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RECOGNIZED POLITICAL PARTY IN SRI LANKA

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A MESSAGE FROM RANJAN RAMANAYAKE, LEADER UNITED DEMOCRATIC VOICE



In this Parliamentary Election Sri Lanka faces a critical choice.

As the Leader of Sri Lanka's newest Party, the United Democratic Voice, I believe this is a once in lifetime opportunity to cast away the politics of the past and follow a vibrant alternative that is based exclusively on the needs of the people.

This manifesto which I urge you to read has been fashioned after listening to the voices of the people.

Everyone knows where I stand on the crucial issues of the day. I speak my mind without fear. The risks that I have personally taken and the journey that I have made are a matter of public record.

Unemployment, poverty, the cost-of-living crisis, a lack of transparency, corruption, the size of the national debt have all dogged our country for years and years.

In a real sense we have become the laughing stock of the world. Its time for change, it's time to reclaim our country. I want this country to be the best country in the world to live in.

I want prosperity for all, and I do not want to leave **anyone** behind.

We must make this transition from the past to the future as one nation and one people

We can only fulfil these obligations if you support this party and its excellent candidates at the election on Thursday the 14th November.

With your help we can change the course of our history.

Let us together embrace change!

Let us together be courageous and united!

Let us together make our United Democratic Voice heard!



INTRODUCTION

CURRENT POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Sri Lanka has entered an era of dramatic change. Our nation has successfully travelled through a critical junction in 2022 which has led to an historic transformation. The democratic non-violent uprising which was witnessed by the whole world demonstrated that the citizens of Sri Lanka had empowered themselves. These Parliamentary Elections are an once in an lifetime opportunity for the country to move forward.

OUR VISION

Our vision is to create a Sri Lanka that is prosperous, fair, corruption free and inclusive for all. With strong values of democracy, social justice, and national unity, we aim to address the critical challenges facing our nation today especially the cost-of-living crisis and the burden of overwhelming national debt. We are committed to providing solutions that will uplift all Sri Lankans, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion, or region. Together, we can build a stronger nation for future generations.

CORE-PRINCIPALS

- 1. Ending Corruption
- 2. Economic Renewal & Eliminating Poverty
- 3. Equality Justice and Freedom
- 4. The Rule of Law
- 5. Constitutional Reform & Decentralization of Power
- 6. Environmental Sustainability



1. ANTI-CORRUPTION & GOOD GOVERNANCE



We pledge to ensure openness and accountability, and a government that serves all the people. We will always put people first. The Sri Lankan government's public administrative systems are outdated inefficient and ineffective. Sri Lanka needs a good public administration system to deliver public services.

Anti-Corruption Measures

Establish independent anti-corruption bodies
with the power to investigate and prosecute
corrupt officials, ensuring that no one is above the
law. We will have a zero-tolerance approach to
corruption wherever it is.

Transparent Governance

 Promote e-governance initiatives to make public services more transparent, efficient, and accessible to all citizens. We will publish the minutes of Cabinet meetings and the details of any contracts the government enters into, on the Official Government Website.

Freedom of Speech

 Every citizen should have the right to enjoy freedom of speech. This concept is at the very heart of our democracy. We will not tolerate any attempt to suppress the right of any individual to speak freely on any issue they choose.

Academy of Public Service

 We will create an Academy of Public Services which will train public officials elected or appointed in all areas of governance.



2. JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE AND THE RULE OF LAW



In Sri Lanka the rule of law has been severely compromised due to political meddling and undue influence to maintain the current system with all its corruption and irregularities.

Judicial Independence

- Safeguard the independence of the judiciary to ensure justice is served without political interference.
- We will create an Independent Judicial Commission to select all members of the Judiciary including in the Higher Courts and Supreme Court. It will take on the responsibilities of the Judicial Services
 Commission. There will be no political involvement in the appointment process.
- Provide adequate resources and modern technology to our court system. This is the way to ensure an efficient functioning of the legal system.





3. THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS & ELIMINATING POVERTY



For the people of Sri Lanka, the cost of living has had a crippling effect on their lives and their families. Successive governments have deliberately failed to understand what ordinary people are facing. We will tackle the cost-of-living crisis head-on.

- We will reduce the cost of necessities, such as eggs, rice, vegetables, milk and many more essential items.
- We will ensure that any third parties that manipulate the costs for profit will be dealt with severely.
- The **use of subsidies** for these items will be expanded so that everyone can benefit.

