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10th November 2020

His Excellency Gotabaya Rajapaksa

President,

Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Your Excellency,

DEVELOPMENT OF EAST CONTAINER TERMINAL IN THE COLOMBO PORT

We write to you on the above subject considering present media information on the East Container Terminal (ECT) development.

As envisaged in the Colombo South Harbor Development Project, the ECT is to be developed by the landlord, Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA), and other terminals to be developed by operators who are selected through a competitive bidding process. It is with pride we note that the SLPA has already built the berth and installed the cranes utilizing its own funds. We are aware that the SLPA has commissioned the cranes recently, by serving vessels to the terminal. The ECT is the most strategic terminal in the Colombo port, which even facilitates back-to-back operation, with a substantial yard area. It should also be noted that the SLPA will not remain in a competitive position in port operations within next five years, if a deep water terminal such as ECT is not strategically exploited.

However, present media information from several sources state that the ECT terminal is planned to be given partly to a Foreign company, which is highly surprising as well as heartbreaking, as many of our Engineers and allied professionals have contributed to its development with the sincere thought that this will be a key resource in the economic revival of the country, encompassing strategic geo-political significance.

We note that former President H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksha has directed the development of Sri Lankan port sector massively, during his tenure, safeguarding strategic national assets. Singapore, being in a strategic location in the international supply chain, has developed her own maritime operator companies and promoted them to work even overseas. As we too are located strategically and our port facilities are well developed, it is unreasonable and illogical to allow some foreign party to reap benefits from a huge asset created with our own funding and expertise. May we point-out that the Colombo port has been listed among the highest growing ten ports in the world recently, which confirms the SLPA capacity of efficient operations in the Colombo Port?

Your Excellency, we are confident that you will surmount any geopolitical pressure impacting on our sovereignty and economic development. It is in this light we see the need for absolute State control of port infrastructure operations, which impact heavily on national security and non-aligned status of our country. While it is our fervent hope that the media insinuations are baseless, if there is even a slight truth in them, we shall prevail on the confidence and trust placed on you as the President, to keep the East Container Terminal of the Colombo Port totally under SLPA control and not allow any foreign or non-state entities to take even the slightest control of its operations or ownership.

Yours Sincerely,


President on behalf of the Council

The Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka

Cc.

Hon. Prime Minister

Secretary to the President

Secretary of Ministry of Ports

Hon. Cabinet of Ministers

Secretary to the Prime Minister

Chairman Sri Lanka Port Authority

(Engineers are the nation builders who strive to boost the economic development of the Country in various capacities.)