



GAM UDAWA '88
ANAMADUWA
SPEECH BY
HON. R. PREMADASA M.P.
PRIME MINISTER AT THE
CONCLUDING CEREMONY
OF THE
GAM-UDAWA '88
EXHIBITION AT ANAMADUWA
ON 3rd JULY 1988.

**THE ADDRESS OF
THE HON. R. PREMADASA, PRIME MINISTER
AT THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE GAM UDAWA MOVEMENT
HELD ON 3RD JULY 1988
AT ANAMADUWA**

All of you including His Excellency the President and Honourable Ministers are present here today to take part in the 10th Anniversary of the Gam Udawa Movement. On the 23rd of June 1988 too the Ven. Mahanayake Theros of the three Nikayas, religious leaders of the Christian, Catholic, Hindu and Islam faiths, Hon. Ministers and Members of Parliament and all of you gathered here, as you have gathered now, for the opening of Gam Udawa '88.

Today marks the 10th Anniversary of the Gam Udawa Movement. We have taken the North-Western Province as the centre for these anniversary activities. Specially associated in these activities are the Puttalam District and two Constituencies of the Kurunegala District. This was for a special development of these areas. These anniversaries are held generally in all parts of the country. As a part of these anniversary activities we provide the common amenities required by the people in association with our housing development programme. On this occasion, on behalf of all of you, I wish to express my grateful thanks to His Excellency the President for joining us in these activities today. I would like to state in all gratitude that from the very beginning of this Movement, we received the fullest support, encouragement and patronage from His Excellency. We also received the

fullest support of our Ministers, Members of Parliament, Government and Corporation Officials and also of the members of the Armed services, the Police, Voluntary Organisations and other sectors. This made the Gam Udawa programme a success. All of them deserve credit for this success.

The Member for Anamaduwa Mr. Asoka Wadigamangawa explained to you how undeveloped this area was. He represents his area with great commitment. I know the extent to which he supports the Sevana Fund which helps our housing programme. It was as a token of that support that he walked about 600 miles selling Sevana tickets on his way. His aim was to boost the Sevana Fund. He confirmed the role played by the Sevana Fund to help the housing needs of the people. He showed that it is the duty of one and all to help the Sevana Fund.

Chief Minister, Hon. Jayawickrema Perera, told you of the plan devised by the Gam Udawa Movement to solve the problem of unemployment which is the main problem in this area. Similarly, we are planning for the advancement of the condition of the common masses of this area and the development of its various villages in every possible field.

Your Excellency, Hon. Ministers, it was here in the North-Western Province that we started our Gam Udawa Movement. The support we received from the NWP was later received from every other part of the country as well. The biggest challenge facing the NWP is the absence of an irrigation system. The people of the NWP are a people who are making a special effort to raise their heads through self-reliance. That is why we have received such encouragement as this from the people of the Puttalam

and Kurunegala Districts. We have a duty to respond to their concern for self-reliance. I hope that before long there will be a massive irrigation system for the NWP. I can say that that is the main demand of the people of the NWP.

Your Excellency will remember that at the time of the administration of Premier Dudley Senanayake, a noble son of Sri Lanka pointed out that the prime need of the people of the NWP is water for their paddy cultivation. He was none other than the late King's Counsel and Chief Justice Mr. Hema Basnayake. He went from village to village and prepared a survey of the needs of these villages. Through that survey he proved with facts and figures that this particular need of our peasantry can be fulfilled. It is very necessary that we revitalize his proposals. It is because our Kings and Ministers of old constructed tanks and irrigation channels and helped develop paddy cultivation that Sri Lanka then became the granary of the East. So, our special attention should be drawn to this matter.

During the last few years we implemented an accelerated programme for the development of irrigation facilities in our country through the Mahaweli Development Scheme. It was accelerated for a particular reason. We wanted to bring under cultivation about 9 lakhs of acres, prevent floods and develop small and large scale industries and create more employment opportunities as quickly as possible. That was why you, Your Excellency, gave priority to that programme. Our next step is to ensure that the urban and the rural poor of this country would live without want.