Addressing poverty in Sri Lanka requires a multifaceted approach. We are determined to eliminate poverty and to create a more equal Sri Lanka. We will create a **Poverty and Low Pay Commission** with a Commissioner tasked with producing an interim report in six months, and a final report in one year and there after Annual reports. This will provide recommendations for action. In the meantime, we will take specific measures'

- Increasing the monthly financial support provided by the government which will provide immediate relief to vulnerable people, helping them meet basic needs.
- We will provide comprehensive social welfare programmes that include skills training and job creation initiatives, aimed at empowering individuals to achieve long-term financial stability.
- We will increase the payments to all aswesuma people to 20,000 rupees per month



4. ABOLISHING THE EXECUTIVE PRESIDENCY AND CREATING A STRONG PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY



Recent history has shown that when one individual has been elected to the Presidency the concentration of power is open to abuse and is therefore not in the national interest. We will never forget the boast of a previous President when he said "I can do everything I want except turn a man into a woman".

• We will abolish the Executive Presidency and hand back power to Parliament. This will distribute power more evenly instead of one person making all the decisions. Parliament provides an effective means of checks and balances, fostering greater transparency and public participation in decision-making. This fundamental change could help restore public trust in the political system and create a more responsive government that better serves the needs of its citizens.

- Members of Parliament must exercise their power in a responsible and accountable way. They must always remember it is the people who are their masters and not the other way around.
 Corruption involving MPs will be met by the full force of the law.
- We will review the way in which elections are conducted in particular to give disabled people the right to a postal vote. At present the system discriminates against the disabled.
- We are concerned at the large number of rejected ballet papers at the Presidential election held in September 2024. We will institute a strong public awareness campaign.



5. THE OVERWHELMING NATIONAL DEBT BURDEN



The burden of overwhelming National Debt has made Sri Lanka into an international embarrassment and unless addressed it will eventually destroy the country. The current debt has reached an estimated total of US \$93.4 billion while the population of Sri Lanka stands at approximately 22 million this is a per capita debt obligation of around \$4000 for each individual in the country.

 We will manage the public finances efficiently and borrow only when necessary. Excessive borrowing in the past by previous Governments has caused this crisis.

- We will end all vanity projects. All our major infrastructure projects will be commissioned in a fully transparent way and be of direct benefit to the country. We will work with international partners and encourage inward investment but always be mindful that this must be in the national interest.
- We will continue with a constructive and open dialogue with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and where appropriate propose minor adjustments.
 We will make it clear to all that Sri Lanka is not for sale.

6. SRI LANKANS LIVING ABROAD



It is estimated that 3 million people of Sri Lankan origin now live abroad. The amount of remittances sent by them back to Sri Lanka each year is estimated to be \$4.2 billion. Sri Lankans living in the gulf send over \$500 million a year. By comparison the total amount of foreign exchange held in Sri Lanka is \$5.9 billion.

- We welcome the interest of our former citizens and their contributions to our economy.
- We hope they will visit often and remind their children and grandchildren of the rich past heritage of this country and the bright future that lies ahead.
- Even though they are well settled in their own host countries and making a commendable contribution there we hope they will be our well-wishers and speak up forcefully in support of our country.
- We will appoint a Special Envoy to engage Sri Lankan citizens living abroad.



7. NATIONAL UNITY & RECONCILIATION



A peaceful and united Sri Lanka is essential for the nation's progress. We are one nation and one people. The divisions of the past must be left in the past. We must immediately call out anyone who incites racial or religious hatred.

Ethnic Harmony

 Promote policies of inclusivity and respect for all ethnic groups, ensuring equal opportunities and rights for everyone.

Truth & Reconciliation

 Strengthen reconciliation processes and support initiatives that aim to heal wounds of the past and foster national unity. We must look forward together.



Protecting Religious Freedom

• Ensure that every citizen has the right to practice their religion freely and without fear. The diversity of our religions must be a cause for celebration.

8. DECENTRALISING POWER



In Sri Lanka, local authorities often face significant limitations on their decision-making powers, which hampers effective governance and community development. We will empower these local bodies to enable them to address the specific needs and challenges of their communities more directly and responsively. Provincial and local councils have a duty to their citizens but in order to do so they need additional a powers and resources.

- We will grant more authority to local government which must foster greater accountability and enhance citizen engagement, ultimately leading to more sustainable and locally tailored solutions.
- Strengthening local governance is crucial for promoting democracy and improving public services across the nation.

 We will require every Provincial and Local council to hold a monthly citizens meeting so that there can be open transparency regarding the way they work and the decisions they make.

9. CRIME AND PUNISHMENT



People need to feel safe in their homes and public spaces. Those who break the law will be dealt with by the appropriate sentence.

