

# Language Policy: Towards Reducing Multi Ethnic Imbalances, Enhancing Social Harmony and Social Cohesion

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## 01. Introduction

After ending thirty years of civil war in 2009, Sri Lanka has become one of the emerging countries in the Asian region, developing through the policies introduced by the “Mahinda Chinthanaya”, the main policy document presented by the His Excellency, the President Mahinda Rajapaksa identifying the main issues and strategies to drive the development process eliminating the imbalances which contributed to worsen the war situation. The new language policy which was introduced, or actually taken as a tool to increase the interrelationship among the different ethnic groups, especially between the main two groups, the Sinhalese and Tamils, can be treated as very important initiatives taken by the government after ending the war chapter in the history book of Sri Lanka. In common with some other policies adopted by the government, with good initiative to give a position drive to the forces of development, the language policy also, while it has many position and favorable aspects, contain some defects and weaknesses which have to be remedied.

## 02. Ethnic Diversity in Sri Lanka

Like most of the Asian countries, Sri Lanka is also a multi ethnic country having a population of 20.2 million in 2011 (2011 Central Bank). This multi ethnical situation ensures the differences among the languages in same territory, different beliefs and practices, cultural diversity, less understating of the prevailing issues, having different religions, severe affects of caste problems on the lives of the people and many other problems. The language problem, the problem of not knowing other main ethnics group’s languages is the biggest issue as it is directly related with communication needed for better understanding. Having less communication will be a serious problem as it will affect negatively to mutual understanding of the people in a same society negatively.

**Table 01**  
**Population, Language and Religion by Ethnic Groups**

Ethnicity	Population , 1989		Mother Tongue & Major Lang. Speak	Main Religion
	Population	%		
Sinhalese	12,437,000	73.9	Sinhala	Buddhism
Sri Lankan Tamil	2,124,000	12.6	Tamil	Hindu
Indian Tamil	873,000	5.1	Tamil	Hindu
Muslims	1,249,000	7.4	Tamil / Sinhala	Islam
Burger	42,000	0.24	English	Catholic/Christian
Malay	48,000	0.28	Sinhala	Muslims
Others	52,000	0.30		

*Source: Statistical Abstract, 2010*

### **03. Civil Conflict in Sri Lanka**

Although the history gives some good evidences of the conflicts for the power in the shape of ethnic conflicts, mainly created between major ethnic groups such as Sinhalese and Tamils, the new shape of the civil conflict started in mid 1983 based on a incident occurred between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) resulting of killing of 13 army soldiers at Jaffna peninsula assumed unimagined proportions. This resulted in the most destructive explosion of communal rioting mainly in the southern part of the country.

David D. Laitin at Stanford University says that the civil war in Sri Lanka did not begin in earnest until 1983 when Tamil was already a recognized regional language. The positive correlation between recognition and insurgency in this case reflects the weakness of the Sinhalese state in rationalizing language in the mode of the 19<sup>th</sup> century French state. In large part, the weakness was due to the unwillingness of civil servants to switch over from English to Sinhala for their work. But the economic and potential military power of the Tamil compelled concession as well. The result is the odd sequence of language concessions preceding civil war.

### **04. Major Shift in National Language Policy after Independence**

Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948 and after eight years independence, in 1956, a major shift in national language policy was made by introduction of the Sinhala Only Policy. The easiest way to come to power by politicians, in natural, is to seek popularity within the majority ethnic groups and this theory has been applied in Sri Lankan political arena also from the past and most of the political parties have used several strategies to be popular among the largest group, the Sinhalese, by giving political promises to win the hearts of the Sinhalese people forgetting or neglecting the rights of the other minority ethnic groups, expanding the wounds in their hearts. This situation in the long run, even today has negatively affected the people in different ethnic groups other than treating all citizens as “Sri Lankan”. Wikipedia discussed that the detailed reports of the Kandyan Peasantry Commission (1947), the Buddhist Commission (1956), as well as statistics of preponderant admission of Tamil speaking student to the university provided a basis for these Sinhala activists who ensured that S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike won a landslide victory in 1956, campaigning on a strong Sinhala nationalist platform. In the process of encouraging the English language in the country as the language of administration, education and in the Courts, English was introduced as a medium of instruction.

