



**NEW DEMOCRATIC FRONT**

**THERE IS  
NO LIMIT  
TO WHAT  
SRI LANKA  
CAN ACHIEVE**

*Let us prove it  
together*







# FORWARD TOGETHER

*My Dear Friends,*

*Ayubowan! Vanakkam! Assalamu Alaikum!*

*May I take this opportunity to send a message to each and every one of you. It is a message that has you at the very centre - your family, those near and dear to you and all Sri Lankans, living and working in, and contributing to our motherland, as well as Sri Lankans who live overseas and who may wish to return.*

*I know that you have concerns and expectations - many of which have not been addressed or fulfilled. I am committed to address each and every concern and expectation, that you have. Towards that end, I have met individuals and groups, of all persuasions, professions and vocations in almost every part of our country. I have assembled teams of experts, with whom I have had many months of dialogue, and they will continue to guide me. I have thus developed, a Vision, a Mission, goals and strategic initiatives, time-bound action plans and identified people through whom I will engage my heart and mind, towards propelling this country, upward, onward and forward together.*

*I believe I have the passion and energy, commitment and determination, to achieve results within timelines. I have walked and worked with people, felt their pulse, and nurtured a rural electorate. Having been a Parliamentarian for more than two decades, I have practised and indeed protected parliamentary procedure, respected the constitution, complied with administrative and financial regulations of Government, whilst maintaining the highest levels of integrity at all times.*

*Permit me to say that I have demonstrated a track record, having served as a Member of Parliament, a Deputy Minister, and a Minister. I have been in Government, as well as in the Opposition, I have been a consistent people's representative, remained committed and loyal to one country, and one party, worked with senior and junior public officials, engaged with the private sector, negotiated with the international community, and at all times, defended and protected the unity of our country while demonstrating a clear commitment to interreligious, intercommunal and interracial harmony.*

# FORWARD TOGETHER

*As a victim of terrorism myself, I assure each and every citizen of this country that there will be a zero-tolerance approach to terrorism and extremism. I will appoint the best people to handle national security while introducing a comprehensive action plan. They will be empowered to protect all citizens of our country through legislative enactments, without political interference.*

*I will lead by example in the fight against corruption. There will be no room for people with corruption allegations and a tainted past in a Government under my leadership. Each and every member of the governance structure of the country will be held accountable to the taxpayers of this country. I am committed to rooting out corruption and nepotism in the country, and I sincerely request your support in this endeavour.*

*I believe in an economically-strong, growth-oriented, technologically-advanced Sri Lanka which is also socially-conscious and politically-stable. I will lead the country towards prosperity through social equality and inclusive growth.*

I invite you to join hands with me to build a truly progressive country that leaves no one behind. Let's march forward together!

With Best Wishes to All,



**Sajith Premadasa**





# A STRONG NATION, A FAIR SOCIETY

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# HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Affordable prices and a high-quality life:** Affordability of housing, education, healthcare, transportation and telecommunications, and improving wages for the private sector through high-quality jobs
- 2. Shelter for all:** A home-owning society by 2025 and freehold land for permit holders
- 3. Universal pre-school for all:** We will immediately extend free education to pre-schools
- 4. Universal higher education:** A university degree, a professional qualification, or vocational training for every school leaver
- 5. Universal healthcare:** Free medicine, tests and care, with no hidden costs. A free medical check-up for all over 35 and increased benefits for pregnant mothers
- 6. Accountable leadership:** A cabinet of ministers who are free of corruption and conflicts of interest. No relations will be given Government appointments
- 7. Zero tolerance on drugs and corruption:** Swift legal proceedings and no parole or pardon for convicted drug traffickers
- 8. Zero tolerance on religious extremism and violence:** Everyone will be free of fear in their homes and places of worship
- 9. A tough and smart national security strategy:** A National Security Council will be established by law, and the right people will be put in the right places
- 10. Dignity for the public sector:** Scholarships for international exposure and legal assistance for public servants to defend their actions made in an official capacity
- 11. Government for the people:** Documents, permits and licences will be available online, or within a day
- 12. Financial markets:** A new national development bank and a competitive tax regime to accelerate investments to Port City
- 13. Inspiring women:** The Women's Charter will be implemented, 25% minimum quotas will be introduced for Provincial Councils, Parliament and the National List whilst ensuring safe public transport for women
- 14. Empowering small businesses:** All businesses with a monthly sale of less than 4 million rupees, will be exempted from paying VAT
- 15. Empowering the farmer:** Free seed paddy and fertiliser through farmer cooperatives
- 16. Environment and energy:** Environmentally-acceptable community-centred solutions for the human-elephant conflict, effective waste management, and a switch to 100% renewable energy by 2040
- 17. Encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation:** A Rs. 10 Billion National Venture Capital Fund and a Rs. 10 Billion National Innovation Fund
- 18. A market-ready youth population:** 'Centres of Excellence' at each Divisional Secretariat level to improve communication, language, technology and soft skills of the youth
- 19. Appreciation of migrant workers:** Subsidised home loans, an increased duty-free allowance and legal assistance at embassies
- 20. Public transport:** A multifaceted public transport policy through bus modernisation, railway electrification, Light Rail Transit and a smart traffic management system

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# THE ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

## THE WAR ON DRUGS, CORRUPTION AND RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

Having defeated the forces of terror, Sri Lanka faces three great scourges: drugs, corruption and religious extremism. There is one solution to all three problems: swift and certain justice. The rule of law will prevail, without fear or favour.

We plan to complete drug, corruption and religious extremism cases expeditiously. We will ensure that investigators, prosecutors and judges, will have complete independence to perform their duties, and all necessary facilities will be made available to them to bring perpetrators to justice.

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# THE WAR ON DRUGS

- We will establish a special Anti-Narcotics Court, a Special Anti-Narcotics Prosecutor and strengthen the Police Anti-Narcotics Division. Police investigators will receive training according to international benchmarks and better equipment. We will engage in international diplomatic collaborations to eliminate the drug menace
- Sentences for narcotics-related offences will be made stricter and the penalty for those engaged in drug trafficking will be increased to life imprisonment without parole. Drug cartel leaders will be kept in solitary confinement
- Recognising that addiction is a disease and not an offence, we will amend the law to distinguish between addicts and traffickers. We will triple the number of rehabilitation centres for addicts from four to twelve, to ensure that they are treated, trained in life skills and able to return to their families
- Addicts will not be confined with traffickers who turn addicts into hardened criminals
- All ethanol import licences will be reviewed by an independent commission to combat the manufacture of illicit liquor
- We will coordinate closely with international intelligence and anti-narcotics agencies to cut off the supply of drugs to Sri Lanka

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# THE WAR ON CORRUPTION

- The war on corruption will begin at home. We will not protect any corrupt member of my Government or party
- The police and judiciary will have the freedom and support to investigate and prosecute anyone engaging in corruption. We will be particularly vigilant of those in positions of public trust
- No one will be above the law. We will build a new political culture where those in the highest offices will be held accountable. The leadership of this country will be persons of integrity, who uphold high ethical standards
- In some cases, it is only the receiving of a bribe that is considered an offence. We will introduce legislation making the giving of bribes by individuals, companies and other bodies, a serious offence
- Money laundering will be made an offence under the Bribery Act
- We will establish a centralised database of Asset Declarations under the Bribery Commission and ensure proper verification systems. The Bribery Commission will be strengthened with independent, highly-trained investigators. Government services and payments will be digitised to minimise opportunities for corruption
- Procurement subcommittees will be established in the multiparty Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) and the Committee on Public Accounts (COPA). These subcommittees and the Procurement Commission will be staffed with highly-trained auditors, forensic accountants, lawyers and other necessary professionals, to enable continuous monitoring and review of all Government procurements

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# THE WAR ON RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

- We will create a democratic and pluralistic society in which the rights of all people are protected, and the beliefs of all people are respected. This is the foundation on which the War on Religious Extremism will be mounted
- We will introduce new laws and regulations under which religious extremism may be monitored, investigated and prosecuted where necessary. These laws will place severe penalties on hate speech and misinformation
- The International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights (ICCPR) Act will be fully and fairly implemented, subject to Human Rights Commission (HRC) guidelines. The Diyawanna Declaration for Religious and Communal Harmony will be implemented through the Harmony Act which will also establish a Harmony Council made up of accepted religious leaders
- We will consult with the Venerable Maha Sangha, Hindu, Islam, Catholic and Christian religious leaders, communities, and civil society, to create a national policy on social cohesion. The policy will be used to educate the public and reform school curricula

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# CREATING A STRONG NATION

A strong and well defended nation requires the right leadership. Our defence policy will be intelligent, flexible and farsighted. Threats to the Nation will be identified in advance, appropriate proactive strategies developed and these put into action when necessary. We will put the right people in the right places. They will be empowered to do their duty and be free from all political interference. We aim at modernising our security forces, police and intelligence services and enhancing security systems. Our Nation needs not only military safety and protection but also economic, political, social and environmental security.

A nation's strength is not only measured by its ability to defend itself from its enemies. A strong nation must also defend its citizens' rights and freedoms, and for that, it must have robust democratic institutions. Its laws must enshrine and protect the values of democracy. Its judicial system must be fair, swift and accessible, upholding the Nation's supreme law: the constitution, at all times. We will revitalise Sri Lanka's judicial system and enable it to regain the trust that has been eroded in our people's hearts.

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A stable nation needs a constitution that is relevant. It will ensure that the threat of autocracy is held at bay. When it needs to be strengthened by reform, that reform must come wisely and without delay. We are confident that this moment has come, and that a new constitution is needed for Sri Lanka to take its rightful place in the world as a developed Nation. Diversity is our strength. Our constitution must reflect the multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual and pluralistic nature of our country and must unite us not only in law, but also in our hearts.

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**A strong nation requires a people-centred public administration and a Public Service dedicated to serving its people efficiently, pragmatically and fairly.**

**We will reform and modernise the public service to thoroughly reflect these values, ensuring it is staffed according to merit and not by favouritism or corruption, giving it the necessary modern tools and systems needed to run a 21<sup>st</sup> century Nation.**

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A country gains much of its strength from its global position; not only geographically, but through its relationship with its neighbours and partners across the world. A strong nation must respect international treaties, participate in the workings of those bodies and truly live up to its role as a member of a universal fraternity. For this, we will launch a Sri Lanka First Foreign Policy committed to firmly pursuing our national interests within a rules-based world order.

Keeping our Nation strong, resilient and transparent to the people and accountable to our democratic values, requires dedicated watchdogs who will keep citizens informed and aware. To ensure this, we will take bold steps to create a free and fair media that functions ethically and with responsibility.

The security forces of a nation defend it against external and internal enemies. In addition, a strong and stable nation must also be protected from natural threats and disasters. Sri Lanka has suffered greatly in the past, and as we face a future threatened by climate change, we will make our Disaster Management more efficient and effective, and create the funds to mitigate disaster risks.

Conservation is key to the future of a strong nation, particularly in the context of the world Climate Crisis. We will create an Environmental Policy based on the newly-formulated Environmental Charter that will advocate conservation of our national resources and ensure that we adhere to our international commitments as well as our commitment to our future generations.



# DEFENDING OUR NATION

## SMART SECURITY AND A MODERN MILITARY

- A National Security Strategy will be developed after review of our existing national security framework and policies. This review will take the form of an audit, conducted by a multidisciplinary team of experts which will include cybersecurity specialists
- Based on these recommendations, we will develop a holistic and long-term National Security Strategy, which will have a strong focus on Counter-Terrorism and preventing violent extremism
- The National Security Strategy will be created by the best professionals from all fields related to security. A National Security Council will be established by law to bring these professionals together, and they will be empowered with the authority to create defence policies and to make decisions on national security
- There will be a new post of National Security Advisor, also created by law. We will create a new inter-organisational Counter-Terrorism Centre, which will hold weekly meetings, and we will also strengthen the office of the Chief of the Defence Staff



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## MODERNISING OUR DEFENCES

The Defence Budget will be enhanced to prioritise modernisation of the intelligence agencies, police and security forces, in line with the National Security Strategy. Included in the modernisation of the police force, will be a fresh policy on promotions that will reflect merit and recognise the value of officers who are dedicated to their duty in pursuing challenging, dangerous and important criminal cases, and who do so without fear or favour. As a diverse Nation, we recognise that diversity is our strength. The composition of the security forces and police will reflect that diversity.

Additionally, the Navy and Coast Guard will be strengthened to reflect our position as a maritime Nation, to defend our coastline, guard sea lanes, and protect the assets in our Exclusive Economic Zone. An integral part of the National Security Strategy will be the readiness of the security forces to swiftly deploy according to national security needs. We will also maintain readiness by substantially increasing deployment on United Nations Peacekeeping Missions.

