

**Remarks at the Reception
hosted by Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India
in Honour of the Prime Minister and for the PM to meet
Ambassadors and High Commissioners Concurrently Accredited to Sri Lanka
from New Delhi**

16 October 2025

Excellencies,

Members of the Media,

Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be with all of you this evening.

I bring you greetings from President Anura Kumara Disanayaka and my Cabinet colleagues.

I thank you for joining us, and I thank our High Commissioner and her team at the Sri Lanka High Commission for bringing together this distinguished gathering of Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and diplomats representing every region of the world.

All of you are connected with Sri Lanka through accreditation, through friendship and through shared purpose.

Your presence here today demonstrates the importance you and your governments place on bilateral relations with Sri Lanka. I want to assure you that we value your work and that we value the partnerships that we have with each one of the countries that you so proudly represent.

Excellencies,

My visit to India comes at an important time for my country. It comes on the heels of President Anura Kumara Disanayaka's visit to India in December last year – his first visit overseas since being elected President; and the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Sri Lanka just four months later in April this year – the first foreign leader to be received by President Disanayaka and our Government.

This is a demonstration of the importance we give to India in our foreign relations as our closest neighbour, trusted partner, and a nation with which we share deep civilizational, cultural, and people-to-people bonds. The relationship between our two countries which I would describe as being at an unprecedented best has matured to a multi-faceted partnership that encompasses economic cooperation, security collaboration, and enduring ties between our peoples.

Excellencies,

Sri Lanka has turned a new page. As you all know, last year, at Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, the people of my country placed their trust in a new government with a clear and progressive mandate to restore stability, rebuild the economy, and create new opportunities and confidence for our citizens.

The National People's Power Government was elected to office with an overwhelming call for change from the people of Sri Lanka. It was not simply a vote for a new government. It was a categorical rejection of the politics of the past that was associated with corruption and governance failures that eventually led to economic collapse.

Under President Anura Kumara Disanayaka's leadership, we have reaffirmed our commitment to sound macroeconomic management and fiscal discipline. We are restructuring debt, modernising governance, digitising public services, seeking to implement structural reforms under the IMF Extended Fund Facility, increasing revenue through fairer taxation, protecting social safety nets for the most vulnerable, and encouraging investment. The IMF now recognises this resolve. Inflation has reduced (it peaked to 70% in September 2022 during the crisis), reserves are rebuilding, and confidence, while fragile, is returning.

Just this month, the IMF and Sri Lanka reached a staff-level agreement on the Fifth Review of the programme, which, once approved by the Executive Board, will unlock about USD 347 million in further support. This follows the successful Fourth Review completed in July this year, when the IMF commended Sri Lanka's fiscal recovery and progress on debt restructuring.

Our goal is not only growth, but just growth – growth that uplifts and includes; while ensuring stability and long-term sustainable development and prosperity for our people.

For too long, communities in Sri Lanka have felt excluded from the nation's progress. We are committed to building a country where every citizen regardless of ethnicity, religion, language, or geographic location, has equal opportunity and dignity. Reconciliation is not just a political slogan for us. It is a practical necessity for sustainable development of our nation.

We seek to open new avenues for trade, sustainable tourism, green investment, and technology entrepreneurship – creating the conditions for a resilient economy that rewards productivity and integrity.

We are focused on creating an investment climate based on clear rules and institutional efficiency.

We are pursuing social justice and inclusive development. This includes advancing gender equality, recognizing and increasing women's participation in the economy, in decision-making, and in political leadership; safeguarding the rights of marginalised groups; and ensuring that youth empowerment, women entrepreneurs and the small and medium enterprise sector are also given due importance.

We are also pursuing environmental sustainability because we recognise its importance, not just for tourism but as Sri Lanka's ecological wealth also has a stake in our future prosperity and resilience.

Our vision is of a Sri Lanka that is globally connected, regionally dynamic, and people-centric. A country that looks to the future with confidence.

As you all know, I serve not only as Prime Minister, but as the Minister of Education, Higher Education, and Vocational Education of Sri Lanka.