- We will deal severely with two areas of crime that have seen a dramatic increase in recent years, drug trafficking and human trafficking.
- We will also seek to enact new laws to combat domestic violence.
- We will provide adequate resources to our national authorities so that they could deal with these and other issues.

 We are deeply concerned at the high level of reported child abuse. Such actions against defenceless children are abhorrent. We will appoint an Independent Children's Commissioner to oversee this matter working closely with the Nation Child Protection Authority.

10. ECONOMIC GROWTH & JOB CREATION



We recognise the urgent need to revive Sri Lanka's economy and create more opportunities such as employment opportunities for people. So far, the digital revolution has bypassed Sri Lanka with many people living in rural areas finding it impossible to connect to the internet.

Promoting Local Industries

 We will support and grow local industries, including agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing, and tourism, to strengthen the domestic economy and reduce dependence on imports.

Digital Economy & Startups

 Encourage entrepreneurship by supporting tech startups and digital businesses with incentives, tax cuts, and grants.

Job Creation

 Our policies will focus on creating sustainable employment by promoting public-private partnerships, increasing foreign direct investment (FDI), and incentivise businesses to expand operations.

Special Focus on SMEs

 Provide low-interest loans and grants for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and support innovation to boost the backbone of our economy.

Privatization

- The Government owns many enterprises. However, in principle governments should not be running businesses and successive government have shown that they are so inefficient in doing so generating huge losses that are eventually paid for by its own citizens. We will begin the process of privatising some government owned enterprises so that the people of Sri Lanka themselves will become the owners.
- We will do this on a case-by-case basis provided it benefits the country.

11. ENERGISING ENTERPRISES



We will make it easier for businesses to be established, to prosper to create jobs and contribute to the economy.

Access to Finance

 Seed capital platforms connect startups with investors through equity crowdfunding, angel networks, and incubators, facilitating initial funding. Low-interest loans and grants from government programmes, and development banks provide crucial financial support without high repayment burdens. We will underwrite credit guarantee schemes, reduce lending risks for banks, encouraging them to finance small enterprises.

Tax Incentives

 We will implement reduced corporate tax rates for startups to encourage growth and innovation.
 Additionally, tax reductions for reinvesting profits into research and development and training will further stimulate business advancement. By lowering import duties on machinery and technology, we aim to help businesses scale up production more efficiently, creating a smoother business environment overall.

Smooth Business

 We will create one stop online platforms to allow new businesses to register and obtain necessary permits and licences. In addition, we will provide for a more efficient tax filing system and apply faster regulatory compliance. The more successful the enterprise the more jobs can be created. Growing our business means growing the economy.

12. AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY



Sri Lanka should be its own Food Basket. The Agriculture and the Fishery sectors have been neglected by past governments. Sri Lanka's agriculture needs a robust revival to ensure food security and rural prosperity.

Modernising Agriculture

 We will introduce modern technology, irrigation solutions, and efficient farming techniques to increase productivity and reduce post-harvest losses.

Farmer Welfare

 Implement fair pricing mechanisms for farmers' produce and ensure timely payment of subsidies.



Organic Farming

 Promote organic farming through research, training, and support programmes to reduce chemical dependency and improve sustainability.

Youth in Agriculture

 Launch programmes to engage young people in agriculture by offering training, access to resources, and financial support.

Sri Lanka's heavy reliance on imported milk highlights the urgent need to bolster local agricultural production, 70% of our milk is imported.

- Incentivise local farmers to increase corn production, such as providing subsidies for livestock farming, access to modern technology, and training programmes.
- Enhance local food production, not only can the country reduce its import dependency, but it can also create job opportunities in farming, processing, and distribution.
- Support the agriculture sector in this way not only boosts food security but also stimulates economic growth and rural development.

13. FISHERIES





It is astonishing that Sri Lanka, an Island with massive fish stocks around it should be importing tens of thousands of metric tons of fish each year. We will ensure that Sri Lanka will be self-sufficient in fish and that this industry will contribute more than its current 2.7% share of its GDP.

- The Ministry of Fisheries has failed to stand up for fisherman and families. We will reorganise the Ministry to make it more accountable.
- Fishermen need to be given subsidies to enable them to buy the best equipment which will contribute to better productivity. This will help support our country develop one of its most important industries.
- Our beautiful coastline and marine life have been the envy of the world, but it has been seriously neglected. We will restore its natural beauty which will help preserve our eco-system and enhance tourism.

