

Launch of Coffee table book "1975 - 2014"

25 February, 2014



Mr. Asanga Abeyagoonasekera **Executive Director, LKIIRSS.**

Welcome Address

Hon. Prof. G. L. Peiris, Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa Secretary of Defense and Urban Development, Commanders of the Armed Forces, your Excellencies, Member of Parliament, our distinguished panelists Mr. Gomin Dayasiri, Mr. Arun Thambimuthu, Author of our publication Mr. Malinda Senivirathna, Ladies and Gentlemen, On behalf of the Board of the Management of the premier National Think tank of Sri Lanka The Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations & Strategic Studies I warmly welcome all participants for today's Book launch "1975 to 2014" Sri Lanka.

It is with immense pleasure I welcome our Chief Guest for today's event Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, we are pleased to have him with us. Let me also warmly welcome our Panelists Mr. Gomin Dayasiri, Mr. Arun Thambimuthu, and the Author of our publication Mr. Malinda Senivirathna. Today Sri Lanka is at an important juncture where we have experienced stability and are able to live without fear. The Kadirgamar Institute in its own capacity has conducted 8 conferences in reconciliation on various themes. In October last year the Institute initiated and hosted a joint seminar on the theme of post conflict reconciliation with South Africa. This year I was given the opportunity to chair the post-conflict reconciliation working group at the Strategic Studies Summit conducted by NESAC in Bangkok with the participation of members from ten different countries.

As a global community coming out of conflicts reconciliation is paramount for this decade. Today the book we are launching in collaboration with Centre for Reconciliation and Co-existence, displays the cycle of conflict and trauma that was common occurrence in Sri Lanka before 2009.

Our country has suffered so much during the last three decades due to terrorism. All of us are direct or indirect victims. We have two survivors and two victims at the head table. Minister Prof. G.L. Peiris survived from a suicide attack in 1999 and our Chief Guest Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksha survived from the attack in 2006. Mr. Arun Tambimuthu and myself lost our parents due to the terrorist attacks.

The terror of LTTE is clearly illustrated with a simple and blunt narration by the author Malinda Senivirathna in this book. The page 18 of this book narrates the assassination of the founder of this Institute, Hon. Lakshman Kadirgamar. Next page, page 19, illustrates the suicide bomb attack on a political rally in Colombo by the LTTE on the 23rd of November 1994 which killed Mr. Gamini Dissanayaka and my father Ossie Abeyagoonasekera. My father believed in a political solution and had many discussions with LTTE in Jaffna and also in South India. His assassination and the assassination of many other renowned political leaders like Neelan Thiruchelvam, denotes LTTE's stubborn reluctance to accept a political solution.

One cannot forget the pain of losing a loved one, it forever remains in our hearts. But we must move on and make a genuine effort not to allow our children to feel the same pain. Now we all have a golden opportunity to rebuild our society. We could choose the path that unites us or the path that divides us. The future of our Nation is in the hands of the present generation who should dedicate their lives to make a more positive future for the next generations.

Reconciliation must be seen as a process that leads to the production of socio-political and economic conditions for all communities to anticipate a shared future. A shared history is the most secure foundation to build a shared future. Reconciliation is remembering the past and forgiving the mistakes, not forgetting.

Thank you