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**The police will be equipped and modernised to respond to an emergency call within 20 minutes, anywhere in the Island.**

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All statements and complaints made to the police will be digitised and the person making them will receive a copy of the document.

For this, we will initiate better training, a higher level of professionalism and political independence.

We will also ensure that the security forces, police and civil defence force are solely focused on their duty of protecting national security and are not used for other distracting tasks, especially those not befitting their professionalism and dignity.

## COHESIVE INTELLIGENCE

For national security to prevail and for our defences to be strong, a cohesive, integrated intelligence network is necessary both within our borders and abroad. .

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**The creation of a new National Intelligence Act will increase efficiency in intelligence gathering and enable coordination between the intelligence agencies.**

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It will support broad intelligence sharing systems that will establish strong and robust relationships with our key partners, both national and international. We will enhance financial intelligence to detect unregulated financing of extremist groups by strengthening the Financial Intelligence Unit.

The National Intelligence Act will also enable a national threat level system that will communicate threat warnings to the citizens of Sri Lanka in an appropriate and timely fashion.

We will introduce a Cybersecurity Act and, through it, a National Cybersecurity Agency which will be tasked with analysing digital threats to Sri Lanka and reducing our Nation's vulnerabilities to cyberattacks.

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# THE PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTION

## CONSTITUTING STRENGTH

Sri Lanka is Asia's oldest democracy. But democracy is an evolutionary process and our journey is not yet complete. Strong as our democracy is, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution and the Right to Information Act saved us from the threat of impending dictatorship. To protect our Nation and keep it strong on its onward journey, we need a new constitution. This new people's constitution will complete the democratisation of our structure and system of governance. It will ensure that all Sri Lanka's citizens live in peace and harmony with each other, regardless of ethnicity, caste, creed, gender or any other distinction, as free and equal citizens, enjoying equal opportunities and able to participate meaningfully in the governance of our country.

The Constitutional Reform process on the Executive President acting with the concurrence of the Prime Minister, devolution and electoral systems begun by this Parliament will be completed without delay, along with all stakeholders. The new constitution will be approved by the people through a referendum, continuing our unwavering journey down the road of evolutionary democracy.

The new constitution will reform the electoral system, replacing the Preferential Electoral System, that has led to corruption and waste, with a system that preserves the important benefits of proportional representation. The new constitution

will also reform the governance structure. There will be an end to crossovers in Parliament, increasing government stability, preserving the people's electoral preference. The new constitution will build on the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and increase the effectiveness and independence of appointed Commissions by promoting greater civil society participation in the Constitutional Council.

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All National List MPs will be professionals or other distinguished individuals. An increase in the participation of women in Parliament will be legislated by stipulating that at least 25% of the National List is female.

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Government waste must be reduced and corruption eliminated if a nation's institutions are to remain strong and thus, so the new constitution will stipulate the number of ministries allowed, and specify the list of ministries by law.

A strong nation requires the judiciary to be independent of government. To ensure this, the new Constitution will create an independent public prosecutor, appointed by the Constitutional Council. We will move the judicial interpretation of the constitution away from the Supreme Court to a new Constitutional Court which will also adjudicate disputes between different levels of Government,

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between provinces and the Central Government, and between the provinces themselves.

The protection of its citizens' fundamental rights is crucial to a strong nation and allowing them to seek justice when their rights are violated is vital. To make the process of justice easier, the new constitution will let citizens file appeals at High Courts close to home and not just at the Supreme Court in Colombo.

## POWER TO THE PEOPLE

We will protect the unity, territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of our motherland. We will bring government decision-making closer to the people. Maximum devolution of power within an undivided and indivisible Sri Lanka, will be implemented. Devolution of power will become meaningful, efficient and waste will be reduced. Devolution of power will ensure that we create true unity among all Sri Lankans, not only in law and in practice, but also in our hearts.

As such, the powers, functions and accountability of the provinces will be decided taking into

consideration the proposals made under Presidents Ranasinghe Premadasa, Chandrika Kumaratunga and Mahinda Rajapaksa. There will be a second chamber, the Senate, consisting of representatives of the Provincial Councils to ensure power sharing at the Centre and to ensure that the Centre and the provinces are able to exercise their respective powers on the basis of their competencies.

**The law will ensure a 25% quota for women in the Senate and prescribe the appropriate educational qualifications.**

The provinces will have the necessary powers to muster required finances and exercise their devolved powers. District Secretaries and Divisional Secretaries will act as agents of the Centre when exercising central powers and act as agents of the province when exercising provincial powers. In regard to the units of devolution, we will make power-sharing more meaningful and cost-efficient by making necessary adjustments as may be agreed upon.

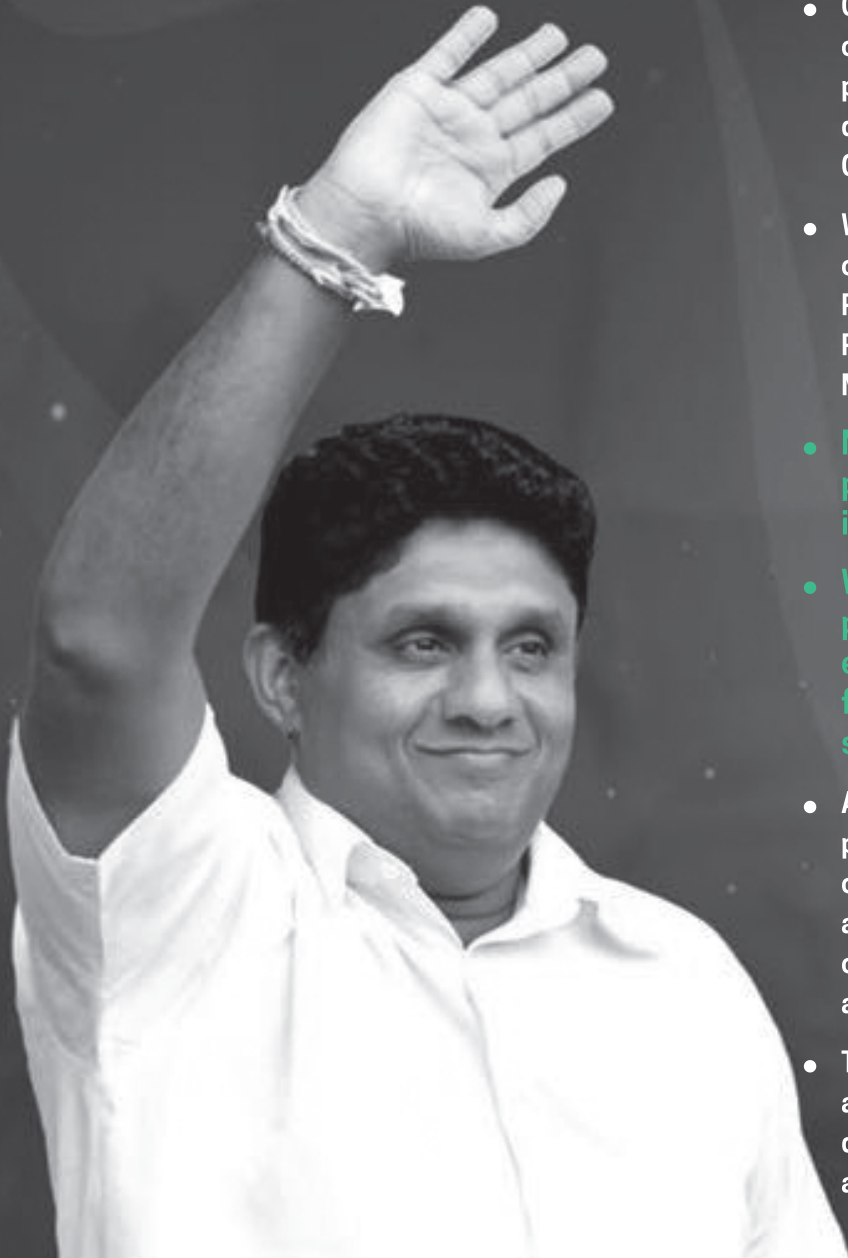


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# ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP

## INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC LIFE



- Government ministers will be required to publish online asset declarations annually so that the public can hold them to account. These declarations will be verified by the Bribery Commission
- We will appoint a Parliamentary Commissioner on Standards & Ethics who will maintain a Register of Interests on all members of Parliament, and ensure compliance with the MP's Code of Conduct
- Ministers will not be allowed to hold positions where there is a conflict of interest
- We will withdraw luxury duty-free vehicle permits for all 225 parliamentarians while ensuring they have the necessary facilities to carry out their duties in service of the public
- An All-Party Committee will review all perks and privileges of Parliamentarians and other elected officials. The Committee will also study anomalies between the wages of elected officials and public servants, and recommend adjustments where necessary
- The numbers of security personnel and vehicles allocated to elected officials will be solely determined by intelligence agency threat assessments

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# SRI LANKA FIRST

## A STRONG FOREIGN POLICY

Sri Lanka's geographically-significant position at the centre of the Indian Ocean has historically, placed us at the crossroads of trade and international travel. We are committed to a foreign policy of friendship with all nations. We will take advantage of our geographical location and our historic connections to work as partners with all nations, as well as regional and international organisations, to transform Sri Lanka into the hub of the Indian Ocean.

To take on this role and strengthen it, we will remain committed to the principles of open trade, freedom of navigation and international law. We will rebuild our international credibility by ensuring that we implement our voluntary commitments to international treaties and resolutions. We will also ensure freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean with all other regional stakeholders.

**Our international relationships will be based on the premise of “friendship with all, enmity with none.”**

To project our role as the hub of the Indian Ocean, we will pay special attention to building and reinforcing strong links with our neighbours; paying particular attention to nations on the Indian Ocean

Rim regions, such as South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa.

Our overseas missions will be rationalised according to our foreign policy strategy and our foreign service will be reoriented to focus more on economic diplomacy. We will station representatives and teams from the Board of Investment, the Economic Development Board, and the Commerce Department in the appropriate missions to promote exports, increase investment and facilitate the transfer of technology.

**All diplomatic missions will be regularly evaluated on their contribution to our national interests in trade and investment promotion.**

We will, as far as possible, ensure that all our ambassadors are Foreign Service officers and, where suitable Foreign Service officers are unavailable, we will appoint appropriately qualified alternatives in accordance with transparent criteria.

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# JUSTICE DELIVERED ON TIME

## A MODERN, IMPARTIAL JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Over the next five years, we will clear the backlog of over 725,000 cases, and double the speed of the legal system.

Uncertainty, heartache and injustice caused by delays will soon be history. Businesses including foreign investors, will be able to trade, transact and build without fear of endless disputes. This will be done through a comprehensive programme of reform and modernisation within the judicial system that will clear administrative bottlenecks, strengthen institutions and digitise its files and records.

To do this we will launch studies of international best practices in modernising court procedures and introduce legislation to reduce delays in our judicial system. Special attention will be paid to property cases, where the longest delays occur, and the highest economic damage is done. The number of practising judges and prosecutors will be increased. We will introduce specialised courts like the Constitutional Court to fast track appropriate cases. We will create a healthy system of independent arbitration and dispute resolution, to reduce the need for litigation, and thereby reduce the pressure on the court system. Similar initiatives will be undertaken at the local level by upgrading Community Mediation Boards. Digitising court records and procedures will expedite proceedings and create transparency. A full digital transformation will be complete by 2030.

In addition to efficiency, we believe that in a strong democracy, every citizen, regardless of socioeconomic status, should have access to appropriate legal aid. To champion this, we will increase and expand funding for a network of regional legal support centres that will make legal advice and counselling accessible to all.

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# A FREE AND FAIR MEDIA

The role of the media in a strong and stable democracy is vital. Often known as the Fourth Estate of Government, after the Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary, its power to shape public opinion can be harnessed to unite, invigorate and inform. In a healthy democracy, the media is often the watchdog of the people, ensuring through its close observation of government that the latter stays true to the nation's values.

**For the media to function as it should, it requires freedom, and we will guarantee that freedom abolishing outdated laws that limit freedom of expression, in accordance with the Colombo Declaration on Media Freedom and Social Responsibility.**

While we will apply regulation to ensure that the private media remains ethical and responsible, it will be done apolitically. An Independent Media Commission will be appointed by the Constitutional Council to ensure balanced reporting in line with reputed standards such as the Fairness Doctrine. The Commission will study and implement best practices to combat hate speech and misinformation in the mainstream media.

