
Sri Lanka will rise from the ashes

Monday, 08 June 2009

Last Updated Monday, 08 June 2009

Trevor JAYETILEKE, Consultant in Energy, Logistics and Utilities, Australia. With the defeat of terrorism the Thurstan College educated President Mahinda Rajapaksa the 'Lion of Ruhuna' has captured the imagination of his people as a resolute and judicious leader who sincerely cares for his motherland and all his subjects irrespective of race, religion, ethnicity or dialect. He is a leader with an Iron Fist but also wears a Velvet Glove., and a 'Humble Servant Leader' who prefers to remain a 'Trustee' and The 'Mahinda Chinthana' an Egalitarian Dream for his people. .

The Boxing Day Tsunami of 2004 was a 'Circuit Breaker' which CBK failed to capitalise to our advantage unlike President Udiono BB of Indonesia who grasped the nettle and tamed the Ache Rebels. The election of Mahinda Rajapaksa as President on November 18, 2005 was a seminal moment in our history in that the 'worm finally turned' for Sri Lanka and May 18, 2009 was a 'magnanimous' moment for all Sri Lankans in that we could now breathe real freedom (unlike even Independence from British in 1948) which had to be earned with the blood, sweat and tears of our valiant forces and many innocent bystanders and therefore this victory is the 'Sweetest of all'. President Rajapaksa is not just the Commanding Chief of the Armed Services of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka but our 'Champion'. The Greek philosopher Epictetus has stated that 'It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters' and with a Strong Leader like Mahinda Rajapaksa who has a Vision for his people we can adept, re-invent and respond to our situation and like the Phoenix lift Sri Lanka and all its many diverse people from the Ashes. As Mahatma Gandhi said 'Be the change you want to see in the World'. We Sri Lankans have a role to play in the 'Nation Building' process which will take years but we know that we have the 'Dragon in the Belly' to do it. Even after 30 years of unbridled Terrorism there is no real 'Love Lost' between the Sinhalese and Tamil people and we can live in peace and harmony in the future as brothers and sisters of this blessed island and its natural beauty. To get the Nation Building process going now that we have the writ of the entire expanse of our land and sea we have to get the control of our future firmly in our hands. If we are to do it our way as clearly emphasized by the President at the Galle Face Parade and celebrations held on June 3, any outside vested interest eyeing our natural resources must get this message and back off, and let us take control of our destiny. Since Independence in 1948 we have depended on Tea and Sympathy but the time has arrived for us to change our ways and device a time frame of 15-20 years by which we could have a self-reliant economy to service the needs of our people and not just be content with a comfortable 'Microcosm' confined to the Western Province. We should have development oriented administrative boundaries for Sri Lanka and the nine Provinces could be reduced to about five for Good Governance. This is an idea which has been floating around since the 1960s taking into consideration the water resources of Sri Lanka. We could relive our past glory and make Sri Lanka the granary of the east and be self-sufficient in our staple foods. The Indian Ocean is our oyster and we can now fish the entire waters and also stop poachers who fish in our waters with impunity and take our 'Blue Fin Tuna' found abundantly in the southern waters. Further, when we are rightfully granted the extension of our Exclusive Economic Zone to encompass the 'Pra Lanka Samudra' not only will we be able to exploit the natural resources such as Minerals, Oil and Gas, but also the extended Blue Seas of the Indian Ocean. We may be in the shadow of India geographically but in terms of Maritime Logistics the reverse is also true. Sri Lanka could make the Indian Ocean come alive., and the 'Marine Silk Road' will be dominated by India, Sri Lanka and China. The USA should have no doubts that it will always remain our friend in need and deed, and Sri Lanka will be the Glittering Gem in the British Crown. As proposed by the PM of Australia we could help put together the 'Asia Pacific Community' and till such time Sri Lanka could bring back the 'IOR-ARC' from the back burner. The 18-member Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation could make the Indian Ocean Region an active trading block of three Bln people. For South Asia to become a dynamic entity radical changes should be made without delay. SAARC is moving too slowly to make any major impact to this region of 1.5 Bln people. In my humble opinion SAARC and IOR-ARC should be merged and the joint Secretariat brought to Colombo, the Logistics Hub of South Asia. To have the SAARC Secretariat in the land-locked Katmandu and the IOR-ARC Secretariat in Mauritius a Indian Ocean Atoll far away from the main sea route is not going to help lift South Asia from abject poverty. Three Bln people of this world are living below the poverty line, 600 million people in India have to step outside their dwellings to answer natures calls and 40 Million people in our wonderful world are infected with HIV/Aids. The West that put the whole world into this current induced financial coma summoned a G20 (85 per cent World GDP among them) meeting in London on April 2, 2009 to find a way out of this dilemma but only helped themselves further with lots more trillions and dished out just one trillion to the rest (15 per cent GDP contributors of the World) and even grudging the crumbs from the table to poor Sri Lanka which has the antidote (Mahinda Chinthana) to neutralise Western greed. By 2010 when the Hambantota Harbour Complex is completed we could service the Logistic needs of ships plying in both directions and ensure the energy security to Eastern economic engines like Japan, South Korea and China and also ensure safety from piracy in this part of the world using our world class Navy. According to the wisdom of Issac Newton if Sri Lanka could see a little further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants like India and China. In the 13th Century Ceylon gifted the 'Relic of the Orient' to China through Marco Polo and ever since China and Sri Lanka enjoy a serene friendship that was clearly visible when MR and the Chinese Leader watched the opening ceremony of the Olympics Games in Beijing together on August 8, 2008. The week before the Indian PM was in Colombo shoulder to shoulder with MR at the 14th SAARC Summit and could say without doubt that we are India's ally, and trusted neighbour in the Sub-Continent. The icing on the cake will be when we discover our hydrocarbon potential in the offshore basins of Sri Lanka and this will happen accidentally in accordance with our very ancient name - Serendip. This the only

macroeconomic lever left that could help us to stand on our own two feet and not on those of Co-Chairs who demand their pound of flesh. This is the century of Asia and Sri Lanka its mascot and beacon. Anyone who thought that Sri Lanka was a failed state should think again. May the Triple Gem shine on Sri Lanka., and all its inhabitants live in peace forever. Courtesy: dailynews.lk