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எதிர்க்கட்சித் தலைவர் - இலங்கைப் பாராளுமன்றம்  
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION - PARLIAMENT, SRI LANKA

9 January 2019

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Four years of misrule and the fate of future generations in this country

Sri Lanka faces three major dangers as we complete four years since the change of government on 9 January 2015. The first among them is the danger of the economy collapsing at any moment. In the past four years, the UNP led government has borrowed the equivalent of 50% of the total national debt that was outstanding as at the end of December 2014 from the loans taken in the six decades after gaining independence in February 1948. Even though the UNP claims to be taking loans to repay the loans taken by my government, if debt was being incurred only to pay off previous debts, the total outstanding debt in the country cannot increase. What has happened however is that while the total outstanding debt as at the end of 2014 has remained as it is, a sum equivalent to more than 50% of that total has been added on to the national debt in the past four years.

When we ruled the country between 2006 and 2014, there was a major war in the country in the first few years. We had to face a world food crisis in the middle of that in 2007. Between 2008 and 2009 came the worst global recession since the 1930s. Between 2006 and 2014, crude oil prices went up continuously in an unprecedented manner touching 140 USD per barrel. Despite all those challenges, in the entire nine years between 2006 and 2014, the Rupee depreciated by only Rs. 28 to the US Dollar. However over the past four years, without any of the crises that we had to face, the Rupee has depreciated by Rs. 53 to the US Dollar. The average growth rate of 7.4% that we maintained has plummeted to below 3%. Even though the President realised the danger of what was happening and tried to hold a general election and hand the running of the country back to us, that did not succeed. We are now in a situation where no one knows what will happen to the economy in the coming weeks and months.

The next danger we face is that of the entire governmental mechanism breaking down due to the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Under the provisions of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, Parliament cannot be dissolved under any circumstances, even in the event of a government repeatedly losing votes on the budget, the statement of government policy or no confidence motions. A parliament is a gathering of individuals and organisations with their own views, needs and ambitions. Over the centuries, the parliamentary system evolved certain mechanisms to retain these individuals and organisations within a framework that will enable a government to function in the country. If differences emerge with a parliamentary ruling party to the extent that it disrupts governance, the power to call a general election and allow the people to elect a new government was one of the corner stones of the parliamentary system. Since it is now no longer possible to go before the people when necessary, the capacity of the governing party to retain its MPs and coalition partners within a certain framework has been seriously impaired.


The parliamentary dissolutions that took place in this country in 1952, 1959, 1964 and 2001 were due to turbulence within the ruling parties and coalitions of the time. Before long, it will become clear to everyone how inimical it is to a country to block the ability to call a general election when necessary. The main criticism made against the 1978 Constitution from the very beginning was that in the event where the parliamentary majority goes to a political party other than the party of the President, the system could face a situation of gridlock. The precedent that was created in this regard after the general elections of 1994 and 2001 was that in the event where the President calls a general election which is won by a different political party, the President would submit to the people's mandate, take a step back and hand over the running of the country completely to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet appointed from within Parliament. That however, is no longer possible today.

Even though the President is now prohibited from calling a general election to seek the people's mandate, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment itself has placed the responsibility of forming governments with the MPs in Parliament and taking the country forward entirely on the same President. The President continues to be the head of government and the head of the Cabinet. The President will also be responsible for everything done by such a government. The President now cannot call elections to test public opinion and take a back seat if the people's mandate goes against him. After the 2018 local government

election, the whole country knows that the UNP does not have the people's mandate and that they have been avoiding holding elections for that very reason. In such circumstances, it will be impossible for the President to hand over the running of the country to the UNP and take a back seat. Because of the irrational provisions of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, there is a clear danger of a breakdown in the governmental mechanism of the country.

The third danger facing the country is the proposed new draft constitution which is to be presented to the Constitutional Assembly. Through this draft constitution, the government seeks to divide the country into nine semi-independent federal units. The powers wielded by the central government today, are to be devolved to the provinces. Each province is to have a separate police force. Provisions have been introduced to weaken the central Parliament and the legal framework in such a manner as to make it impossible for the central government to respond adequately to an emergency in order to safeguard the peace and integrity of the country. This draft constitution has been prepared by the same persons who drafted the completely confused 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

The same parties that drafted this proposed new constitution introduced a new elections system for the local government bodies and provincial councils in 2017. Today, the every people who enthusiastically voted for that new elections system say that no election in the future should be held according to that new system. If the new constitution drafted by the same people is passed, Sri Lanka as we know it, will cease to exist. We now hear that attempts are being made to buy MPs to get this new constitution passed. Thus, Sri Lanka now is confronted with three deadly dangers. In these circumstances, I wish to draw the attention of the people to the fact that the only political force capable of preventing these dangers from becoming a reality is the opposition alliance that I lead, which has an established track record of having overcome even challenges deemed impossible, in the service of this country.



***Mahinda Rajapaksa***  
***Leader of the Opposition***