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**In recognition of the role of a vibrant and independent media in our democracy, 1,000 homes will be given to journalists under a special interest-free Sathyapura housing scheme.**

- **Taking into account the often difficult and dangerous working conditions, all working journalists will be given a Rs. 10 Million life insurance policy**
- **Broadcast frequencies belong to the people, and must be used for the public interest and allocated in a transparent, accountable manner**
- **The Right to Information, already enshrined by an Act of Parliament, will be strengthened by improved transparency, a system of proactive disclosure by government institutions, and a speeding up of responses to RTI requests**
- **Freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity will always be protected and defended. Intimidation will be banished and the threat of the 'White Van' permanently removed from our lives**



# A PUBLIC SERVICE FOR THE PUBLIC

## EFFICIENT, MERITOCRATIC AND EMPOWERED

Sri Lanka cannot progress without a dedicated public service. The key to our prosperity is through an empowered, caring and motivated public service. At Independence, Sri Lanka is said to have had the finest Public Service in Asia. We believe that with the appropriate reforms and modernisation, we will re-establish a Public Service that will once more be the envy of the region. We will reinstitute a service that is meritocratic and empowered, independent, but also accountable. Insightful and far-thinking policies will be developed and efficiently implemented in a timely manner. Sri Lanka's public service will be quick and reliable.

The public service is the permanent government. It is a professional service and as such, their dignity must be protected. We will stand by them when they are called to defend their actions made in an official capacity. They will be provided legal financial assistance for the duration of court cases.

Government institutions will be free of political interference; but accountable to the President, Cabinet, and Parliament for their performance. They will also be accountable to the public they serve. The Public Service will be fully digitised and information on the use of taxpayer money, both at policy and implementation stages, will be freely accessible to the public.

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In addition, the digitisation programmes will allow the public access to Government services from the convenience of their homes and businesses. No one will be forced to travel long distances to Colombo simply to collect a document or hand over a form. Wherever a digital interaction is not possible, many services will be offered with one-day options in every District.

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- **Passports and National Identity Cards will be available in a day, in addition to Driving Licences and Vehicle Registrations**
- **Foreign Ministry Consular Services and Document Attestation, along with Foreign Employment Bureau Services will also be available in just a day**
- **Police Services, for which citizens currently must visit Colombo, such as Police Reports, will also be obtainable as a one-day service**
- **Employees' Provident Fund, Employees' Trust Fund, pensions, and other funds, will also be accessible in a day**
- **The same timeframe will be applied to the Examination Department and the Ministry of Education documents as well**

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## MERITOCRACY AND EFFICIENCY

To deliver such a service to the citizens of Sri Lanka, our Public Service will have to be transformed completely. One of the first steps in this process will be the introduction of a Public Financial Management Act aimed at modernising Administrative and Financial Regulations, as well as Procurement Guidelines, across the entire public service. Reforms and policy-making processes in the service, will be sped up by strengthening and modernising pivotal agencies like the Attorney General's Department, Legal Draftsman's Department, National Budget Department, the Department of Census and Statistics, and the Cabinet Office. Similar strengthening and modernisation will target regulatory agencies, particularly those relating to land and construction, such as the Central Environmental Authority and the Government Valuer.

In addition to these reformations, efficiency will be vastly improved by straightforward physical reorganisations of the infrastructure, such as housing all the departments and functions related to a particular subject under one ministry.

Finally, in addition to seniority, promotions will be based on scientific performance appraisals of candidates, thus encouraging quality services. Promotions will take place transparently and independently, free of political interference. Under the policy of moving towards market-based salaries, public sector salaries were raised by 107%. This policy will be continued while seeking to address all salary and pension anomalies for the public sector and security forces. All public servants who are currently employed and will be newly-employed before the introduction of a

contributory pension scheme will be entitled to a pension under the present system.

## CAPACITY AND EMPOWERMENT

To strengthen and empower the Public Service, the Sri Lanka Administrative Service and other services will be expanded by benchmarking them against other Commonwealth public services. A new Sri Lanka Economic Service (SLES) and Sri Lanka Digital Service (SLDS) will be added to the public sector to more effectively develop and implement economic and digital policy. We will streamline the public sector's human resources and invest in post-graduate education and on-the-job training for public sector employees to increase the capability and capacity of the public services. We will also introduce a scholarship scheme for top-ranked recruits using Commonwealth Public Service Scholarship models.



We will also establish a Business Council for each sector staffed by Chamber representatives and Ministry Secretaries which will meet every month.

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# PROTECTING OUR FUTURE

## CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

A farsighted strategy for conservation and environmental protection is essential to securing Sri Lanka's future and reducing the causes of climate change and environmental damage. As a nation with a relatively low carbon footprint, Sri Lanka has nevertheless been severely hit by the global Climate Crisis. However, as our Nation continues to develop and urbanise, we will ensure that we do our part as a member of the world community to minimise our impact on the environment by creating an Environmental Policy in accordance with the newly-formulated Environmental Charter.

We will, as a nation on the frontline of the Climate Crisis, advocate for change in international practices and for adherence to the Paris Climate Accord. This will be a cornerstone of our Foreign Policy. The capacity of the Central Environmental Authority will be expanded with the necessary experts.



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All major infrastructure projects will be required to commission an Environmental Impact Assessment that must be completed within four months, and made available to the public.

Air and water pollution will be recognised as a National Public Health Emergency and adequate funds allocated to combat it.

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We will enter the global Carbon Emission Trading market by generating national carbon credits through the planting of 30 million trees over a 5-year period.

We will place emphasis on the long-term protection of three flagship animal species: the Sri Lankan elephant, the Sri Lankan leopard, and the blue whale, amongst other wildlife conservation projects.

We will introduce fresh initiatives aimed at conserving coastal mangrove forests, as well as protecting the coral reefs off our coast. There will be a full enforcement of the ban on mechanised bottom-trawling and other forms of unsustainable fishing.



## THE HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT

The elephant has been a visible part of Sri Lanka's history and culture for centuries and, today, continues to be an essential feature of our wildlife and cultural tourism. Therefore, protecting the elephant will always be high on our list of conservation priorities. However, it is vital that we also recognise and understand the causes of the conflict between elephants and citizens in rural areas, so that we can take steps to prevent further deaths.

- **We will invest in developing community-led solutions to the Human-Elephant Conflict affecting villages bordering national parks and will work in consultation with these rural communities to implement them**
- **We will introduce a specialised insurance scheme to cover death and damage to property that is caused by elephants**

As many as ten elephants are reported killed each year in collisions with trains on the Northern and Eastern Railway lines which run through densely populated elephant habitat.

- **To prevent future incidents, we will introduce a pilot scheme of overpasses and underpasses at key crossing points, and devise a strategy to reduce the effects of these**
- **We will manage the Department of Wildlife Conservation and the Forest Department under a single management plan, to increase cohesion in policy-making, optimise coordination, increase accountability and reduce waste**
- **We will also immediately pass the Animal Welfare Bill to protect both wild and domestic animals, and launch a national programme to enforce it**



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# DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Natural disasters strike even the strongest of nations. As the global Climate Crisis deepens, Sri Lanka stands on the frontlines. We have been one of the worst affected countries in recent decades; previously established weather patterns changed, bringing in extremes of weather, such as frequent droughts and annual floods. These are becoming more frequent and increasingly intense. Heavy rains focused on small areas have brought a resultant increase in landslides, causing great human suffering. We will take appropriate measures to reduce disaster risk and improve the speed and quality of our Disaster Management. We will also create a Disaster Risk Reduction Fund.

## MANAGING FLOODS

We will take proactive measures to control and manage regular flooding. Our first step will be to create a River Basin & Watershed Authority, including representatives of relevant agencies, with responsibility for all the major river basins in Sri Lanka.

**All urban canals and the Kelani, Kalu, Gin, and Nilwala river basins, will be dredged and cleared in readiness for periods of intense rain.**

The riverbank of the Kelani Ganga will be strengthened and a bund built between Kaduwela and Modara. The National Rainwater Harvesting Policy will be updated and put into action to reduce urban runoff and prevent the flooding of city streets. We will also ensure that urban drainage systems are upgraded and maintained effectively.

## PREVENTING LANDSLIDES

We will tightly control construction and the felling of trees in heavy catchment areas prone to landslides. We will plant trees in National Building Research Organisation-designated high-risk areas. Cutting of trees will be prohibited in such areas.

## WASTE MANAGEMENT

In addition to the natural disasters that Sri Lanka faces regularly, a failure to adequately manage our waste output will be another disaster in the making. With this in mind, we will invest in projects converting waste into an energy source. We will better coordinate collection and disposal of plastic waste, particularly in riverine and coastal areas, and ensure that sorting of garbage is correctly carried out by all Local Government Authorities. We will promote a Reduce-Reuse-Recycle Policy at all levels of Government across the Island. We will pass legislation to minimise single-use plastics and incentivise the manufacture and distribution of organic single-use alternatives. We will also introduce an incentive scheme to promote and support the recycling of plastic and other inorganic waste at the community level, creating a new cottage industry.

We will also set up a process of investigating emerging issues in large landfills, including those in Puttalam, and offer environmentally acceptable solutions to the satisfaction of local communities.

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# A COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

## COMPETITIVE MARKETS FOR A COMPETITIVE SRI LANKA

The private sector is the engine of growth. For a strong and prosperous nation to share its wealth with its citizens, the private sector must operate efficiently. However the private sector is shackled by archaic regulations, logistical bottlenecks, and government red tape; it is unable to achieve its true potential. We will make the private sector highly competitive, knowledge-based, modern, and technology-driven.

We will achieve this by returning to our ancient heritage as the trading and manufacturing hub of the Indian Ocean. We will resume the reforms that began in 1977; reforms which dramatically improved growth and were instrumental in markedly removing poverty in Sri Lanka. The Government's role will be to drive productivity, primarily in education and health, while also applying intelligent and farsighted regulations to guarantee competitiveness, and a level playing field. The Government will support the private sector by maintaining stable, reliable, competent,

and accountable establishments. We will prioritise macroeconomic governance and stability. We will manage the key economic variables of inflation, interest rates, and exchange rates to avoid shocks and uncertainties. The Government will only run the most strategic of enterprises, and will do so with professionalism, integrity and accountability.

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**For the first time in decades, the prices of many essential items have fallen. This is because of the Government's stabilisation of the economy, the rationalising of border taxes, the increasing of competitiveness, and the launching of anti-corruption campaigns. As we accelerate these programmes, the prices of essential items will only reduce further.**

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As productivity increases, so will development. Wages will increase. We will ensure that the prosperity created will be shared and inclusive, and redistributed where necessary. The dignity of all participants will be upheld, especially those of the worker, and the marketplace will operate within a framework of fairness, tempering the competitiveness with social justice.

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# NATIONAL POLICIES

## STABLE AND CONSISTENT GOVERNANCE

In the past there has been a great deal of uncertainty and instability in Government policy and regulation. Sri Lanka has lacked of a cohesive, overarching strategy for the Nation. Constantly fluctuating Government regulation creates instability in every aspect of the economy and our society, discouraging investment and dampening aspiration. We intend to remove the uncertainty from Government and create trust and stability that will encourage economic growth and social well-being.

- **We will ensure policy stability by creating and following a rules-based system that is not swayed by short-sighted ideology or political expediency**
- **We will strengthen the role of Parliament in policy-making. National Policy documents will be approved by Parliament**
- **Ministerial discretion will be limited by adherence to pre-agreed strategies and policies**
- **There will be a formal rationale to justify the existence of each Ministry**
- **And finally, we will create a national consensus on key policies**

Legacy business practices make it difficult for small businesses to compete with integrity. We will introduce good governance practices to the Business Sector, which will become more transparent, regulated and accountable.

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**We will introduce an empowered Competition Commission that will ensure a level playing field for all businesses and corporations. Government procurement will become corruption-free as we expand the new e-Procurement System.**

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# RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

We want our Nation, its people and their livelihoods, to have a robust and resilient future. We will study, understand and develop new systems, processes, and services to guarantee that Sri Lanka's path into the future is well-paved and secured.

To achieve this, we will establish a National Innovation Investment Fund with an initial Government commitment of Rs. 10 Billion that will support many diverse fields, from Information Communications Technology to Biotechnology and Nanotechnology.

**The Fund's board of directors will be led by professionals from the Private Sector. In addition, we will develop a budget to increase Government spending on R&D to 0.8% of GDP by 2023. We will also launch a National Flagship Programme to foster collaborative research with diverse partners.**

The Homagama Tech City will be extended to include incubation centres to support university research cells focusing on the commercialisation of research. The city will also house a science museum to inspire young innovators. We are committed to the creation of a knowledge economy in our pursuit for growth and development.

