

**Address of
The Hon. R. Premadasa, M.P.
Prime Minister of the
Democratic Socialist Republic
of Sri Lanka,
at EXPO'88, Brisbane, Australia,
19th July 1988.**





PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARIAT
LIBRARY

**THE ADDRESS OF THE HON. R. PREMADASA,
PRIME MINISTER OF SRI LANKA,
AT THE SRI LANKA DAY CEREMONY
AT EXPO 88 IN BRISBANE,
AUSTRALIA - 19TH JULY 1988**

PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARIAT
1100 A/011

THE ADDRESS OF THE HON. R. PREMADASA,
PRIME MINISTER OF SRI LANKA,
AT THE SRI LANKA DAY CEREMONY
AT EXPO 88 IN MELBOURNE,
AUSTRALIA - 19TH JULY 1988

Today is Sri Lanka Day at Expo 88. I thank you for having invited Mrs. Premadasa and myself to be your Chief Guests. For us, visits to these expositions, are occasions for paying tribute to the finest technological achievements of man. What we have been able to see at this 23rd World Expo symbolizes these vast strides of mankind. Indeed, they constitute a memorial to human creativity and ingenuity.

It is specially appropriate that World EXPO 88 is being held in Australia. This year, the Australian nation celebrates its bicentenary of permanent settlement on this island continent. In two hundred years, the marriage of human energy to

technology has produced a great nation. Your prosperity is a beacon to others in the southern hemisphere. It also teaches us an unique lesson. And what is it? The Australian experience teaches us that human beings from diverse backgrounds and different levels of society can live together in social harmony. Therefore the Australian experiment is a lesson for all of us. It has been enriched by cultures and peoples of so many countries. It has been sustained by equality of opportunity devoid of entrenched class barriers.

Now, to this vast and enterprising continent, comes a luminous technological event—EXPO 88. Just as Australia

symbolizes man's sense of contentment, EXPO 88 symbolizes our sense of intellectual exploration. And, here in Brisbane is a perfect setting for this confluence of the human spirit and the human mind; a confluence that gives birth to modern technology.

The theme of EXPO 88 is, as you know, *Leisure in the Age of Technology*. Your motif links together two of the central features of our contemporary times. For many societies, particularly those of affluence, recreation and technology have a great importance. They are the products of human creativity. They are the products of human ingenuity combining the efficient use of time and technology. In fact, we are told by social planners and sociologists, that modern society cannot exist in a stable or sensible manner *without* leisure and technology. Conventional wisdom tells us that the secret of social progress rests in

balancing and managing leisure and technology. Much of the effort that has gone into EXPO 88 is directed at demonstrating the interaction between these two elementary conditions.

However, for many of us in poorer developing countries, both recreation and technology are not elementary. They are luxuries. Nothing symbolizes the development gap and the affluence abyss more than the comparative presence of leisure and technology. What is a necessity for the prosperous is a luxury for the large mass of the poorer fellow-citizens of our world.

To the average man and woman in the Third World, leisure is a distant hope. It is a distant dream. The backbreaking toil of daily life leaves no spare time for recreation. The burdens of living—of manual labour; of collecting firewood; of

household work; of caring for the family—are more than a day's haul. If there is some extra time, it often goes into religious observances. The notion of leisure is often a dream framed against the harsh reality of existence.

Yet, there is a kernel of nobility in this existence. It is a way of life based on caring and sharing. It focuses on familyhood, the shared interactions of community and traditional faith. Aren't these noble substitutes in value and in values for what is missing in comforts and lifestyle? However, we cannot and must not allow material deprivation to continue. There is no virtue in poverty, however much it may sustain human bonds.

The great task of those of us in public life in poorer countries is to find ways in which we can improve the living standards of our people. It is clear that one of those ways is technology. But, technology for the poor is

very different from technology for the rich. Technology for the poor needs to have three essential ingredients; it has to be affordable, it has to be easily understood and capable of quick introduction, and it has to be only minimally disturbing of the human values framework. How to tailor, how to fit, and how to cost technology is our vital need in the Third World.