14. EDUCATION & YOUTH EMPOWERMENT



Empowering young people and ensuring the highest quality education is essential for Sri Lanka's progress. Our children are our future. Every Sri Lankan child and young person deserves equal educational opportunities. We will be:

Improving School Infrastructure

 Invest in upgrading school facilities, ensuring that all children, especially in rural areas, have access to quality education and the necessary school equipment.

Skills Development

 Develop vocational training programmes to equip youth with practical skills that match industry needs and boost their employability.

Expanding Higher Education

 Increase scholarships, promote research and development, and encourage partnerships between local universities and global institutions.

Youth Entrepreneurship

 Establish youth innovation hubs in each province, providing mentoring, startup capital, and access to global markets.

Students studying abroad

 We recognise some Sri Lankan students seek the opportunity to study abroad at high personal cost to them and their families. We will implement incentives to encourage them to return and share their acquired skills and knowledge in this country.

15. HEALTHCARE FOR ALL



Ensuring access to affordable and quality healthcare is a key priority of our manifesto.

Universal Health Coverage

 Expand healthcare services across the country with a focus on rural areas, improving hospitals, and ensuring access to essential drugs and treatments.

Healthcare Workforce

 Increase the number of healthcare professionals, improve their training, and provide better working conditions and wages. We will encourage Higher Education institutions to offer more qualifications for healthcare.

Mental Health

 Launch comprehensive mental health programmes in schools and communities to provide counselling and support services.

Health Insurance

 Expand government-sponsored health insurance programmes to cover more people, including informal sector workers. Improving the primary care of the hospital facility will be a priority. This must include purchasing state of the art equipment for advanced medical treatment.

Infectious Diseases

 We will equip our health sector with the tools to eradicate dangerous and infectious diseases such as Dengue, TB and Malaria. We will also tackle lifestyle illnesses such as Type 2 diabetes.

Awareness & Prevention

 Prevention is always better than cure the more we educate people from an early age about healthy lifestyles the better their future and that of the country. Parents and schools have a big responsibility to ensure this happens.

Preparing for the next Pandemic

 like the rest of the world Sri Lanka was not prepared for the Covid19 pandemic. Thousands died in Sri Lanka and millions across the globe. We will reinvigorate and modernise the **Disaster** Management Centre so that it is better prepared for every eventuality.

16. ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY



Protecting Sri Lanka's natural resources is essential for future generations. We borrow our country from our children it is our duty to keep our country beautiful, environmentally sound, sustainable and safe. Climate change concerns the whole planet and only be truly addressed in a global setting we must attend every international gathering on this important subject and play our part in agreeing conclusions. Our weather and rising sea levels have changed dramatically and are affected by our ability to deal with climate change. We need to take action immediately.

Conservation

 Implement policies to protect wildlife, forests, and marine ecosystems while promoting responsible eco-tourism.

Climate Action

 Develop a national plan to mitigate and adapt to climate change, focusing on reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable agriculture and energy.

Waste Management

 Address the waste crisis by introducing recycling programmes, waste-to-energy projects, and stricter regulations on industrial pollution.

17. CULTURE, TOURISM AND SPORT



Tourism is and should be one of the most important income producing sectors of the Sri Lankan economy. Urgent action is required to bring this area up to its previous high benchmark. In 2018 earnings from this sector were \$4.4 billion by 2022 it had dropped to \$1.1 billion. We will make this a high priority.

Anti-Corruption Measures

Sri Lanka boasts some of the best hotels in the world, its beaches are outstanding, and it has eight world heritage sites. Our new Minister of Tourism will ensure that we further enhance this sector. We want this to be the destination of choice for all foreign travellers. On day one we will initiate a "Visit The Pearl" media campaign.

- We welcome the new process of granting visas for tourists on arrival. However, this policy needs to be consistent in order to encourage more tourists to come to visit our begutiful island.
- Good sporting infrastructure will not just be for our cities. We will ensure that our rural areas will all have local sports facilities to enable our children to emulate the sporting heroes of the past. Each local area will be allowed to choose which sporting facility they would require such as Volleyball, Football, Cricket or any other sporting interests of their choice.
- We will establish a National Mentoring Scheme so that our former sports stars will mentor our young people to develop their sporting skills for the future.
 We will initiate a competition amongst the public to name the new scheme.

18. PENSIONERS





In this extraordinary time of financial crisis, we need to be especially mindful of the plight of our pensioners. These are some of the most vulnerable sections of our society with low incomes and they need to rely on their families or the government. They have given a lifetime of service to Sri Lanka and at this time of their lives they need maximum support.

Enhancing privileges for pensioners is essential to ensure that the elderly population can live with dignity and security.

