

English Translation

On the 19th of July 2022

To the Presidential Candidates

Hon. Anura Kumara Disanayake

Hon. Dallas Alahapperuma

Hon. Ranil Wickramasinghe

With pertinence to the restoration of the economy and the strengthening of democracy towards the establishment of political stability

A new executive president will be elected out of the Members of Parliament by the Members of Parliament on the 20th for the first time in history. According to the view of the below-mentioned trade unions who are members of the National Labor Advisory Council, this is considered a temporary measure that can be immediately taken within this constitutional framework, to establish some form of political stability in the country.

The protest which commenced at Galle Face premises about four months ago was a consequence of the social and economic crisis which prevailed in the country by then. However, during all this time no proper solution has been received for the problems of the people and no progress could be seen with pertinence to the smooth functioning of economic activities related to the production and the supply of services.

The government offices do not run smoothly and punctually. The health service is maintained among dire difficulties basically due to the dearth of pharmaceuticals in hospitals. School education has become totally defunct since the start of the Covid pandemic, and the country encounters a serious collapse with the inability to reopen the schools to recommence the education of the children. It is quite explicit that the public transport sectors too have collapsed along with the fuel crisis. Along with the total collapse in the transport sector, transportation of goods, fisheries industry and agricultural production too have been hampered. The Power interruptions add more gravity to the issue. Along with all these circumstances, thousands of individuals who earned their living in the informal sector became destitute due to the downfall of domestic production.

In a backdrop of this nature, a considerable decline can be observed in the export production sector as well. The majority of the workers in this sector have migrated to cities from rural areas. Therefore, it is well-known fact that they do not have permanent residency in these industrial areas and hence they remain as temporary boarders. During the past few months, they underwent immense worries concerning procuring their food and daily transport facilities, leading to difficulties in reporting to work properly. This had a direct bearing on production, and especially, certain serious hindrances were encountered by the medium-scale production firms which failed to complete their orders owing to the fuel crisis. In such a problematic environment, the situation in the Department of Labor, which can be considered the only department to seek justice and just solutions for the problems of workers employed in the private and Semi-government sectors, got worsened and deteriorated, making the workers incapable of seeking any solace under these circumstances.

The prominent apparel manufacturers are already well aware of the fact that we are on the verge of losing many orders as most of the suppliers and brand owners who place orders in our country are already aware of the crisis and show certain reluctance towards giving their orders to us since any probable end to the uncertainties and the instability faced by us cannot be predicted so far. In case we happen to encounter such a situation as depicted above, the foreign exchange crisis would get worsened and thousands of individuals would face the risk of losing their job opportunities.

Still, we don't witness any progressive, political step, being taken by the current governing structure to address the above situation and to put things under control. Most of the institutions which come under different departments and cater to the basic requirements of the society have been acquired by the Ministry of Defense through a gazette notification under the blessing of the emergency law regulations. However, this does not lead to the establishment of a stable democratic society. This would only forcefully maintain social silence. We would like to emphasize the fact that the possibility to attract investors and productively maintain the production process, can only be realized in an independent, democratic society. Therefore, we would like to reiterate the fact that taking measures toward more arbitrary and authoritarian governance would not find any remedy to the crisis encountered by us.

We would like to emphasize and reiterate the Members of Parliament who have been nominated to be elected by Parliament, as the president of the country on the 20th of July to find solutions to fulfill the aspirations of the people within a bankrupt economy of the above nature abundant with improper and harmful political adjustments, that their short term plans to save people out of this burdensome situation be immediately presented and that the following proposals be included within their plans.

01. Steps should be taken to provide fuel, kerosene oil, gas, and essential commodities at concessionary rates for the poor community who earn very low income and are victimized by the economic devastation, within the next two weeks.
02. The defense budget should be re-adjusted in line with the allocation of Rs. 117 billion which was allocated for the year 2009, the year in which the war was concluded, having suspended the giant-scale infrastructure development projects and suspended all the allowances provided to the Member of Parliament.
03. The conditions laid down in the agreements entered into with the International Monetary Fund and the contracts made with them be placed before the public before the official endorsement.
04. The 21st amendments to the constitution which include the proposal to abolish the executive presidency, which has been submitted to all the political parties and made public by the Trade Union Collective who are members of the National Labor Advisory Council be passed without any delay.
05. Measures need to be taken to establish the Police Department as an independent civil department and constitutional provisions should be included to maintain it under the Ministry of Home Affairs under all circumstances.
06. The Prevention of Terrorism Act is repeal within two weeks.
07. The required amendments to the relevant laws should be introduced to make it mandatory to submit to parliament the information of the electronic frequency applicants and the basis and conditions related to the granting of frequencies before the issuance of transmission

licenses and to get them to present all the information related to the transmission licenses so far issued and the information of license holders to Parliament.

08. Declaration of Assets and liabilities Law number 01 of 1975 should be amended as required to make it compulsory for all the candidates contesting at elections to submit the declarations of their assets and liabilities and those of their families along with the nomination papers, to make the annual submission of the declarations of their assets and liabilities by the elected members compulsory, to make it the mandatory responsibility of the Elections Commission to make the aforesaid declarations public and to make it compulsory for all the Ministry secretaries coming under the central government and the provincial councils, chief accountants, all the professionals in the public service and the principals of national schools to submit the declarations of their assets and liabilities and those of their families.
09. The relevant election laws should be amended to make it mandatory for the political parties to submit their annual budget reports with the information on all the revenues received and the reports with the information of their election funds to the Elections Commission and further to make it mandatory for the commission to make such reports public immediately.

We firmly believe that the drafting of the legislature and the formulation of policies should always happen through social dialogues and public consultations and therefore it is hereby emphasized the fact that the above proposals included in this letter should be subjected to certain dialogue in the society for a period of minimum 04 weeks before the submission of the plans and solutions of the ensuing regime to Parliament and that adequate time should be allocated by the state media for this purpose daily and the responsibility to organize and mobilize the public should be taken by the government in this regard.

1. Free Trade Zones & General Services Employees' Union
2. Sri Lanka Nidahas Sewaka Sangamaya
3. Ceylon Mercantile Industrial and General Workers Union
4. Jathika Sewaka Sangamaya
5. Sri Lanka National Union of Seafarers
6. Ceylon Estate Staff' Union
7. Lanka Jathika Estate Workers' Union
8. Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions
9. United Federation of Labour
10. Ceylon Federation of Labour
11. Ceylon Bank Employees Union
12. Inter-Company Employees Union

On behalf of the trade unions mentioned above,

Anton Marcus
Joint Secretary
Free Trade Zones & General Services Employees Union