
SL hosting C'wealth games would inspire 45 other nations – President

Wednesday, 02 November 2011

Last Updated Wednesday, 02 November 2011

We strongly believe that Sri Lanka's hosting of the Games would inspire over 45 other nations, who have so far never hosted these Games, to come forward and bid to host future Games. These nations would certainly benefit by the massive economic opportunities that host nations derive from hosting Games of this magnitude and scale, President Mahinda Rajapaksa said. As we all know, in 1991, Malaysia bid for, and won the opportunity to host the 1998 Commonwealth Games. At that time, Malaysia was a Fifty Billion Dollar economy, just like Sri Lanka is today. But after winning the bid, Malaysia made massive progress economically and sports-wise and is today hailed as a vibrant, advancing nation, President Rajapaksa said at a sports breakfast meeting organized by Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Perth this morning. The meeting attended by the bid teams for the Sri Lankan city of Hambantota and Queensland's Gold Coast, as well as members of the 71 Commonwealth Games associations who have a vote. President Rajapaksa addressing the gathering said Sri Lanka's preparation and promotion of the bid to host the Commonwealth Games in 2018 has given Sri Lankans the confidence and self-esteem to aspire for even greater heights. "I also believe that our hosting of the Games in 2018, would be a life-changing event in our history since it would provide a great platform to support our high growth momentum. It will also allow our people to display the reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reconciliation that is taking place among the different communities of our country", President further said. The organization of the Commonwealth Games, once every four years, has provided a wonderful opportunity for athletes and sportsmen of countries to gather together, compete with each other, foster friendships, and establish bonds, bonds that bring nations closer. These Games provide a wonderful opportunity for emerging nations to showcase their own countries and strengths, and to proudly take their place in the league of nations. It also helps countries to undertake landmark infrastructure development, he said.

Full text of the speech:

Your Excellency, the Prime Minister of Australia, Your Excellencies, Heads of States of Commonwealth Nations, Secretary General of the Commonwealth, President of the Commonwealth Games Federation, Ladies and Gentlemen. At the outset, I wish to thank the Commonwealth Games Federation for inviting me to participate at this Sports Breakfast Meeting and to share a few thoughts on the occasion. Today, every country focuses on sport to uplift, inspire and energize their people. Undoubtedly, sport has become a universal language in human interactions. The hosting of this Sports Breakfast, organized to coincide with the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting, would therefore further confirm the importance and relevance of sports in nations and people. The Commonwealth Games Federation had given leadership to this aspect of human endeavour by promoting sport in the nations of the Commonwealth. It has also played a key role in this regard. For such efforts, we must all congratulate the CGF. I wish to thank the President of the CGF and his team for the remarkable enthusiasm and professionalism they have shown in the work they do. Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, The organization of the Commonwealth Games, once every four years, has provided a wonderful opportunity for athletes and sportsmen of countries to gather together, compete with each other, foster friendships, and establish bonds, bonds that bring nations closer. These Games provide a wonderful opportunity for emerging nations to showcase their own countries and strengths, and to proudly take their place in the league of nations. It also helps countries to undertake landmark infrastructure development. As we all know, in 1991, Malaysia bid for, and won the opportunity to host the 1998 Commonwealth Games. At that time, Malaysia was a Fifty Billion Dollar economy, just like Sri Lanka is today. But after winning the bid, Malaysia made massive progress economically and sports-wise and is today hailed as a vibrant, advancing nation. My own country, Sri Lanka, has been pleased to prepare and submit a bid from our emerging City of Hambantota to host the Commonwealth Games in 2018 (Twenty eighteen). The preparation and promotion of the bid itself has been rewarding, and I believe, it has given us the confidence and self-esteem to aspire for even greater heights. I also believe that our hosting of the Games in 2018 (twenty eighteen), would be a life-changing event in our history since it would provide a great platform to support our high growth momentum. It will also allow our people to display the reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reconciliation that is taking place among the different communities of our country. Therefore, let me assure the CGF and all the Commonwealth Games Associations that the Sri Lankan Government would give the 2018 (Twenty eighteen) Games its fullest backing, so as to make it a most memorable Games. We also strongly believe that Sri Lanka's hosting of the Games would inspire over 45 other nations, who have so far never hosted these Games, to come forward and bid to host future Games. These nations would certainly benefit by the massive economic opportunities that host nations derive from hosting Games of this magnitude and scale. We, in Sri Lanka, accord high priority to sports, and development of sports is included in the Mahinda Chinthana, the policy agenda of the government. Further, my Government and the private sector have closely combined to produce new and exciting sports persons who can compete with the best sports persons from the rest of the world. As you may remember, Sri Lanka received Test status in Cricket in 1982, and by 1996, was able to win the World Cup. Thereafter, we have been in the World Cup finals twice. Our other sports persons are also keen to emulate the cricketers in the sports of their choice, and I believe that the priority that we now accord to many other sports, would greatly assist them to excel in those sports in the near future. It is worthy of mention that Sri Lanka has the capability and strength to provide all the necessary infrastructure for Games or Sports event of this magnitude. When Sri Lanka hosted World Cup matches in Limited Over Cricket this year, we built two brand new Cricket Stadiums and renovated another in just twelve months. Similarly, Hambantota is being prepared to host the 2018 Games. The ground work has been done to make it a sports city that would be coupled with tourism. While all the venues for many types of sports would be completed by 2015, accommodation for a large influx of tourists would also be in place by that time. In addition, a commercial harbour and an international airport, fully functional by end 2012 are being constructed. That is not all. Our organizers have

studied the positives and negatives of many international sports events and lessons learnt would be used to ensure that Hambantota offers a world class host city for the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Let me now also express my good wishes and congratulations to the Prime Minister of Australia, Her Excellency Julia Gillard for the major contributions Australia has made to world sports in general, and to the Commonwealth Games, in particular. Their dedication to the Commonwealth Games is clearly reflected in Australia graciously hosting the Commonwealth Games on four previous occasions, and we commend them for their enthusiasm in offering yet another beautiful city, Gold Coast to host the Commonwealth Games in 2018. Finally, let me commend Mr. Mike Fennell, President and Mr. Mike Hooper, Secretary General, of the Commonwealth Games Federation for the services they have rendered to the sporting community of the world. The dedication that they and their colleagues in the 71 Commonwealth Games Associations from all parts of the world have displayed in promoting world sports and competition is outstanding. Sri Lanka, as an emerging sporting nation, highly value all these contributions. Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my wish that our collective efforts would inspire the young people of the world who are the life blood and the back-bone of our societies, to participate in a spirit of goodwill and friendship in the world's sports arenas. Through such efforts, we also wish that we can progress rapidly in our respective countries with friendship and equality and to create a better destiny for ourselves in the future. Thank you and May the blessings of the Holy Triple Gem be with you all!