

Candidate Name: Siritunga Jayasuriya

Election Symbol: Tri-shaw

1. Candidate Profile and Background

Siritunga Jayasuriya is a prominent Sri Lankan politician and activist associated with the United Socialist Party (USP). He has a history of participating in presidential elections, having contested in 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2019. Jayasuriya is known for his long-standing commitment to leftist and socialist ideologies.

2. Candidate's Policy Platform and Vision

- **Economic Policies:** Jayasuriya's economic policies are likely to focus on socialist principles, including wealth redistribution, social justice, and the reduction of economic inequality. He may advocate for nationalization of key industries and increased state intervention in the economy to protect workers' rights and provide essential services.
- **Social Policies:** His social policies are expected to emphasize improving public welfare, healthcare, and education. He would likely support progressive taxation to fund social programs and ensure equal access to opportunities for all citizens.
- **Foreign Policy:** Although specific details may vary, Jayasuriya's foreign policy might focus on maintaining neutrality and non-alignment, advocating for international cooperation, and supporting socialist and anti-imperialist movements globally.
- **Environmental Policy:** Environmental policies would likely align with his socialist vision, including efforts to combat climate change through sustainable practices, promotion of green technologies, and equitable distribution of environmental resources.

3. Track Record and Experience

- **Previous Positions Held:** Jayasuriya has been a key figure in the United Socialist Party and has served in various capacities within the party. His experience includes running for presidential office multiple times and being involved in numerous political campaigns and movements.
- **Accomplishments:** His accomplishments are primarily in the realm of political activism and leadership within the socialist movement. He has been a vocal advocate for workers' rights and social justice issues in Sri Lanka.

4. Values and Integrity

- **Ethical Standards:** Jayasuriya is known for his adherence to socialist values and principles, emphasizing ethical governance and integrity in his political activities.
- **Consistency in Principles:** Throughout his political career, he has maintained a consistent stance on socialist ideals and has been steadfast in his commitment to addressing social inequalities.

5. Public Image and Communication Skills

- **Public Engagement:** Jayasuriya has been actively involved in public engagements through speeches, rallies, and media appearances. His public engagement often focuses on advocating for socialist policies and addressing social injustices.
- **Leadership Qualities:** He is recognized for his leadership within the United Socialist Party and his ability to mobilize supporters around socialist causes. His leadership style is characterized by a strong commitment to his ideological principles.

6. Party Affiliation and Support Network

- **Political Party:** Jayasuriya is the presidential candidate representing the United Socialist Party (USP).
- **Coalition and Alliances:** The USP may form alliances with other leftist or socialist groups, although specific coalitions can vary depending on the political landscape.

7. Public Opinion and Endorsements

- **Polls and Public Sentiment:** Public opinion on Jayasuriya may vary, with support likely coming from those aligned with socialist ideologies and criticism from opponents of his policies.
- **Endorsements:** Endorsements may come from various socialist and leftist organizations, as well as from individuals and groups who share his political vision.

8. Debates and Interviews

Jayasuriya's participation in debates and interviews will typically focus on his socialist platform, criticisms of the current political system, and his vision for addressing economic and social issues in Sri Lanka.

9. Election Symbol - Tri-shaw

The election symbol for Jayasuriya's campaign is the tri-shaw (three-wheeled vehicle), which is often used to symbolize the working-class and grassroots support.

10. Challenges and Opportunities

- **Feasibility of Promises:** Implementing his promises may face challenges due to potential resistance from other political factions and the economic realities of Sri Lanka.
- **Potential Obstacles:** Obstacles could include limited financial resources, political opposition, and the need to address complex socio-economic issues within the constraints of existing political structures.

11. Personal Vision and Values

Jayasuriya's personal vision revolves around creating a more equitable society through socialist policies, focusing on social justice, economic equality, and workers' rights. His values include a strong commitment to fairness, solidarity, and anti-imperialist principles.

12. Conclusion

Siritunga Jayasuriya presents a clear alternative to the traditional political landscape of Sri Lanka with his socialist platform. His campaign reflects his long-standing dedication to addressing social and economic inequalities, though it faces the challenge of translating his vision into practical policy within the current political and economic environment.

From Wikipedia

Siritunga Jayasuriya in 2010

Siritunga Jayasuriya is a [Sri Lankan](#) politician, trade unionist and current leader of the [United Socialist Party](#). He was formerly a member of the [Lanka Sama Samaja Party](#) and later the [Nava Sama Samaja Party](#).