#### **4.1 The Sinhala Only Policy**

The “Sinhala Only Policy” was introduced by passing the “Official Language Act No.33 of 1956” in the Parliament in 1956 recognizing English as an official language with the Sinhala without giving an official recognition for Tamil which was used by the second largest ethnic group. Sinhala was the mother tongue of Sinhalese and the Tamil was the mother tongue of Tamils. However, Tamil mainly is used by three largest minority ethnic groups such as Indian Tamils, Sri Lankan Tamils and the Moors. In 1956 the Sinhalese accounted for 70% of the total population while the minority groups accounted for 29% of the countries’ population. The introduction of this new policy was treated as an attempt to control the minor

groups by using the linguistic tools. This thinking later came to a head and led to a bloody civil war demanding a separate state within the same territory.

The above Act declared that Sinhala should be the only official language. As usual the Tamils opposed the policy of Sinhala only and tried to break the good relationship between Sinhalese and Tamils. The ethnic conflict was exacerbated by the Sinhala Official Language Act of 1956 (Wikipedia). As a result of these activities and the trend of separation of the ethnical groups, mainly two main ethnic groups the Sinhalese and Tamils, the 1958 riots occurred killing, assaulting, looting the properties, creating many refugees. In 1970, importing Tamil-language books, films, magazines, journals, from India, mainly from Tamil Nadu, was banned. These policies based on Sinhala only led a country towards a civil war situation drawing the country back from many years from the development not only economically but also socially.

#### **4.2 Enacting of the Tamil Language (Special Provision) Act of 1958.**

The Sinhala only policy was highly opposed by the Tamil people saying that it was highly partial and treating as an effort to destroy the rights of the Tamil people by the majority. As a counter measure to the criticism made to the Sinhala only policy, the government passed a new Act named as Tamil Language (Special Provision) Act of 1958. This Act provided for the use of Tamil in correspondence with the public for administrative work in Northern, Eastern Province. By this Act Tamil language was treated as the official language in the Northern and Eastern provinces without prejudice to the operation of Sinhala as the official language of those provinces (Thirumalai). Not only the Tamil people but also lefties political parties, especially “Lanka Samasamaja Party led by Dr. N.M.Perera also bitterly opposed the move of the government of introducing Sinhala only policy and a motion was proposed in Parliament that the Act “should be amended forthwith to provide for the Sinhalese and Tamil languages to be state languages of Ceylon with parity in status throughout the Island (Wikipedia). The other lefties leader Dr. Colvin R.de Silva has asked “Do we want a single nation with too languages or do we want two nations with one language? Do we want a single state or do we want two? Do we want one Ceylon or do we want two? And above all, do we want an independent Ceylon which must necessarily be united and single and single Ceylon, or two bleeding halves of Ceylon which can be gobbled up by every ravaging imperialist monster that may happen to range the Indian Ocean? These are the issues that in fact we have been discussing under the form and appearance of language issue. (Wikipedia).

The later incidents with the severe war in Sri Lanka continuously until the end of the terrorism in 2008, within a period of previous 30 years has vindicated the position of the lefties party leaders as to what may occur as a result of biased national policy. If the then government did not introduce such policies thinking about the whole nation as Sri Lanka it may have avoided many troubles that occurred later. The story of Sri Lanka which we are experiencing today may have been different and the country would have been developed simultaneously to the other developed countries today such as Singapore and Hong Kong. The previous situations of these countries around 1940 were equal to the situation of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) or worse. Therefore, at this juncture, after turning the history of Sri Lanka by ending the so called bloody war, the policy makers should have to understand the real situation that may occur in future as a result of bad policies taken at present.

### 4.3 Introduction of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka - 1978

Chapters III and Chapter IV of the Constitution specified the law relating to the languages and Articles 18 to 25 specified the laws related to languages as follows.

