



October 2017

ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT MAITHRIPALA SIRISENA AT THE 72ND SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY



It gives me great pleasure to be able to commence my address to the 72nd Session of the General Assembly while congratulating the newly appointed President and Secretary-General of the Organisation. In fact, it gives me great pleasure to address this august assembly for the third

time as the Head of State of Sri Lanka.

The theme of this 72nd Session of the General Assembly is 'Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet'.

Today, when we take into consideration the prevailing conditions in the world, this theme is extremely timely.

I was elected President in January 2015. Before being elected, there were a number of promises and pledges that I made to the beloved people of my country. What I particularly mentioned at the time was that, since the Executive Presidency in Sri Lanka had been vested with more power than in any leader in any other democratic system in the world, once I am elected, I would remove

those excessive powers from the Presidency and entrust those powers to the Parliament.

Once I was elected to the Presidency, I have taken steps, while holding office and while enjoying the right to exercise those powers, to, in fact, shed those powers and transfer them to the Parliament. I have thus set an example both to national politics in my country and to international politics.

As countries that promote, protect and nurture democracy, it is very important that leaders who are elected to office in democracies take steps to strengthen and protect democracy, exercise power with great responsibility, and use one's authority to build a righteous society .

However, when one observes recent history in the past few decades, one witnesses situations where the reluctance of leaders to leave office has led to the breakdown of peace within those countries, even resulting in the breakdown of peace and the creation of division, disunity and discord between countries in the international arena as well. We have the benefit of several such examples from history.

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SPEAKER KARU JAYASURIYA AND MULTIPARTY DELEGATION VISIT WASHINGTON D.C.

Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka Karu Jayasuriya led a multiparty parliamentary delegation to the U.S. capital from September 25-29.

The delegation included Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation Nimal Siripala de Silva, Minister of Women and Child Affairs Chandrani Bandara, State Minister of Irrigation & Water Resources Management Palitha Range Bandara, Members of Parliament Vijitha Herath, Kumara Welgama and M.A. Sumanthiran, and Deputy Secretary General of Parliament Neil Iddawala.

During the visit, Speaker Jayasuriya and the delegation met with the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Paul Ryan at the U.S. Capitol. They also had fruitful discussions with several members of congress from both the republican and democratic parties, including Senator Chris Van Hollen, who was the former democratic co-chair of the House Congressional Caucus on Sri Lanka until his



election to the Senate at the beginning of this year. Senator Van Hollen is a longtime friend of Sri Lanka. The delegation also met the present co-chairs of the Sri Lanka Caucus, Representatives Robert Aderholt and Dina Titus; Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific Rep. Ted Yoho; and Ranking Member of the sub-

committee Rep. Brad Sherman.

Following up on the congressional visit to Sri Lanka by the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) of the U.S. House of Representatives in February, the delegation met with its Chairman Rep. Peter Roskam, Ranking Member Rep. David Price, and HDP members Rep. Gerald Connolly and Rep. Gwen Moore. During the previous visit of Speaker Jayasuriya to Washington D.C. a year ago the Sri Lanka Parliament and the HDP signed a collaboration agreement to strengthen partnership between the two legislatures. *Continue to page 2*



The delegation briefed the members of congress on developments in Sri Lanka, particularly in relation to constitutional reforms. The Parliament of Sri Lanka is marking 70 years of parliamentary democracy this year. They emphasized on the value of strengthening cooperation between the Sri Lanka Parliament and the U.S. Congress to underpin the expanding bilateral partnership.

The Speaker invited the members of congress to visit Sri Lanka and see first hand the developments on the ground.

The members of congress commended the progress made by the Sri Lankan government since 2015 in ad-

REMARKS BY FOREIGN SECRETARY PRASAD KARIYAWASAM AT THE OFFICIAL RECEPTION HOSTED BY THE COMMANDER OF THE NAVY ON THE OCCASION OF THE GALLE DIALOGUE 2017



This is the 8th successive year in which the Galle Dialogue Maritime Conference is being held in Sri Lanka, attracting to our Island Nation, personnel from Navies both near and far, and academics and experts

in maritime affairs.

I thank and congratulate Vice Admiral Travis Sinniah and his extraordinary team in the Sri Lanka Navy, for organizing this year's Conference, and for continuing this wonderful tradition that has come to stay. For many, this has now become an annual event to look forward to.

I am personally drawn to this Conference just by its title for two reasons. "Galle" is my hometown. But not just only that. Galle is a city that has played an important role in Sri Lanka's maritime interactions, in turn influencing the very history of our nation.

For instance,

Our first contact with the United States probably took place when an American Merchant Ship called at the Galle Harbour somewhere around the same time that the new American Republic adopted its Constitution.

Galle is said to be the port from which King Solomon reportedly received ivory and peacocks.

Recorded history tells us that Galle was a prominent sea port through which Persians, Arabs, Greeks, Romans, Malays, Indians and the Chinese were all conducting business with our Island Nation.

In 1411, a stone tablet was erected in Galle in three languages – Chinese, Tamil, and Persian – to commemorate the second visit to Sri Lanka by the Chinese admiral Zheng He. [More](#)

vancing political and economic reforms, taking concrete measures to advance human rights, good governance and reconciliation. They acknowledged the importance of enhancing and expanding the U.S. – Sri Lanka partnership in diverse spheres, including at the legislative level, and assured the support of the U.S. Congress towards this end.