We have had the Gam Udawa Exhibition for 10 days now, and today is the 11th day. Yesterday about 10 lakhs of people visited this Exhibition. The Kataragama Exhibition

site covered 38 acres. Here at this Exhibition site we have set apart 75 acres for the convenience of the people. The entire area is even larger. There are a number of permanent buildings on this site. Within these 75 acres about 10 lakhs have come and seen this exhibition yesterday. According to statistics I received this morning the number that had entered from each gate in one hour had been between 25,000 and 27,000. From 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. the number that entered the Exhibition site through the six gates amounted to about 10 lakhs. When Your Excellency came with me to the Secretariat I was told that people had come to see the Exhibition even at eleven O'clock in the night. Since the 23rd, people have been coming here every day in hundreds of thousands. I believe, considering the crowds coming here today, that we will be able to find out by tomorrow that the total number of visitors would be around five million. One can guess it from the numbers now entering the site. And, every one of them pays Rs. 3/- for admission. You yourself, Your Excellency, had to pay Rs. 3/- and buy an admission ticket. The proceeds go to the Sevana Fund. This Exhibition is just one way of boosting the Sevana Fund. This is how the poorest of the poor who cannot even get a loan of Rs. 7,500/- and who subsist on Food Stamps have been provided with housing assistance to the tune of one hundred million rupees during this year alone by the Sevana Fund. That is not all, the Sevana Fund since its very inception has helped 250,000 poor people. This was in addition to our Million Houses Programme.

Your Excellency, Hon. Ministers and Members of Parliament, why does such a vast concourse of people visit this Gam Udawa Exhibition. I believe that it is because the Gam Udawa Exhibition reflects the wishes of our people. This Exhibition has given no place to gambling,

drinking and vice as a means of attracting people. They have all been discarded. Therefore, the people who visit this Exhibition are a peaceful and well disciplined people. They come from all four corners of the Island. I doubt whether we will be able to use the roads un-obstructed by 7 p.m. today. There was a similar situation last night too. These vast crowds are due to the fact that this Exhibition symbolizes their desires and aspirations. Members of the Maha Sangha and Christian, Hindu and Muslim clergy come here every day in hundreds of thousands. Why? It is because we have given pride of place to our eternal values. People from rural areas come here along every path they can find. They come walking, on bicycles, in carts, in tractors, in lorries and buses. Why do they come here in their hundreds and thousands? Because they find in this Exhibition things that help them to improve their way of life. People from urban areas also come here in their hundreds and thousands. I inquired as to why they come in such numbers. They told me that they can get a lesson from this Exhibition for the development of their own urban areas. This exhibition provides a model of how the rural environment would enhance urban beauty. The poor and the destitute also come in their hundreds and thousands. They tell us that this Exhibition teaches them the ways of getting over their problems of poverty. There are the school children who gather here in hundreds and thousands everyday. I believe they come here to learn things that they cannot learn at their tuition classes on payment of fees. They come here after paying Rs. 3/- for admission. That is perhaps why they take so much interest in gathering here. There are the youth who come here over and over again. That is because this Exhibition gives added strength to their youthful intelligence, courage and labour. There are men

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of art who come in their thousands. For they admit that this Exhibition has given added lustre to national art. There are also the intellectuals who visit this Exhibition. I spoke to some of them. They say that it is from this Exhibition that they realised the extent of the practical intelligence of the masses. They also say that there were lessons that they too were able to learn at this Exhibition.