- In the short term we will ensure that they are given additional payments.
- In the long term we will appoint a Special
 Commissioner for Pensioners to protect their interests.
- We will ensure that the payments that we make to pensioners are reflective of the rising cost of living and healthcare expenses.
- Prioritizing the needs of the elderly, we can promote social equity and show commitment to the well-being of all citizens, fostering a more inclusive society.

19. HOUSING





Everyone in Sri Lanka should have a home that is warm dry and decent. Many people are without basic facilities. We will find innovative ways to solve our Housing crisis. We regard this as a key pillar of our manifesto.

- We are aiming for a million housing projects over the next five years which can significantly address
 Sri Lanka's housing crisis while promoting accessibility and essential facilities
- Affordable housing development requires that projects are strategically located near employment opportunities and essential services like healthcare and education.

- Incorporating sustainable building practices and community planning will not only enhance living conditions but also foster vibrant neighbourhoods.
- This ambitious plan can create jobs in construction and related industries, ultimately contributing to economic growth and improved quality of life for many citizens.
- We should seek to emulate innovative schemes for the provision of housing that have been piloted in the other parts of the world. The lack of housing is a challenge for all democracies.

20. WOMEN'S RIGHTS & GENDER EQUALITY



Ensuring gender equality and empowering women is central to our vision for a progressive Sri Lanka. Women account for more than half the population of this country.

Women in Leadership

 Implement policies to increase the participation of women in politics, business, and leadership roles.

Equal Pay

 Enforce laws to ensure women receive equal pay for equal work, promoting workplace equality.

Gender-Based Violence

 Strengthen laws to protect women from domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other forms of abuse, while ensuring swift and just prosecution of offenders.

Maternity Benefits

 Improve maternity leave policies and ensure that women have access to affordable childcare facilities.
 We will look positively on proposals for paternity leave.

21. FUNDAMENTAL LABOUR RIGHTS



Hand in hand with energising enterprise we must respect the rights of those who work in our organisations whether they are in the private or public sector, new or old enterprises. Every employee must be working in a decent work environment, receive good salary and appropriate rights.

 Employers need to respect those who work for them and respect statutory requirements. A work force that is happy, motivated, properly trained and upskilled does not just benefit the organisation but also the country. Every business should honour these commitments.

- There should be a constructive and continuous dialogue between the work force and management so that any disputes can be dealt with speedily.
- All organisations should employ the best talent available. People should be promoted on merit and no other criteria must apply.

22. INFRASTRUCTUR DEVELOPMENT



Building modern infrastructure is crucial for long-term economic growth and development.

Transportation

 Improve the road network, public transportation, the bus service and the railway system to enhance connectivity between provinces and reduce traffic congestion. Roads are becoming congested and dangerous we need more road safety measures.
 Good transport links will create enormous economic benefits.

Energy Sector

 Focus on sustainable energy solutions, such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power, to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and combat climate change. In partnership with the private sector we will pilot Electric vehicle zones in order to reduce carbon emissions.

Affordable Housing

 Implement large-scale affordable housing projects, especially for low-income families, to address housing shortages.

Water Management

 Develop better water management and waste systems, particularly in drought-prone areas, to ensure access to clean and sufficient water.



23. FOREIGN RELATIONS, NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE



Maintaining strong international relations and ensuring the safety of all Sri Lankans is a priority.

A Balanced Foreign Policy

 Maintain neutral, non-aligned foreign policies that prioritise Sri Lanka's interests while fostering international cooperation. At the United Nations (UN) we will always be on the side of those advocating peaceful solutions to conflicts.

National Security

 Invest in modern technology and high-quality intelligence to combat threats to the state, organised crime, and cyber threats. We will create a Cyber Security Agency to counter attacks wherever they come from. We will ensure that the procurement process provides value for money and is in the interests of Sri Lanka rather that purchasing the latest equipment.

Our Neighbours

 we will always maintain good relations with our neighbours and play our full part in organizations like South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Defence Personnel

 The honourable veterans of our army and armed services need to be given the opportunity to re-train should they wish to return to civilian life. We will initiate a new programme to enable them to do so and are forever grateful for their service.

24. A GLOBAL TRADE HUB



As a small nation in the middle of the Indian ocean Sri Lanka harbours a great potential by becoming an indispensable global magnet. In particular we should develop maritime and air transport. We need to seize this moment and invest in the future.

A Balanced Foreign Policy

- Although completed and not properly planned the Hambantota harbour should be put to effective use such as turning into major international maritime hub.
- The Mattala airport is another example of government waste, yet we will ensure it is put to use as a major centre for air cargo. If properly developed it can be landing spot for those wishing to visit for Tourism.



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