

MANIFESTO OF THE UNP PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE
RANIL WICKREMESINGHE

Leader of the Opposition and Presidential candidate of the UNP Ranil Wickremesinghe today launched his manifesto for the upcoming Presidential election.

The manifesto has two sections. The first section has three themes; end to hunger, jobs for abilities and end to separatism. The second section deals with twenty areas ranging from tsunami reconstruction to women's rights and foreign affairs.

Following is a brief summary of the contents of the manifesto. A more thorough translation of the original Sinhala language document will follow.

SECTION 1

1. An end to hunger

Declare war on high cost of living

- The most serious issue faced by the people of Sri Lanka today is the unbearable cost of living caused by irresponsible printing of money by the Government to pay for unsustainable government expenditure. We will put an **immediate stop to this reckless money printing activity, control inflation to bring down the cost of living.**
- Until it becomes possible for us to create a new low inflation regime, we will create a consumer relief programme. Under this programme we will immediately reduce the prices of essential food items and promise not to let these prices increase at least for one year. Under this scheme we will initially offer **400g packet of milk powder at Rs. 139, 500g of dhal at Rs. 34 and 500g of dried sprats at Rs. 94.** This programme will be reviewed every six months and include new food items as necessary.

Siya Saviya programme

- We will introduce the "Siya Saviya" programme to alleviate poverty of those in the Samurdhi programme. Under this scheme we will introduce a mechanism to provide **food stamps ranging from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 4,000 to all Samurdhi recipients.**

2. Jobs for abilities

Youth revolution

- We will completely **eliminate unemployment** by creating employment opportunities in the state and private sectors as well as foreign and self employment schemes. We will **create 200,000 job opportunities in the first year and increase it to 1,000,000 jobs in five years. This we will increase to 2,000,000 in the next five years.**

- We will create **five economic zones** of the country and **increase the economic growth rate to 10% an year** by linking up with the fast growing regional economies.
- Through this programme we will ensure that **every person's income would be more than doubled in less than 10 years.**
- We will provide **redeemable vouchers that could be used to pay for course fees at accredited technical and vocational institutes.** These vouchers would help youngsters to enroll in courses that have market value.
- We will help those thousands of stranded graduates who were swindled by the UPFA government to get permanent jobs depending on available vacancies in the state sector or help them find jobs in the private sector.
- We will reconstitute curricula in degree programmes to ensure that students are able to obtain an education that would ultimately help them find good employment.

Agriculture and Fisheries

- Today the village economy is in ruins. We will revitalize the village economy. We will help farmers market their produce both domestically and internationally. **We will create a Perakum era.**
- We will **guarantee a price of Rs. 17 a kilo for paddy for the next harvest.** We will establish a workable system to ensure a reasonable guaranteed price for paddy thereafter.
- We will provide a meaningful fertilizer subsidy. **All types of fertilizer will be sold at Rs. 550 per 50 kilo bag.**
- We will go back to the 2002 policy of not importing rice. Furthermore we will help increase the paddy yield up to 6 MT per hectare.
- To stabilize the price of producer prices we will establish a **“produce marketing agency”**
- In order to **directly target the subsidies to the farmer** we will introduce a farmer relief voucher which can be redeemed for agricultural services and implements.
- We will formulate legislation to ensure that **farmers get freehold title** to the land they were supposed to get **from “Swarna Bhoomi” and “Jaya Bhoomi”** schemes. Further we will take steps to establish a programme to **transfer title of share-cropping (“ande”) land to the farmer** with the agreement of the owner through securitized paper.

- A new fund will be established to uplift the lives of villagers; with **each village being provided with an initial sum of Rs. 1 million.**
- Farmers today are buckling under heavy debt. We will introduce a **scheme to waive off agriculture loans.** We will also provide agriculture loans at subsidized interest rates.
- We will guarantee **Rs. 25 per litre of milk** to the dairy farmer.
- To help the **small tea estate owner**, we will **increase the current Rs. 150,000 subsidy to Rs. 200,000.**
- We will undertake a special programme to rehabilitate the fishermen who were affected by the tsunami.
- On the one hand we will promote the consumption of fish among our people and on the other we will **improve the entire fishing industry** by introducing new technology. We will upgrade all fisheries harbors to top standard.
- In order to encourage young fishermen to exploit opportunities in deep sea fishing, we will establish a programme to provide **subsidized credit for multi-day fishing crafts.**
- We will create a special **life insurance scheme for fishermen and their families** along with a special investment plan.