Jayasuriya is a [perennial candidate](#) in [Sri Lankan presidential elections](#), running for president in every election from [2005](#) to [2019](#) and is planning to run in [2024](#).^[1] In 2005, he won 35,405 votes, 0.36% of the votes cast and came third.^[2] This would be his best performance at a presidential election and has never been able to win more than 10,000 votes in an election since.

In early 2007, Siritunga narrowly escaped a raid by 300 armed thugs at a place where an [anti-war](#) rally against the [Sri Lankan Civil War](#) was due to take place.^{[3][4]}

Article from themorning.lk

‘The N-E Tamil community has the right to self-determination’

15 Aug 2024 | BY Sahan Tennakoon

- **United Socialist Party Prez candidate Siritunga Jayasuriya claims that a Govt. under them would ‘halt all foreign debt payments for a minimum of 10-yrs’**

In a recent interview with *The Daily Morning*, the Presidential candidate of the United Socialist Party (USP) Siritunga Jayasuriya, discussed his vision and policies for Sri Lanka. Jayasuriya elaborated on his approach to the country’s ongoing economic crisis, the contentious 13th Amendment to the Constitution, and his views on the Executive Presidency.

Below are excerpts from the interview:

Sri Lanka is currently facing its worst economic crisis. If you were elected as the President, what immediate steps would you take to address this crisis?

The economic crisis in Sri Lanka is undoubtedly severe, but, it requires a well-thought-out, long-term economic plan. My approach would begin by establishing a mechanism to reclaim funds that have been illicitly moved out of the country by various entities, including foreign Governments and international organisations. Implementing this mechanism would not be easy, but, it is essential.

Additionally, I would advocate for a vigorous economic programme focused on building an export-oriented economy. This would involve maximising the use of our natural resources. It is important to note that my policies don't rely on the assistance of international organisations, particularly those driven by capitalist countries. Instead, we believe in self-reliance and the development of an economy that serves the people of Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, none of the major Presidential candidates seem to have a viable plan. Most of them, including the President and independent Presidential candidate Ranil Wickremesinghe and those from the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) (SJB and Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa) and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)-led National People's Power (NPP) (JVP and NPP Leader and Opposition Parliamentarian Anura Kumara Dissanayake), are relying on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. This approach, in my view, is not a sustainable solution for our country.

Sri Lanka has already entered into an agreement with the IMF. How would you handle this agreement and the ongoing debt crisis?

Regarding the IMF agreement, my stance is quite clear. We would immediately halt all foreign debt payments for a minimum of 10 years. We would declare a moratorium on loan repayments, acknowledging the critical consequences that this decision might bring. However, it is a necessary step, and we would need to prepare the citizens to face these consequences. While this could lead to some turmoil, it is essential at this stage. Following this, we would revisit all existing loans. Our strategy would include seeking support from progressive countries, organisations, and the global working class to address our financial issues. We must look beyond traditional methods and instead pursue a collective approach to debt management.

As for the IMF, I believe that countries like Sri Lanka, Kenya, Bangladesh, and Pakistan have faced adverse consequences due to their dependence on such international organisations. Rather than relying on external solutions, these countries should unite, form a coalition, and engage in collective bargaining with organisations like the IMF and the World Bank. We should reject the IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and similar programmes, which, in my view, are merely traps that entrench economic dependency under the guise of assistance.

The 13th Amendment has been a controversial topic in every election. What is your position on this matter?

The 13th Amendment has often been used as a tool to garner votes from ethnic minorities during elections. Politicians frequently change their stance on this issue depending on the audience. However, we at the USP have a consistent and firm position. We believe that the Tamil community in the North and the East has the right to self-determination. This stance might be unpopular with some, but, it is what we believe is just and fair. We don't believe that the citizens of the North and the East are particularly interested in the enforcement of the 13th Amendment as it stands. What they need is a long-lasting solution that genuinely addresses their concerns. Granting them the right to self-determination would not, in our opinion, divide the country. On the contrary, it could lead to a more cohesive and united nation, as has been seen in other parts of the world, such as Scotland. The USP has not wavered on this issue, unlike other parties. For example, the JVP was once the most vocal critic of the 13th Amendment, even resorting to violence to oppose it. Yet now, they have shifted their position, promising to implement the very policies that they once denounced. This inconsistency only highlights the double standards of other parties.

