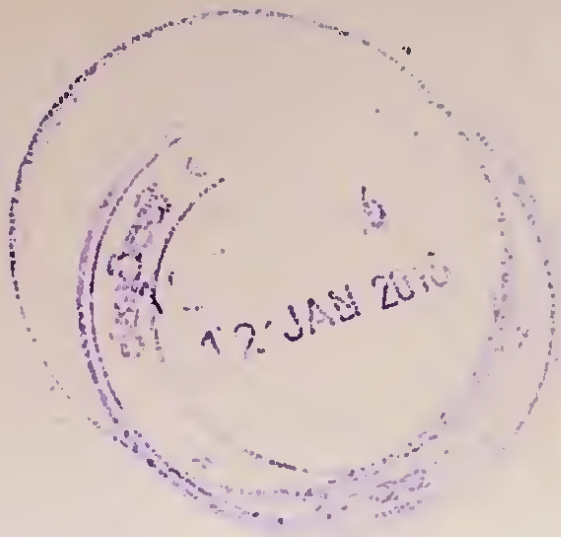


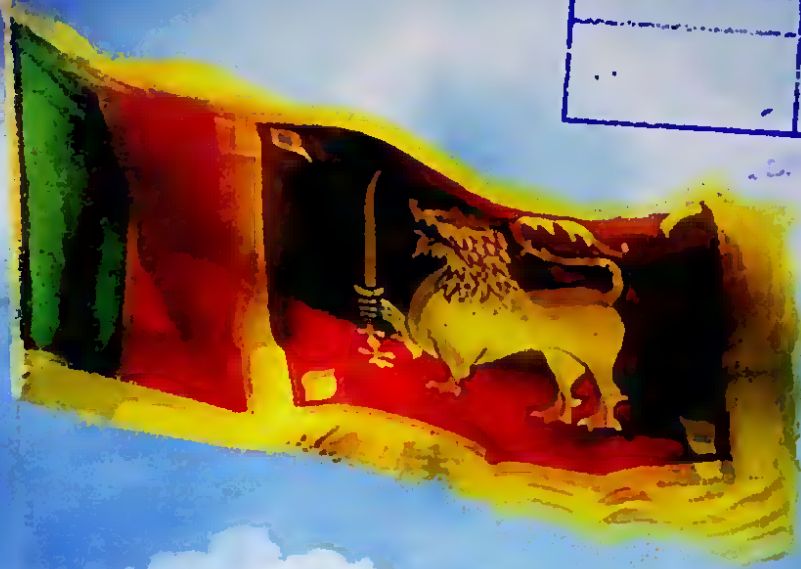


Paradigm Shift



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Paradigm Shift

The President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Maithripala Sirisena's address to the Nation
at the 67th Independence Day Celebrations held at the
Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Parliament Grounds on 4th February 2015



