

‘Maha Sangha, tower of strength’

President Mahinda Rajapaksa paid a glowing tribute to the Maha Sangha, when the Amarapura Nikaya and the Ramannya Nikaya felicitated him, the Defence Secretary and Chiefs of the Armed Forces at a special ceremony at Independence Square on Saturday.

A large gathering of Bhikkhus from various parts of the country along with representatives of several Buddhist organisations took part at the ceremony where President Mahinda Rajapaksa was bestowed with the title *Sri Lanka Rajawansa Vibhooshana Dharmadeepa Chakravarthi* jointly by the Chief Incumbent of the Amarapura Maha Nikaya Most Venerable Dawuldena Sri Gnanissara Maha Nayaka Thera and the Chief Incumbent of the Ramannya Nikaya Most

Venerable Weweldeniya Sri Medhalankara Thera.

The President speaking at the ceremony said that the Buddhist clergy remained a tower of strength to the countrymen, when the country was in the grip of terrorism. “The Buddhist clergy donated even their blood and stood alongside with the soldiers and their families when the fight against the terrorists were carried out.

The Maha Sangha also visited the villages affected by terrorism and preached Buddha Dhamma to the families affected due to terrorism.

As in the past the Buddhist clergy played an active role in protecting Dhamma and the integrity of the country when the country was going through the turbulent conditions. I

take this opportunity to worship the country’s Buddhist clergy for their immense sacrifice and contribution and safeguarding the nation,” the President said. The President also noted that the youth of present day were growing as responsible citizens while refraining from smoking in public places.

“When the Posen Poya was observed in Anuradhapura this year a large gathering of devotees gathered at Mihintale and attended the religious observances with great relief without any fear,” he said.

Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Chief of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshall, Donald Perera, General Sarath Fonseka and Inspector General of Police, Jayantha Wickramaratne were also felicitated at the ceremony. - (A.P)



Chief Incumbent of the Sri Lanka Amarapura Maha Nikaya Most Ven. Dawuldena Sri Gnanissara Maha Nayaka Thera and the Chief Incumbent of the Sri Lanka Ramannya Maha Nikaya Most Ven. Weweldeniya Sri Medhalankara Theras bestowed the title *Sri Lanka Rajawansa Vibhooshana Dharmadeepa Chakravarthi* on President Mahinda Rajapaksa at a ceremony held at the Independence Square on Saturday. The honour was in recognition of the President’s bold initiatives to wipe out terrorism. Pictures by Sudath Silva



Observance of *Pansil* at the commencement of the ceremony



President Mahinda Rajapaksa arrives at the Independence Square.



Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa felicitated



Chief of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Donald Perera, Army Commander General Sarath Fonseka, Inspector General of Police Jayantha Wickramaratne and Director General of Civil Defence Force, Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekera felicitated by the Maha Sangha