The visit to Washington D.C. took place as part of the USAID-sponsored programme – Strengthening Democratic Governance and Accountability Project in Sri Lanka (SDGAP). SDGAP is a three-year programme with the Sri Lankan Parliament to strengthen public accountability systems; improve planning, communication, policy reform, and implementation; and increase the participation of women in politics. The visit to the U.S. Congress allowed the parliamentary delegation to experience firsthand the workings of the U.S. system. [More](#)

U.S. PACIFIC FLEET COMMANDER ADMIRAL SCOTT SWIFT SPEAKS AT GALLE DIALOGUE



Good morning distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is my distinct pleasure to be here with you today. I would like to thank our

hosts, the Sri Lankan Navy, and in particular the Commander of the Navy, Admiral Sinniah, for their hospitality. The Galle Dialogue is one of the critically important venues to discuss key issues among naval and maritime leaders. It is an integral part of the ongoing discourse that is taking place across the region and globe in fora like the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, the Shangri-La Dialogue, and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium. The fact that the Galle Dialogue had to be moved to this larger venue last year is just one indication of its growing importance not just in the region but across the globe.

I am honored to be among such an august group of maritime leaders. We have representatives here today from six continents and Oceania, indeed all corners of the globe. More than anything, I think this is a fitting representation of how much the seas connect us. I look forward to learning from the diversity of ideas and the experience present in this room.

As just mentioned, our nations are linked by the sea. For millennia, adventurous men and women have harnessed the winds and ridden the currents to transport merchandise, people, and ideas across the great distances of the seven seas. Those sea routes, established long ago when seasonal monsoon winds governed the age of sail, have empowered the growth and prosperity of nations around the world.

That dynamic is still the case today, where 90 percent of global trade remains dependent upon sea borne transport. In an increasingly interdependent global economy, we share an interest in providing continued security at sea, in order to produce stability, which in turn sets the conditions that allow prosperity the opportunity to continue to grow. [More](#)

TOURISM PROMOTION ROAD SHOW 2017 IN THE UNITED STATES



The second session of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Road Show was held at the Kimpton Hotel Monaco in Washington DC on October 3. Thirteen Sri Lankan companies, among them Jetwing Travels (Pvt.) Ltd. and Aitken Spence Travels, and the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) participated in the Road Show organized by the SLTPB for the first time in the United States. The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Washington DC coordinated the organizing of the show. This was the second leg of the road show, which started on October 2 in New York.

The road show attended by more than fifteen travel companies in Washington DC was inaugurated by Prof. Gamini Keerawella, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Washington D.C. in the presence of Madhubani Perera, Director, Marketing

and Chameera Peiris, Assistant Director, Marketing of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau. In his remarks Prof. Keerawella highlighted the importance of the US market for Sri Lanka citing the statistical evidence of the US outbound market.

Displayed at the venue were pictures of tourist attractions, illustrating the beauty and rich cultural heritage of Sri Lanka. Tourist brochures were available for the visitors, and the show highlighted the potential of Sri Lanka to become a global tourist destination in the world. Following Madhubani Perera's comprehensive presentation, which covered all aspects of Sri Lanka tourism, including the potential investment opportunities in the tourism sector, the visitors showed notable interest in wedding tourism, Sri Lanka's culinary traditions.

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UNITED STATES AND SRI LANKA CO-HOST PACIFIC AIRLIFT RALLY WITH A FOCUS ON HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF



The United States and Sri Lanka conducted the Pacific Airlift Rally, a biennial exercise, from September 11 to 15, 2017. The Pacific Airlift Rally brought together participants from the United States, Sri Lanka, and other Indo-Asia-Pacific nations for an airborne training exercise that focused on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. Participants practiced mission planning, cargo handling and loading, and air-land and airdrop operations.

The Indo-Asia-Pacific region is home to 60 percent of the world's population in 36 nations spread across 53 percent of the Earth's surface, and the majority of the world's natural disasters occur in this area. Experience has demonstrated that in order to effectively

provide support to civilian disaster response agencies, it is extremely important that nations cooperate and improve joint capabilities.

One U.S. Air Force C-130J Hercules from the 815th Airlift Squadron at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi and one C-130J from the 327th Airlift Squadron, Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas joined airlift aircraft from Sri Lanka and Australia for the flight training portion of the exercise. They practiced airlift techniques that would be executed during a real-world humanitarian assistance operation.

Sri Lanka previously co-hosted the Pacific Airlift Rally in August of 2011, during which participants worked on a tropical cyclone scenario. *More*

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES: SEVEN ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME SAFARIS OUTSIDE OF AFRICA

Africa may have a lock on our collective imagination when it comes to safaris, but there are plenty of places outside of Africa where you can come face-to-face with wildlife in its natural habitat, too—think Canada's "Kings of the Arctic," Brazil's big cats, the wolves of Romania, and so much more.

So, if Africa doesn't figure into your travel plans this year, don't despair. Here are seven trips that prove you don't have to go all that way to have an authentic bucket-list safari. [...]

Spot leopards, seek out blue whales, and watch primates play in Sri Lanka

The island nation of Sri Lanka, off the coast of southern India, teems with stunning natural features and weathered ruins that have become de facto wildlife playgrounds. Only

slightly larger than West Virginia, this tropical country is one of the planet's top biodiverse hotspots, with 123 mammal species and hundreds of bird species. It also boasts 26 national parks.

Sri Lanka's lush rainforests are home to herds of Asian elephants who like to bathe in its rivers and monkeys that linger beside waterfalls, and mountaintop cloud forests heaving with primates. And then there's Yala National Park: home to shaggy, insect-eating sloth bears and one of the world's highest population densities of leopards.

Even the country's surrounds are a treat for wildlife lovers, who may spot dolphins, sperm whales and the ultimate sea creature — blue whales — in the Indian Ocean. Whatever your animal preference, Wildlife Tours Sri Lanka has an itinerary for you. *More*