

Speech made by Hon. (Dr.) Jagath Wickramaratne, Speaker of Parliament of Sri Lanka at the General Debate

PARLIAMENTARY ACTION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE

Good Morning/ Good Evening!

*Honorable President,
The Honorable Speakers of Parliament,
Distinguished Members of Parliament,
Esteemed Guests,*

It is a privilege to address this esteemed assembly on the vital role of Parliamentary action in advancing social development and justice. Sri Lanka stands at a pivotal juncture, where economic recovery must be pursued alongside inclusive growth, equity, and the protection of human rights. Through targeted legislative reforms, strategic budgetary allocations, and proactive governance, Parliament holds the power to build a more just and prosperous society for all.

It is witnessed that Sri Lanka is undergoing a transformative period. The newly elected Parliament of 2024, backed by a renewed public mandate, marks a significant departure from the political oligarchies that have dominated the country for decades. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake,

leader of the National People's Power (NPP) alliance, campaigned on a platform of transparency, anti-corruption measures, and economic reform—championing social development and justice. His vision has resonated with a populace exhausted by the crises that have engulfed the nation since 2022.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Over the past half-century, Sri Lanka's experience with an open economy has contributed to economic crises and significant imbalances in national income distribution. Unregulated trade and market policies have exacerbated disparities, raising concerns about the government's role in safeguarding the well-being of its citizens. The renewed public mandate calls on Parliament to focus on inclusive social development and justice through law-making, oversight, representation, and budgetary functions.

The 2025 Budget, approved by Parliament, prioritizes enhanced social protection, improved public health, modernized free education, gender inclusivity, and strengthened governance mechanisms. It also reinforces a strict policy of zero tolerance for corruption.

A just society must protect its most vulnerable members. During the 2025 budgetary process, Parliament increased social protection spending to

provide financial support for low-income families. Monthly allowances for kidney patients, elderly citizens, and persons with disabilities have been enhanced, reaffirming our commitment to social justice. Furthermore, allocations for orphaned children and institutionalized youth will ensure access to housing, education, and vocational training, fostering long-term social inclusion.

A healthy society is the foundation of sustainable development. The government has significantly increased the health budget to Rs. 604,000 million for 2025, aimed at upgrading medical facilities, ensuring the supply of essential medicines, and digitalizing the healthcare system. Special emphasis has been placed on mental health services to uphold the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Education is a fundamental pillar of social justice. Parliament has focused on upgrading school infrastructure to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to quality education. Special investments have been made in vocational training programs, particularly for Malayagam Tamil youth, one of Sri Lanka's most vulnerable communities. By equipping our youth with skills and knowledge, we are securing the future of Sri Lanka.

Additionally, women's economic participation is central to national progress. Parliament has launched initiatives to prevent violence against women, empower female entrepreneurs, and support working mothers. Financial stability for senior citizens has also been strengthened through additional interest payments, reinforcing economic security for the elderly.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Combating corruption is a critical component of social justice. Parliament has prioritized the enactment of the Proceeds of Crime Bill and the strengthening of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC). A corruption-free Sri Lanka will foster a fairer economy and enhance public trust in our institutions.

Social development is incomplete without environmental justice. The Clean Sri Lanka Initiative promotes waste management, urban sanitation, and conservation projects. Parliament has approved financial allocations to mitigate human-elephant conflicts and improve waste management, demonstrating our commitment to balancing human welfare with environmental sustainability.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that as representatives of the people, it is our responsibility to ensure that Parliamentary actions translate into tangible progress for our citizens. We can pave the way for social justice and sustainable development through well-structured policies, inclusive budgeting, and transparent governance. Let us work together to create a Sri Lanka where every citizen, regardless of background, enjoys dignity, opportunity, and security.

Thank you.