

Honourable Speaker, today is the last day of the budget debate and also the day dedicated for the Committee Stage Proceedings of the Ministry of Finance. I considered it important to come to this august Assembly to present the Budget and also to take part in the Committee Stage debate of the Ministry of Finance. At the Committee Stage Proceedings of the various Ministries throughout the budget debate which spanned over 16 days, Hon. Ministers and Members of Parliament of the ruling Party answered various questions raised by the Hon. Members of the opposition. However, I propose to address few general concerns that cropped up during the budget debate concerns.

This is the first Budget of the coming decade. Honourable Speaker, your signature to be placed on the Appropriation Bill to be enacted as a legal document will be of historic value. You will be placing your signature to endorse the continuance of the Mahinda Chinthana Vision for the Future for another six years so that our national economy will be nurtured especially through our own villages, farms, workplaces, art, culture and values. This Budget is prepared in order to ensure that our country will be transformed, within the next six years, into an emerging economy in Asia that is free from poverty, with a per capita income exceeding US\$ 4,000.

During this budget debate, various members of the Parliament expressed diverse views and we value them. Some of such ideas greatly helped to make our proposals more meaningful. We are humble enough to improve our strategies taking into consideration the rational views. However, some of the other proposals were mere criticisms due to the political ideologies, they

believe in. The target of some such criticisms was to attempt to realize some of their aspirations through us. Within our political and economic policies, there will be no room to implement agendas that are unsuitable to our country. However, I take this opportunity to thank all members of Parliament who assisted to make this budget debate a success.

Honorable Speaker, in the post independence era, there were many progressive leaders with foresight, who represented the villages and endorsed local strength similar to what were implemented through the Mahinda Chinthana Vision for the Future. Those who stand out from amongst them are Mr. D A Rajapaksa from Ruhuna, Sri Nissanka from Sathkorale, Maithripala Senanayake from Rajarata, Mr. Philip Gunawardana from Hewagam Korale, Mr. S A Wickramasinghe from the South, Dr. N M Perera from Sabaragamuwa and Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranayake who led our country with fame. There was a socio economy that they dreamt of. We can now speak of the good things they have done, with pride. The Employees Provident Fund, National Savings Bank, national insurance, transport board are some of the notable initiatives launched by these leaders. They honestly represented initiating irrigation schemes, rights of farmers, public enterprises, land reforms etc. Those initiatives were aimed at creating self-sufficiency in agriculture.

At that time Dr. N M Perera, emphasized on the need to save to foster development in the country. In this effort, compulsory savings accounts were introduced. Since we too have the same visionary approach, and since the *Mahinda Chinthana Vision for the Future*, is to create an environment that ensures our people will not be dependent on others for their living, we have come forward, to introduce pension schemes, for our farmers and the working class and for overseas employees, to make their retirement more meaningful.

It is to realize the socio economic dreams of those leaders that we have allocated funds, heavily to strengthen the village economy, roads, power, irrigation, primary schools , hospitals and livelihood activities, by expanding the “Gama Neguma” initiative to cover all villages. Rs. 20 Bn was allocated for provincial road development so as to ensure that a marked improvement in our road network is achieved within the next two years.

We have made use of the practical experiences gained in the implementation of 72,105 smaller projects, to strengthen villages. The beneficiaries of these projects are in excess of 11.9 Mn. It is to take our country to prosperity and to create a prosperous economy that we align this Budget directly to key sectors of our economy such as agriculture, irrigation, livestock, small and medium enterprises, tourism which is interwoven with our natural resources. This is why we included proposals to this Budget to enhance milk production and to pay Rs. 50 per/litre, to milk farmers, provide concessions to fishermen, promote seed production and encourage the 1 million home gardens project. We gave emphasis to areas which have so far not been addressed through a Budget, such as self employment sector, home economy, small scale economic activities and sales outlets in villages and towns, since they are critical parts of the chain of our economy. We addressed the needs of children and mothers, pre-schools, English language, university facilities, youth and a ‘sport economy’ since we aspire to see the future being a skilled and knowledge based economy. We did so since we believe that the development of our country should be aimed through a vision unique to us while aiming at our own strengths.