Small and medium scale entrepreneurs

- We will focus attention on traditional handicraft and provide support and guidance for SME to explore international markets.
- We will take steps to realign the **construction industry to face the challenges of meeting the demand of rapid economic growth.**
- After careful examination we **will do away with taxes and levies that are not conducive to the growth in the gems and jewellery trade.**
- **We will stop the export of uncut gemstones.** We will introduce a fair and just way for gem mining on state land.

3. Defeat to Separatism; Uniting Sri Lanka

- We will bring about a **permanent resolution to the ethnic problem through a political solution based on a United Sri Lanka.**
- **A consensus reached between the UNP and the UPFA on the ethnic problem, the agreement arrived at between the Government and the LTTE and the Oslo and Tokyo declaration, which guarantees the unity, democratic character and territorial Integrity of Sri Lanka, has created the framework of a solution acceptable to all communities of the country.**
- **Guaranteeing the security and protection of the Eastern province, while guaranteeing Muslim representation in the peace talks, we will also ensure that at all times, the views of the Muslim community are taken into consideration.**
- **I request from the people of Sri Lanka for a mandate to reach a permanent political solution within this framework. I also request from the people for a mandate to discuss and reach a consensus with the SLFP to proceed as above.**
- **We will create a separate Ministry for the war displaced people in the North and the East.**

SECTION 2

1. A new beginning

While the other countries that got devastated by the tsunami are steadily coming back to normalcy our people are still suffering.

- We will appoint a competent authority for tsunami reconstruction, give him adequate power and **complete all tsunami reconstruction within one year.**
- We will immediately do **away with the 100/200 meter ban** on reconstruction except in vulnerable areas. Instead we will educate the people on appropriate construction in those areas and **introduce a tsunami early warning system.**
- **All partly damaged houses will be reconstructed by our government in 3 months and completely damaged houses in 6 months. If title is not held by the inhabitants of these houses we will introduce a programme to provide them with free hold land.**

2. Women's empowerment

The UNP is for gender equality. Women are today the spine of our economy; be it in the apparel industry, in plantations or employed in foreign lands. But they suffer tremendous hardships.

- **We will listen to what women have to say.** Not only listen, we will include women in all decision making processes. **We will create an environment for women to develop their lives in any which way they see fit.**
- We will **equalize the daily wage of women and men** in daily wage jobs.
- We will introduce a women's charter.
- We will take steps to **ban the dowry system** that has made being born female a burden to the family.
- Husband and wife will be **treated equally when applying for subsidies and housing loans etc.**
- We will change the police ordinance to ensure that **every police station has a women's unit** specially to deal with women's issues.

- **No bail will be given to rapists.**

3. This is our School

Today getting a decent education is a battle. Getting one's child in to a 'good' school has become a struggle that most parents don't win. Only the affluent city dwellers are able to get their children in to the few elite schools.

- We believe that it is **every child's right to get a good education**. To protect this right we will establish a **3 year programme called "Our School" to develop every school** in the country.
- After discussions with school development societies and alumni, development plans for each school will be formulated.
- Inter alia this programme will introduce a system where **staff of each school will be its own**, not seconded by the central or provincial basis. After two years the **top 1,000 schools will be selected and provided with all facilities to be upgraded to the level of 'popular' schools**.
- We will **improve the quality of the university education and take appropriate steps to complete the degree in the specified time period**.
- A new national programme called **'English for All,' will be launched to improve the ability to read, write and converse in English of our people within 6 years**.
- We will increase the budgetary allocations for education.

4. A home for everyone

A home is a basic human right.

- We will introduce a programme to create a **'house owning democracy'** in Sri Lanka.
- To encourage house building and purchasing of houses we will **establish a national housing fund**.
- We will **extend President Premadasa's concept of houses for the poor through the "Grama Rajjya" and "Nagara Rajjya" programmes**.
- We will work on a programme to **provide ownership to the houses built on "Swarna Bhoomi" and "Jaya Bhoomi" land**. We will also introduce a mechanism to give **ownership to those living in estate houses**.

