn from the events of that difficult era. With this intention, a Commission on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation has now been appointed. We are confident that this Commission with its wide ranging mandate would guide us towards a process of further strengthening national amity.

Excellencies,

With our focus now on delivering the peace dividend and prosperity to our people, our economic relations with India assume an even more fundamental importance. Sri Lanka's locational advantage and human resource potential can couple easily with India's vast market, business skills and core technological competencies. There must be greater interaction between our business and professional communities, who are in fact the change agents for economic cooperation and integration.

Just as much as we in Sri Lanka hail the economic rise of India, we also salute her achievements in deeply entrenching democratic governance.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and I, joined by our respective delegations have had fruitful discussions today and reached agreement on many issues. I am confident that these decisions will strengthen our endeavours to fashion a partnership that can become a model of deep trust, friendship and cooperation between two very close neighbours.

Excellency,

While thanking you and the Government of India for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to me and my delegation, I take this opportunity to invite you to visit Sri Lanka. The people of my country will be most honoured to receive you.

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Let me now propose a toast to the good health, success and happiness of Her Excellency Srimathi Pratibha Patil and to the long-lasting friendship between the peoples of India and of Sri Lanka.

To Friendship !

Thank you.