

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT DROUPADI MURMU
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED IN HONOUR OF
HIS EXCELLENCY ANURA KUMARA DISANAYAKA
PRESIDENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI
LANKA**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, December 16, 2024

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome H.E. Mr. Anura Kumara Disanayaka, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the distinguished members of his delegation to Rashtrapati Bhavan this evening.

Sri Lanka occupies a place of primacy in India's 'Neighbourhood First' Policy and the 'SAGAR' Vision.

The inter-linkages between our two countries are not only based on geography, but also on shared religious and cultural practices, linguistic commonalities, economic cooperation, and political understanding. The shared heritage of Buddhism has particularly nurtured our relations for over two millennia.

In contemporary times, our relations have become multi-faceted encompassing several sectors of cooperation. India, as responsible neighbour and friend, has always stood in support of Sri Lanka in times of need, be it during the recent economic crisis or subsequent debt restructuring discussions.

I am happy that, today, during the visit of President Disanayaka, we have adopted the "India-Sri Lanka Joint Statement: Fostering Partnerships for a Shared Future", which will provide a comprehensive framework for further deepening our multi-faceted bilateral ties.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sri Lanka is deeply embedded in the psyche of the Indian people, and is an integral part of our folklore and common civilizational heritage.

In fact, the Kalinga region of ancient India had special cultural and spiritual linkages with Sri Lanka, which are remembered to this day in the state of Odisha. I am sure that our friends from Sri Lanka will recognise a few familiar tastes and tunes over dinner this evening!

We will continue working together to build on these deep and enduring links of history and culture, and towards the shared prosperity of the people of our two countries.

With these words, Excellency, ladies and gentlemen, may I request you to join me in expressing our good wishes for:

- the good health of His Excellency President Anura Kumara Disanayaka,
- the continued progress and prosperity of the Sri Lankan people, and
- the close friendship and cooperation between India and Sri Lanka

Thank you.