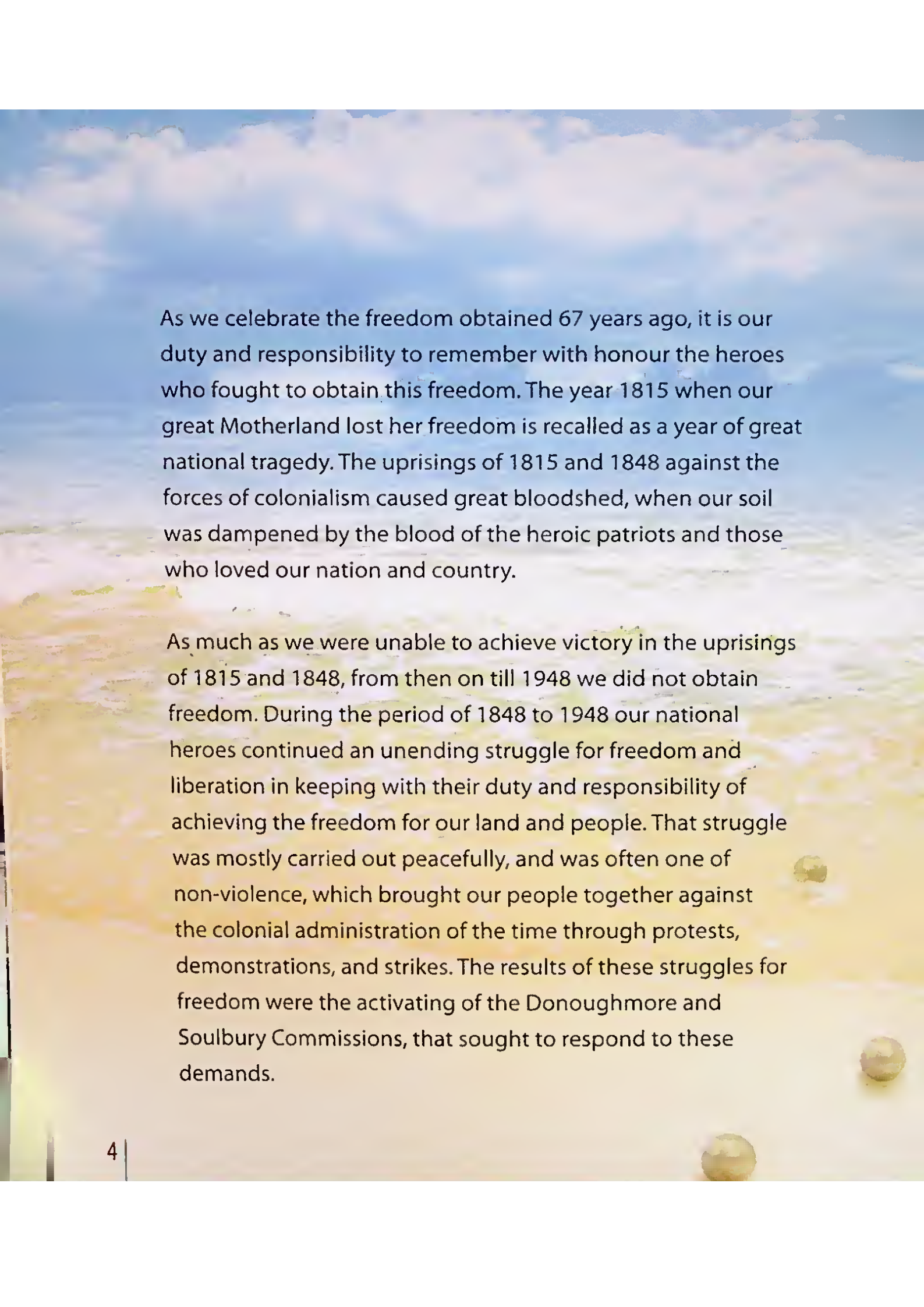
Full text of the speech

67th Anniversary of
Independence

Blessings of the Noble Triple Gem
Ven. Members of the Maha Sangha,
Reverend Clergy of Hindu, Islam, Catholic and other faiths,
Hon. Prime Minister,
Hon. Speaker,
Secretary to the President and all State Officers,
The Heads of the Security Forces,
Distinguished Guests,
My Dear Friends,

This is the occasion when we celebrate the 67th Independence Day with due honour and dignity.

It is most fortunate that I am able to address you at this historically important city of Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte, today, in the precincts of the House of Parliament that confirms the sovereignty of the people.