Honourable Speaker, The Mahinda Chinthana, Vision for a New Sri Lanka is a strategy filled with practical experiences. Our Government took measures to

ensure that election promises are not confined to the time of elections, but stretch beyond and are transformed as Government policies and strategies. We have transformed into action through this Budget, our 2010 Election Manifesto. We have made provision in this Budget to fulfil many of the election promises. It has laid the foundation to fulfil all of the election promises within the ensuing six years.

During the past five years, our economy has gone tread on the way forward. We have managed to increase the per capita income to about US\$ 2,400 by 2010. We have managed to achieve an 8 percent growth and contain inflation below 7 percent. Even over and above the economic growth that economists are speaking of, we are proud of the fact that we have been able to reduce poverty from 15.2 percent in 2006 to 7.6 percent in 2010 – almost half, consequent to the success of our programs. This is a definite strength to us. It has proved that our strategies are correct.

That progress could be achieved from villages and the plantations sector. This transformation was made possible through the provision of basic needs such as roads, electricity, and drinking water. The people were able to reap best benefits, since the government despite many challenges, continued to expand the provision of the substantial fertilizer subsidy, high producer prices, interventions to purchase produce, distribution of school books and uniforms, education, health and nutritional programs. This Budget has provided over Rs. 10 Bn. for such programs, through line ministries. That is how we have been able to speak of reducing poverty and high Human Development Indexes. The vision of the 2011 Budget was to bring people even closer to such development activities. That is why we have remained continually committed to provide for expenditure associated with the fertilizer and the Samurdhi

concessions, in spite of the many Budget proposals. Rs. 1,500 Million was provided in this Budget for the 'Thripasha' program aimed at benefiting 1.1 Mn. expectant mothers, since nutritional programs need to be expanded.

All those in this Parliament do not have to agree with this Budget. It may not match the vision of some of them. I do not think that they have any alternative vision to privatization, market forces and condemnation of state corporations, to find solutions to the country's problems. However, until they come into power, they are afraid to speak of policies that they firmly believe such as pruning the public sector and privatization. But, that is precisely what they would do if they come into power. That is what history has proved. That is also the reality. They do not concentrate on villages, at least to the extent of developing such villages through our economic resources. They have no love for the country to be able to think of worker welfare, small and medium scale enterprises and adding value to national assets. They have no vision and knowledge to be able to introduce a tax policy, which would promote the middle class towards saving. Those who destroyed national assets and nurtured racism, terrorism and the international agenda which led to blatantly killing people, would take some time to get away from such trends and realize what is best for the country. Unfortunately this minority segment looked at this Budget from racial and malicious angles.

Honourable Speaker, many who spoke on this Budget were of the view that the defence expenditure of the country is too high. They questioned why the Defence Ministry would want so many funds now that terrorism is no more. Our defence expenditure is approximately Rs. 209 Bn. out of which Rs 184 Bn. or 88 percent is on account of salaries, food and uniforms of the security forces. Can we refrain from paying the salaries of the security forces, on the

basis that terrorism is no more? Don't we have to pay the increased salaries to them? Don't our security forces engage in activities of de-mining, resettlement of the displaced, to control floods and develop Colombo. What could have been the damage to the Colombo City if not for the projects launched by the security forces to control floods? Hence, please do not interpret such expenses as meaningless expenditure.

We should in fact not get disturbed of those who have historically taken the view that national aspiration and national security as two separate components. Our priority is, not only to target more expenditure for the benefit of the security forces who have secured our country, but also for the welfare of family members of those who have sacrificed their lives for us. This is why it was proposed to allocate Rs. 3,000 Mn. to enhance the welfare of families of the security forces.