Your Excellency there are a few who have not visited this Exhibition yet. Who are they? They are those officials who value rupees and cents more than the sweat of the people who toil and try to solve the problems of the masses with plain statistics and remain in their Colombo offices filling files and say "no money" when any request is put to them. I never saw any of them coming here. It is too late for them now. If they are listening to my speech they can come here tonight itself and see this Exhibition and learn how to bridge the budget. There are foreigners visiting this Exhibition. Several of these foreign visitors are members of institutions aiding our country. I spoke to some of them. What do they say? They say that they learnt from this Exhibition how they can assist the people of this country. They stated that they realised from this Exhibition that there is a vast difference between the actual needs of our people and the needs expressed by some of our country's representatives before the Aid-giving institutions abroad. According to them Sri Lanka's biggest crisis is the failure of our representatives to explain the actual needs of our people. What are the dividends gained from this Exhibition? The highest dividend is the ability to understand from this Exhibition the value of human labour. There is also the ability to understand the extent of self-reliance of the people, the natural resources of the country, the attention paid by high officials to the capacity of the rural folk and the

attention they show to their housing needs, tube wells, roads, agriculture and small industries. In fact we appointed several persons to gauge the response of the people. What do they say? What do they expect? We carried out a survey on these lines. Those who prepared that survey tell me that our rural folk are a wonderful kind of experts. I asked them why they say so. The hundreds of thousands of village and urban poor who visit this Exhibition, I was told, not only raise questions, but also provide solutions to them. I was told how these people explain the way to solve their problems at less expense and less inconvenience. Another matter I inquired about is the security provided at this Exhibition and outside. Our Sri Lanka Police and our armed forces have in a most exemplary way ensured the Security of the people without creating inconvenience to them. I noted down what they told me. "Sir, the gentlemen of the Police and the armed forces help us a lot. They are very good people. To be frank, there have been times when we have had to protect ourselves from those who come to protect us. But no such situations arose on this occasion. Therefore, please express our regards to them." This was what I was told by a person who came with his family from a remote village. On behalf of these people I would like to thank the members of the Police and Armed forces.

Your Excellency, in 1973, you took over the leadership of our Party. I remember the statement you made that day. You said that our people cannot remember 1948, or 1952, or 1956, or 1960. The people cannot even remember 1970 now. Today, it is 1973 and that is what the people wish to remember. That was a pragmatic statement accepted by every one. What the people seek are immediate answers for their problems. That was why you determined that day to bring about a reorganisation

not only within our Party but also in the entire administrative structure of our country. It was in consequence of this that in 1977 we were given an overwhelming mandate by the people. Accordingly we brought about a special reorganisation affecting the Constitution, the entire administrative structure and fulfilled the needs of the people through the Constitution, through the development process and through the economy. The people responded magnificently. The results of the Presidential Election of 1982 and the Referendum of December 1982 were indicative of that response. It is 11 years since. There is no doubt that Your Excellency will admit that a total reorganisation is called for afresh. In 1983, as a result of the escalation of terrorism, there was a setback in our development programmes. We can see that as a consequence our poor masses are today leading a hard life. We understand that reality. Ours is a Party that realises that whatever development we may bring about should be to the benefit of the poor. Development, in any sense, should help people live. It is to help people live that we need irrigation facilities, highways, electricity. We need science not for the sake of science but to help people. We need technology not for technology's sake but for improving the living conditions of the people. Our Party is aware that there is no meaning in any development that keeps the people in hunger and in malnutrition, leading to death. Our Government is well aware of this. That is why our Government always acts with the welfare of the people in mind. For whose benefit is science meant? For whom is technology? If hunger cannot be eliminated through science, and if it cannot eliminate sickness and physical weaknesses, we have no need of that science. If technology cannot eliminate poverty, unemployment, want, we have no need for that

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technology. If the scientist and the technologist cannot provide relief to the poor what need have humanity for such a scientist or technologist! The poor people are served better by buffaloes, draught cattle, and pack bulls. We can imagine how these innocent animals serve humanity without any knowledge of science or technology. If as a result of the modern inventions of the scientist the fertility of the soil dwindles, and herbs, fruit and vegetation in general are poisoned wouldn't that scientist amount to a murderer? If as a result of the technologist, people are thrown out employment wouldn't that technologist be an enemy of the people and not a friend? If the products of scientists and technologists are weapons of destruction and not products that help people live what use is there of that science and technology to humanity?

