

AT THE CIVIC RECEPTION ACCORDED IN HIS HONOUR BY HIS
WORSHIP MR. B. SIRISENA COORAY MAYOR OF COLOMBO
THE TOWN HALL

22 APRIL 1983

Your Worship; Hon'ble Members of the Colombo Municipal
Council; Hon'ble Ministers;
Excellencies; Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am deeply honoured by this civic reception which you have so kindly accorded us this afternoon. On behalf of my wife and members of my delegation, I would like to thank you and members of the Colombo Municipal Council for this kind gesture. I am particularly honoured to have been given the key to the city of Colombo. It was several years ago that the first Malaysian Prime Minister, The Honourable Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, was accorded this similar honour. I consider this as a happy manifestation of the close ties of friendship between our two countries and peoples.

2. Your Worship is no stranger to Malaysia. It was not so long ago that we had the pleasure of having you with us in Kuala Lumpur as Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to Malaysia. We are pleased to see you now holding the esteemed position as the Mayor of Colombo.

Your Worship,

3. Colombo has a rich historical background behind its growth and development. The student of history could not but be intrigued by the diverse cultures and external influence that had washed your shores since the 9th century. In the modern context, the city's rapid development has added to the importance of Colombo as a centre for regional and international activities. The role that your city has played in this regard in world affairs is well known, having been the venue for a number of important conferences and seminars covering a wide spectrum of activities and subjects. It is a proud moment for your country that one such event recorded in the annals of your history was the Meeting of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers in January 1950 when the Colombo Plan was conceived. Membership of this organisation has since grown to 26 countries and the fact that the Colombo Plan Council

and the Bureau are located in Colombo is symbolic of the valuable contribution that your country and in particular His Excellency President J.R. Jayewardene has made to this organisation. I recall also your great city was the venue for the 5th Non-Aligned Summit of Heads of State or Government in 1976 and more recently you hosted the ESCAP Population Conference and the Commonwealth Conference of Law Ministers. Indeed, the association of your city to international affairs is impressive.

4. I am also aware of the important role played by the Colombo Municipal Council since it was established in 1865, almost 118 years ago. It has been said that next to the central government itself, the Municipal Council of Colombo is the largest administrative machinery in the island. This council has apparently been the launching pad for many a leading Sri Lankan politician. Many of your great leaders started from this unique institution and thereafter several of them had entered the Legislature. I am aware that Your President, His Excellency J.R. Jayewardene started his political career from here when he won a seat in the Council in December 1940.

Your Worship,

5. The task of city administration is not easy. We, in Malaysia, have a variety of problems confronting us such as providing housing and buildings for the growing population and the business community, social development, efficient transport system, traffic management, recreational facilities, sufficient water supply and other infrastructure amenities. The quality of the environment has also to be protected to ensure a balance between ecological development and national heritage. Your city, Colombo, from its small trading settlement and its strategic position in shipping and commerce grew up rapidly, while Kuala Lumpur from its modest tin mining community rose up to be the Federal Capital of Malaysia and has since then become a Federal Territory. Still there are many problems involved with city development and for this reason we have recently drawn up the Kuala Lumpur Master Plan to make Kuala Lumpur a people oriented city and not a primate city with diverse problems.

6. In tackling these problems, it is useful to bear in mind that exchange of expertise, knowledge and personnel in the field of city development is vital. In this respect cooperation between us in this area will be to our mutual benefit. I wish to assure Your Worship that we on our part are always prepared to cooperate with you in your endeavour at city building and development. I have no doubt that we can learn from each other the techniques and approaches that are essential for materializing our mutual visions of creating great cities of our capitals.

Your Worship,

7. May I once again thank you and the Honourable Members of the Colombo Municipal Council for the honour you have bestowed upon me. I look forward to close cooperation between us on all matters of mutual interest and wish you and your distinguished colleagues every success in your endeavours.

Thank you.