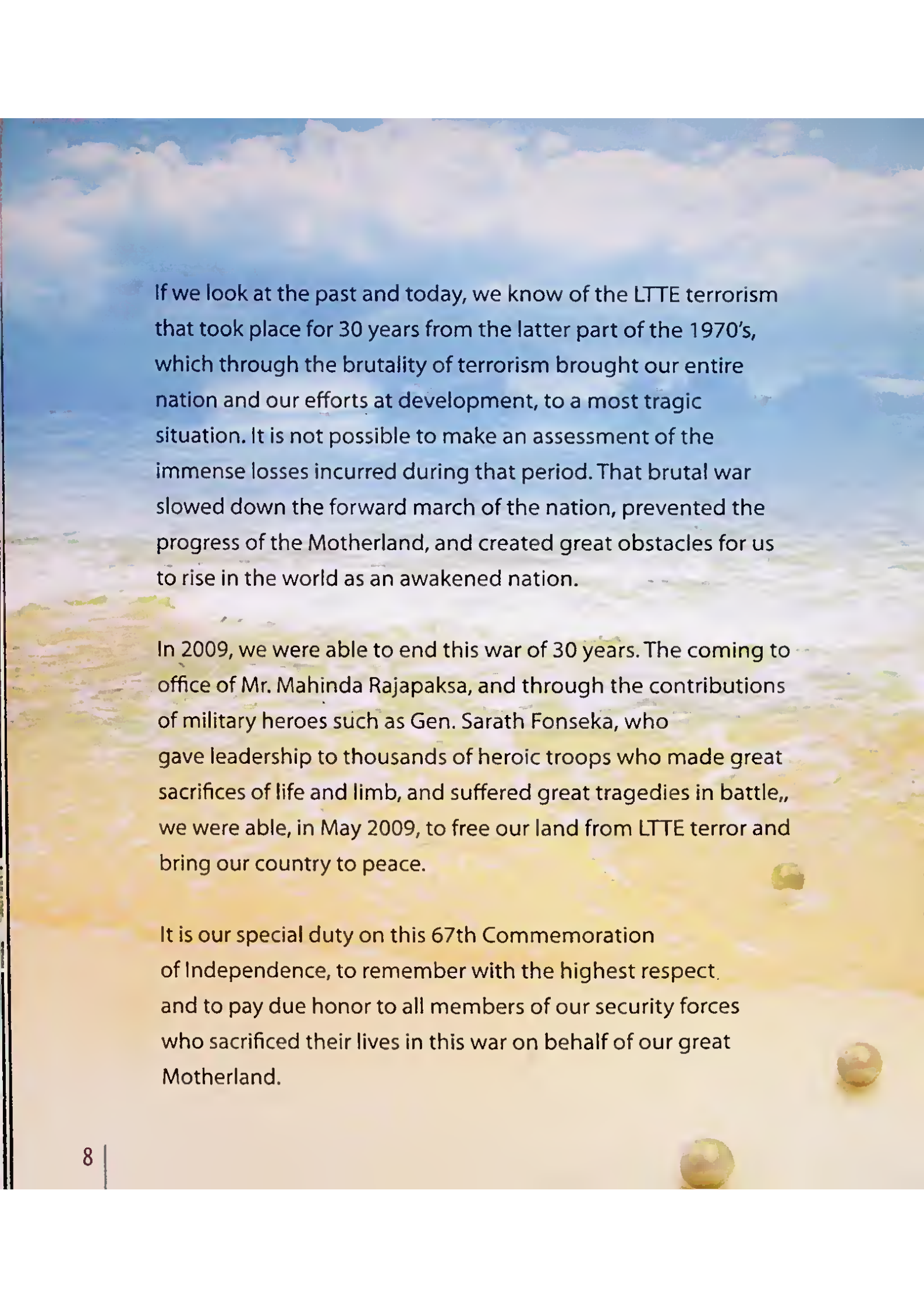
As we celebrate the freedom obtained 67 years ago, it is our duty and responsibility to remember with honour the heroes who fought to obtain this freedom. The year 1815 when our great Motherland lost her freedom is recalled as a year of great national tragedy. The uprisings of 1815 and 1848 against the forces of colonialism caused great bloodshed, when our soil was dampened by the blood of the heroic patriots and those who loved our nation and country.

As much as we were unable to achieve victory in the uprisings of 1815 and 1848, from then on till 1948 we did not obtain freedom. During the period of 1848 to 1948 our national heroes continued an unending struggle for freedom and liberation in keeping with their duty and responsibility of achieving the freedom for our land and people. That struggle was mostly carried out peacefully, and was often one of non-violence, which brought our people together against the colonial administration of the time through protests, demonstrations, and strikes. The results of these struggles for freedom were the activating of the Donoughmore and Soulbury Commissions, that sought to respond to these demands.

We remember well those who gave leadership to these struggles, who, among many other heroes, include Mr. D.S. Senanayake, Mr. F.R. Senanayake, Sir D.B. Jayatillake, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, Mr. TB Jayah, Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Dr. N.M. Perera, Mr. Philip Gunewardena and Mr. Leslie Goonewardena. It is important to remember the contribution of the Anagarika Dharmapala. Similarly, we recall the great literary names of the time such as Munidasa Kumaranatunga, Piyadasa Sirisena, and other exceptional campaigners for freedom through writing, who used their pens to effectively kindle the spirit of freedom in the hearts and minds of people.