Your Excellency, the United Nations General Assembly recently issued a valuable report about these scientists and technologists. The United Nations General Assembly appointed a panel to make a survey of the service rendered by the scientists and technologists of the world in reducing hunger, malnutrition and sickness and raise the standard of life. Their report is now out. It says that over 5 to 6 lakhs of scientists and technologists are only providing advice for the production of lethal weapons. The survey makes this clear. The report says:-

"Some hundred million people are directly or indirectly involved in the fulfilment of destructive military tasks. About 500-600 thousand of the best qualified scientists and technicians are devoting their intelligence and energy to the improvement, invention and construction of weapons systems of mass murder."

You will see that there are between 500 to 600 thousand murderers in this world. They will add to the numbers already sentenced to death for murder. The Gam Udawa Exhibition shows how to help people live; how to give a new value to human intelligence and labour. That is why the innocent masses gather here in their hundreds and thousands. The people who criticize this are people who in their residences in Colombo have four full meals a day. They have no concern for our drink of ginger-corriander water, or for our herbs, fruits and vegetables. These are the people who criticize our Gam Udawa. There were international institutions that put forward various conditions before providing aid for our poor people. I know how Your Excellency, when you assumed office, had to deal with various conditions put forward by these institutions. On that occasion Your Excellency and the Members of our Cabinet told those institutions that we are not prepared to entertain conditions that adversely affect our poor masses even if we are to forego their aid. We took a courageous step. Various experts told us that building houses will bring no fruitful results. We rejected those observations. The latest publication issued by the World Bank states that as a result of these conditions a generation of "new poor" has emerged in undeveloped countries, in addition to the traditional poor masses of those countries. It was only the other day that I received a copy of that publication. It was shown to me by Mr. Susil Siriwardene the General Manager of the National Housing Development Authority. That publication is named "The Urban Edge". In its June 1988 issue it is recorded that "Many developing countries faced the need to make structural adjustments in their economies during the 1980s. Accordingly economics

have been re-oriented to increase efficiency and export spending has been slashed and employees have been discontinued in both public and private sectors."

"The Urban Edge", a World Bank publication, in its June 1988 issue, has drawn attention to the social costs of these structural adjustments. Structural adjustments were undertaken in an effort to reform domestic policies that were no longer appropriate to the international economic situation. Thereby these adjustments attempted to stimulate lagging economic growth. There is a broad consensus that many of these measures were necessary to re-align developing country economies and facilitate growth. On the other hand there is also a growing consensus that these adjustments did not sufficiently foresee, the effect on individuals, families and the poor in general.

"In this process special food subsidies were also removed in a number of countries in order to reduce government budgetary deficiencies. In many countries, before and during the adjustment process, calorie intake has decreased, infant mortality and malnutrition have increased, while primary school attendance has dropped, wages have fallen, unemployment has risen. It is increasingly perceived that the long term growth that was expected from adjustment programmes is not in itself sufficient to alleviate absolute poverty."

Accordingly the World Bank has introduced three strategies to help reduce social costs of adjustments. They are:

- (a) re-directing social expenditure to favour increased access of the poor to necessary social services.
- (b) improve access to productive activities either through job creation or provision of credit.

- (c) Targetting special benefits to those who are suffering the direct effects of adjustment programmes.

The other day, the Aid Consortium held in Paris provided Sri Lanka with foreign aid amounting to Rs. 19,000 million. This Aid Meeting was attended by our new Finance Minister. We should thank him for it. We should also express our gratitude to these countries that granted this Aid.

