

Professionals' service to the country

Expats respond to President's call

President Mahinda Rajapaksa recently called on the country's expatriate community with expertise in various fields to extend their service towards the country's development. Following are a few letters the Daily News has received from Lankan expatriates.

PAY GRATITUDE: The best of professionals' seeking greener pastures abroad especially those sent on State funds are turning their back and getting domiciled in the foreign countries. This has to be viewed as a lamentable national loss.

We are getting free education from the primary, through the secondary to the tertiary level. Aberrations may be among others the donations, tuition, high cost of study material and even additional subsidies to the tax evaders (Mahapola).

Sense of gratitude is a laudable characteristic that any person should manifest especially when he is a beneficiary. The amount spent on producing a professional (doctor, engineer, other graduates) is stupendous and it goes down the drain if the recipient does not serve the providing country in return. Only a few voluntarily reciprocate. The average individual is more self-centred.

A person manifesting 'enlightened self-interest' will always think of the responsibilities, duties, and their contribution while thinking of reaping the personal benefits. It is more a two way process than a one way passage.

The State as a trustee has to devise ways and means of getting the maximum benefit from the state investments to produce the professionals. It may be like the farmer who toils to till the land, sows, weeds, and watch the growth but allows some other person to rob him of the harvest.

The country provides free education, spends its meagre wealth on producing professionals but the 'Rapacious West' lures the ready made professionals by higher wages and better conditions of life when the country that needs their services is starved by a few dollars more offered by the countries which exploited us during the colonial days and continues to do so even under neo-colonialism. The State has to step in to ensure obtaining their services to meet the country's needs which are more urgent than those of the affluent West.

Professionals seek greener pastures for the local conditions are not conducive to their desire to earn a bit more and more than that to work under conducive conditions free of harassment and discrimination and be treated as those whose services are valued by the society and the country especially by those who govern the country. Another important factor to be borne in mind is the need to allow the professionals 'to mind their business' without undue distractions like fear of physical inflictions, outside interference, discrimination to name a few irritants which impel the exit if not the exodus.

A dedicated professional is one who is fully immersed in his chosen field of specialty. The objective conditions must be created not only by the State but also their organisations and peers to enable them to progress and contribute without let or hindrance.

It is not money alone that makes them migrate. There are a number of other higher needs they wish to satisfy. A good number of professionals feels that opportunities to satisfy their self actualization needs are rather limited and artificially restricted.

Professionals have to think of their duty by their country that looks after them from womb to the tomb and also the state and the various agencies which should make it worth the while for the professionals to stay in the country, return to the country and practise their profession in the country and even abroad if possible through permissible channels with the State blessings and have legitimate access as visible value added exports.

R. Suntharalingam

Call for expats

RALLY AROUND: It is commendable that the President's call for expats all over the world to rally for the benefit and development of Sri Lanka, which I believe most would do given a proper structure and a framework to make use of such skills are in place. Having said this, it is important to note that there are many capable and highly qualified people living in Sri Lanka who find it extremely hard to do a honest days of work with the meddling of political interests.

Having talked to some of my friends who decided to stay in the country for one

reason or another (although they had ample opportunity to migrate), I have realised that if you are a honest public servant there is no place for you in the Sri Lankan Government service. The amount of fraud, embezzlement, bribery that is undergoing with the full knowledge of the politicians and high ranking officers is so shameful and sad. Under such an environment it is questionable whether any number of expats coming to the rescue would have any impact and I believe most of them would be extremely frustrated.

I think Mr. President you will have to first clean up the dishonest top management of Government departments and those who feed them and let the few honest public servants that are left to do their jobs. Then if you still need more, I would be the first to come if there is anything I can do. As it happens in any decent country what is needed is to make the civil or Government service independent of the political process.

Ministers make policies and the government service, which is comprised technical people, are given the independence to carry out those policies the best way possible. Any public servant caught with any unscrupulous activities should be immediately sacked regardless of whom they know or who knows them.

As a test case it would be a good idea if the Government maintains a register of skilled expats and initially call them for short-term assignments. This will give the individual a chance to determine whether they can make a contribution and the Government a chance to see how a larger scale resettlement would work and what resources would be needed.

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