Looking back at the record of history, especially the 67 years that have passed since Independence, we recall that after receiving Independence in 1948, the people's government of 1956 led by Prime Minister SWRD Bndaranaike strengthened our freedom by removing the British Air Force and naval bases at Katunayake and Trincomalee. Also, in May 1972, Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, brought the Republican Constitution, which made this country one of greater independence and democracy.





If we look at the past and today, we know of the LTTE terrorism that took place for 30 years from the latter part of the 1970's, which through the brutality of terrorism brought our entire nation and our efforts at development, to a most tragic situation. It is not possible to make an assessment of the immense losses incurred during that period. That brutal war slowed down the forward march of the nation, prevented the progress of the Motherland, and created great obstacles for us to rise in the world as an awakened nation.

In 2009, we were able to end this war of 30 years. The coming to office of Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, and through the contributions of military heroes such as Gen. Sarath Fonseka, who gave leadership to thousands of heroic troops who made great sacrifices of life and limb, and suffered great tragedies in battle,, we were able, in May 2009, to free our land from LTTE terror and bring our country to peace.

It is our special duty on this 67th Commemoration of Independence, to remember with the highest respect, and to pay due honor to all members of our security forces who sacrificed their lives in this war on behalf of our great Motherland.

Although by 2009, after the defeat of LTTE terrorism, and bringing peace to our land, although we had the opportunity to take the physical resources of the land forward towards development, we were unable to do so; and to bring together the minds of the people of the North and South.

To end the war against terror, our heroic troops were able with their guns to silence the guns of terrorism. However, the biggest challenge we face today, is that of bringing together the minds of the people of the North and South, and through a process of reconciliation bring about co-existence and national understanding, and thus take our great Motherland forward as a land rich in human affection and understanding.

In so moving forward, there are many responsibilities before us. We need to ask ourselves whether we can truly and honestly be satisfied with what we have achieved, as we celebrate this 67th Anniversary of Independence. As we look back at these 67 years of freedom, the solution to our needs does not lie in the mutual pointing of fingers at each other. It is my belief that all political parties, all political leaders who have governed this country in the past 67 years, should look back at themselves and truly study and understand one's duties and responsibilities, and look towards the future in the discharge of such responsibilities.

I think the great responsibility and duty before us today is to ask where we have gone wrong, and how we could correct those errors. As much as we look at the path we have trod in the 67 years of freedom, and especially since 2009, can we be satisfied at what has been achieved after the restoration of peace.