The basis of the Mahinda Chinthana Programme that was approved by our people is to accept that national security and national aspirations are not separate but are one and the same. Our country faced an insecure position till May 19, 2009, throughout the history, since independence, all governments failed to understand that this is one and the same. Ethnic riots in 1958 , the coup in 1962, insurrections in 1971 and 1988, Black July in 1983, and the brutal separatist terrorism that prevailed till May 19, 2009 from the date of the Duraiappa murder are all grave repercussions of not understanding national aspirations and underestimating the importance of national security. The consequent loss to the country is definitely several fold as opposed to the amount spent on national security. The primary duty of the government is not only to secure the people of the country but also those officials who come on diplomatic missions, tourists and visitors as well as the fauna and flora and

the national heritage. We see that incurring such expenditure is a constitutional obligation entrusted on any government. We were able to rescue our country by ending the 26 year long terrorism since we realized and came to terms that national aspirations and national security is one and the same. That effort is essentially a humanitarian exercise but not one of war crimes. It was an effort which managed to end human killings carried out by the terrorist over a period of 26 years.

Not only so Mr. Speaker, after 26 years we have been able to complete a full and a peaceful financial year for this reason. As a result, we have been able to do away with a lot of uncertainties associated with fiscal management. Can we quantify the value of the financial strength gained by the country, the feeling of relief in the minds of the people and the number of lives we have saved? Can we quantify the gain accrued to the business community? Hasn't our country become one that is safe to our people as well as to those foreigners who visit our country? Were we not able to achieve all this since we spent our defence expenditure as a meaningful investment towards humanitarian objectives?

Hon. Speaker, the cause of all tragedies that our country experienced is due to underestimation of the importance of national security. All rulers told the people that they have to look after their own security. Hence, not only our people turn out to be innocent and helpless citizens, they also became victims of robbers, underworld gangs and private security personnel of powerful persons. When the massacre of Buddhist monks took place such as at Aranthalava, the rulers got distant from the people by imposing curfew. But when the Kabethigollewa massacre took place we got closer to the people and ensured their safety. We pledged them that a country free from doubt and fear

will be created. The Defence Ministry expenditure was on account of making this pledge a reality. From this august assembly, this Government wishes to assure - not only to all citizens, but also to all the members of the diplomatic corps and foreigners, that their safety will be assured. Not only that, I also wish to state with responsibility that funds required to ensure this position has been allocated through this Budget.

We have been able to give this assurance from this august assembly, since we incur defence expenditure as an investment. To strategically protect our territories from the sea, air and land on a long term basis, we would have to continue with defence expenditure for national security. Further, steps will be taken to strengthen our defence forces to be deployed as peace keeping forces in other countries. National defence expenditure will be routed to strengthen the talents of our security forces so that they would become one of the world's best disciplined and professional armies. We will thereby give priority to strengthen the investment climate in our country. Hence irrespective of 'who bears, what ever view', our Government will not hesitate to ensure that our defence expenditure will be managed in a manner that will suite the needs of our country. We must always understand that, such expenditure is necessary to ensure that the brutal separatist terrorism that occurred in the past will never be experienced again.

Hon. Speaker, some endeavoured to undervalue the good effects of this Budget by making humiliating criticisms that although the Budget as a whole is good, the Government may not be competent to execute the same. Since our Government launched the humanitarian operation, first in Mavilaru and expanded the same to cover the entire East within an year, and further held elections in such areas and brought such areas to a democratic process and

thereafter liberated the entire North from terrorism and fed and resettled around 300,000 innocent people having demined the area, we do not consider it a major challenge having to develop the country, covering every village. We will dedicate ourselves to such development in the same manner that we dedicated ourselves to the eradication of terrorism.