- Article 14 - Every Citizen is entitled to the freedom of speech and expression including publication, the freedom to engage by himself or in association with others to enjoy and promote his own culture and to use his own language.
- Article 18 - Sinhala shall be the Official language of Sri Lanka.
- Article 19 - Sinhala and Tamil shall be the National Languages of Sri Lanka
- Article 20 - The members of Parliament, Members of Provincial Councils and Members of Local Authorities are entitled to perform their duties and discharge their functions in Parliament or in the Provincial Councils or Local Authorities of which they are members, in either of the National Languages.
- Article 21 - A person is entitled to be educated through the medium of either of the National Language. This does not apply to the institutions of higher education where the medium of instruction is a language other than a National Language. Where on National Language is a medium of instruction or in any course, department or faculty of any University directly or indirectly financed by the State the other National Language shall also be made a medium of instruction for same. Compliance of this provision is not obligatory if such other National Language is the medium of instruction for those in other campus of the University or in another University.
- Article 22 - Sinhala and Tamil shall be the Languages of Administration throughout Sri Lanka and Sinhala shall be the Language of Administration in all provinces other than the Northern and Eastern Provinces where Tamil shall be used.
- In any area where Sinhala is used as the Language of Administration, a person other than an official acting in his capacity is entitled; (a) to receive communications from, and to communicate and transact business with, any official in his official capacity in either of the National Languages. (b) if the law recognize his rights to inspect or to obtain copies of or extracts from any official register, record, publication or other document, to obtain a copy or an extract or translation thereof in either of National Languages, and (c) to obtain a copy or translation in either of the National Languages.
- Article 23 - All laws and subordinate legislation should be enacted or made or published in both National Languages, together with a translation in English.
- Article 24 - The Official Language shall be the language of the courts throughout Sri Lanka.
- Article 25 - The State shall provide adequate facilities for the use of the languages.

#### **4.4 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution**

By the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution made and certified on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1987 was mainly for the establishment of the Provincial Councils in order to decentralize the powers of the Central Government to give some independence to the provinces as a relief for the Civil War of the Country, it also introduced very important amendments related with the language policy of the country. By this amendment the Tamil language was also recognized as an Official Language and English language was introduced as the Link Language.

#### **4.4 16<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution**

By the 16<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution made and certified on 17<sup>th</sup> December, 1988, replacing the article 22 and the 23 made in the original Constitution Sinhala and Tamil were both introduced as the languages of administration throughout Sri Lanka, and Sinhala shall be the language administration and used for the maintenance of records and transacting business by the public institutions in all the provinces and except north and east and Tamil shall be Language of administration and shall be so used in the North and East Provinces. With the enactment of this amendment, languages of legislation shall be Sinhala and Tamil, together with a translation in English. All the documents made under any law should be published both in Sinhala and Tamil with a translation in English. Further the Sinhala and Tamil shall be the languages of the courts. It also replaced the words mentioned as “National Languages” in the original Constitution or in the previous fifteen amendments with the words of “Sinhala or Tamil”.

#### **4.5 Introduction of Official Language Commission (OLC)**

The Official Language Commission (OLC) was established by the Act No.08 of 1991 with the objective of recommending principles of policy on the use of official language. The monitoring and supervising compliance with the provisions contained in the Constitution were the other expectations of establishing this Commission.

#### **05. Public Sector and the Official Language Policy**

Although the both public and private sectors are important for the country for its development, in implementation of the Official Language Policy, the public sector has been given a priority and important place. The Official Languages Commission (OLC) says that the Public Service is the focus of the implementation of the Official Language Policy; it covers the State Sector, Provincial Public Sector and Semi-Government Sector. An examination of the Constitutional provisions on language reveals that they cannot be fully implemented without the public service proceeding to achieve this in stages and being geared to operate in both Official Languages (2005OLC Report).