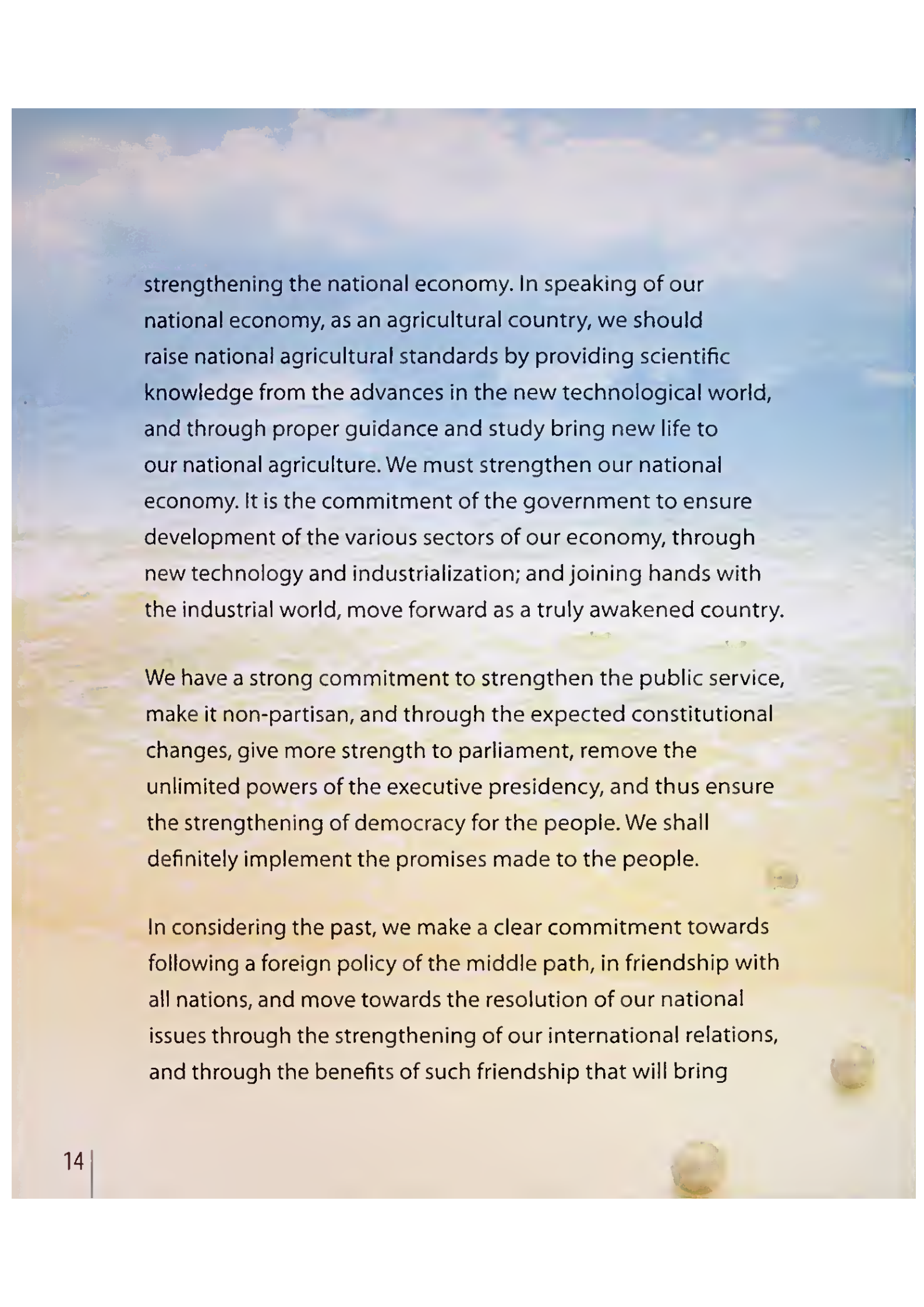
In looking at this we must be aware of the income gap that prevails and poverty in the country. I believe this is both a major problem and challenge that we face today and one that needs necessary and compulsory change.

Together with the mandate given to us by the people on January 8th, we made important promises and pledges to the people that working as a new government, we would bring about new transformations in politics, the economy, society and culture. We remain bound by these pledges. In the nearly three weeks that have passed, we have initiated many moves in this regard, and a beginning has been made. The level of poverty in our country stands at 6.7 %. We should pay special attention to this with a commitment to bring it to a minimum. This is the task of our new government, elected by our people.

Accordingly, our new government will work towards reducing the income gap among people, eliminating poverty and







strengthening the national economy. In speaking of our national economy, as an agricultural country, we should raise national agricultural standards by providing scientific knowledge from the advances in the new technological world, and through proper guidance and study bring new life to our national agriculture. We must strengthen our national economy. It is the commitment of the government to ensure development of the various sectors of our economy, through new technology and industrialization; and joining hands with the industrial world, move forward as a truly awakened country.

We have a strong commitment to strengthen the public service, make it non-partisan, and through the expected constitutional changes, give more strength to parliament, remove the unlimited powers of the executive presidency, and thus ensure the strengthening of democracy for the people. We shall definitely implement the promises made to the people.

In considering the past, we make a clear commitment towards following a foreign policy of the middle path, in friendship with all nations, and move towards the resolution of our national issues through the strengthening of our international relations, and through the benefits of such friendship that will bring

technological progress, to take our Motherland towards greater progress.

We see the necessity to bring new technology to our new generations, implant the advances of technology in their minds, and join hands with the modern world. It is, therefore, necessary to fully understand the thinking and expectations of the new generations, and as a government to take necessary steps to help them realize these expectations.

We will clearly carry out our task of moving forward as an awakened nation, by obtaining the cooperation of all through our foreign policy of the middle path, and as a country that acts in keeping with the United Nations Charter, and its conventions.

Therefore, while we look back at 67 years on this 67th Commemoration of Independence, as a new government, we will also look and move forward with our beloved people, with the firm dedication to build our great Motherland for the future.

Thank you.

May you all be Blessed by the Noble Triple Gem.

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REFERENCE

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