Having to develop the country, may be a challenge to those who were not able to combat terrorism, eradicate poverty and double the per capita income within five years, or those who call themselves intellectuals while not having managed even a boutique- leave alone a country, and for certain non-governmental organizations. But it is not a challenge to us. I could state so because of the favourable sentiments expressed on this Budget by our public servants, the general public, trade unions and the patriotic business community. There is a trust built in the minds of all those people that our Government is dedicated to develop our country. Hence, they do not solely stick to their demands. They are of the view that their issues can be resolved through discussions. They have placed the country before themselves. We will give priority to the Budget and the development efforts. All enabling laws required to give effect to the Budget will be prepared prior to end March 2011. I will commence the first progress review under this Budget at provincial level in March. This time, all opposition members of Parliament will also be invited for these review meetings. Let all of us get together and rectify any shortfalls in this development process and be dedicated to develop our villages at the earliest.

Hon Speaker, we brought down inflation that everybody was speaking of from 26 percent to 6 percent, to bring down the cost of living. In order to maintain the inflation at the same level, the Budget deficit was contained to 6.8

per cent of GDP. This Budget proposed to introduce a new Food Security Card for the benefit of those affected by market competition. Since 2002, the Pay as You Earn and Income Tax thresholds has not been increased. We were able to increase the disposable income of wage earners by reducing these taxes. This is a major concession especially to those engaged in professional services. When the business community was receptive of the Budget, the criticism of some was 'let us see whether investors would in fact come'. The ulterior motive of this was to underestimate the positive response of the private sector. The question for some was as to why those businessmen who were in fact nurtured by them were stating that this Budget is favourable. All this demonstrate that there is a vehement effort to somehow destabilize the positive effects of the peaceful environment experienced in many facets of the country, being transformed into wholesome economic development. The intention is to make political mileage even at the cost of economic development.

Hon. Speaker, the independence of our judicial system is protected by our Constitution. There is a orchestrated move to attack and condemn our judiciary so as to make our legal framework susceptible to foreign Courts. Internationalization of the judiciary is the ulterior motive of this move. Our Supreme Court has amply demonstrated that solutions to various problems cropping up within our legal framework can be found having adhered with international norms. The Lessons Learnt and Reforms Commission was appointed to study causes of failure of the peace accords that were aimed at eliminating terrorism and to study the experiences of humanitarian operations and make recommendations to the Government. Such recommendations proposed from time to time have been implemented by the Government. Our country has demonstrated maturity we have gained in

handling such issues. Any party can make submissions to this Commission. As an autonomous state, we cannot permit attempts to underestimate such measures in order to internationalize our legal framework and our judicial system. We consider that shielding the independence of our Judiciary from such influences and strengthening our Judiciary is as important as national security.

Hon. Speaker, attempting to create racism through the budget debate is very dangerous. We can see a close connection between the ideas of some who opposed this Budget and those who were instrumental in sabotaging the Speech I was to deliver at the Oxford University, alleging war crimes on the part of the Government. This reveals that there are attempts to once again promote terrorism, once again.

22. The books submitted along with this Budget show that our Government has entered into a meaningful and a massive development program. US\$ 2,129 Mn. has been spent to the development in the North alone. These details are contained in the book which was tabled in Parliament along with this Budget, in all three languages titled "Towards an Emerging Economy in Asia" published by the External Resources Department (Note - I). Similarly, the crux of my speech which was to be delivered at the Oxford University was on our vision towards a political solution to establish democracy in the North and the manner in which the administration of such areas will be approached with the involvement of the people. Our focus is for a political solution which would strengthen the people and the economy at village level. The latest strategy of the terrorists is to prevent the world from knowing of these strategies which was manifested in the international arena. Parallel to the Budget process, we can see both local and international forces which are trying to change to worse,

the favourable and peaceful environment evolving in the country, immerging in the international arena. This proves that such moves and activities of those who have neither patriotism nor any feel for our country and are dependent on Non Governmental Organizations, is not a new trend.