The total number of public sector employees according to the Central Bank are, between 2009-2011 as in the following table and it comes to 1,232,477 in 2011. Most of them would have achieved the proficiency in a second official language such as Sinhala for Tamils and Tamil for Sinhalese. The Official Language Commission is of the view that the exact number of public servants who need to be proficient in both Official Languages should be computed by the government after a due survey (OLC Report, 2005).

The objective of the government is to build a public service with at least with by bi-lingual skills if not trilingual. The Official Language Commission has pointed out that there should be a plan to achieve short term goals to facilitate citizens to communicate and correspond with the government and its different institutions in either of the Official Languages and to obtain documents etc. Further it has been pointed out that the implementation of such a plan should be in stages based on a time-frame and relate to the degree of coverage of the public service at each stage whilst taking into account the priorities in regard to the needs (2005).

**Table 02**  
**Public Sector Employment 2009-2011**

Category	2009	2010	2011
<b><i>Government Institutions</i></b>			
Executives and Professionals	310,061	338,397	346,629
Non-Executives	535,362	483,970	451,631
Minor-Employees	201,618	147,207	188,126
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>1,047,041</i></b>	<b><i>969,574</i></b>	<b><i>986,386</i></b>
<b><i>Semi- Government Institutions</i></b>			
Executives and Professionals	37,151	38,295	37,607
Non-Executives	121,153	110,576	108,575
Minor-Employees	108,239	101,146	99,909
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>266,543</i></b>	<b><i>250,017</i></b>	<b><i>246,091</i></b>
<b><i>Public Sector (Total)</i></b>			
Executives and Professionals	347,212	376,692	384,236
Non-Executives	656,515	594,546	560,206
Minor-Employees	309,857	248,353	288,035
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>1,313,584</i></b>	<b><i>1,219,591</i></b>	<b><i>1,232,477</i></b>

*Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka*

The real problem is that most of the public servants have not been trained to work in both languages. The following table shows that the total number of the Tamil speaking employees is very low in the total number of public servants. When compared with the total population, the figure is insignificant. By understanding this need, the government has taken many measures to reduce this gap.

## **06. The Measures Taken to Reduce Gaps in the Usage of Second Language**

### **6.1 Issuing Public Administration Circular No.36/89 on the Implementation of the Law on Official Languages by amending the relevant sections of the Establishment Code of Sri Lanka.**

This Circular was issued by the Secretary of Ministry of Public Administration on 06<sup>th</sup> June 1989 to impact the laws related to the Official Languages as in the Constitution by making some Amendments to the Chapter of the Establishment Code. Some of the Amendments made are introducing the requirement of passing an official language at the efficiency bar examination, emphasize the requirement of following

the laws related with the Official Language Policy, giving official leave for six months with pay to have the proficiency of an official Language and introducing the requirement of getting the consent of the public servants as agreeing to follow the conditions introduced by the Constitution. However, this Circular later amended by the same Secretary by the Public Administration Circular No: 36/89 (1) introducing a new specimen of the Appointment Letter. By this amendment all the Secretaries, Chief Secretaries, Secretaries of the Governors, Head of the Departments and the Government Agents were informed to amend the all appointment letters incorporating changes introduced by the Public Administration Circular No.36/89.

**Table 03**  
**Tamil Speaking Public Servants by Sectors and Ethnicity**  
**(2002 – Provincial)**

Sector	Total Number of Employees	%			
		Muslims	Sri Lankan Tamils	Indian Tamils	Tamil Speaking Employees (Total)
State	295,734	3.09	5.06	0.25	8.4
Provincial Councils	292,072	5.75	12.3	1.76	19.81
Semi - Government	247,845	3.2	5.48	0.37	9

Source: Annual Report, Official Language Commission, 2005

## **6.2 Payment of Incentive Allowances to Public Officers who Acquire proficiency in More than One Official Language**

The Secretary of the Ministry of Public Administration & Home Affairs issued a circular No. 03/2007 on 09<sup>th</sup> February, 2007 giving incentives to enhance the productivity in the Public Service through the proficiency acquired by Public Servants for the discharge of duties in both official languages. The objective was to minimize the problems relating to the use of official languages. By this circular, the public officials are divided into three groups to be entitled with the incentive scheme. All together thirty three different services beginning from Sri Lanka Administrative Service (SLAS) down to the minor staff have been identified for incentive payments. For having the incentives, proficiency in both languages should be acquired by an officers who are recruited to the posts indicated in the scheme of recruitment where it is a requirement of passing a specific examination in Sinhala and Tamil as an additional qualification will not be entitled to the incentive payment.