Finally, we will set up two initiatives to shape how the Government handles R&D in the future. We will conduct a review of current institutional restrictions and administrative bottlenecks that are holding back R&D organisations performing optimally, and implement the necessary changes over a stipulated timeline. We will also carry out a Public Expenditure Review of existing public R&D and enterprise innovation support programmes and investments, and formulate a strategy for reform that will be submitted to the Cabinet.

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# DIGITISATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

In the last two decades, digital connectivity has made great strides in our country, mostly led by the private sector which has invested heavily in converting the Sri Lankan public into a society that is increasingly engaging with social media and the internet. This would not, however, have been possible without Government-sponsored infrastructure. While the private sector has greatly benefitted from this

connectivity and has in many cases, transformed the lives of the common man by providing app-based services, e-commerce and online access, the Government itself has been slow in taking advantage of this digital revolution to engage with its citizens, to prepare and educate them for a fully-digitised world. The Government, must now regain the lead in digitising Sri Lanka. This will unleash growth in

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all sectors. It will also provide citizens easier access to Government services and bring Government closer to the people. As part of this initiative, we would like Sri Lanka to become a cashless society by 2030.

For us to achieve these great milestones on the road to a digital Sri Lanka, we will begin at ground level. We will establish a technology park in every district. In collaboration with technology associations, we will reform university curricula to align it with tech industry needs. We will take steps to ensure that verified

educational certifications and badges from online global-standard educational institutions are recognised by the Government Sectors.

**We will reduce Effective Tax to 5% for tech companies that apply scientific and engineering innovation to create or substantially improve products, materials, solutions and processes.**

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## CHEAPER DATA AND EASIER PAYMENTS

We will introduce competition and a level playing field into the fibre-optic Home Broadband market and provide the consumer with better products at lower

prices. We will facilitate overseas payments to and from the country by attracting at least two international payment operators to Sri Lanka.

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## e-GOVERNANCE

We will create a Sri Lanka Digital Service to formulate a national digital policy. A Chief Digital Officer will be added to the structure of every Government Ministry, and will be responsible for digital policy in that sector. We will introduce a unique Digital National Identity to replace the National Identity Card and pass a Data & Privacy Protection Act to provide citizens with the necessary protections against identity theft. Every

Sri Lankan will be allocated his or her own lifelong mobile phone number that will be portable between different telecom service providers. A seamless interoperability platform will be introduced for all Public Services. All Government Services will provide and incentivise a paperless option to the public by 2025. All Free Trade, Industrial, and Special Economic Zones will be completely digitised.

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# ENCOURAGING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## STARTUPS AND SMEs AS THE ENGINE OF GROWTH

We will provide tax relief and improve the ease of doing business for SMEs by increasing the Value Added Tax threshold from 12 Million rupees per year to 50 Million rupees a year, removing the need for businesses earning up to Rs. 4 Million a month to pay VAT.

### STARTUPS

**A 10 Billion-rupee National Venture Capital Fund will be created to support tech startups.**

We have already reduced the effective corporate tax to 5% for companies employing more than 50 people; now, we will remove the minimum employment number so that this rate will apply to all tech startups. We will remove Dividend Tax for tech companies producing intellectual property. We will introduce district level entrepreneurship, incubation and accelerator hubs with the necessary skills training, coaching, mentoring and business advisory services.

We will streamline processes and cut through the red tape that often hinders startups by establishing a dedicated Startup Desk at key Government Institutions like the Registrar of Companies, the

departments of Inland Revenue, Labour, and Customs, and the Consumer Affairs Authority. These desks will be manned by dedicated officers trained to deal with the unique queries, requests and needs generated by startups. We will group the various agencies together in a consolidated Small & Medium Enterprises Authority, which will also help SMEs and startups connect to buyers, markets and finance.

We will develop regional co-working centres for startups, with similar facilities, on a smaller scale, at discounted rates.

### SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

Along with our support for Small & Medium Enterprise exporters, we will take equal measures to support and invigorate SME manufacturers and startups. We will further reduce interest rates for SMEs under the Enterprise Sri Lanka Scheme and introduce a credit-guarantee programme.

- **We will support Small & Medium Enterprises by stipulating an SME Budget Allocation for all ministerial and departmental procurement. As a start, the annual Budget Allocation will be 60 Billion rupees worth of Government procurements**

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- We will create plug-and-play Regional Zones with buildings, power and water, connectivity, and waste management facilities to attract regional Small & Medium Enterprises and startups
- We will also work with the Central Bank and the Institute of Chartered Accountants to amend the necessary regulatory provisions to support SMEs

The recently passed Anti-Dumping Law will be strengthened to protect SMEs from unfair trade practices.

- A new national programme will be implemented to encourage social entrepreneurs in the country. Special incentives will be given to first-time women entrepreneurs

- We have already created a level playing field for Small & Medium Enterprise paddy mills; and we will now build on the highly successful Shakthi pilot project to strengthen and, where necessary, expand this scheme to cover other crops, as well as dairy farms, after completing the necessary analysis
- We will make every effort to protect traditional industries such as *Kalu Gal* (Metal Stones), Clay, Sand and Gold. We will identify the challenges these industries face and will provide necessary solutions through engagement with the industry
- We will also encourage them to adopt environmentally-sustainable business practices and will provide them the necessary support, guidance and training to do so



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# SUSTAINABLE STATE ENTERPRISES

We will restructure State-owned Enterprises so that they are self-sustaining and not a burden on the taxpayer or a drain on national resources. We will make sure they are professionally-led, depoliticised and transparent. SOEs run on a primarily commercial basis, will be placed in a professionally-managed holding company.

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**All State-owned Enterprises will be required to publish audited accounts on a quarterly basis, like publicly quoted companies on the Colombo Stock Exchange.**

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Qualified professionals of integrity will be appointed to the leadership of State-owned Enterprises, with clear criteria established for directors appointed by an independent commission.

All appointments to SOE boards will be subject to approval by an independent body that will ensure appointees are capable people of integrity. Ministers will not be permitted to appoint family members in institutions under their purview. Conflicts of interest will be resolved by separating the roles of owner, operator and regulator.



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# TRADE AND INVESTMENT

## EXPORT-DRIVEN GROWTH

We will swiftly implement the National Export Strategy. We will return Border Taxes to the level of the early 1990s, making Sri Lankan exports competitive once more in the world's markets. This will allow us to diversify beyond traditional exports like tea and garments. We will also halve the Economic Service Charge on export turnover.

Asian countries like Japan, China, South Korea and Singapore, eradicated poverty and transformed themselves into developed nations through export-led growth. Even in Sri Lanka, almost all poverty reduction is a direct result of the 1977 Open Market reforms; and our current export failures can be traced to their reversal between 2005 and 2015. We will reclaim our lost heritage as the export hub of the Indian Ocean.

We must export new products to new markets. Most of our current exports are tea and apparel, and the European Union and United States together account for nearly half our exports. We will transition from an export trade dominated by simple products that pay a low wage to complex products that pay its industry workers a high wage.

This transformation will require unilateral, bilateral and multilateral trade initiatives. Free Trade Agreements are vital to diversifying our exports and addressing non-tariff barriers to

export, such as India's quotas on apparel and pepper. Thailand has 14 Free Trade Agreements; Malaysia and South Korea have 17 each, and Singapore has as many as 25. Sri Lanka has only six Free Trade Agreements. Under our Sri Lanka First Foreign Policy, we will remedy this, concentrating on building Free Trade Agreements with our closest neighbours in the Indian Ocean and Asia. The President will personally review each agreement to make sure, on balance, it is of great value to our country. We are committed to creating a manufacturing economy based on a long-term policy and vision.

- **We will place the highest priority on Small & Medium Enterprise exporters. We will simplify, digitise and make transparent our complex and often opaque border regulations, which make it difficult for small businesses to export**
- **All border agencies, including Customs, will be fully digitised, and use of the National Single Window Portal will be maximised to streamline documentation and access**
- **We will aim at developing 100 new exporters from every district of the country. Assistance will be given to these new exporters to overcome challenges associated with conquering international markets**

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- Value addition in the gem and jewellery sector will be supported by reviewing the gold import duty, reviewing export tax concessions, reducing taxes on gem-cutting equipment, creating a trading exchange and one-stop-shop for the sector, including a certification lab and training centre

- A Presidential Task Force will be appointed to drive this process and restructure the National Gem and Jewellery Authority

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# SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES

Many manufacturers of export products continue to have issues related to land, construction, water and electricity, as well as waste disposal. Previous United National Party Governments created Free Trade Zones in Katunayake, Biyagama, and Koggala, but these are now insufficient. Even though these zones are operating at capacity, no administration, until the current one, has opened a new zone since 2002. New infrastructure for economic development is badly needed, and we will provide it.

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**We will, therefore, devolve Special Economic Zones to the people.**

**Every Province will have its own Special Economic Zone, complete with facilities, ready to receive the manufacturers' own machinery.**

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With this huge stride forward we will more than double the area of Free Trade Zones available to exporters. The expansion of the Hambantota Industrial Zone will be accelerated.

Sri Lanka is home to the planet's purest graphite. As part of the National Export Strategy, we will classify graphite as a Critical Raw Material and regulate its bulk export. We will invest in the Graphite Industry and the manufacture of graphene and complex graphene-based products, such as lithium batteries, fuel cells, and solar and nuclear devices, that will fuel the Fourth Industrial Revolution in our country.

The apparel sector which is one of the most important sectors in the country will be supported through the creation of Apparel Business Parks in every province. Apparel manufacturers will be given special incentives for the use of renewable energy in their manufacturing plants.

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# FINANCIAL MARKETS

There is a need for long term debt financing of projects. In the past, Sri Lanka had the National Development Bank and the DFCC Bank which were converted into commercial banks over time. To address this gap, we will commence the operation of a domestic development bank.

## COLOMBO INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CITY

Given our geostrategic location we will focus not only on manufacturing complex goods but also on complex services to generate high paying jobs. These include financial services, FinTech, information technology, and other knowledge-based services as well as regional headquarters and world-class education facilities. The reclamation of 269 hectares of new land at Colombo Port City is now complete.

We will pass the Colombo International Financial City Act to create a Special Economic Zone for services covering the Colombo Port City jurisdiction. This will put in place a robust policy, legal and administrative framework and competitive tax regime to accelerate investments to CIFC and Port City.



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# CAPITAL MARKETS

We will strengthen good governance in the capital markets. Capital markets will be well-regulated, efficient and will offer protection for all stakeholders. We will speed up enactment for the new Securities & Exchange Commission Act to achieve these objectives, build capacity and ensure competent

leadership with integrity. We will also accelerate the listing of Government securities on the Colombo Stock Exchange to increase transparency, provide greater access for retail investors, secure better returns for the Government and improve market liquidity.

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# DEBT MANAGEMENT

We will establish an independent Debt Office to effectively manage public debt. We will protect our economic sovereignty by regulating foreign borrowing, and introducing the necessary structural reforms to preserve our economic policy-making independence. This will also guarantee we always borrow from the cheapest source.

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# FREEDOM IN THE FINANCIALISED SOCIETY

**As Sri Lanka progresses to become a financialised society, we will assist in the transition by providing all those who have defaulted payments of less than Rs. 1 Million, prior to November 2019, a one-time removal from the Credit Information Bureau (CRIB) listing for one year.**

We have already taken direct steps to revive the cooperatives all over Sri Lanka, and now with the passing of the Microfinance Act, we will revive cooperative banking and regulate microfinance companies. This Act will also be an avenue to eliminate the dependence of rural women on loan sharks and unscrupulous microfinance companies.

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# FAIR AND JUST TAXATION

Today, 83 cents out of every rupee of tax collected by the Government comes from taxes on goods and services. This indirect taxation increases the price of both goods and services, affecting our poorest citizens the most. We will, therefore, reduce the contribution from indirect taxes to 60%.

- **We will continue the process of phasing out those para tariffs that have driven up costs to consumers and industry whilst enriching a few**
- **In bringing down the number of taxes, we will amalgamate the NBT and VAT to a single tax of 15%**
- **We will increase the threshold of VAT from Rs. 12 Million per annum to Rs. 50 Million per annum - thereby making several small businesses exempt from VAT and enabling a proper focus on compliance of larger more established businesses**
- **With improved VAT compliance, we also hope to decrease VAT rate from 15% to 12.5% within two years**

We will strengthen direct taxation through Income Tax and other progressive methods of taxation that ensure the burden of tax is not on the poor. The strengthening of direct taxation will not be through

increased Income Tax rates, but rather, it will focus on improving compliance with national tax regulations by using technology and operational improvements such as digital inter-linkage between Government agencies such as Department of Motor Vehicles, the Land Registry, the Registrar of Companies and the Customs Department and the Inland Revenue Department.