People in our country are well aware as to who joined the foreign forces by betraying the sovereignty of the country, in promoting the suspension of GSP, despite the Government's and the Private Sector's calls to secure the same. Through this they intended to economically weaken and place the Government in difficulty, through the closure of factories and consequent unemployment. They planned to do so with the hope that such situation anticipated would be favourable to them at the Presidential Election. Our Government considers that the country's sovereignty is more important and that even despite not been able to secure GSP concessions, the economy could still be maintained. Our people gave us immense strength in this situation.

Hon. Speaker, in order to vitiate the good impact of this Budget, some alleged that no allocations have been made for the development of the North, and thereby tried to spread the germ of racism. Development is vitally important in the attempt to find an equitable political solution to unify the Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim communities. Therefore we gave priority to develop the North and East. The state machinery was mobilized in this effort. For this the Government service was launched. These areas were gradually restored to normalcy and the democratic rights of the people were also restored. Money has been allocated under all Ministries for the development activities in the North. While this being the factual situation, we witnessed in London, the agenda of a group of activists who have not lived even a single day in this country, but call themselves the saviours of the Tamil people. In the same

manner the GSP issue was dealt with, these people have adopted a popular method of obtaining visas to go overseas, by alleging that there are human rights violations in the country. These people are engaged in this racket with a view to collect funds and to secure political leadership on the pretext that they are protecting the minority and thereby live luxurious lives overseas. Their intention is to tarnish the image of our country.

At this moment that we have concluded the Budget debate and are stepping into the new decade, this is the biggest challenge that this Parliament need to take cognizance of. Businessmen who spent large amounts of money on terrorists who fought while hiding in the jungles and Non Governmental Organizations that were facilitated by such businesses are still engaged in illegal money transactions. These people are carrying out the same activities to separate the country through dreams of a Tamil Ealam. Except the absence of bomb blasts within the country, hidden terrorist forces are still active outside the country. It is the utmost responsibility of all Members of Parliament who have taken the oath to uphold the Constitution of the country, to save the country from this dangerous threat. Not only the resources required for such purposes need to be provided by this Parliament , it is also essential to refrain from engaging in activities that would damage the image of the country as a national duty.

Hon. Speaker, there were discussions on Government debt during this budget debate. However, this government took up the challenge to develop the country, while also assuming the responsibility of filling the lacuna created by the previous regimes. By the time our Government assumed office, Sathosa had been destroyed. The Paddy Marketing Board was closed. Government Corporations were being privatized. During the period of 2002- 2004 steps

were initiated to dispose of institutions such as People's Bank, the Department of Inland Revenue, the Customs, the Railway and the Central Transport Board. All Governments in power in the post independence era have obtained loans to meet Government expenditure. However, there was no infrastructure improvements required for the country's development. If such improvement were made, by now there should have been sufficient expressways, railway lines, ports and power generation stations. This was not so at the time we assumed office in 2005. What was prevalent is that public debt exceeded GDP of the country. The liberal ideologies that were adopted to solve the economic problems during the period of 2002-2004, only sped up the disposal of state assets as opposed to reducing Government debt. Government debt was 105 per cent of GDP.

Hon. Speaker, our Government has obtained loans from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank as well as from other friendly countries for large scale development projects. But these loans were not raised having agreed to privatization, nor having agreed to prune the fertilizer subsidy extended to develop agriculture, nor having agreed to increase taxes and also not by agreeing to sell even the loss making corporations leave alone agreeing to sell the profitable corporations. We obtained these loans having explained to donors, the economic pros and cons of these projects aimed at improving infrastructure to augment state assets. Even the donors were convinced that the efficiency gains of these projects will be in excess of these loans. We built large scale power plants such as the Puttalam Coal Power plant, Upper Kothmale hydro power plant, Kerawalapitiya power plant, having obtained only such loans. The outcomes of such loans are already being experienced by the people of this country. From the day that our Government assumed office, not only that there has not

been a single power cut, but nearly 90 per cent of the population have access to electricity. When 'Electricity for All' becomes a reality by 2012, the benefits of these projects implemented having obtained loans will be further enjoyed by the people. The consequent fuel savings and the broadening of production will be sufficient to pay off such loans.