The syllabus for language training for each category is prepared by the Department of Official Language, and courses can be conducted by the Department, other Government / Non- Governmental or private institutions. Cost of the training incurred by the Government Institutions will be borne by the government;

however, the officers having training should enter into agreement with the government. The additional increment will be further paid on a recommendation issued by the Department of Official Languages after holding a test once in five years.

**Table 04**

**The Incentives given under the Public Administration Circular No.03/2007**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Language Proficiency to be Acquired</b>	<b>Allowance Granted</b>
01	Pass in Sinhala/Tamil at the G.C.E.(O.L.) Examination as a main subject (Not as second language or optional subject) and pass in oral test conducted by the Department of Official Languages or pass in the special competence examination conducted by the Department of Official Languages for this category.	Rs.25,000/= and a monthly non pensionable allowance equivalent to an increment
02	Pass in the test for the language course at Secondary Level examination conducted by the Department of Official Languages.	Rs.25,000/= and a monthly non pensionable allowance equivalent to an increment
03	Pass in test for the language course at Preliminary Level examination conducted by the Department of Official Languages.	Rs.15,000/= and a monthly non pensionable allowance equivalent to an increment

**6.3 Implementation of Official Language Policy – Public Administration Circular No. 07/2007 dated 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2007**

The Government issued a Circular No. 07/2007 on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2007 under the caption of “Implementation of Official Language Policy” as able to deliver the expected by the general public of the country in official Language, Sinhala or Tamil, according to the Constitutional requirements of Sri Lanka. It is specified under this Circular that all officers to the Public/ Provincial Public Service with effect from 01.07.2007 should acquire proficiency in the other language within a period of 5 years in addition to the official language through which they enter the service and the proficiency standard required to be acquired by each service, thirty two services have been identified from the Sri Lanka Administrative Service to Minor Staff. However, these requirements are necessary only for the appointments made from the 01st September 2007 and the provisions stipulated in the Public Administration Circular No. 03/2007 will not apply to the officers recruited after 01st September 2007.

**6.4 Public Administration Circular No.03/2010**

The Secretary of the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs issued the Circular No.03/2010 on 01<sup>st</sup> September 2010 on the Caption of Constitution and the Regulation for the Usage of



Sinhala/Tamil/English. According to this circular guideline, all the government institutions should reply to the letters received on the same language of the letter. However, if the signing officer has less or no knowledge about that language the relevant document or letter is written, he/she should prepare the letter in a national language known to him/her and should send a translation of the same letter attached. Other than that, all the circulars, regulations and instructions should be issued in all three languages as Sinhala, Tamil and in English.

**6.5 Delegation of Responsibility for the Implementation of the Official Language Policy - The Notification made in the Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka No. 1620/27 on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2009 and the Public Administration issued Circular No.18/2009 on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

The Secretary of the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs and National Integration made a notification in the Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka No. 1620/27 on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2009 according to the decision taken by the Cabinet of Ministers held on 03.02.2009, under the caption of “Delegations of Responsibility for the Implementation of the Official Language Policy” to delegate responsibility and the responsibilities of Chief Official Languages Implementation Officer and the Official Languages Implementation Officer. In this Gazette Notification, the Officers specified in the Column II and in Column III have been specified as Chief Official Language Implementation Officer and Official Languages Implementation Officer respectfully.

The Secretary of Ministry of Public Administration issued Circular No.18/2009 on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009 on “Delegation of Responsibilities in the Implementation of Official Language Policy” to empower the requirement mentioned in the Gazette Notification.

In this Gazette, two schedules, Schedule “B” and Schedule “C” have been published specifying the responsibilities of Chief Official Languages Implementation Officer and Official Languages Implementation Officer respectfully.

The Chief Official Languages Implementation Officer is responsible for ensuring that the Official Languages Implementation Officer possess a sound knowledge of the law, make a framework and strategic plan within the institution related to better implementation of the Official Language policy, ensure a sufficient supervision, take remedial actions to overcome difficulties, and make and submit reports where necessary related to the Country’s Official Language Policy and its implementation.

According to the Schedule “C”, the Official Languages Implementation Officer is responsible for ensuring that subordinate officers are acquainted with the Official Language Law, formulating strategies for ensuring that the law relating official language are compiled with and by the subordinated officers,

suitable scheme for implementing, monitoring and evaluating have been formulated and reports, data and information are forwarded in relation with the implementation of the Official Language Policy of the Country.

**Table o5  
Definition of Official Languages Implementation Officers**

<b>Colum II</b>	<b>Colum II</b>	<b>Colum III</b>
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Chief Official Languages Implementation Officer</b>	<b>Official Languages Implementation Officer</b>
Ministry	Secretary	Additional Secretary/ Senior Assistant Secretary
Department	Head of the Department	Additional Head/Deputy Head of the Department
Provincial Council	Chief Secretary	Deputy Chief Secretary in charge of administration
Provincial Ministry	Secretary	Deputy Secretary
Provincial Department	Head of the Department	Additional Head/Deputy Head of the Department
Municipal Council	Municipal Commissioner	Deputy Municipal Commissioner
Urban Council	Secretary	Administrative Officer
Pradeshiya Shaba	Secretary	Administrative Officer

*Source: Government Gazette No. 1620/27 dated 25<sup>th</sup> September 2009*

## **6.6 Creation of Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration (MNL SI)**

The Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration was established in April 2010. It has a pivotal role to play in a post conflict era where the people of Sri Lanka are looking forward to the fresh dawn of a prosperous country. The expectation of the Ministry is to be deeply committed to the noble task of facilitating all the communities to live in peace and harmony in a country enlivened by the colors of diversity while ensuring the language rights enshrined in the Constitution. The Vision of the Ministry is to establish a “ A unified Sri Lankan nation celebrating unity in diversity endearingly intertwined by two languages ensuring the cultural identity of all communities” while the mission is to Policy formulation, guidance and facilitation to create a developed and socially integrated trilingual society that assures rights of one and all and respects each other. Accordingly, the Ministry expects to enhance the freedom of communities, communal harmony, strong understanding, Religious and Cultural bonds, and develop a society with equal opportunities for every citizen of this country ensuring social Integration protecting the language rights of everyone and providing equal opportunities to every person.

### **6.7 Naming Bilingual Divisional Secretaries**

According to the Section 22(1) as amended by the 16<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, president can declare Bilingual Divisional Secretariat Divisions considering the proportion of the population of the Sinhala and Tamil linguistic minority population. Accordingly, by a Gazette Notification, the president declared at the initial stage, 29 Divisional Secretariat Divisions as Bilingual Divisional Secretaries. Another 10 Divisional Secretariats have been notified as the Bilingual Divisional Secretariats in October in accordance with the recommendations made by the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration to declare another 43 Divisions which also have been recommended by the Official Language Commission.

### **6.8 The Establishment of the Official Language Commission (OLC) by the Act. No. 18 of 1991**

The Establishment of the Official Language Commission (OLC) by the Act. No. 18 of 1991 can be treated as a major initiative taken by the government. There were four major objectives of recommending, monitoring and supervising the principles of policy relating to the use of the Official Languages, taking the actions and measures to ensure the use of the languages referred in the Constitution, promoting the appreciation of the Official Languages and the acceptance, maintenance, and continuance of their status, equality and right of use and to conduct investigations and taking remedial actions where needed.