Would you change the Executive Presidency and the Constitution?

The Executive Presidency has been a contentious issue in Sri Lankan politics for decades. Every President elected since 1994 has promised to abolish it, but, these promises have consistently gone unfulfilled. The Constitution drastically altered the country's political landscape, and it is high time that it is replaced. If elected, I would unconditionally abolish the Executive Presidency within the first three months of my term. We would then work towards drafting a new Constitution, with the full participation of the people. The current system is outdated and no longer serves the needs of our nation. A new Constitution, created by and for the people, would be a cornerstone of our governance.

Corruption is a vital topic in this Presidential Election. What is your plan to end corruption in Sri Lanka?

Corruption and the capitalist economic model are intrinsically linked. If we want to eradicate corruption, we must first address the underlying economic system that perpetuates it. While enacting new laws to combat corruption is necessary, it is not sufficient on its own. We need to implement systems that prevent corruption from occurring in the first place. One of the key areas that we would focus on is streamlining Government procurement procedures and making them more transparent. Additionally, we would introduce systems to make Government officials and institutions more accountable to the people. This would include enhancing the role of trade unions (TUs) in the administration of public enterprises, as they are better positioned to oversee and ensure that resources are used effectively and honestly. Furthermore, we would reduce defence related expenditures, such as maintaining an excessively large military. Given that 15 years have passed since the end of the war, the size of our military is unsustainable and unnecessary. These funds could be better allocated towards development projects and public services that directly benefit the people.

What are your plans to boost Government revenue?

Boosting Government revenue requires a multifaceted approach. One of the first steps that we would take is to transform loss-making State owned enterprises (SOEs) into profit-making institutions. Without addressing the inefficiencies within these SOEs, it will be challenging to generate the revenue needed to tackle the Budget deficit. Our approach to nationalisation would differ from that of the 1970s. We would carefully evaluate the background and potential of each institution before bringing them under State control. A collaborative administrative mechanism, involving both Government officials and trade unions, would be introduced to ensure that these institutions are run efficiently and effectively. Additionally, we would work to reduce defence related expenditures. The funds saved from reducing the size of the military could be redirected towards initiatives that contribute to the economic growth of the country.

What would be your foreign policy?

Our foreign policy would be focused on building an independent Sri Lanka that cooperates with all countries without favouritism. We don't subscribe to slogans such as 'non-aligned', which, in practice, often result in a lack of clear direction. Instead, our goal is to establish relationships based on mutual respect and cooperation, ensuring that Sri Lanka's sovereignty and interests are

always protected. We would also seek to build stronger alliances with countries that share similar values and goals, particularly those that support progressive and people-centred development. By working together with these nations, we can create a more just and equitable global order.

What legal reforms would you enact if elected?

The legal system in Sri Lanka requires a complete overhaul. We have witnessed numerous issues due to the inefficiencies and delays within our current legal system. For example, the increasing number of prisoners and the prolonged duration of legal cases are direct results of these shortcomings. We would implement new laws aimed at expediting procedural delays and making the legal system more accessible and friendly to the people. Additionally, we would introduce extensive legal reforms to address corruption and crime. These reforms would focus on ensuring that justice is swift, fair, and transparent, thereby restoring public confidence in the legal system.

What are your plans for developing the education and healthcare sectors?

The current education system in Sri Lanka is in dire need of reform. We would shift the focus from merely preparing students to sit for exams to equipping them with the skills needed to succeed in the job market. Our goal is to create well-rounded individuals who can thrive in a rapidly changing world. To achieve this, we would overhaul the school syllabus to ensure that it maximises the potential of each student, allowing them to pursue their passions and interests. We would also work towards making every school in the country a 'better school' with equal resources and opportunities for all students. This is the only way to create a truly free and fair education system. In terms of healthcare, our main focus would be on strengthening the free healthcare system and improving the quality of public transportation services. We believe that everyone should have access to quality public services, regardless of their socio-economic status. Our goal is to make these services affordable and accessible to all, ensuring that the needs of the public are met.

What is your message to Sri Lankan voters in this Presidential Election?

My message to the Sri Lankan voters is one of consistency and conviction. Unlike many political figures who have shifted their stances over time, I have remained steadfast in my beliefs and policies since I first contested for the Presidency. This Election comes at a critical juncture in our nation's history, where the decisions that we make will shape the future of our country. It is imperative that the electorate exercises wisdom and discernment in choosing their leaders. Now, more than ever, Sri Lanka needs leaders with unwavering integrity and a genuine commitment to the people. It is your responsibility to identify and support those who have the conscience and the courage to guide our nation towards a brighter future.