As part of this process, we recognise shortcomings in the prevailing direct tax structure as well - and in reforming this we have removed the tax on interest from foreign currency accounts, and the tax on children's saving accounts.

- **We will simplify Withholding Tax and other taxes. The PAYE Tax threshold will be increased from Rs. 100,000 a month to Rs. 150,000**
- **The PAYE tax brackets will be widened. We will also ensure tax policy certainty**
- **We will immediately implement the Capital Depreciation Allowance, under which all investments up to \$100 Million will receive an additional 100% capital allowance, in addition to 100% depreciation**
- **Investments over \$150 Million will receive an additional capital allowance of 150%**

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# LABOUR FLEXICURITY

## WELFARE AND THE MODERN WORKFORCE

We will modernise the Private Sector's labour system to address employers' needs for a more flexible workforce, while reconciling these needs with those of the workers' own needs for welfare and security.

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**We will formulate a new and comprehensive Labour Law, in consultation with all stakeholders, to create new jobs and encourage the movement of unsecured informal workers to the secure formal sector.**

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This Labour Law will remove discrimination in the market, provide regulation for manpower agencies, improve responsiveness and pave the way for us to introduce an Unemployment Insurance Scheme that will allow labour markets to be more flexible while safeguarding the worker. To reinforce the security and welfare of the workforce and enhance the flexibility of migrant labour, we will work with the private sector to create comfortable, safe, low-cost housing in the form of quality hostels for young workers moving for employment to urban centres like Colombo. We propose to increase the retirement age in both public and private sectors by 3 years.



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# REVERSING THE BRAIN DRAIN

Sri Lanka has a large number of expatriates living and working all over the world, from the Far East to the Middle East and Europe, and North America. Many have set down roots over the years, forming a sizeable community of overseas Sri Lankans. Great numbers of these expats and immigrants are highly qualified and have acquired impressive skill sets. As Sri Lanka develops and modernises, we need the participation of all Sri Lankans, here and overseas, and returning overseas Sri Lankans will help address some of the skill shortages faced by the country.

We will establish an active register of Sri Lankan professionals resident abroad and in the country with the aim of promoting knowledge sharing and collaboration in innovative practices in different socioeconomic fields. The register will be used to organise regular innovation conferences where registrants will be encouraged to publish research papers directly connected to the development of Sri Lanka. This Innovators' Forum will be used as a platform to encourage development programmes and entrepreneurship among the youth.

We will make it easier for these dispersed Sri Lankans to return, live, work and invest in their homeland by introducing a simplified online application for dual citizenship; a status and process that has often remained unclear in the past.

Every person of Sri Lankan heritage, regardless of their current location and citizenship, will be eligible for an Overseas Citizen of Sri Lanka certification by right.

Spouses of Sri Lankans who are foreign nationals are also often highly qualified and skilled, but their legal right to work in Sri Lanka is unclear, often with the disparity between the rights of spouses. We will rectify this by offering them dual citizenship after three years of residency in Sri Lanka.

## TAXIS AND THREE-WHEELERS

Taxis and three-wheelers currently provide a vital service, filling the gap in the inefficient public transport system. As we reform and modernise our urban infrastructure and provide an efficient network of road and rail services, taxis and three-wheelers will continue to play an important role in 'last-mile' transportation.

We will offer collateral-free loans of up to Rs. 300,000 to taxi and three-wheeler drivers wishing to obtain career-changing skill training. We will also provide a health insurance scheme for drivers.

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# SOLVING URBAN CONGESTION

## SMARTER TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Sri Lanka's public transportation system is today one of the most inefficient in the region. The failure of the public transportation network has resulted in the citizens of Sri Lanka seeking alternative transport in the form of taxis or purchasing a vehicle of their own. This massive increase in low-budget taxis and personal vehicles is overwhelming the capacity of our urban streets and thoroughfares, causing further delays. The drastic increase of individuals applying for driving licences has inevitably created shortcuts and corruption in obtaining the necessary training and qualifications to operate a motor vehicle. Unqualified drivers result in increased accidents, deaths, injury and further delays.

The long travel times within and between cities do not reflect the compact geography of our Island. These lengthy travel timelines are adversely affecting every aspect of private and public life, business and the economy, development, logistics, and even public health.

- **To solve this, we will modernise the bus and rail transport systems and improve traffic management, particularly in urban centres. We will launch extensive reforms to the public transport system to ease congestion in the cities and to provide increased mobility in rural areas**

- **We will develop a more environment-friendly Transport Sector. Critical highway infrastructure, such as the Central Expressway connecting Colombo to Kandy, and the New Kelani Bridge will be completed within this President's first year in office**

While developing solutions for immediate needs, we will also fast-track our Long-Term Structural Transport Master Plan, along with the associated Land Use Plan, to create transport links between provinces, ports, and airports. To do this we will expand the expressway system and upgrade rural roads to provide better access to distant communities. Where these improvements are insufficient, we will provide energy efficient para-transit support vehicles so that no community, however remote, will be isolated.

- **As we complete ongoing transport and logistic infrastructure projects, and begin new ones, we will ensure that all new projects worth over \$50 Million acquire approval from the Public Investment Committee, to ensure that they are capable of providing adequate return on investment. The Rate of Return figures and calculations will be made public**

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- **We will implement the National Physical Plan, emphasising road and rail links in four identified economic corridors; namely, Colombo - Trincomalee, Dambulla - Ampara, Ambalangoda - Ambalantota, and Jaffna - Kilinochchi**

- **A fourth economic corridor, Trincomalee - Medawachchiya - Talaimannar is in long-term planning and will begin with upgrading the highways between those cities to four lanes**

## ROAD AND RAIL

With the rapid urbanisation of Sri Lanka, increasing numbers of citizens are flocking to urban centres. The cities are expanding and new residential neighbourhoods are appearing in ever more distant suburbs. New satellite townships and urban areas are being created. New bus routes will be put in place to reach these locations, reflecting the changes in where people are living and working. Modern low-floor buses will be introduced on all routes, increasing comfort and access to public transport for our growing elderly population and for those with physical disabilities.

The Sahasara concept will be widely implemented. Under this system the link between a bus operator's daily income and the number of passengers transported on that particular bus will be removed. Instead, the total revenue collected by all the buses serving a particular route will be fairly divided among all the bus operators, based on the number of trips each bus made. This will prevent unnecessary competition between individual buses for passengers on one route. Bus priority lanes will be upgraded and expanded. Metropolitan areas will have dedicated Bus Rapid Transit systems. Initial routes will be the 100, 120, 138, and 177 bus routes. The number of route permits will be

increased on high-commuter routes and permits allocated in a transparent manner that provides the commuter and taxpayer with better value.

City railway lines will be double-tracked and electrified to ensure faster and more frequent trains. The first electrified rail route will be between Veyangoda and Panadura.

- **Double-tracking of the Kelani Valley line will begin immediately**
- **Railway stations will be modernised and overhead cover provided for waiting commuters**
- **A contactless credit and debit card payment system will be installed in all public transport, and a public transport app with real-time information on buses and trains will be available**
- **We will start construction of the 75 km Light Rail Transit's four lines in metropolitan Colombo and the first operational line will connect Colombo Fort to Malabe**

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- We will set up multimodal transport hubs with park-and-ride facilities. An elevated road network will extend to the Port City and Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte
- A new rail line will connect Kurunegala to Habarana via Dambulla. New trains will be bought to increase frequency, speed and reliability of long-distance rail services
- The Central Expressway connecting Colombo to Kandy will be completed, as will the Ruwanpura Expressway, connecting the Southern Expressway to Ratnapura
- The Central Expressway will then be extended to Trincomalee, via Dambulla, and the Airport Expressway to Puttalam. We will also create a blueprint for the Northern Expressway
- A new automated Traffic Management System will be introduced to the Colombo and Kandy city areas to reduce travel time and improve traffic flow
- The Circular Highway around Colombo City will be completed, diverting transit traffic away from the city area. School transport services will be upgraded and modernised, and designated pickup areas will be allocated to reduce congestion around schools
- Bypass roads, improved pedestrian facilities, and cycle lanes will all be added to ensure free-flowing channels of traffic in and around our cities

The Carbon Tax on vehicles will be removed, and higher investment for the modernisation of Sri Lanka's public transport will be financed by taxing land appreciation



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# CREATING THE INDIAN OCEAN HUB

## PORTS, AVIATION AND LOGISTICS

Sri Lanka is powerfully positioned astride the main east-west sea route, at the gateway to the Indian subcontinent. While this prime geographical location gave us many historical advantages, we have not harnessed this huge potential to become the maritime, aviation and logistics hub of the Indian Ocean. It is time we did so.

We will immediately commission the East and West Container Terminals, based on the highly successful South Harbour and Queen Elizabeth Quay Public-Private Partnership model followed by the Colombo North Port. We will complete the Colombo Port access road within 18 months.

We will upgrade the Kankasanturai and Thalaimannar Ports to handle container, cruise, yacht and ferry services from both international and domestic lines. A permanent solution to the Oluvil Harbour will be found expeditiously.

We will begin expansion projects of both the Bandaranaike International Airport and the Ratmalana Airport under a similar Public-Private Partnership as the Colombo Port. We will launch a flagship domestic Aviation Development Initiative, Project Ravana, to modernise the Batticaloa and Trincomalee airports as domestic hubs, through another Public-Private Partnership. Together with the Katunayake, Jaffna and Mattala international airports, these three domestic airports will provide

a 6-hub network of improved travel and logistical connections across the island and contribute to the tourism industry as well. Alongside this expansion and modernisation, we will introduce fresh regulations to create an impressive aviation sector that is competitive and safe. We will ensure fair competition in high-revenue aviation services and develop International Logistics Zones.

Once the marine infrastructure is in place, we will have an attractive proposition in place to ensure multinational logistics companies set up operations in Sri Lanka that will include Multi-Country Consolidation. All border agencies will be digitised and the National Single Window Portal will be fully implemented to simplify and streamline access.



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# RENEWABILITY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

## AN ENERGY POLICY

As the global community grapples with the Climate Crisis, Sri Lanka will embrace its moral responsibility to transform itself into a Nation completely committed to renewable sources of energy.

We will begin the journey to make Sri Lanka completely energy self-sufficient by 2040. All of our energy will come from renewable sources like solar and wind. The equipment needed to generate renewable energy will grow more economical as applicable taxes are removed. Similarly, taxes on electric automotive batteries will be reduced.

We will implement our Long-Term Generation Plan and our Transmission Plan according to strict timelines, to ensure that there will be no more power cuts because of inadequate power generation or transmission bottlenecks. We will establish a Smart Power Grid within five years to better manage the power grid and transfer the benefits to the consumer. All conflicts of interest within the electricity sector will be addressed and full transparency will be the standard.

All reservoirs used for hydropower will be reconstructed to optimise their water retention capacity. Hydroelectric generation using the Pumped Storage method will be implemented in appropriate locations. Nationwide measures to reduce energy consumption will be implemented,

with the use of energy-efficient equipment such as LED bulbs instead of CFL bulbs stipulated throughout the Government, and the public and private sectors.

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**The Soorya Bala Sangramaya, or Battle for Solar Power, will be accelerated with transparent and fair mechanisms to promote floating and rooftop solar installations.**

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We will avoid buying emergency power except in a genuine emergency, and all purchases will be fully transparent and subject to appropriate guidelines and oversight.



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# MODERNISATION OF AGRICULTURE, DAIRY AND FISHERIES SECTORS

## A REVOLUTION ON LAND AND SEA

The first step in the extraordinary development of the East Asian countries was not evolutionary; it was revolutionary. These once rural nations created an agricultural revolution that jumpstarted their economies. Sri Lanka needs this revolution. We will focus on increasing the productivity of our agricultural sector through modernisation and innovation. Our agricultural policy will be modern, scientific and overarching. We will focus on achieving affordable food production, sustainable farming and growing value-added exportable produce.

### POLICY REFORM

An agricultural revolution must begin with a complete reform of our strategy on agrarian development.

**We will update the Seed Act, Land Reform Act, and Paddy Land Act to take into account new technology and to increase the land available for producing cinnamon and pepper.**

Our Sri Lanka First Foreign Policy will secure Free Trade and Mutual Recognition Agreements in key markets to open the doors to our agrarian produce. We will maintain our GSP+ preferential trade status and secure investment in adding value to our agricultural products.

### THE RICE & FARM REVOLUTION

We will lay the foundation for Sri Lanka to move into a modern agriculture era. Farming will no longer be a means of survival but a thriving business activity which will derive higher incomes to farmer households. We will do this by introducing new tools and technology.