Last night I met a person reading the Dinamina. News of this Rs. 19,000 million aid received by this country was flashed on the front page of that paper. This person was reading the banner headline. He was a person from Nawagattegama. When I questioned him, he said "Sir, we have received a vast amount of money as Aid, it is to the tune of Rs. 19,000 million." I asked him whether he was happy about it. Then he replied "Sir, will all this money provide jobs for at least two or three lakhs? Will we be able to fill the teacher vacancies in our schools?" I told him that I cannot give an answer now, but will give an answer after speaking to the Finance Minister when he returns. This is how our people think. After 1983, as a result of the terrorist menace, our development programmes broke down. Employment opportunities decreased. But we have tried and are trying in various ways to face that challenge. The Honourable Member for Anamaduwa told you today that about 15,000 people from this area received an opportunity of earning something through this Gam Udawa programme. Yesterday I saw a bicycle and motorcycle park. I wanted to know for whom it had been set apart. I was then told that the bicycles and motorcycles parked in that section belonged to people

who had worked for this Exhibition. We are all aware that before work on the Gam Udawa started here, these people had no bicycles or motorcycles or even walking sticks. Therefore, all our programmes should now be directed for the welfare of our people. We should implement during the next 10 years a programme of work that would successfully face this challenge. A total re-organisation is necessary in our development process. What is the reorganisation that is needed? To help answer this question the experience we have gained from the last ten Gam Udawas would be immensely useful. A total reorganisation is necessary in the field of development, foreign aid, local resources, human resources. On that day in 1973 our present President thought of that time and the time to come and carried out a reorganisation. Similarly, to face the current challenge we must carry out a fresh reorganisation. Soviet Russia, a World Power, is also aiming at a reorganisation. Soviet leader Mr. Gorbachev declared recently the restructuring he proposes to carry out. You know when a person in Soviet Russia catches a common cold, some persons here are stricken with double pneumonia. Even they are now surprised that Soviet Leader Mr. Gorbachev is attempting a restructuring called Perestroika. The change contemplated by Mr. Gorbachev is so radical that he even proposes that the election of the Soviet President should be by popular vote. You can see the progressive way he looks at things and acts. He is putting forward a new plan in relation to the Soviet economy. The Soviet leader quite honestly and openly speaks of the shortcomings of the Soviet system. He takes courageous steps to meet those shortcomings. That is what is called "progressive". What is reactionary is to ignore the obvious faults. We too should take into account our experiences and carry out a complete

reorganisation. Half of our people are today living on Food Stamps. We should save them from that plight somehow. We should save them from poverty. Ours is a rich country. Though half of our population is poor, our country is rich in natural resources. We have no need to make our country an Europe, an America or an Africa. Let us make it an Asia. Let us make it a Sri Lanka. Through Justice, self-reliance and eternal values and truth, let us bring this about. As you know if there is any obstruction to this programme, we should change it. That is what "progressive" means. In 1977 our Government changed what obstructed us. The political Party system was required to provide the people with an alternative. Each Party puts forward its own policy. It was to select the policy one desires that the Party system was created. But, what has happened today? The Party system has become a divisive and dangerous system. The Party system that was adopted to provide the people with an alternative form of Government has become a divisive force creating tension and dissension among the people. There is no racial consideration or class consideration, or caste consideration, or religious consideration affecting the common masses. Those who are trying to cut a figure and become leaders are creating all these differences. They destroy the unity of the masses for the purpose of getting their votes and strengthening their parties. There is only one difference among the masses today. It is the difference between the haves and have-nots.

Our efforts should be to remove this distinction between have and have-nots altogether. A distinguished President of the United States stated "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor it cannot save the few who are rich." That president was the late John F. Kennedy. If anyone tries to force upon the people what

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they themselves think, without considering the needs of the people, the result would be wastage and displeasure. What we should do is to take each family and find out their needs and help them to overcome their difficulties. That is the need of the day. That is the challenge before us. The poor are suffering in silence. We go to them and ask for their votes. What happens thereafter? A limited crowd hangs around the person who received the vote. We made a survey of this too. A Member of Parliament of an urban area has around him about a thousand such individuals. A rural M.P. has around him about 500 to 800. They share the spoils. The M.P. thinks that the results of his services are brought to the people by his supporters. Very often that does not happen. There are of course M.Ps who see to it that that does not happen. There are M.Ps who deal directly with their people avoiding these supporters even incurring their displeasure. Where that does not happen the response received is most regrettable. For the people surrounding him form a screen separating him from the people. That is why I say that we should look into the needs of each and every family. It could be done through village-level officials. We should think for a moment whether we pay to our innocent families the same consideration that we pay to tender tea leaf or to a rubber sapling or to a coconut plant.