The numbers of countries and organizations who are willing to grant us loans have increased due to the high economic value of the projects promoted by us. The Colombo South Port is being constructed utilizing a loan obtained by us from the Asian Development Bank. That is the highest loan ever provided to us by the Asian Development Bank. This is an excellent investment, not only to increase the capacity of the Colombo Port but also to make Colombo a commercial hub. The Port and the Airport at Magampura - Ruhuna is also being built, utilizing loans obtained from friendly countries. These projects are now nearing completion. Hence a new economy will emerge in those areas. Railway lines and roads in the North are also being constructed with loans obtained from friendly countries. When these projects are completed by 2012, the Northern economy will be strong enough to pay off such debt. The Moragahakanda irrigation project is also being constructed on the same basis. The water resources associated with this project will be sufficient to make the North Central and the Eastern provinces economically self-sufficient. The additional production consequently generated, will enable us to grow our own food and ensure food security within the country. We must understand that the value of such infrastructure that is being built will be far in excess of the total of the related loans obtained. New roads, houses, shops, shopping complexes and new towns that are emerging provide signals to us on how speedy we could repay such loans. That is why the GDP growth is in excess of loans obtained. Government debt has reduced to around 80 percent of GDP,

since we are creating assets required for national development, while reducing the debt burden. This is while shouldering the debt burden created by all previous Governments. However, I wish to remind the so called debt experts that we will be able to reduce the country's debt burden to 70 per cent of the GDP within the next 3 years, while reducing the debt burden created by successive Governments without laying the blaming on them.

Hon. Speaker, there were a series of allegations made against several Government Corporations, during today's proceedings and the Committee Stage proceedings of the various Ministries. From the day 'Mihin Lanka' Airline was established, there were attempts to show that it is a major burden to the country. Any business would need a basic capital and sufficient time to reach the profit making stage. Mihin Lanka commenced its operations with a low capital of Rs. 300 Mn. It was a small amount such as US\$ 3 Mn. However, today it has emerged as a Government airline with two aircrafts, flying to India, Singapore and the Middle-East. The losses incurred in the initial years are now reducing. Today the commercial value of this company is 20 times as that of its initial capital. By strengthening this airline and the Sri Lankan Airline, we propose to make them strongest airlines in Asia. The Government did not own any of this prior to 2005.

Hon. Speaker, the profit of the Peoples' Bank which was once earmarked to be privatized, is over Rs. 6 billion. There are over 50 profitable Governmental Corporations. (Note II). The losses of loss making corporations are also reducing. Certain corporations have been weakened consequent to decisions taken to wind them up. Electricity Board and corporations such as the Petroleum Corporation suffered losses due to the huge subsidies granted by them in the year 2008, in the wake of high oil prices and the global recession.

If both the Electricity Board and Petroleum Corporation performed without resorting to grant such subsidies, we would not have been able to make our country this strong. Such losses are in fact subsidies divided among everybody in the country. The loss incurred by the Electricity Board this year is less than in the previous years. However, it still has to set-off previous debt and losses. Due to investments we have made for the next three years, we are confident that we will be able to transform CEB to be a profitable business. Thereby we will be able to reduce the quantity of the oil to be imported by the Petroleum Corporation as well. Sathosa that was once closed has been reopened and Lak Sathosa has been added once again to our trade network. Even the Parliamentary COPE Committee has agreed that it is a very efficient institute. The Paddy Marketing Board has once again been strengthened as an institution that facilitates paddy storage. We intend to reduce transport losses by developing railway lines, increasing number of railway carriages and by improving the efficiency of the CTB.