- **We will establish a new Biotechnology Research Facility modelled on the Sri Lanka Institute of Nanotechnology. We will pave the way for the introduction of new technology by slashing taxes on agricultural machinery and machine parts**

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- We will establish a National Warehouse Grid to modernise and simplify logistics
- We will introduce soil cards to reduce the use of fertiliser by 20%. We will partner with technology firms to create an app-based farm machinery rental programme for smallholders
- We will increase food production to ensure food security and decrease food imports. To this end, we will launch a programme to provide smallholders with free seed paddy through the cooperatives in their area
- Free fertiliser will also be provided through this scheme for all cultivators, including paddy, vegetables, fruit, chena, small crop, coconut and tea

Through our expansion and modernisation of Sri Lanka's logistics and transport infrastructure, we will address the problem of post-harvest waste. Three decades of policy implementation failure will be reversed through incentivising a shift to better transportation methods, and by investing in comprehensive supply chains.

**We will expand the Prabhashwara Programme, which created the first public accessible temperature and humidity-controlled warehouse, into a network to store excess produce after bumper harvests and reduce post-harvest loss. This will be first available at a district level and later available at a divisional level.**

- We will stabilise prices by using the Prabhashwara Programme to link with value-added regional and global agrarian markets seeking traceable source farms and quality accreditation

- We will create an app-based information exchange system to make markets fairer, more efficient and highly responsive
- Farmers and buyers will be linked through this mobile app which will incorporate trading and planning subsequent delivery
- As an interim measure, we will sustain the price of rice at Rs. 50 per kilogramme
- We will enhance the farmers' contributory pension scheme and address its current deficiencies

## UPLIFTING OUR PLANTATIONS

- We will build a globally competitive, modern, and profitable Plantation Sector. We will provide Research Grants in partnership with renowned universities to introduce new developments in scientific study, and prepare the ground for the use of modern methodology in Sri Lanka's plantations
- We will open Agricultural Schools in all Plantation Districts that will provide the necessary training and skills to transform our workforce into one suited to a 21<sup>st</sup> century Plantation Sector
- We will provide incentives for companies willing to adapt technologies for the mechanisation of plantations, simplifying production and processing of the product
- We will regulate the use of fertiliser and develop scientific and environmentally-friendly methods of fertilisation that will reduce waste

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- **We will allow much greater diversification of unproductive plantation land for non-traditional crops**
- **We will introduce a systematic Land Acquisition Policy that does not discourage local investment in plantation lands**
- **We will take legislative measures to protect the Sri Lankan brand in global markets by banning the import of low-quality spices, such as pepper, which are rebranded and re-exported as Sri Lankan spices**
- **Similarly, the illegal importing of liquid rubber will be stopped**
- **We will create an effective mechanism to sustain the price of rubber at Rs. 300 per kilogramme, in the short-term, encouraging smallholders to invest more in their plantations, and we will take steps to minimise price fluctuations in the rubber market**
- **We will guarantee that tea smallholders receive at least Rs. 90 per kilogramme of tea leaves, and we will launch a replanting programme**

## COCONUT INDUSTRY REFORM

The Sri Lankan coconut industry is extremely fragmented, with several authorities and departments often vying with each other and holding the sector back from its full potential. We will integrate the Coconut Development Authority with the Coconut Research Institute, the Coconut Cultivation Authority and other related departments to simplify both policy-making and implementation. Coconut and palm oil will be

distinctly labelled and marketed in accordance with stringent regulations. We will establish an authoritative monitoring method for the re-exportation of imported edible oil under the Temporary Import for Export Purposes system.

## DAIRY

Demand for fresh milk is rising, and we will promote this further with the Dairy Development Fund and strive to achieve self-sufficiency in milk production. Taxes on imported dairy products remain high, and with the increasing demand on local dairy farms, expansion is essential. We will empower expansion of dairy farms by releasing unproductive tea land in the Central Highlands for dairy farming.

As the plantation sector mechanises and modernises itself, we will institute a three-way agreement between plantation companies, labour unions and dairy developers, to set up quality high-yielding dairy farms that will employ estate residents. To support these farms, we will reduce taxes on animal feed.

We will introduce strict criteria when importing livestock for the dairy industry, paying particular attention to the adaptability of certain livestock breeds to local climate conditions.

## STRENGTHENING FISHERIES

As a maritime Nation, it is essential that Sri Lanka's strength come from the sea itself. In spite of being a relatively small island in a vast ocean, our traditional connection with the sea has diminished over the centuries. Seafood is not a staple in our diet and the Fisheries Industry does not have the capacity to

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supply the quantities we should be consuming to maintain a balanced sustainability with our agrarian and livestock industries.

To increase the capacity of our fishing fleets, we will improve our capability to fish further away from our coasts, and in all weather conditions, by subsidising the use of larger trawlers and multi-day vessels which have longer ranges and are safer in bad weather, which will have better on-board fish handling facilities such as cold storage.

- **The Government will provide 50% of the investment towards installing Refrigerated Sea Water Systems on board multi-day vessels to improve storage and handling of fish at sea**
- **We will also invest 50% of the cost of installing modern vessel monitoring equipment and other safety systems essential for expanding the range of our fishing fleets**
- **We will establish a life insurance scheme and strengthen the contributory pension scheme for fishermen with the goal of promoting the fishing industry as a viable career for young people. Women of fisher families will also benefit from these schemes**

We will also strengthen the effectivity of our fishing fleets by improving the Fisheries Forecasting System to make information on fish

stocks, such as geographical location and size, available to fishermen so that time and fuel is not wasted on locating productive fishing areas. The Meteorological Department will be modernised to provide ever more accurate weather forecasting and real time updates to fishing vessels via SMS.

We will invest and encourage inland fisheries and aquaculture exports. We will empower coastal and inland fishermen by reducing taxes on outboard engines. Other input costs for inland fishing will be reduced through comparable tax breaks.

We will remove all upfront taxes on logistics equipment, including freezer trucks and cold storage to reduce post-harvest losses. We will connect fishermen to exporters directly by holding regular Expo Trade Fairs at the main fisheries harbours.

We will manage fishing sustainably and encourage fishermen to fish responsibly while ensuring optimum utilisation of our Exclusive Economic Zone. We will strictly enforce the bans on bottom trawling, dynamite fishing, and other wasteful and unsustainable fishing methods. The planned expansion of the Sri Lanka Coast Guard will strengthen efforts to protect our territorial waters from foreign trawlers engaging in these banned fishing methods. The Silavathurai fisheries harbour will be upgraded to ensure Sri Lankan fishermen are able to make use of protected waters.

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# INFRASTRUCTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## GAMPERALIYA

As we invest heavily in urban development and infrastructure projects that will link major urban centres, we will continue specific rural projects so that villages and small townships are not left behind.

The Gamperaliya Scheme which is revitalising our villages has developed many different levels of rural infrastructure, from country roads to reservoirs, schools, places of worship and community centres. These programmes will be vigorously continued.

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**An additional Rs. 100 Million per year will be given to each electorate to fund infrastructure and livelihood development bringing the total value of Gamperaliya to 400 Million rupees per electorate per year.**

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We will also have long-term programme focusing on community water supply schemes across the

country. Similarly, there would be a national policy on small, medium and large irrigation projects across the country based on the use of new technology and international collaborations.

Under the Isuru Pawla National Initiative, we will promote the production of minor export crops and encourage subsistence farming to strengthen the economy of the rural family unit.

We will initiate the Kandurata Multi-sectoral Integrated Regional and Rural Development Programme. This is to address the deficiencies in lopsided regional and rural development. This programme will cover the underdeveloped areas under hilly terrain in the Central, Sabaragamuwa, and Uva Provinces and Kalutara, Galle and Matara districts (Sinharaja). The country has developed its infrastructure in the coastal regions, Mahaweli Development Zone and dry zone without paying due attention in resource allocation to these areas, creating relative and significant imbalances in development outcomes and welfare. The programme will focus on activities in village-to-village and village-to-market physical connectivity, sanitation and health services, housing, education and training, drinking water, irrigation, market development, local tourism, small-scale agriculture, animal husbandry and livelihood development.

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## CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

We will have a plan for Government construction projects so that they are phased out to avoid hiatuses in the construction industry. The lack of such a plan has led to instances of corruption. Delays in payments and in initiating projects will also be addressed to strengthen the industry. The online platform for obtaining construction permits for Colombo Municipal Council limits will be expanded to ensure faster approvals. Further, we will encourage the formulation of joint ventures with local and foreign contractors for transferring technology. Preference will be given to local contractors for the development of future infrastructure projects such as expressways and high-rise buildings.

Removing para tariffs in the construction sector is a necessity not only to reduce cost of living but also to sustain the industry. In order to reduce the costs of construction, the para tariffs applied to selected construction materials will be reduced. The NBT for the main contractor in construction projects will also be made exempt and the VAT-free threshold of the unit price of condominium housing units will be revised from Rs. 15 Million per unit to Rs. 25 Million per unit. VAT applicable for those over 25 Million to 6%.



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# THE PREFERRED DESTINATION

## ENCOURAGING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY



Historically, Sri Lanka has been a welcoming and hospitable Nation. Visitors, whether they were explorers like Marco Polo, prisoners of war like Robert Knox, or mythical visitors like Sinbad, they left with nothing but happy memories. This tradition of friendship and kindness to strangers is culturally-rooted in the common Sri Lankan, and this tradition ensured that Sri Lanka was well known as a beautiful destination long before global travel was a practical possibility. Unfortunately, thirty long years of war eroded our position as an attractive place to visit. Our tourism sector withered while those of our nearest neighbours - Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Maldives - thrived. With the end of the war a decade ago, Sri Lanka's tourism sector received a massive boost as the numbers of arriving visitors rose in leaps and bounds. The future looked bright.

However, in spite of the increasing numbers of tourists, the Sri Lankan Government at the time failed to capitalise on the opportunity.

Under our Tourism Policy we will forge ahead with the tax incentives and loan concessions introduced under the Tourism Relief Package, designed to boost expansion in the industry.

- **We will also grant Export Status to establishments in the sector. All Small and Medium hotels and guesthouses with over five rooms and using digital platforms, will come under industry regulations**
- **We will create Public-Private Partnerships between the Government and private sector to**

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manage funds from the Tourism Development Levy, and establish a one-stop shop for tourism sector regulatory agencies

- We will provide special incentives for setting up entertainment/theme parks, adventure-based tourism and MICE Tourism to make Sri Lanka a regional hub for these tourist activities
- We will make Destination Marketing Campaigns a priority in key source markets such as India, China, and Southeast Asia. In addition to the traditional destination advertising, we will formulate a strategy to brand Sri Lanka as a wellness and spiritual tourism destination, expanding from traditional offerings such as Ayurvedha into emerging attractions like Angampora and meditation

- We will promote domestic aviation networks throughout the tourism sector. We will also create Tourist Hubs at Colombo, Galle, Kandy, Hambantota, and six other Tourist Zones across the country
- We will strengthen the Tourist Police Divisions in these tourist hubs and emphasise gender sensitivity training for police officers. Environmental and wildlife conservation programmes will be maximised to strengthen and promote sustainable eco-tourism
- We will provide foreign language training for adults in every Divisional Secretariat with popular tourist destinations
- Promoting the Sri Lankan brand worldwide will be done in collaboration with Sri Lanka Tourism, SriLankan Airlines and Ceylon Tea



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# BUILDING A JUST SOCIETY

## MODERN EDUCATION FOR A MODERN WORLD

Establishment of a futuristic and holistic education policy is a prerequisite for accelerated national development.

Our aim is to:

- Expand the free education system for the first time in decades to ensure universal, free pre-school education using state, mixed and market models
- A national programme for the teaching of English and Mathematics based on proper international benchmarks will seek to eliminate the over 30% fail-rate in GCE Ordinary Level Mathematics and over 50% fail-rate in Ordinary Level English
- Ensure that all Advanced Level schools offer Science and Technology streams
- Ensure universal higher education and ensure that higher education leads to employment

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**EARLY CHILD EDUCATION WILL BE BROUGHT UNDER THE PURVIEW OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION FOR MAINTENANCE OF QUALITY STANDARDS ISLANDWIDE. TEACHERS AND ASSISTANTS IN PRE-SCHOOLS WILL BE ENSURED OF JOB SECURITY AND REMUNERATION. WITH THE COOPERATION OF THE COMMUNITY, MIDDAY MEALS WILL BE PROVIDED TO ALL CHILDREN ATTENDING PRE-SCHOOLS.**

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In keeping with international benchmarks of GCE Ordinary Level, the number of subjects offered to students will be reduced to 6. Years 12 and 13 will include a vocational stream for those not intending to enter university, to be granted a vocational training certificate in line with the benchmarks for vocational and technical education. While we shall strengthen Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, schools will be expected to provide a balanced education by promoting aesthetic studies and sports for overall personality development.

