

Monday, 1 January 2024

## New Year Speech 2024

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Secretary, Ministry of Transport and Highways

Honorable Minister Dr Bandula Gunawardane, Ministers, Secretaries,  
Heads of the Departments and Statutory Bodies and Dear Colleagues,

I wish you a very happy new year!

As we welcome the dawn of a new year and I begin my tenure as the Secretary to the Ministry of Transport and Highways, I am both honored and excited to embark on this journey with each of you.

As I stand before you today, my thoughts go back to my early days as an undergraduate, where my journey with the Road Development Authority (RDA) began. I vividly remember my time at the Neluva Bridge site in 1993, where I did my industrial training. Those days on the ground taught me invaluable lessons about how systems operate at the grassroots level, giving me a firsthand understanding of the challenges faced by our workers. Later as a member of the Board, I managed to grasp the dynamics of management and its real contribution to drive the organisation forward.

My path in the transport sector deepened during my postgraduate studies, where I delved into research on transport modeling. This academic pursuit, coupled with my time as a commission member of

the National Transport Commission (NTC), enriched my perspective on the complexities of transportation and infrastructure development.

Furthermore, my engagement with the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka (IESL) as Vice President allowed me to expand my association with the engineering fraternity, honing my leadership abilities and contributing to the advancement of our profession.

These experiences have shaped my approach to leadership and management, grounding me in the practical realities of our field while elevating my perspective to strategic heights. As we navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead, I am committed to applying these insights, ensuring that our decisions are not only strategic but also empathetic to the needs of every individual contributing to our projects.

Together, we will celebrate our achievements during the past. Together,, we will embark on a journey that values every contribution, understands every challenge, and strives for excellence at every step. I am excited to work with each of you and lead us towards a future marked by innovation, efficiency, and growth.

My approach to leadership has always been underpinned by a fundamental trust in people. I believe in empowering our team, fostering a culture where trust is the cornerstone until proven otherwise. This philosophy has guided me through various roles, from my time at Sri Lankan Airlines and Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation

to leadership positions at Mobitel and SLT, and as the founder of SLTC Research University.

In our operations, I advocate a philosophy that resonates deeply with me: 'Enjoy the outcome of your work but not just the work itself.' It's about finding fulfillment and pride in the results we achieve, ensuring that our efforts translate into meaningful progress and tangible benefits for our society.

Looking ahead, my vision for the future is to seamlessly integrate our rich cultural heritage with digital excellence. This integration is key to creating a modern society that not only advances technologically but also retains and celebrates its cultural magnificence. As we step into this role, we carry the responsibility of shaping a transport and highway system that reflects this vision – one that is efficient, innovative, and culturally resonant.

Together, we will strive to make our transportation network not just a means to an end, but a reflection of our nation's identity – progressive, inclusive, and respectful of our heritage. Our goal is to build infrastructure and provide services that our citizens can rely on and be proud of.

In the wake of our country's economic challenges, a critical part of our mandate at the Ministry of Highways and Transport is to contribute actively to the national recovery effort. Our focus will be on enhancing revenue generation through efficient service delivery, significantly reducing costs without compromising the quality of our work. By

optimizing our operations and exploring innovative revenue streams, we aim to contribute to bolstering our nation's economy. This approach is not just about immediate recovery; it's about laying a solid foundation for sustainable growth and stability in the future. As we embark on this journey, every decision we make, every project we undertake, will be aligned with these overarching goals, ensuring that our collective efforts support the nation's path to a stable and thriving economy.

As we forge ahead, I encourage each of you to join me in this endeavor with enthusiasm and dedication. Your insights, creativity, and commitment are invaluable as we work together to create a transportation system that is a hallmark of excellence and cultural integrity.

I am eager to collaborate with you, to listen to your ideas, and to witness the incredible things we will achieve together. Let us embrace this new chapter with a shared commitment to excellence, innovation, and cultural reverence.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Here's to a year of growth, achievement, and shared success. Together, let's make a lasting impact and build a future that harmoniously blends the best of our past with the promise of our future.

Thank you!