Article from socialistparty.org.uk

Sri Lanka election: Support Siritunga standing for socialist change

11/09/2024

TU Senan, Committee for a Workers' International, International Secretariat

The presidential election in Sri Lanka on 21 September is the first significant election since the 'Aragalaya' – the mass movement that ousted former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Since then, the presidency has been held by Ranil Wickremesinghe, a veteran capitalist politician who has been prime minister on several occasions. He has delayed calling this election for as long as possible to give time to rebuild the reputation and support of the entire capitalist establishment, which was shattered by the movement.

The restructuring of debt and further borrowing from the IMF and various countries (China, the United States, and India) have temporarily helped avert the looming economic catastrophe. However, none of the factors that led to the country's bankruptcy have been adequately addressed or resolved.

Following the default on repayments in May 2022, domestic debt has continued to rise. There is no real solution in sight. The 'restructuring' talks effectively amount to implementing further austerity. Deprivation is on the rise, with over 30% of the population – more than 7 million people – now plunged into dire poverty.

Nearly half the population has reduced what they eat to provide for their children and save money for energy needs. More than half of the population have no savings due to the soaring cost of living, and 6% of households have ceased sending their children to school. This is particularly alarming in a country where children's education used to be highly valued and considered a priority.

Even welfare programmes intended to support the poorest have failed to reach those in need. While vast sections of the population plunge further into desperate conditions, lenders continue their collaboration with the capitalists, prioritising the protection of their investments and profits over the wellbeing of the majority.

Fearing a potential resurgence of mass movements, the government has intensified its repression against protests and strikes, which persist across the country. Most demonstrations led by students or activists are met with police hostility and, at times, violent dispersal.

Political fragmentation

The discredited mainstream parties have lost significant support, and their weakness has led to a record 39 presidential candidates!

Sajith Premadasa, the candidate from the main opposition party, the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB – 'United People's Power'), positions himself as a reliable representative of the capitalist class, while also claiming to support the Aragalaya movement. The once-governing Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) finds itself torn between supporting Premadasa, Namal Rajapaksa (son of former president Mahinda), or Ranil. Amid these divisions, Premadasa is also negotiating with Tamil parties to secure their support. Given the considerable unpopularity of both Ranil and the Rajapaksa family, the SJB candidate is seen as a likely contender for victory.

The Tamil vote could significantly influence the election outcome this time. [Tamils are an oppressed nationality in Sri Lanka and a brutal 25-year-long civil war took place along national lines, ending in 2009 with mass reprisals and persecution of Tamils.] Through the election campaign, right-wing Tamil political representatives have fragmented, with sentiments for

boycotting the election or fielding a Tamil candidate have developed. Some factions have come together for the first time to put forward a common Tamil candidate. An unspoken battle for Tamil votes is now unfolding in the south, yet none of the right-wing parties have stepped forward to address key demands of the Tamil community, let alone offer a viable solution to the national question.

NPP faux-‘Marxists’

The National Peoples’ Power (NPP), a coalition led by the JVP (People’s Liberation Front), has emerged as an alternative, despite not playing a leading role in the mass struggle. Its candidate, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, was ahead in opinion polls prior to June.

However, a shift away from the NPP began as the SJB intensified its campaign as a “reliable force”, committed to continuing capitalist policies while also announcing populist measures in its manifesto. This includes acceptance of the longstanding 1,000 Sri Lanka Rupees wage demand of hill country workers, fully implementing the 13th amendment to the constitution to appeal to Tamils, and restricting the executive powers of the president.

Although the NPP brands itself as ‘Marxist’, its policies hardly differ in substance and effect from those of the right-wing SJB. The NPP has capitalised on past struggles and anger. The anti-corruption sentiment, in particular, has increased its support, as it presents itself as ‘clean’. However, its programme offers little beyond ‘clean capitalism’, lacking concrete solutions for improving the economy. It is now prepared to protect the interests of Indian billionaires and the IMF in Sri Lanka.

The NPP fails to address nationalisation or the protection of nationalised health and education. There is no mention of reversing recent legislation that undermines workers’ and democratic rights. The NPP is woolly on the national question.

