



Questions addressed to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake at the Special Media Briefing held at the Presidential Secretariat on 5 March 2026 and the Answers provided by the President.

Q: An Opposition Member of Parliament has stated in the Parliament that a ship carrying three hundred children is within our territorial waters and that we are in a position to assist them. Such claims are frequently made by the opposition. What is your response in this regard?

A: When cyclone Ditwah struck and when a bus became stranded near the Kala Oya bridge, certain individuals began expressing different opinions every ten minutes. However, as a government, we did not allow ourselves to be distracted by such remarks. Instead, we focused on taking the necessary steps to rescue those people. We carefully examined the situation whether it was possible to deploy a helicopter and if not, whether the Navy could be mobilised. After assessing the circumstances, we made the required interventions and succeeded in saving their lives.

Similarly, in this instance, we are investigating who is on board the ship and what measures should be taken to ensure their safety. Appropriate interventions are being made accordingly. Unfortunately, the opposition appears to have turned falsehood into an art, making statements either knowingly or without regard for the fact that the truth will soon emerge. Their intention seems to be to create the impression that, while a group of children is in danger, the government is acting inhumanely by ignoring the situation. At times like this, both political parties and citizens should instead focus on how to act responsibly and address the situation effectively.

Q: You have explained the real situation to the country. Will this intervention have any impact on the country's security?

A: We are acting in accordance with International Conventions. Some individuals have claimed that these incidents are taking place within our territorial waters, but this is not accurate. An Iranian vessel was attacked while it was outside our territorial waters, although within our Exclusive Economic Zone. We do not have direct control over incidents that occur in that area. However, when such incidents occur, certain political groups attempt to exploit them for their own narrow and opportunistic objectives. They seek to gain political advantage by spreading misleading propaganda. For instance, when tensions arose between India and Pakistan, some attempted spread false narratives linking that situation.

Similarly, when the United States imposed additional tariffs on several countries, similar forms of propaganda were spread. During Cyclone Ditwah as well, false claims circulated suggesting that more than a thousand people had died and that a large number of houses had been completely destroyed. In any circumstance whether it is an international development, a domestic issue, or a natural disaster



මාධ්‍ය නිවේදනය
ஊடக வெளியீடு
PRESS RELEASE



ජනාධිපති මාධ්‍ය අංශය
ஜனாதிபதி ஊடகப் பிரிவு
PRESIDENT'S MEDIA DIVISION

certain political groups appear to focus primarily on how such events can be used for their own political benefit. We deeply regret such conduct.

Q: Based on this incident, some groups are claiming that the economy will collapse. What is the government's response to this?

A: We are in a position to withstand this situation. In fact, we have already purchased nearly USD 700 million from the market, which demonstrates the strength we have achieved. Cyclone Ditwah caused damage amounting to USD 4.1 billion. By that time, we had already presented this year's Budget to the Parliament. Nevertheless, without making any changes to the Budget framework, we were able to allocate 500 billion separately to address the impact of Cyclone Ditwah. As a result, we were able to dispel the perception that the economy would collapse because of the disaster.

Furthermore, 2025 recorded the lowest budget deficit announced in recent history. It was also the year in which the highest government revenue in recent history was generated. Our current account balance exceeds USD 1.8 billion. Historically, the current account has turned positive on only four occasions and this is one such instance. In addition, the primary balance stands at 2.3% according to the parameters set by the International Monetary Fund, while we are currently exceeding 5%. Therefore, we are capable of managing this situation. Of course, neither you nor I can predict exactly how the situation will evolve. Our response will depend on how circumstances develop. However, based on the present conditions, we are fully capable of coping with the situation.

Q: Is there any information regarding the route of the IRIS Bushehr and what led it to this location?

A: According to available reports, the vessel was returning from a military exercise in India. These ships belong to the Iranian Navy and are not passenger or cargo vessels.

Q: At this point, some claim that our actions amount to supporting one side in the conflict. The United States has imposed various sanctions on certain states that have not supported it. In such a context, what impact could our intervention have on us?

A: This is not military support for any party. It is simply a humanitarian action taken to save lives affected by a disaster near our maritime borders. Such action is both appropriate and permissible under the international conventions to which we are a party.

This is the same procedure we follow in relation to any party affected by such circumstances. Our actions are guided by the international agreements we have signed, including the 1907 Hague Convention and conventions relating to maritime activities and resources. The real concern would arise if we failed to act in accordance with the charters and conventions to which we are committed.



මාධ්‍ය නිවේදනය
ஊடக வெளியீடு
PRESS RELEASE



ජනාධිපති මාධ්‍ය අංශය
ஜனாதிபதி ஊடகப் பிரிவு
PRESIDENT'S MEDIA DIVISION

Q: On many occasions, you, as the President, have come to the Parliament to make statements. Why was there such a delay in informing the country of the government's position on this incident and why was a statement not made in the Parliament?