We shall ensure that human and physical infrastructure development for STEM education will be strengthened islandwide, eliminating

disparities in national-level teacher training. We will improve the standard of English and Mathematics teaching in rural schools by resolving the gaps in available teachers, especially in rural areas, through a special training and incentive scheme for recent graduates and teachers. National Colleges of Education will be upgraded to degree-awarding institutions in compliance with national quality assurance guidelines. We will also establish three new National Colleges of Education for Mathematics, Science and English. To improve the standard of STEM teaching, teachers of those subjects passing a capability assessment will be incentivised. We will establish objective criteria for recruitment and quality assurance in the teaching profession.

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## SCHOOLS

We will ensure that the schools admission system is transparent, just, and impartial to all. Nationwide school vacancies will be constantly updated on a publicly accessible online portal. We shall take urgent measures to modernise the facilities of the National Institute of Education with regard to human and physical infrastructure development so that it is able to ensure the maintenance of high standards for education management in the nine provinces.

**The deficiency of Tamil language staff officers in Government educational institutions will be rectified. Training opportunities will be expanded for Tamil-language principal teachers.**

We shall establish national schools with proper human and physical infrastructures for the nine provinces. To cope with the increasing demand for quality education in suburban areas we will establish 30 new national schools in Homagama, Maharagama, Kaduwela, Kotte, Kolonnawa, Kesbawa, Moratuwa, Piliyandala, Malabe, Pannipitiya, Avissawella, Panadura, Kalutara, Wattala, Kelaniya, Ja-Ela, Katana and Negombo.

**To minimise school dropouts due to financial difficulties, we will provide two school uniforms, a pair of shoes and a nutritious, free midday meal to students.**

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# HIGHER EDUCATION

We aim at building a globally-competitive university system. Universities will enjoy greater autonomy to make their own decisions and determine their own vision and identity. In doing so, we will redefine the roles and responsibilities between the Government, the University Grants Commission and individual universities. The independence of the UGC will be strengthened and its mandate expanded to reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century needs.

Students will have a greater choice over the selection of universities and subjects they enrol in. We will transform Sri Lanka to an international educational hub in the region capable of attracting foreign students.

**To ensure higher education for all and increased freedom of choice for students, we will expand the My Future interest-free higher education loan scheme to cover more Higher Education Institutes, and double the credit limit from Rs. 800,000 to Rs. 1.6 million.**

We will also expedite the loan application process to enable students to enrol immediately after examination results are released.

We will expand the annual intake of the Bachelor of Education degree to 5,000 students, which will also help address the shortage of teachers in the school system.

**The planned Scholarship for Education Excellence aimed at providing the students who excel in the Advanced Level Examination with overseas education will be swiftly implemented, so that they can return to help develop the country.**

We will encourage new non-profit technical universities or university colleges in every province.



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# MAKING FREE HEALTHCARE WORK

## COMPREHENSIVE HEALTHCARE FOR A HAPPIER, HEALTHIER PEOPLE

The model of universal healthcare has been historically successful. However, there are disparities in the level of healthcare received in urban vs rural hospitals. Though we have doubled the training of specialist doctors in the public health sector there is still a shortage of trained specialist doctors further away from the cities. In addition, technology and diagnostic equipment are not widely available.

To address these issues, we will continue upgrading and modernising all District, Base and rural hospitals to provide more modern facilities for the sick and injured in their own localities. While our goal is to move towards a 24-hour OPD service, as a first step, we have extended OPD hours from 4.00 pm to 10.00 pm.

**We will re-establish the Family Doctor concept by opening family clinics in each Grama Niladhari Division and introduce electronic patient records.**

**Special geriatric care units will be added to every hospital to provide medical services to Sri Lanka's growing population of elderly citizens.**

**Similarly, home visits and home-based care will be introduced to the public health system, to ease the burden on hospital wards and better care for the needs of the differently-abled, the terminally ill and the elderly.**

**We have increased the intake of medical students to Government universities from 1,300 to 2,000 to address the shortage of doctors in the country.**

We will accelerate the training and recruiting of all health sector staff, including supplementary professions, and introduce new categories of staff to meet changing conditions in medical care. Non-clinical services, like psychosocial support, will be paid increasing attention. We will also create a Counselling Service with trained counsellors.

The Suwaseriya ambulance service will be further expanded with more emergency vehicles and an increase in trained paramedical staff. We will also begin construction of an islandwide network of substations from which Suwaseriya units will operate, covering larger areas.

We will invest more in preventive measures to fight non-communicable diseases such as chronic kidney disease, diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

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**A free annual medical check-up will be the right of every Sri Lankan citizen over 35 years of age.**

Such pre-emptive examinations will support the early detection of diseases. In addition to this system, blood pressure and blood sugar testing booths will be installed in every Divisional Secretariat.

We will expand coverage and improve the quality of nutritional services, to young children, through the school food programme. We will also upgrade nutrition to prenatal and postnatal mothers,

paying particular attention to recent scientific discoveries in paediatric care.

**The Government allowance for pregnant women will be increased from Rs. 20,000 per month to Rs. 30,000.**

We will launch a new initiative to promote indigenous medicine, both locally and globally, and further develop all areas of Ayurvedha and other alternative medicines. Through this, formal status will be granted to practitioners of alternative medicine as recognised health sector workers.



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# SHELTER FOR ALL

## CREATING A HOME-OWNING SOCIETY BY 2025

Owning a home is the dream of all families. However, housing in urban centres is unaffordable for both the middle and working classes, forcing them to live further away, on the edges of ever-expanding cities. We will make all Sri Lankans homeowners.

Under the vision of a “Shelter for All”, we will expand access to middle-income and low-income housing. We will expand the successful Gamudawa Housing Scheme in rural areas. Existing housing schemes including post-tsunami housing schemes will be renovated to reflect the needs of the modern era. We will dramatically expand middle-income housing in urban areas, through Public-Private Partnerships. The concept of green housing will be encouraged in these urban schemes.

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**We will also provide safe drinking water to all homes by 2025 and ensure access to proper sanitation systems, especially in the Plantation Sector. Our urban and rural infrastructure projects will also expand with the boom in housing, making sure all citizens are securely connected through bus, rail and telecommunications.**

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## FREEHOLD LAND

Citizens occupying Permit Land are limited by the permit system from fully making use of their land to invest, borrow against, or develop it, even though they may be permanently occupying that land. We will give them Freehold Deed Land.

## LAND REGISTRY

Currently, the Government has no mechanism in place to identify under-utilised or unused State Land. We will create a Digitised Land Registry which will determine the most productive land, and to maximise rent from lands that the Government leases out. This convenient and accessible inventory will allow citizens to check registration information and confirm the quality of documentation. This reform will also improve Sri Lanka’s standing in the Ease of Doing Business Index, which ranks countries according to their individual openness to business.



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# NATIONAL UNITY AND EQUALITY

## CHILDREN OF ONE MOTHER

It is only when we unite as one country that will we be able to harness our long unreached potential as a modern, stable and prosperous land. We will celebrate our multiethnic, multireligious, and multilingual identity. We will lead the process to build a truly united country; a Sri Lanka where all Sri Lankans feel that they belong.

**There will be no room for racism, extremism or separatism. Every citizen will be treated equally by law and in practice, regardless of ethnicity, religion, class, caste or gender.**

## LANGUAGE POLICY

Our Language Policy will be based on a truly trilingual Sri Lanka where everyone can engage in their mother tongue with the Government and its representatives, including at kachcheri, police, and other Government institutions. Training and recruitment policies for Government staff will be updated to make this a reality. All Government documents, forms and pieces of communication, all signboards and notices, will be trilingual or available in optional languages. We will create a Sri Lanka Translation Service to practically implement this policy, and to guarantee that

translations are accurate, to avoid giving offence, and to uphold the dignity of our mother tongues.

Link language teaching will be upgraded and the syllabus revised so that we become a truly trilingual Nation. Government staff in departments and agencies will reflect Sri Lanka's ethnic diversity.

Books of Sinhala literature will be translated into Tamil and books of Tamil literature will be translated into Sinhala to strengthen interethnic understanding and discussions.

## RECONCILIATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

We will review and update the National Policy on Reconciliation and Coexistence of 2017 that will be applied to all levels of governance to prevent the emergence of conflicts at community levels. We will utilise the already established District Reconciliation Committees to promote values of diversity, manage tensions, reduce risk of future violent conflicts, promote social integration, facilitate forward-looking reconciliation initiatives, and build a pluralistic and inclusive society. We firmly believe that decisions must be made by those who live and work among the citizens they are serving.

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Two Presidential Task Forces will be appointed specifically for reconstruction and development in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. We will appoint a Presidential Commission to address outstanding land disputes from the conflict-affected areas, with the plan of solving them within a year. The relevant departments, such as the Mahaweli, Forest and Wildlife departments, will release lands that were occupied by the people prior to the war for their resettlement.

**We will facilitate the resettlement of those suffering from lengthy displacement, including reconstruction of their homes and businesses, and will provide other necessary assistance.**

All refugees and those suffering from protracted displacement will be encouraged and assisted to return, and we will provide the necessary support to facilitate that process. Expansion of technical education in conflict-affected areas will be prioritised, starting with the creation of a modern technical education centre in Mannar. In addition to the current concessions on investment, further specific concessions will be made for rebuilding and new development in the conflict-affected areas.

**Persons detained for long periods without charge will be released.**

We will fully support the Office of Missing Persons in its efforts to locate the missing both in the North and the South. We will instruct the Office of Reparations to resolve the issues of people affected by the war, and pay compensation where appropriate. All lands not required for security and defence purposes will be returned to their owners or civilian authorities without delay. The policy of no state-sponsored demographic changes will be maintained.

To promote harmony and integration between ethnic communities in the future, the school curriculum, particularly the subject of history, will be reviewed to ensure that it reflects the true history of the different communities. Where necessary, the curriculum will be revised so that students understand the perspectives of individuals, groups, parties, and other entities in our collective history. Going forward, new schools will reflect our multicultural, multireligious and multiethnic society that is united in diversity and its commitment to equality and justice.

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# THE SPIRIT OF SRI LANKA

## PROTECTING OUR SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING AND CULTURE

A spiritual nation is a peaceful nation. Sri Lanka is blessed with many peaceful religions. The new Sri Lanka we are building will cherish the virtues of every religion, and thrive on our interfaith and intercultural connections, understanding and appreciating our fellow citizens. Buddhism shall have the foremost place, and all religions and beliefs will be treated equally. All religions and beliefs will be constitutionally guaranteed equal rights and freedom from discrimination.

We will ensure that religious establishments are further strengthened and nourished to promote tolerance and coexistence, by executing a nationwide programme on infrastructure development and maintenance at places of worship. We will renovate and reopen all religious institutions and places of worship affected by violence in the past. We will create spaces for the revival of moderate religious discourse. We will insist that interfaith education is a subject in the school curriculum, and resolve the current shortages of religion teachers in schools.

**On the advice of the Maha Sangha, we will provide all necessary facilities for a Dharma Sangayana, or Buddhist council to revive Buddhism. A National Institute of Buddhist Studies and a Theravada Buddhist archive and library will be established.**

**We will establish the Budhu Puth Suraksha scheme of health insurance for the clergy, and immediately resolve the issues preventing the issuance of National Identity Cards to female clergy.**

## SUPPORTING THE ARTS

We will create state-of-the-art galleries and public spaces for citizens to celebrate street art and theatre, photography, music and cultural festivals. We will protect the Intellectual Property rights of artists and ensure that a proper system of royalties is in place to support them. Artists will also be eligible to join a contributory pension scheme.

**We will set up a fund to support filmmakers submitting their work to international and regional film festivals, and to assist artists to travel to art festivals.**

Youth leaders will be supported to develop emotional intelligence and communication skills through drama and performing arts to create spaces in societies to have shared dialogue about diverse cultures and values, helping realise their visions for a tolerant and inclusive society.

We will buy the rights to Sri Lankan books and create a free national digital library which will democratise knowledge and support artists. To create a broader base of knowledge in the Sinhala language, we will translate foreign language books into Sinhala. We will take steps to preserve Sri Lankan films in digital format in a National Film Archive.

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Let us prove it together.



