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இலங்கையின் பிரதம அமைச்சர்

Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

Prime Minister's May Day message

The history of the Sri Lankan labour movement is a remarkable journey, shaped over decades by the blood, sweat, and sacrifices made in the pursuit of rights, justice, and dignity.

Beginning with the printers' strike of 1893, the working people of this country emerged as an organised force. Through the trade union movement led by A. E. Goonesinha and the emergence of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the voice of labour gained political strength. The Railway Workers' Strike of 1923 and the public service strike of 1947 reaffirmed that the true 'driving force' behind the country's economic and social transformation was its working people. I respectfully acknowledge the invaluable contributions of workers in the plantation sector, ports, railways, and across both the public and private sectors, whose dedication laid the foundation for many of the labour rights we benefit from today.

As we commemorate International Workers' Day with dignity once again, we pay tribute to all working people across the world, including the heroic workers who sacrificed their lives in the struggle for an eight-hour workday in Chicago in 1886. This year's May Day holds special significance as it is being celebrated under a government built through the power of the people, in honour of the entire working community of Sri Lanka.

Granting due respect to labour and safeguarding the rights of all working people are core policy commitments of our government. Accordingly, we remain dedicated to creating a fair and safe working environment by expanding existing services and implementing new programmes aimed at improving the living standards of working people.

Ensuring fair and equal access for all citizens is a fundamental objective of the government. Following that, it is our responsibility to create an environment in which everyone can lead a dignified professional life. Establishing a national social protection system that recognises unpaid labour and guarantees social security for unpaid labours is among the foremost priorities of our government.

On this May Day, we must reaffirm the importance of moving forward together in unity to build a country where all labour is valued, rights are protected, and equality prevails. With the strength and dedication of all working people, may we soon achieve the vision we all share: "A Thriving Nation – A Beautiful Life."

Dr. Harini Amarasuriya
Prime Minister
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka