Proposals for immediate reforms

Nine months have passed since a new administration on policies of ‘good governance’ was established to replace Mahinda Rajapaksa’s rotten political culture that had affected the socio-political system of this country for nearly a decade. The aspirations of the masses in voting in a new mandate on 8th January did go beyond mere defeat of Mr. Rajapaksa as an individual. It was to get rid of the political culture nurtured during that period and to establish political, legal and administrative reforms that would prevent a repetition of such a situation. Also, a number of reforms demanded and had been agitating by political and civil organizations for a long period had been included in the manifesto for the presidential election held on 8th January. These reforms were also included in the manifesto of the government presented for the general election held on 17th August. We, as responsible members of political parties and civil organizations as well as individuals, have included several such reforms approved by people in two elections held within 8 months and several other reforms as it is our responsibility to get inspirations of the masses and their needs fulfilled. Also, it is the responsibility of an administration that respects the mandate it has been given to implement such reforms. The following is a set of proposals for immediate implementation:

01. Bring in constitutional amendments to totally abolish executive presidential system

02. Enforce laws to revoke Parliamentary seats of Parliamentarians who cross over

03. Abolish provisions that exist in the 19th amendment to increase the number of ministers to 30 and the number of deputy ministers to 40 and legalize
having subjects and institutions of ministries on a scientific basis by bringing in a Parliamentary act

04. Introducing, after a broad dialogue with the masses, a new electoral system that would allow fair representation of multiple political tendencies that exist in our country in Parliament, provincial councils and local government bodies.

05. Adopting in Parliament and implementing the Right to Information Act

06. Adopting and implementing the National Audit Act

07. Appointing a Parliamentary Select committee to prepare a programme to enable Sri Lankan citizens living abroad to vote from where they are domiciled

08. Humiliating, ridiculing and subjecting to injustice due to one’s race, religion or any other reason should be totally prohibited and a ‘Commission Against Discrimination’ should be established to entertain and investigate complaints from those who have been subjected to indiscrimination and to take legal action against offenders.

09. Establishing a ‘Truth and Reconciliation Commission’ through an Act of development and reconstruction of national unity to enable those who were affected by the war to present their grievances, to find out the truth regarding such complaints and to give relief to the distressed.

10. Investigating expeditiously all frauds and corruption that have been reported so far and punishing the perpetrators immediately should be considered a priority of the government. Change the situation that exists in Attorney General’s Department, the CID and other state investigating institutions that undermines, puts off investigations to fulfill the needs of politicians.
11. Strengthening and making totally independent all institutes that have been established to investigate frauds and corruption and to punish those responsible.

12. Allocating a minimum of 6% of GNP from state funds for education and making use of these funds to develop free education, its quality and development of infrastructure relevant to education.

13. i. Adding all allowances of state employees to their basic salary

ii. Bringing in laws necessary to increase the salary of all private sector employees by Rs.2500

iii. The proposed daily wages of estate sector employees to be increased to Rs.1000

iv. Implementing, as has been accepted by the Construction Industry Development Act, pension benefits and an insurance scheme to employees and craftsmen in the construction industry as they represent a large portion of the irregular employment sector.

14. Abolishing the system of political appointments when recruiting to state and statutory bodies and establishing a system to recruit on eligibility.

15. Strengthening legal provisions and institutions that exist for the protection of women and children and establishing a special court to hear offenses of abuse of women and children.

16. Stopping the spread of narcotic drugs to save children and young generation from the hazard of drug addiction and taking immediate steps to implement the law against drug racketeers.
17. Legalizing, to cover the private sector as well, the guaranteed prices decided by the government for paddy, rubber and tea and legalizing prices of other agro products when their guaranteed prices are determined.

18. To frame a national policy that covers fine arts and the media sector that would protect the professional dignity of artistes, to give total freedom for creations, enable all citizens to appreciate artistic creations and to establish a council consisting of experts in the relevant fields to frame such a policy.

19. Activating immediately the National Intellectual Property Office to consolidate the right of artistic creators in a manner that would not hinder the right of the people for information and people’s access to knowledge.

20. Compile a national policy to conserve natural resources and the environment to meet national necessity and study existing policies, acts and regulations in connection with conservation strategies and strengthen them.