- We will **waive off all loans and interest given under the 1 million and 1.5 million houses programme and provide ownership of those houses to the people living in them.**
- We will **immediately provide freehold ownership to tenants in housing schemes such as the Maligawatte Scheme and Soyzapura Scheme; those started prior to 1994.**

5. **A healthy tomorrow**

Decent healthcare is a patient's right. But today it is a struggle to save life from the jaws of death at many public healthcare facilities.

- We will discuss with all stakeholders in the health sector and **formulate a patient's charter and create a special board to implement the same.**
- We will **create a national health insurance scheme where any citizen, immaterial of income could obtain services from any state or private hospital.**
- We will **create a special department for the disabled.** We will also empower the national policy for the disabled by enacting it through Parliament.
- We will **ban smoking in public places.**
- We did not provide liquor licenses during our time in office. Likewise we will establish a new excise regulation.
- We will **launch a campaign against alcoholism** and setup special provisions to treat and rehabilitate alcoholics and drug addicts.
- We will provide maximum **support to expand ayurvedic medicine internationally.**

6. **Transport**

It's a daily war getting to work or school. Transport and roads are in ruin and road safety is in an appalling state.

- Under a new land transport policy we will **restore both public and private transport to an acceptable level within 3 years.**

- We will introduce a new **land transport bill that will have special powers** to undertake necessary steps to improve all modes of land transport **including safeguarding discipline in public transport services.**
- We will take strong steps to **ensure road discipline.**
- We will take measures to **train and safeguard the jobs of those engaged in private bus services and also to include them in EPF and ETF.**
- We will establish a **three wheeler secretariat** to look into grievances of three wheeler drivers.
- We will repair all roads from A1 to rural roads measuring some 9,000kms.
- We will **implement the construction of 6 expressways** identified in the infrastructure planned unveiled by our 2002-2004 government.

7. Working people

We will adhere to recommendations of the public services commission in hiring and promotions.

- We **will correct all salary anomalies within 18 months** and ensure that such anomalies don't recur through a permanent salary commission.
- We will **provide every state sector employee a special allowance each December** in consideration of the additional expenses at the beginning of the year.
- **We will extend the no-pay leave scheme to work in the private sector in Sri Lanka now available only to work overseas.**
- We will reintroduce the vehicle permit entitlement for all officer grade employees with over 5 years of service.
- We will **eliminate the anomalies in the pension schemes of government employees by reintroducing the previous UNP government's policy and equate the pension to the salary as at 2004.12.01.**
- We will introduce a mechanism for **workers to benefit from profits of corporations.**

8. Good governance

Even though citizens expect good governance it is a difficult challenge under the present political climate.

- We will create a **“Good Governance Council” with power to prosecute politicians** who violate the codes of good governance.
- We will also look in to establishing a **“National Political Commission” to consider among other things the suitability of potential candidates for political office.** A parliamentary committee will be setup to consider this.
- We will **re-establish an efficient government service like in the Premadasa era.**
- To ensure that public funds are utilized in the most appropriate way, we will **establish a National Audit Commission within one year.**
- To create a **society free of bribery and corruption** we will strengthen the laws necessary to prevent such activity. We will work together with ADB-OECD programme to eradicate bribery and corruption in the region.
- We will enforce the regulations in the Lima declaration to prevent bribery and corruption at highest levels in government.

9. Village Government and City Government

We will provide a government to the village and to the city; a system where certain powers now held only by the capital city is devolved to the villages and cities.

- We will establish a system **where village and city level development activity would be handed over to the ‘Gram Rajjya’ and “Nagara Rajjya” authorities.**

10. A righteous society

It is the government’s responsibility to create an environment in which citizens could develop their lives around good moral and virtues.

- We will establish a council comprising of religious leaders from all religions to advice the government on creating an environment fit for the above.

- Under the guidance of the Prelates we will establish a Supreme Council of Maha Sangha.
- We will establish a special programme **to help Buddhist priests learn Pali language for the purpose of spreading the Buddhist message internationally.**
- We will again **make Sri Lanka the centre of Theravada Buddhism** where various institutes and programmes will be established to spread Buddhism internationally.
- We will build the world's largest dagaba in Sri Lanka
- We will **repair all Hindu places of worship that have been damaged by the war and fallen out of maintenance over the years.**
- We will **create an environment for all Christians to practice their religion freely.**
- We will **rebuild all tsunami and war damaged Muslim places of worship in the original sites.**

11. Defense

A study of our defense policy will be made and a 10 year defense plan will be drawn up.