A: If I had made this statement in the Parliament, you would not have had the opportunity to raise questions on the matter. That is why this discussion with the media was arranged. We informed you immediately after the government held its discussion on this issue. However, we had to prepare this briefing within a short period of time. We also examined the matter carefully in accordance with international conventions. It was important to make the statement only after reaching a final decision and initiating its implementation. Therefore, this briefing was held only after about fifty individuals from the second vessel had been taken on board our ships. In situations such as this, the same individuals who earlier claim that why those affected are not be rescued often begin to raise questions about the consequences once the rescue has taken place. Therefore, we considered it appropriate to make this statement at a stage when the likelihood of unnecessary controversies arising within the country could be minimised.

Q: How could this war situation affect our country's economy?

A: The Central Bank of Sri Lanka provided us with their forecasts yesterday. These projections for the financial market have been prepared in three scenarios: the current situation, a moderately developed neutral scenario and a potentially disastrous scenario, the last of which we do not expect. The report outlines how the financial market is likely to behave under each scenario and we are making decisions accordingly. At the same time, we are monitoring the daily macroeconomic indicators of the country, including food security, employment and the activities of the Ministry of Finance and we are taking necessary measures based on these observations.

Another key consideration is the situation of Sri Lankans living abroad. We are evaluating the interventions required to protect them in the current context and to safely repatriate them to Sri Lanka if conditions worsen. Similarly, the safety of tourists in the country is a priority. Ensuring their security is essential for the continued growth of the tourism sector. We have been coordinating with hoteliers, travel agencies and other stakeholders regarding measures such as granting a two-week visa-free stay to tourists unable to leave the country and arranging safe repatriation through alternative routes.

In addition, several cargo ships that were due to arrive at our ports en route to the Middle East are currently unable to proceed. These vessels are being temporarily accommodated at Colombo Port and we are exploring solutions to provide them with relief and allocating land for container storage.

Our attention is also focused on tea exports, a sector that directly impacts the economy. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is in India, seeking support to sustain this sector. While the situation could develop in ways we do not anticipate, we remain optimistic while simultaneously preparing for the worst-case scenario.



මාධ්‍ය නිවේදනය
ஊடக வெளியீடு
PRESS RELEASE



ජනාධිපති මාධ්‍ය අංශය
ஜனாதிபதி ஊடகப் பிரிவு
PRESIDENT'S MEDIA DIVISION

Q: It is reported that there are approximately 208 people on this ship. What security measures will be followed after their rescue and where will they be accommodated?

A: Following their rescue, the individuals are expected to be taken to the Welisara Navy Base. There, they will undergo the necessary medical examinations and receive any required treatment. In addition, they will be properly registered and accounted for in accordance with standard procedures.

Q: What is the security situation of the vessel currently stationed at Trincomalee Port?

A: The vessel is currently under our custody. We trust that all parties involved in this conflict will act responsibly and with understanding in this regard. If they fail to do so, international conventions and agreements would have little practical effect. However, we are confident that such a situation will not arise.

Q: What kind of support have you received from the United Nations and the International Red Cross in this operation?

A: We have conducted several rounds of discussions with the International Red Cross and have also engaged with the Permanent Representative of the United Nations in the country. However, the primary responsibility for this rescue operation lies with us. The next step involves coordinating with the relevant international organisations to determine how best to proceed with further actions.

Q: What is your message to Sri Lankans living abroad?

A: We advise Sri Lankans residing in countries affected by conflict to follow the guidance and recommendations issued by their respective governments. Additionally, our Embassies have established 24-hour emergency hotlines.

If any issues arise, we encourage Sri Lankans to contact these hotlines. Family members in Sri Lanka who wish to inquire about their relatives abroad should reach out to the Foreign Employment Bureau. The government is taking all necessary administrative measures to ensure their safety, in line with our optimistic outlook for the country and its future prospects.

Q: Are there any other ships reported to be in or near our territorial waters similar to this one?

A: No, there have been no reports of any such incidents.

Q: What is the opinion of foreign countries, including Iran, regarding the actions taken by your government?



මාධ්‍ය නිවේදනය
ஊடக வெளியீடு
PRESS RELEASE



ජනාධිපති මාධ්‍ය අංශය
ஜனாதிபதி ஊடகப் பிரிவு
PRESIDENT'S MEDIA DIVISION

A: Iran has sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs commending Sri Lanka for the first rescue operation. We have now commenced the necessary follow-up interventions and we believe that they are satisfied with the measures undertaken in accordance with the requests made of us.

Q: As soon as the war began, long queues formed at petrol stations in our country due to fears of a fuel shortage. Although we are not currently sourcing fuel from Middle Eastern countries, if this conflict continues for an extended period, could it affect our fuel supply?

A: At present, we do not face any such problem. However, if the situation escalates significantly and fuel supply routes are disrupted, it could impact not only Sri Lanka but the global market. We are unable to store large reserves of oil; instead, we import fuel according to demand, we have to place fuel orders in such a way that our storage tanks are kept near empty.

A highly experienced team of officials is managing this situation, ensuring that we can withstand current conditions. As I have stated before, we remain hopeful for the best outcome while also preparing for the worst.

President's Media Division (PMD)
06.03.2026