



President Ranil Wickremesinghe delivering his policy statement in Parliament.
Picture courtesy: President's Media Division

PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT IN PARLIAMENT

RESTORING SRI LANKA TO ITS PRISTINE GLORY

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President Ranil Wickremesinghe's statement in Parliament on August 3, 2022 is one of the most comprehensive speeches ever delivered by a Head of State either as the Throne Speech in the dominion days or as an Address to the House after the country became a Republic, thereafter.

He by inference expressed high hopes of restoring Sri Lanka to its pristine glory by making it not only self-sufficient in rice like what it was during the reign of King Parakramabahu the Great but also the Granary of the East by being the hub of international trade in that commodity, and touched on vital issues such as managing loss making State enterprises, modernizing the economy opened in the time of President J.R. Jayewardene, stopping selected imports to pay for fossil fuel imports and limiting the use of it till year end etc.

He lamented the cancellation of the Japanese Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Container Terminal pro-

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jects. He noted with concern the shrinking of the middle class in the country and emphasized that it should be re-kindled.

Ever since agriculture, especially rice cultivation began on irrigated fields after the advent of the Aryan settlers, land of which the sole owner was the king had been equitably distributed among farmers imposing a tax of one-sixth of the produce but large extents of which had been given to the king's favourite officials thus creating the feudal aristocracy.

Feudalism exists to this day represented by the new rich with wealth accumulated by fair or foul means in spite of a large number of farmers being given land ownership in colonization schemes, by the

Paddy Lands Act, under Land Reform and the Mahaweli programme.

Quite strangely, there are striking similarities between concepts, events and even the dates of the French Revolution of 1789 and what is happening in Sri Lanka today, although taken mutatis mutandis of the times, institutions, actors, functions and the locale.

Historian Sir J.A.R. Marriott in his work 'The Evolution of Modern Europe 1453-1939' says: "On 4th August the National Assembly at Versailles, in a frenzy of excitement and self-renunciation, adopted a series of resolutions abolishing the last relics of feudalism: all men were hence forward to be equal before the law; offices to be open to all;

justice to be administered gratuitously and impartially; the last traces ... of feudalism abolished. ..."

It is up to President Ranil Wickremesinghe to completely eliminate the new rich in Parliament if they have amassed wealth in an irregular manner without fear or favour as a first step by strictly enforcing the declaration of assets of which no honest Member of Parliament need be alarmed, so that he will be left with really clean and trim people's representatives!

There is no reason why State institutions which have been a liability should not be privatized when even Communist countries such as China and Vietnam are relying on private enterprise to boost economic development not to mention Rus-

sia which had become the largest economy in the world after the 1917 Revolution but crashed due to mismanagement proving that humans are by nature fickle and for that matter even profit making institutions which when given to the private sector perform better.

The open economy registered an economic growth rate of over 6 per cent in 1978 but fell below 2 per cent by 1986 and although it reverted to the former on almost five years until it plunged to nearly -2 per cent in 2002 from which the country was rescued by President Ranil Wickremesinghe as Premier then making the economy soar to over 8 per cent by 2011 and the slump thereafter continues to this day the economy falling to a minus

growth again ironically to be rescued by the same person, President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

So, it is natural that those jealous of him casting aspersions unable to stomach his achievements the Opposition Leader saying when he became Prime Minister this time that he accepted the post because he cannot become President having to bite the dust when he became President not long afterwards and two of his top party officials scoffing at President Ranil Wickremesinghe for him dropping the official use of the honorific 'His Excellency' and not using the Presidential Flag very correctly saying that there should be only one flag for a country all in very bad taste bringing disgrace upon their alma maters.