# THE FIFTY-TWO PERCENT

## DIGNITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR SRI LANKA'S WOMEN

The contribution of Sri Lanka's women to our history, economy, culture and society has been immense. And yet, women in Sri Lanka still fight to be treated as equal citizens today. We will ensure that our female citizens live with dignity, free from fear, and with political and economic empowerment. There can be no future for Sri Lanka except with women as equal partners on that journey. For that, we will fully implement the Women's Charter. In addition, just as the Youth Commission was appointed to address the issues faced by our young people, we will appoint a Women's Commission to identify and solve many of the problems facing women in our country.

### SAFETY AND SECURITY

- To provide Sri Lanka's women with a safer environment, we will ensure speedy sentencing in cases of rape and sexual abuse, and introduce more stringent sentencing for repeat offenders
- We will criminalise marital rape and create awareness of the problem
- We will clarify the legal definition of sexual harassment, to prosecute street harassment of women and girls
- We will establish a dedicated national police unit to solely investigate and prevent sexual harassment, including sexual abuse on public transport
- We will clear the long backlog of court cases relating to sexual abuse of women
- We will increase the resources dedicated to the women's helpline so that it can function 24 hours a day and connect victims of abuse and harassment to police officials for immediate response
- We will invest funds to publicise the 1938 helpline so that women all across the country are aware of it
- We will expand and improve the network of shelters and safehouses for abused women, into integrated Crisis Centres with legal aid, medical facilities and psychosocial counselling
- We will develop a gender-sensitive media policy to support a positive portrayal of women in the media. This policy will also govern how the media reports gender-based violence

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## EMPOWERING PARTICIPATION

**ON THE HEELS OF THE SUCCESSFUL 25% MANDATORY QUOTA FOR WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES, WE WILL PLACE A SIMILAR 25% QUOTA FOR THE NATIONAL LIST. WE WILL THEN SET FORTH A 25% QUOTA FOR WOMEN IN PROVINCIAL COUNCILS, AND A 25% QUOTA FOR WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT.**

We will amend all discriminatory laws, beginning with those that prevent women from fully participating in the economy. Equal wages for equal work will be legislated.



We will provide special assistance to households headed by women, and address the issue of high indebtedness among women, particularly war widows. As an interim relief measure, microfinance loans given to women at exploitative interest rates will be written off.

## MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN

We will set up a Presidential Task Force with the goal of ending child malnutrition in Sri Lanka. Children identified with malnutrition, pregnant women with nutritional deficiencies and breastfeeding mothers will continue to receive Thripasha supplements free of charge.

We will establish childcare units in Government institutions for working mothers, and incentivise the private sector to do the same in offices and factories. The private sector will also be incentivised to provide female staff with fixed co-pay schemes to cover maternity leave, as set out in the 2019 Budget.

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# A GRATEFUL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

**ENSURING DIGNITY FOR ALL**

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## A COVENANT OF DIGNITY FOR WAR VETERANS

The term *ranaviru* has become a political tool, broadly and loosely applied to all ex-servicemen and women, regardless of whether they made sacrifices on behalf of our motherland or joined the service after the war was over. The term itself has little meaning to those who indeed made great sacrifices and are now suffering mentally or physically because of it. Although there is widespread agreement that we must appreciate the services of the security forces, this does not translate into true recognition and fair treatment of military personnel and their families. We will draft a covenant between the people of Sri Lanka, the Government, and all those who serve and have served in the military, and their families.

**A National budget allocation will be made to establish a Department of Veterans Affairs. This Department will serve all veterans of the security forces, and their families, and will not be restricted to the missing, wounded, and families of dead servicemen. The Department of Veterans Affairs will also provide psychosocial facilities to help veterans and their families deal with the mental wounds of battle, and not just the physical.**

## DIFFERENTLY-ABLED PEOPLE

A National Disability Inclusion Commission will be set up to develop, execute and monitor the progress of a multisectoral disability-inclusive development plan. The Commission will empower differently-abled persons through the provision of monthly cash transfers, assistive technologies and special vocation training programmes to increase employment opportunities. A 3% employment quota will be introduced in the public sector and the private sector will be incentivised to follow the same policy.

We will enshrine in legislation, the right of differently-abled children to enter a school of their choice. We will conduct sensitisation programmes for both teachers and students to create a more understanding society.

Television channels will be required to communicate through methods such as sign language and subtitles to make media consumption more inclusive.

## POVERTY ALLEVIATION

We will combine the best elements of Samurdhi and Janasaviya, increasing the value of Samurdhi payments and increasing the number of recipients. This scheme will be subject to strict legislation to ensure that only those truly deserving of help, receive it. Corruption and waste will be removed by making payments directly to recipients' bank accounts.

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## DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND SENIOR CITIZENS

With the advances in healthcare, nutrition, and general quality of life in Sri Lanka, our citizens are living longer, and an ageing population needs to have special care and welfare.

**We will introduce a contributory pension scheme for informal workers such as farmers, fisheries industry workers, domestic workers, migrant workers and artists.**

We will create a Department of Senior Citizens' Affairs tasked with assisting senior citizens with their specific problems dealing with financial institutions and healthcare. The Department will also provide social support to help the elderly deal with isolation and loneliness, and provide training on retaining their independence and operating digital devices and technology. We will incentivise the private sector to provide senior citizens with affordable services and care. We will recruit and train more nurses in the public health sector who will specialise in geriatric care.

**The senior citizens' allowance will be increased from Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 3,000.**

**Once we have established card payments on public transport, we will introduce a special senior citizens' discount on all buses and trains. We will create a Senior Citizens' Corp of retired professionals who will serve as advisors, trainers and lecturers in key professional institutions.**



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# MIGRANT WORKERS

Female Sri Lankan migrant workers still continue to face a number of serious problems in the field of foreign employment that has not been addressed sufficiently in the past decades. Female migrant workers are still overwhelmingly employed in low-skill categories in the Middle East, and the resultant issues of low pay, low remittances and safety, need to be solved.

To address some of these problems we will assign a legal advisor to each and every embassy and consulate dealing with migrant worker issues. We will establish a 24-hour emergency hotline and operations centre which female migrant workers can use.

We will introduce a modern, transparent rating and regulatory system for employment agencies recruiting migrant workers.

We will remove income tax from non-resident foreign currency accounts.

**Sri Lankan migrant workers registered under the Foreign Employment Bureau are eligible for the Sihina Maliga housing loan with a 75% interest subsidy.**

We will introduce a contributory pension scheme for migrant workers, increase their duty-free allowance, and enable them to vote from overseas.



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# THE UPCOUNTRY PEOPLE

While the integrity of the Upcountry Tamil population to Sri Lankan society has been formally recognised by successive administrations, the community still lags behind in facilities, access and opportunity for its people. We will take specific steps to ensure their dignity, development, equality and economic security. We will resolve the issues of landlessness and shelter. We will also take all necessary measures to improve the education and health of the Upcountry Tamils, and support their transition to modern jobs in the industrial and service sectors.

A Presidential Task Force to 'Uplift the Upcountry Community' will be established immediately.

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**We will make sure that all Upcountry Tamil families will be able to have their own land in the form of 7 perches of Freehold Land, and a home on that land.**

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All administrative barriers and bottlenecks in this process will be removed. Every family that does not have shelter on their allocated land will be provided one.

To guarantee a fixed income to Upcountry Tamil farmers, we will go into partnership with private and State-owned enterprises to establish out-grower schemes that will guarantee the regular purchase of produce from these farmers. We will be moving towards a Rs. 1,500 income per day for plantation workers.

We will ensure that public health services in the Upcountry communities are comparable to services in other parts of the country. We will open ten national schools in the estate areas, and a Highland university to improve access to higher education. An Affirmative Action programme to increase the representation of Upcountry Tamils in educational and training institutions nationwide will be developed and put into practice. We will create industrial zones and linked vocational training centres in these areas for the youth.

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# A VOICE FOR THE YOUTH

We are committed to bringing Sri Lanka's younger citizens into Government participation as early as possible, and so we will institute a network of issue-focused, group-based regional Youth Councils that will be directly linked to Parliament and Parliamentary Committees. We will also institutionalise diverse youth representation in public policy consultations at all levels of Government, particularly on matters of education, employment, reconciliation and the environment. The recommendations of the Youth Charter will be fully implemented.

We recognise that the youth of our country are responsible for driving digital innovation through demand and we plan to supply that demand so that the digitisation of Sri Lanka will be in perpetual motion.

**To facilitate increased engagement with digital infrastructure and the internet in general, we will reduce the cost of mobile data and mobile broadband by 10%.**

The present Government policy of providing jobs for unemployed graduates will continue. We will establish Centres of Excellence across all

Divisional Secretariats which will conduct communication, language, technological and soft skills training for the youth to broaden their career prospects. We will initiate an internship programme to retrain unemployed degree holders for employment in IT business process management and knowledge process outsourcing. This will be created on a Public-Private Partnership model. We will introduce the subject of entrepreneurship into university and vocational education.

**We will establish a Rs. 15 Billion fund to create 100,000 jobs for youth in the export sector, focusing on the electronics, boat-building, wellness tourism and spice value-addition sectors. This scheme will also be used to encourage female participation in the economy.**

In recognition of Sri Lanka's diverse ethnic makeup, the police and security forces, will launch a new recruitment drive to redress some of the ethnic imbalances in these organisations. Special recruitment programmes to encourage young men and women from minority communities to consider careers in the police, Army, Navy, and Air Force will take place nationwide. We will also launch home-stay exchange programmes to enable youth in the

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cities to understand the villages and those from different communities to understand each other.

We will ensure the safety and well-being of young men and women moving to urban centres for employment, by partnering with the private sector to create comfortable, safe, low-cost hostels in convenient locations accessible to public transport. We will also end all forms of bullying and ragging in universities to create a humane society.

**We will reduce Effective Tax to 5% for startup tech companies that apply scientific and engineering innovations, inspiring young men and women to create products and services that will help our country develop further.**

We will streamline processes and cut through the red tape that often hinders young people wanting to start new enterprises and businesses of their own. The Startup Desk we will establish at key Government institutions will be manned by dedicated officers trained to deal with the unique queries, requests and needs generated by young men and women. We will group the various agencies together in a consolidated Small & Medium Enterprises Authority, which will also help young people connect to buyers, markets and financing.



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# THE SRI LANKAN SPORTING BRAND

**We will introduce a 20-year National Sports Policy, and professionalise the entire sports sector by establishing an independent Sports Commission.**

We will develop a rational process to allocate funds and investment to each district, so that there are enough resources for the development of sports. We will establish provincial extensions of the National Institute of Sports. We will also take measures to reduce the prices of sports equipment.

We will also conduct a study to identify key sports with the most potential for Sri Lanka to excel in at a global level, and provide special funds and facilities to support these sports all the way up to world championship category. We will pay particular attention to training, mental conditioning, nutrition and developing coaching to international standards. Costs associated with representing the country at international sporting events will be borne by the Government on behalf of all sportsmen and women.



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# IMPLEMENTATION

## STRENGTHENING AND MONITORING

A new Presidential Task Force for National Development will be created to overlook the delivery of key performance indicators in all the ministries.

All the Divisional Secretariats in the country will have a subunit of this, so that there would be a direct link between the President and the constituents when it comes to the provision of public services and national development.

Certain Government agencies play a particularly important role in the implementation of policy. To ensure that they are well-staffed and modernised, and capable of carrying out policy without delay, we will pay special attention to rebuilding the Attorney General's Department, Legal Draftsman's Department, Cabinet Office, and Parliamentary committees. The same emphasis will be placed on key regulatory agencies, such as the Central Environmental Authority and the Government Valuer.

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# IMPLEMENTATION

## STRENGTHENING AND MONITORING

1. To ensure we create a merit-based and efficient public service, it will be necessary to reform Government processes and certain human resources management agencies
2. We will begin by modernising administrative and financial regulations, as well as the Establishment Code, based on best practices in other Commonwealth countries
3. We will introduce a new Public Finance Management Act
4. We will modernise, strengthen, and appoint capable people to the Public Services Commission, the National Procurement Commission, the Ministry of Public Administration, the Management Services Department, the Salaries and Cadre Commission, and the Exams Department
5. Every Minister and Ministry Secretary will have annual quantitative key performance indicators
6. We will streamline Government decision-making by easing regulations for securing consultancy services
7. We will clarify guidelines on what needs to be submitted to the Cabinet, and what does not
8. We will appoint standing Cabinet subcommittees for economic and social policy, national security, and foreign affairs
9. There will be weekly meetings of Secretaries and relevant subcommittees
10. We will also establish a monitoring and evaluation unit within the Cabinet Office, reporting to the President, consisting of both public servants and private-sector professionals

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NEW DEMOCRATIC FRONT

