

Toast on the Occasion of
The 76th Independence Day of the
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Friday 16th February 2024, Savoy Resort
19:00 hrs

High Commissioner of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to the Republic of Seychelles, His Excellency Mr. Srimal Wickremasinghe
Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Roger Mancienne
President of the Court of Appeal, Honourable Justice Anthony Fernando
Colleague Ministers
Member of the Diplomatic Corps
Attorney General
Chief of Defense Forces
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen
Good evening!

I am happy to be here this evening to celebrate with you the 76th Anniversary of Sri Lanka's Independence.

On behalf of President Wavel Ramkalawan, the Government, and the people of Seychelles, I extend our warmest congratulations and best wishes to His Excellency President Ranil Wickremasinghe, to Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, to the Government and the people of Sri Lanka, as well as to the Sri Lankan community in Seychelles, on this significant occasion.

Tonight, we pay tribute to the resilience, determination, and progress of Sri Lanka since achieving independence. As we mark this memorable occasion, let us remember the heroic deeds of those who shaped Sri Lanka's contemporary history with their ideals of freedom and democracy. Let us also pay tribute to the fearless sacrifices of those –most notably, the late Mr. Don Stephen Senanayake, Sri Lanka's first Prime Minister, and the late Mr. William Gopallawa, Sri Lanka's first President – who fought for an independent and sovereign Sri Lanka. Today's celebration is a testament to their bravery and patriotism.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The enduring historical connections and shared principles between our countries form the bedrock of our friendship, which continues to deepen. Additionally, our bilateral ties are reinforced by our mutual experiences as island nations confronting similar challenges and pursuing common goals. Despite our differences in size and demographics, we remain steadfast in upholding our shared principles and values.

Furthermore, the recent resurgence of Somali piracy in the Western Indian Ocean underscores the importance of collective action in addressing transnational threats. Recently, Seychelles' intervention to rescue a Sri Lankan vessel and its crew exemplifies the necessity

for strengthened partnerships, not least with Sri Lanka, to ensure regional stability and security.

Moreover, acknowledging the importance of collective efforts in tackling transnational challenges, the ongoing partnerships between institutions such as the Colombo International Nautical and Engineering College (CINEC) and the Seychelles Maritime Academy highlight the concrete advantages of strengthened cooperation in improving capacity building in the maritime field and nurturing connections among young individuals. This collaborative effort also establishes a foundation for future collaboration and mutual understanding between our countries.

Speaking of education and capacity building, I must highlight the invaluable contribution of the Sri Lankan teachers to this vital field. Seychelles has a longstanding tradition of recruiting highly skilled Sri Lankan professionals into our educational system, and it's rare to find a Seychellois student who hasn't been taught by a Sri Lankan educator at some point in their academic journey.

I would also like to highlight the dedication of Sri Lankan health professionals, who have provided vital support to the Ministry of Health and the population. We also acknowledge and appreciate the essential support and care that our Seychellois patients receive when seeking treatment in Sri Lanka.

In addition, Sri Lanka's substantial contribution to Seychelles' judiciary has notably enhanced the capabilities of Seychellois judges, lawyers, and legal professionals, underscoring the importance of international cooperation in advancing legal frameworks and ensuring equitable access to justice.

These examples represent just a fraction of our bilateral achievements, with countless opportunities available for further enhancing our collaboration. Both sides are prepared to continue in working alongside each other to cultivate deeper dialogues and expand our cooperation in areas of shared interests and benefits.

**Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

In conclusion, tonight's gathering not only pays tribute to the remarkable resilience and progress of Sri Lanka since achieving independence but also underscores the deep-rooted friendship between our nations, built upon shared values and historical connections. As we reflect on our past achievements and envision the future, both nations are committed to furthering dialogue and expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest, fostering a prosperous and enduring partnership.

We extend our best wishes for Sri Lanka's ongoing success in its journey towards development and economic prosperity.

On this note, I invite you to join me in a toast to the good health and well-being of **His Excellency Ranil Wickremasinghe**, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and **His Excellency Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena**, and to the prosperity and well-being of the friendly people of Sri Lanka.

Thank you.