Hon. Speaker, in addition to strengthening Government Corporations, formerly privatized companies such as the Colombo Gas Company, Sri Lankan Air Lines and Sri Lanka Insurance have been taken back under Government control and now function as very profitable institutions. Therefore our positive attitude towards Government Corporations has become more meaningful to the country as opposed to the approach that prevailed by privatizing and ruining them. I would like to caution those who are being critical of Government Corporations, to also consider the public services provided by such corporations.

Hon. Speaker, through this Budget we proposed to simplify the tax system that prevailed in our country. We believe that the harassments and fears

caused to the ordinary businessmen and ordinary income earners have been removed. The joint tax system administration of the Provincial Councils and the Government will simplify the system for the tax payers, while enabling the PCs and the Government to split the revenue. Some came up with a political criticism that Provincial Councils get undermined through this mechanism. We believe that this will enable the Provincial Councils to execute their mandate effectively by being able to collect provincial revenue in an efficient manner. Since the general public and businessmen would benefit from a simple tax system, we believe that the economy would hence get strengthened. We proposed to write-off tax arrears of small and medium businesses that are below Rs. 100 million, especially in order to grant relief to businessmen in the North and East who found it difficult to pay their tax liabilities during the conflict period. We did not come forward to grant a tax amnesty for high earning businessmen as was done through the 2002 Tax Act. Our intention was to grant concessions to ordinary businessmen to enable them to foster their businesses in the peaceful economic environment that dawned after 26 years. This Budget has fulfilled this objective.

Hon. Speaker, there were several other questions raised by those who criticized this Budget. One such concern is about the salaries of Government Servants. Their view was that the salary increase is not adequate for the Government Servants. However, a calculation will reveal that every Government Servant would get a minimum salary increase of Rs. 1,200/- . Many Pensioners will get a monthly increase of Rs. 1,000/- . Steps were taken to remove salary anomalies of the Government Servants and teachers. As a result many Government Servants and teachers will receive a salary increase of around Rs. 2,500. It was further proposed to expand the medical facilities extended to Government Servants and pensioners. The opposition that

recommended a high salary increase is well aware that it would cause an unbearable burden to the ordinary people. They know that if there is unbearable salary increase, it will result in raising prices. What they attempted to achieve is to destabilize the economy by directing the country to an unstable path, since such attempts to destabilize the country through terrorism have failed. Their sole intention is to destabilize the country either through terrorism or any other alternative mechanism. It is surprising to note the concerns presently expressed by those who did not care for the state sector while they were in power. It may be difficult for those who made mere suggestions to make unrealistic salary increases, and for those who are well aware that they will not get an opportunity to give such increases, to understand our policies.

Hon. Speaker, if we are to transform the peace we achieved after 26 years of war into an era of economic prosperity, we have to strengthen this peace dividend. Every segment of this country will be able to benefit from the so called peace dividend, only if we can create opportunities of economic prosperity. The entire country should remain safe, if we are to achieve such economic prosperity. Development for peace and peace for development and national security required to achieve both such objectives is essential. Although terrorism has been eradicated from our motherland, those who led terrorism through foreign financing and the international forces, have not yet been totally eradicated. Therefore the time is right for all Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burgers and those living abroad, to unite to rescue our country from such forces. This is the time that all Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burgers who love this country should unite and be dedicated to assist in the development of the country. It is only then that we can sustain the freedom we have won. I invite all honourable members of this august Assembly to get

together, along with this Budget so that the aspirations of our younger generation could be hence realized in the coming decade.

Hon. Speaker, I wish to again thank all Members of Parliament who expressed views, during the Committee Stage proceedings of the Ministry of Finance and Planning. I extend my sincere thanks to all those in the Parliament headed by the Hon. Speaker, Editors of the Hanzard and the staff. I also wish to extend my thanks to the Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the officials, the Governor of the Central Bank and officials, Chairmen and officials of the relevant Corporations and Boards.

**May the Triple Gem Bless You!**

**Wishing you all, A Bright Future.**