

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

HOW CAN THEY ALLOW TAX EXEMPTIONS RUNNING INTO BILLIONS OF RUPEES TO MPS AND IMPOSE TAXES ON ESSENTIAL FOOD ITEMS TO THE MASSES?



By
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Can Sri Lanka achieve economic growth and development without a significant reduction of corruption – sans good governance and rule of law?

These goals need to be achieved primarily for the government to ensure delivery of numerous promises made by the President and the Prime Minister during their election campaigns. Are they sincere about the need to reduce operational costs of the government in carrying out governance reforms as promised?

Shouldn't we however be happy about the existence of a large group of citizens and their keen political vigilance towards the role played by the elected representatives.

Shouldn't we think that we have a long way to go because we are far behind times? If we did not think of our future seriously, we could all perish.

We need a leader who is ambitious, pragmatic and a visionary, who could take us out from the tangled web.

We need to concentrate on strategies based on foreign trade and expand our national borders in a global village. We also need to work with countries like India and China and build up relationships for a balanced bilateral trade and commerce.

We also need a leader who will be dedicated to root out corruption and institute institutional and political reforms to sever the collusive links between politics and business – to firmly establish the rule of law, which is fundamental for a democracy.

In my view, it is of paramount importance to create a suitable business friendly climate which would ensure an open, effective, efficient, transparent and fair competition



Lee Kuan Yew

in building up a strong economy.

Lee Kuan Yew became Singapore's first Prime Minister on June 5, 1959. After nearly six decades, where are we compared to Singaporeans? Why? Having formed the Cabinet, what was his message to his Cabinet of Ministers?

As we know, unlike our leaders, LKY had been incorruptible financially. He had therefore demanded that all Cabinet Ministers should be totally incorruptible, straightforward, honest, dedicated, hardworking, efficient and transparent. LKY had asserted that he would not tolerate corruption.

LKY had taken great pains to establish discipline in the country. We could see even today, due to these traditions and practices established by LKY, after nearly six decades, there is zero tolerance for corruption, abuse of power and indiscipline. The Singapore government pays the highest salaries to their elected representatives and government servants, probably in the whole world.

Our economy, at the time we became independent, based on three main crops – tea, rubber and coconut which brought

considerable amount of foreign exchange to the country.

We enjoyed the third highest per capita income then in Asia after Japan and Malaysia. Singapore had been nowhere near!

Our rulers thereafter failed to pursue meaningful and progressive plans for industrialization to take the country forward. They had destroyed the plantation economy too after 'nationalisation'.

They abused international aid received for development purposes. Pompous ceremonies and numerous other rituals including luxury vehicles became more important than economic development for them. Even to-date they continue to plunder tax money. They have not yet been able to prioritize investments with a view to uplift the living standards of the citizens. Why do we maintain a huge fleet of vehicles including SUVs at a massive cost as security vehicles, when the war is no more?

They wastefully destroy enormous amounts of government resources for exhibitionism and bumpiousness.

Governments elected to power after 1970s failed to recognise intellectuals. They began politicisation and destroyed the Public Sector. They disregarded academics and failed to develop industry and education.

On the other hand LKY had always believed that the success depended on these two areas. LKY had said that he achieved growth and development in Singapore purely based on industry and education.

We had failed to catch up through the acquisition of new technologies and to use these technologies to upgrade the quality of services rendered to the citizens.