In Sri Lanka, we have embarked on a programme of this nature. It is the Village Reawakening Movement coupled with the One Million Houses Programme. These two efforts seek to renew and revive social life and social progress in our rural areas—areas where most of our people live. In this effort to enliven the condition of villages, we have used the most appropriate technology for this purpose—low cost housing technology. Our technology is simple, yet effective. It is a self-help approach. In essence labour and construction design are undertaken by the householders

themselves. It involves maximum people's participation and minimum State intervention. It is deeply rooted in village values and the family unit. It preserves the best of old traditions while encouraging new ideas and ways of doing things.

The collective mass impact of these little technological efforts is far greater than that of massive hi-tech oriented prestigious projects. For us, the future lies in human hearts and not in gigantic monuments of steel and concrete. When will the scope and the scale of large technology have more meaning? They will have more meaning only when the poor have some assurance of home and livelihood. Most visitors to EXPO 88 look at it as a signpost of the future—where we are going from here. Some of us have to look at it differently. How are we going to get here?

As we reflect on this question, it is also important that we do not forget a critical

imperative. Technology flows from knowledge. In that process, let us not lose sight of wisdom. Today, knowledge expands with an almost hysterical momentum—screaming headlines, humming computers, startling discoveries and always the quest for the new. But, knowledge without the insights and experience and maturity of wisdom is a deadly menace. It is in this context that Mahatma Gandhi described "science and technology" without "humanity" as one of mankind's terrible sins.

I come from a country and tradition that has long been influenced by the philosophy of the Lord Buddha. Twentyfive centuries ago, this great sage preached a doctrine that advanced a new kind of technology—the technology of self-exploration, of spiritual enrichment and enlightenment. Buddha Dhamma teaches the need for right understanding—for context to give value to knowledge. It is a

PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARIAT
LIBRARY

message that is made all the more relevant by the great inventions and discoveries that abound around us.

Sri Lanka Day at EXPO 88 gives us a chance to share some of our ideas with you. Of course, it serves as a window to share our products with you. As you look around the Sri Lanka Pavilion you will see what my country has to offer both culturally and commercially. It is, from my own somewhat prejudiced perspective, a wide and representative selection of things Sri Lankan. What we cannot, of course, show you is our spirit and our determination. We have, this year, celebrated forty years of Independence. In these past four decades, we have achieved much. Yet, we also have serious problems which we are working to resolve. And always, there is our eventual goal—to provide a prosperous and peaceful life for all our people. By our own efforts and with the goodwill of friendly nations, I am

confident we can achieve this within the framework of our democratic political system.

EXPO 88 brings together the nations of the world. By its geography it establishes another link in the many connections between Australia and Sri Lanka. The Australian Government and people have contributed significantly to Sri Lanka's development. These contributions have been enhanced through trade and aid—through human and technological exchanges. Sri Lanka, for its part, has contributed some of its most talented citizens to the migratory stream that has come to Australia during the past four decades. What we have shared and hope to share is depicted in the spirit of cooperation that has made EXPO 88 so successful.

This success can only be achieved through coordination and interaction

between peoples, private enterprise and Governments. Such partnerships and cooperative endeavours are ways in which societies will prosper in the future. For our part, we have evidence of this in the collaborative effort that has made the Sri Lanka Pavilion possible. For this, a special tribute is due to Mr. Hubert Jayakody, the creator of the Sri Lanka Pavilion. His extraordinary efforts can be seen in the

design, decor and the diversity of his creation. Such work tells you a great deal about our talent and potential in Sri Lanka.

Through the Sri Lanka Day at EXPO 88 we have had the opportunity of showing you some of the extra dimensions of our country. For the opportunity you have given us and for the insights which EXPO 88 has provided, I thank you all most sincerely.



Handwritten signature

Published by the Information Division of the Prime Minister's Office

Government Press - Sri Lanka