- We will build a **defense force that is equipped with all modern equipment and ready for 21st century requirements.**
- We will **immediately enforce the salary increment programme for the three armed forces that was halted with the President taking over Defense Ministry in 2003.**
- We will **establish a National Defense University.**
- We will increase the compensation given at the time of death of armed force personnel.
- We will **create a special Ranawiru Ministry to look into the affairs of the families of veterans.**

12. Law and order

- We will **create a modern police force that is capable of meeting the needs of Sri Lanka until 2020.**
- Under a special ordinance and without creating anomalies in the current system we will **incorporate the reserve police carders in to the regular police service.**
- We will introduce a mechanism to **make the employment of “Grama Arakshaka” force and Security assistant officers permanent.**

13. Economic growth

To gradually improve the social economic conditions of our people and to alleviate poverty, we will continue with the successful open economic policies.

- By immediately increasing our economic growth rate to 10% and maintaining it at that level for 10 years, **we will create 3 million jobs, double everyone’s real income and increase income growth by more than inflation.**
- We will **make Sri Lanka a competitive value adding hub for industry, services and agriculture.**
- **We will make Sri Lanka the commercial hub of the Indian Ocean.**

14. Power and energy

We are facing a crisis in power and energy like never before. The crisis has been exacerbated due to the fact that no new plans to address this crisis were drawn up in the last two years.

- We will immediately **pass a new energy bill that will provide us with power to deal with energy security, conservation and development.**
- We will complete all documentation for the Keravalapitiya combined cycle plant during the course of 2006.
- We will construct either coal or gas power stations in Hambantota and Trincomalee.
- We will help **increase the number of small and mini hydro plants** coming on line. We will also **support alternate power development.**

15. Problems in the East

- We will establish a mechanism that will **ensure the peace and security of all people living in the Eastern province.**
- A **Muslim delegation shall be included in the peace talks** and views of the Muslim population will be ascertained at all times.
- We will speed up the post tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation of the East under the to-be appointed competent authority.
- We will **improve the standard of the Eastern University.**
- A **road network linking the proposed Wellawaya airport and the Batticaloa district** shall be built. We will also **build a road linking Kandy with kalmunai.**
- We will establish **free trade zones in the Eastern province** to provide employment to the people of the area.

16. Uplifting the estate community

- We will increase the opportunities for the children of estate workers to enter higher education institutes.
- We will **upgrade 7 estate schools into national school status.** We will provide necessary funds and teachers for its maintenance.
- We will **increase employment opportunities in Government sector** for the estate community
- A **special development plan for the estate community will be launched.** Under this plan we will enhance the infrastructure, housing and other facilities.

17. Art and culture

- While protecting our heritage we will develop plans to take to the global stage our local talent.
- We will **establish a design and technology centre and through it we will link the many rural institutes to provide opportunities for students at those institutes to develop their skills.**

- We will **establish a University of Arts that will produce world class graduates.**
- Sri Lanka will be made a **heaven for making films and a centre for service provision for the global film industry.**

18. Sport

- In order to uplift the level of sports in Sri Lanka, we will **make several sweeping changes in the sports sphere.** Inter alia, we will establish a Sports Development Authority.

19. Foreign affairs

- We will formulate our foreign policy in a way most advantageous to us. **We will improve our relations with every country.**
- In terms of South Asia we will implement to the letter the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with India; strengthen the free trade agreement with Pakistan; enter into a economic partnership agreement with Maldives in addition to starting discussions for free trade pacts with Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.
- We will enter into discussions with the US and EU to obtain duty free access of our apparel into their markets.

20. On public service

The President is the Chief Executive Officer of the country and requires only the power necessary to discharge the duties of the CEO.

- Therefore I will consider the **Office of President as a Public Servant.**
- I will **remove the title “Excellency” from the President** and also do away with the many glittering emblems associated with the Presidency.
- I will **turn the Presidents House in to a 24 hour operations centre for the purpose of public service.**