### **6.9 An Establishment of National Institute of Language Education and Training Institute**

The National Institute of Language Education and Training was established by the Act No. 26 of 2007 with the objectives of generating competent teachers to teach Sinhala, Tamil and English to those who are desirous of acquiring such knowledge, generating competent translators and interpreters in the Sinhala, Tamil, and English languages who shall constitute the National Translators Service and the National Interpreters Service, to make the qualified teachers to train teachers in Sinhala, Tamil and in English, Interpreters and Translators and to train persons with trilingual capabilities to serve people efficiently.

### **6.10 The Department of Official Language**

The Department of Official Language functions as a facilitator for the effective implementation of the language policy as enshrined in the Constitution. The Department is engaged in the provision of translations to the government, enhancing language skills of public servants and the preparation of glossaries, language text books and dictionaries. The vision of the Department is ensuring the peace and ethnic harmony through languages. The mission of the Department is to facilitate and co-ordinate the

effective implementation of the Official Language Policy as enshrined in the Constitution. The objectives of the Department are enhancing the language skills of the Public Service, promoting ethnic harmony and peace through inter-cultural activities, promoting awareness on official Language Policy and recognizing and facilitating the promotion of genuine multilingualism, to achieve unity in diversity and international understanding in conformity with the open economic policy of the Government and the United Nation's Resolution No. 56 /262.

#### **6.11 Declaration of year 2012 as the “Trilingual Year” to unify the nation**

His Excellency, the President of Sri Lanka a function in which the former Indian President Dr. Abdul Kalam participated declared the year 2012 as the Year for Trilingual to strengthen unity in the country. Former Indian President was the Chief Guest at a function held under the patronage of President Mahinda Rajapaksa to declare 2012 as the *Year* for a Trilingual Sri Lanka. His Excellency the President Rajapaksa who entered the Parliament as the youngest member in 1970 tabled the trilingual proposal in 1971 and this initiative will encourage all Sri Lankans to learn all three languages Sinhalese, Tamil, and English- as a means to achieve national reconciliation and harmony.

#### **7. The Way Forward**

Sri Lanka has a very comprehensive and visionary policy in terms of its Official Language Policy. The legal and administrative framework for the proper implementation of OLP which exists at presents undoubtedly commendable. But the practicality of the OLP needs to be further examined and should be prioritized. A proper implementable Official Language Policy drives the development of any multi ethnic country though improving the national harmony in the country. A Country like Sri Lanka which a long term solution is found for the Civil War after severely suffered thirty years or more, such a policy can be used as a very effective tool not only for having economic development but also through amending the separated and wounded minds and hearts of the people to get together as a one nation within a one Country. Therefore, the responsibility of the policy makers is to strengthen the strategies taking to boost the usage and the ability to use a second language is a must duty and the private sector also, not only the public sector should have to get into the net of using an extra official language Sinhala or Tamil, while English is also used as a link language.

The implementation of the better language policy mainly depends and needs high political will and commitment. However, the political initiatives and leadership given by the Political leadership is admirable and as a result above discussed many initiatives could be implemented. Not only that but also

high administrative commitment is essentially needed for a proper operational structure for smooth and better implementation of the Official Language.

The other factor needed for the proper implementation of the OLP is expanding the capacity, organizational and human. As organization capacity, the training institutes or opportunities for learning languages as able to cover widely spread employee network is essential. At the organizational level, each and everyone should have to understand the value of knowing other closed languages and high priority has to be given. The practice of respecting to others rights as well as others languages should have to be developed at the institutional level. As for human capacity, more trainers of all three languages such as Sinhala, Tamil and English are needed. The Translators and Interpreters are the other human capacity areas to be developed and therefore, attractive benefits for these areas should be introduced.

The lack of awareness is the other area to be thought of. There should be more awareness programs for general public as well as public servants. The importance, the advantages and the benefits that can be gained by following the requirement of the official language policy, should be widely made known. At the same time the government should provide funds and allocations for the programs implemented under the OLP. Funding for the Training of Trainers, funding for the training institutions, funding for the training programs, funding for the different varieties of event such as cultural, linguistic, exchanging ideas and promotional activities like language competitions, home stay programs, student exchange programs etc. should have to be introduced and more funds should be allocated.

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