To me, education is the fundamental soul of a nation and the surest foundation for lasting progress. Soon after Independence, Sri Lanka's leaders introduced free education and free healthcare for all Sri Lankan citizens. These policies have served us well over the decades with Sri Lanka being ranked in the "High HDI" category of UNDP's Human Development Index.

However, to provide our citizens the skills that are necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing and evolving world, we recognise that reform is essential.

We have embarked on a reform programme called "*Transform Education: Transform Sri Lanka.*"

Our goal is to create a system that is equitable, inclusive, and relevant to the 21st century. We are modernising curricula, improving teacher training, and strengthening administrative efficiency. We are working to reduce disparities among schools so that the quality of a child's education no longer depends on where they are born or which school they attend.

While introducing new curricula, and embedding core values of critical thinking, creativity, and civic responsibility; we are also aligning higher education and vocational training, bridging the gap between academic learning and employable skills.

A comprehensive **National Vocational Education Plan** is being developed to unify our many training programmes under a single national framework, so that vocational learning becomes not a second choice, but a proud and respected pathway.

Excellencies,

Education reform of this scale cannot be done in isolation. **It requires partnership, collaboration, and shared knowledge.**

Sri Lanka warmly **welcomes cooperation with your countries** in curriculum co-design, teacher development, scholarships, university linkages, and vocational training. We invite your universities, education ministries, and training institutions to work with us to co-create digital learning tools, to share expertise on pedagogy and assessment, to support infrastructure and innovation, and to build exchange programmes that connect our educators and youth.

We seek partnerships that are meaningful. We want to learn from your successes and share our own.

Excellencies,

Sri Lanka, under the National Peoples Power Government, is open to ideas, to investment, and to friendship.

We seek to develop Sri Lanka as a maritime hub for the Indian Ocean region, offering a cost-efficient gateway for global trade through our deep-water and well-equipped ports along the East-West shipping lanes. These ports can be further developed as international trade hubs, supporting regional connectivity and economic growth. As a strategically located island nation, Sri Lanka is well-positioned to complement neighbouring countries' trade and development ambitions. Enhanced trade routes and port infrastructure can drive economic benefits, not only for Sri Lanka but for the broader region as well.

Having faced years of economic mismanagement and having learned the hard way, our government is implementing reforms to create a more stable and transparent economic environment. However, reform, as you know, is not easy, and can be slow at times. But we are determined to stay the course.

We are aware that the task that we have undertaken is not without problems. Reforming institutions, changing entrenched political cultures, healing historical wounds, and reviving an economy that experienced crisis is no easy task.

This is the moment when **we need your support and assistance**. It is **also an opportunity** for your countries to deepen engagement with Sri Lanka, and we hope that your countries will be a part of our transformative journey, investing in our shared journey and mutual prosperity.

We recognise the need to make it easier to do business with us, and we are working on regulatory reform, digital platforms for approvals, and transparent procurement processes.

Excellencies,

- Sometimes we may not be as quick as you would wish in responding to your queries. When I return to Colombo, I will have a conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to see how we can be more efficient in communicating with you and responding to you.
- I want to urge you – whenever opportunities arise, visit Sri Lanka. Whether it's for our national day celebrations, conferences, or even on holiday – please visit. I am sure some of you do so already, but I want to extend a special invitation to all of you using this occasion, to visit Sri Lanka.
- Your countries have expertise that we need in multiple sectors. This may be in governance reform, in economic management, in technology and innovation, and other areas. Help us access technical assistance, share best practices, and work with us to connect your institutions with ours.

I assure you, Excellencies, that Sri Lanka will always be a responsive and reliable partner.

Excellencies,

This evening is more than a reception. It is a reaffirmation of friendship, and an invitation to engage, and collaborate.

On behalf of the government and people of Sri Lanka, I thank you for being here today, and I thank you for your attention to Sri Lanka despite the challenges of non-resident accreditation.

I genuinely hope that we can build substantive working relationships that deliver concrete benefits to our peoples.

While the High Commission here in New Delhi, I am sure, will always do its best to facilitate, I want to assure you that my ministerial colleagues and I will always endeavour to make ourselves available for the conversations, and partnerships that can take our bilateral relationships to meaningful new heights.

Thank you.