A victory for its candidate might even further erode democratic rights. The NPP attracts the Sinhala nationalist base of the Rajapaksa family due to discontent with corruption and economic conditions. Distrust in capitalist institutions and politicians is widespread, and there is suspicion towards the lenders. Some youth and militant workers are drawn to socialist alternatives, which are not unpopular. A victory for the NPP would be unlikely to bolster socialist consciousness, as capitalists will probably exploit its shortcomings to propagate anti-left sentiment.

Marxists must concentrate on rejecting all alternatives protecting capitalism and focus on strengthening the independent power of the working class, through a socialist programme. The working class taking a leading role in struggles could transform the current situation.

The Frontline Socialist Party (FSP), formed by a split from the JVP, has created a small coalition called the People’s Struggle Alliance which is standing in the elections. Its critique of the JVP as a Sinhala nationalist force and its efforts to advocate for socialist ideas are positive developments. Although its manifesto includes details of what it envisions as socialist policies, such as establishing a constituent assembly, enacting the right to recall representatives, and reversing draconian laws, it falls short on two major issues: economic policy and the national question.

Don’t pay the debt

While it agrees that IMF-led policies should be resisted, the manifesto stops short of advocating for the complete non-payment or abolition of all debts. Instead, it proposes negotiating with lenders and delaying debt repayment until the economy improves, with part of the income eventually allocated to debt repayment, which is similar to that of other capitalists and the NPP, differing only slightly in nuance and intention.

Marxists understand that radical policies advancing workers' interests will face resistance from international capitalism and its local allies. Therefore, a clear strategy on implementing these policies is crucial. Marxists advocate an alternative strategy, including debt non-payment or full cancellation, capital controls to prevent capital outflow, worker-controlled mechanisms for price control and essential goods distribution, and the nationalisation of key economic sectors. Education, health, energy, transport, and other sectors should be managed by worker-controlled bodies, with increased subsidies for industry and agriculture development. This vision can only be realised by a workers' government and through solidarity among international working-class movements.

Tamil self-determination

The People's Struggle Alliance also presents a muddled position on the national question. Since the FSP split from the JVP, it has not clearly articulated its stance on this issue. It equates Tamil and Sinhala nationalism as mirror images, without acknowledging the specific context of Tamil demands in relation to state repression.

National aspirations span all classes due to shared repression. Even if pro-capitalist or petty bourgeois sections lead the movement, Marxists must understand its roots and promote workers' unity against all forms of oppression, including national oppression. Recognising demands such as Tamils' right to self-determination is crucial. Marxists should support building an independent working-class movement among oppressed nationalities and unite to dismantle oppressive capitalist systems. Supporting the demands of oppressed nations to self-determination will both weaken the capitalists they are fighting against and bring the working and poor masses of all nationalities closer together. Instead, the People Struggle Alliance proposes a vague 'autonomy' (wrongly read as self-government in Tamil) which fails to adequately address national oppression.

United Socialist Party

The United Socialist Party (USP), affiliated to the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), takes a class-based position to the problems facing working people of all nationalities. This may explain why the People's Struggle Alliance has not invited the USP to join its coalition. The USP maintains a friendly relationship with the FSP, collaborating in various struggles and forums against ongoing repression. The USP has consistently advocated greater collaboration among leftist groups and the establishment of a principled alliance based on a Marxist programme and strategy. The USP has put forward the slogan of debt non-payment from the outset and continues to campaign for it. It has fought for the establishment of workplace and nationwide committees to harness the momentum of the 2022 movement and sustain resistance efforts. USP members have actively participated in this work, encouraging involvement with the People's Struggle Alliance and other left groups.

Siritunga Jayasuriya

Given the severe economic crisis and heightened national tensions, Marxists should not compromise on articulating our programme. The USP has consistently defended the rights of workers, farmers, the poor, and Tamils. When the JVP and much of the left supported the Rajapaksa regime during the Tamil massacres, USP members stood against the slaughter and war.

USP general secretary Siritunga (Siri) Jayasuriya is standing again for president. Despite limited resources, he will put forward a Marxist programme, not solely to gain votes but to build an independent working-class organisation prepared to resist a post-election offensive against the working class. The USP encourages everyone to vote for Siri and, more importantly, to participate in building a revolutionary Marxist party and a mass party of the workers.

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- *[This is a shortened version of an article published online: 'The Left and the Presidential Election 2024' at socialistworld.net on 23 August](#)*
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