How much concern do we show to the tender tea leaf or to a tea bush? How many experts try to find out why a particular tea plant doesn't grow well or what ails it? And also how many of these experts show a concern for the coconut plant and the rubber plant? Hon. Ministers and Members of Parliament here are well aware of how we show a concern to our innocent and poor people. I need not tell you how often they have had to look into these problems.

What are we trying to do through the Gam Udawa Programme and through the policies of our Government? We are using science and technology and machinery as an assistance to man and not to create harm to man. If we had used machinery to complete the work of this Gam Udawa Anniversary there would have been no means of livelihood for 15,000 persons during the past eight months. That is the new way we look at science and technology. That is the new step we are taking. We are using science, technology and machinery as a help to man and not to harm him. The modern world brags about the new successors in science and technology and the use of modern machinery and equipment. If that science and technology were meant to benefit man, how is it that poverty is increasing and hunger is increasing and sicknesses are increasing and malnutrition is increasing day by day.

All that is happening is this: The industrialized countries are becoming richer and richer while small countries like ours are becoming poorer and poorer. While our people are looking on in hunger as a result of the science and technology that have been introduced to us, the fertile soil of our earth is being destroyed through fertilizers and machinery. The environment is being polluted. What we need is science and technology that helps people live. Therefore, we should tell all those who give us aid to give that aid immediately so that we would be able to get over our difficulties and poverty. Sometimes we are told as if in sympathy with us that aid is being given in many millions so that the benefits of that aid will accrue ten or fifteen years later. We should be careful in receiving such aid. We should tell those who offer such aid that what we

need is aid to solve our immediate problems and that we cannot wait too long, for half our people are on the brink of utter destitution.

Thousands of youth who are leaving school and entering society are living in frustration. There are many vicious forces that are trying to fish for them and lead them astray. Therefore, it is our duty to protect our worthy people who in their hundreds of thousands are helping us in programmes of this kind. We would like to tell those who are aiding us that there is nothing wrong in helping programmes that bring results ten, twelve, fifteen or twenty years later. But the first thing necessary is to help us find a remedy to our immediate problem.

There is a humorous story appearing in Hindu literature that I recall this moment. A certain devotee was very anxious to see God. He prayed to see Him. He thought that he would be able to see God and get his problems attended to. So he started praying and suddenly the God appeared before him one day.

The man was very happy that his prayer had been answered. He told the God that he wouldn't mind even dying now that he had seen God with his own eyes. He added that he is leading a very difficult life and that he had longed to meet God. He said "Oh God, I heard that people pray to you and receive your assistance. I shall be happy if you would help me too. Firstly I would like to know from you because you are an omnipotent Being some news about your own world. Is Heaven like earth?" The God replied that there is a vast difference between Heaven and Earth. "In that case does time pass in Heaven as it does on earth?", asked the man. The God replied saying that a century on earth is a second in Heaven.

The man, surprised at that answer, thanked the God and asked Him about the value of money in Heaven. The God replied that a hundred million rupees in earth currency is just a cent in Heaven. The man in his excitement thought of asking for a cent from the God. In considering its immense value he thought that this single cent would help him solve all his earthly problems. So he told the God "Oh God I am a poor man. I am leading a hard life. Can you please give me just one cent". When the God agreed and offered a cent as requested the man became exceedingly happy, for this one cent in divine currency would amount to a thousand million rupees. He jumped and clapped in joy as we do when someone says at a public meeting that everyone will be given jobs. Now the man was stretching his hand to receive the cent. Then the God told him "wait just a second". That second in heavenly time was not the second in earthly time. You all can imagine how long this man had to wait.

There are such Gods even in our world who are ready to help in that way. What is necessary in this age is to be careful of such individuals.

I place these views before you because it is my duty to explain to you our experiences. I hope that you would make a firm determination to make the best use of these experiences.

