



The Sinhala and Hindu New Year was celebrated in grand style at the OPA at the "Bakmaha Ulela". The occasion provided an opportunity for members as well as staff, together with their families, to partake in traditional customs and games. Following a sumptuous breakfast, the attendees took part in a variety of activities and contests, with the children especially being encouraged to participate. During the course of the day, a delicious lunch and refreshments were served. The event concluded with prizes being awarded to the winners and the DJ providing music for those who took to the dance floor.





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OPA EDITOR'S NOTE



There are many sides to the issue of Time Management by an Executive. It is one of the most important issues for a manager of employee. Time is an asset that automatically depletes its total limited stock. You cannot preserve it; you cannot prevent or stop its process of usage. You may be sometimes "wasting" your money. Similarly, a manager may be wasting his time. Since the employer pays its employees for giving their time primarily, when the employee wastes his time, he is obviously wasting an asset of the Organization.

Some interruptions are "useful" or "productive" in relation to your job - objectives. Other interruptions may be harmful. There is a need to "manage" these interruptions. One of the most important early steps in improving your time management is to keep a time - log. This will assist you in discovering the detailed and exact pattern of your time use. You need to study this data and raise many issues by yourself.

Procrastination is a common habit among managers. Persons differ in what matters they delay and postpone. Some do not go to a doctor for a timely checkup. Some do not pay the rates in time, but pay with the penalties later. Some delay getting ready for examinations. The seriousness of the results of such delay varies. Delegation is a time saving management technique that needs careful handling. Delegation is done not only for saving time, but also for other management

objectives like development of subordinates, facilitating management succession etc. Poor time management habits need to be identified. Breaking such habits is required, but this demands self - discipline and concentration on objectives. Long - term time management is useful both for organizational purposes as well as for career development and personal development. Long term planning is difficult, but essential. If you only react to events, but do not "proact" ie. anticipate and plan for future likely situations, you may not get the best use of time and other resources. People have a drive inside, which pushes them to achieve, to do better. There are also external forces in the organization, which push them to achieve, to continually improve performance. These internal and external drives now lead people to carry out systematic self-development activities..

The Organization of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka is a body of Professionals presently belonging to 52 Member Associations catering to 34 disciplines with a total membership of over 60,000. Hence, as leaders & managers & more importantly as leading professionals of many disciplines, we all have inherited obligation to our beloved motherland & organizations. "United we stand, divided we fall", hence, as professionals, let's work as a team & cohesive force to be exemplary in time management.

Maj Gen Renaka Udawatta (Rtd)
Editor - OPA

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As President, it gives me great pleasure to state that the first quarter of 2024 has been a very busy and fruitful period for the OPA. In keeping with our mandate of providing a platform for professionals to have their voices heard on matters of national importance, we have deliberated on a variety of pressing issues at seminars, brainstorming sessions and committee meetings. As a result, we have been able to create several proposals and recommendations which will be presented to the authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

One key topic which was the focus of the seminar and discussion was "Enhancing efficiency of state-owned enterprises". The event was attended by several very eminent guest speakers, including Secretary to the Treasury, Mr. Mahinda Siriwardana and Head of State-Owned Enterprises Restructuring Unit, Mr. Suresh Shah. Following an informative session, a concept paper is being prepared to be forwarded to the government. The role of the OPA as the voice of Sri Lanka's professionals has been recognized by the government as we have been invited to participate in meetings of Parliamentary Sectoral Committees and provide our views on critical matters. These consultations will continue during 2024, and we look forward to helping guide government policy on taxation, the energy crisis, patient rights and other important issues.

National security was the focus of the seminar on "Countering Maritime Crime - Challenges and Potential of Sri Lanka". Attendees were able to hear from luminaries such as Additional Solicitor General Mr. Vikum de Abrew and Rear Admiral Y. N. Jayaratne on the importance and relevance

of the subject to Sri Lanka as well as ongoing concerns in the maritime domain.

One of the main advantages of being the apex body of professional associations is that the OPA is able to facilitate knowledge sharing among members, enabling them to broaden their skillset and advance their careers. The seminar on "Data Science for Decision Making in Organisations" enabled participants to better understand how data science could help them in their workplaces.

The Seminar on "The Role of Banks in Supporting SME's" enabled the bankers and other professionals of the OPA to discuss how banks can help revitalize the SME sector, which is a significant part of the national economy and has an important role to play in achieving sustainable growth.

Besides discussions on national issues, we have also organized events that would help our members to lead healthier lives. A seminar on "New Trends in Dengue Prevention and Treatment" was conducted to allow members to learn more about treating and preventing the transmission of this disease.

Another important development has been the formulation of a Publications Policy for the OPA by the Publications Committee. Once approved by the Executive Council, this comprehensive Policy will ensure that the requisite standards are adhered to on all content released by the OPA, including concepts papers and the journal.

In the coming month, we hope to build on our efforts thus far, culminating in the climax of our calendar, the Annual Conference. As always, our endeavors will remain focused on developing the professions and using the collective expertise of our members to find innovative solutions to the critical issues affecting the nation.

Sarath Gamage
President - OPA



Tisara De Silva
General Secretary

Secretary's Message

The second quarter activities of the OPA were successfully carried out with the cooperation and leadership of the committee chairpersons. We have conducted 5 seminars during that time period on subjects of vital contemporary importance. As a result, the OPA received significant coverage in the national newspapers.

The traditional Sinhala and Hindu New Year celebrations were successfully held at the OPA premises for members and staff together with their families. The refurbishment of several washrooms was also completed as part of our efforts

to provide improved facilities to users of the OPA Center. OPA office bearers attended the annual exhibition organized by the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects. Representatives from the OPA attended a Parliamentary Select Committee meeting to make recommendations, highlighting our continued engagement with the government. We have also successfully renewed the discount offered to life members by Vision Care Optical Solutions.

I would like to thank the Editor and Publications Committee for producing the 2nd newsletter as per schedule.

Seminar on "Enhancing Efficiency of State-Owned Enterprises"

A seminar and discussion on "Enhancing efficiency of state-owned enterprises" was conducted by the Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA) on the 31st of January. The distinguished speakers for this event were Mr. Mahinda Siriwardana, Secretary to the Treasury and Ministry of Finance and Mr. Suresh Shah, Head of State-Owned Enterprises Restructuring Unit. The event provided an opportunity for the members of the OPA to deliberate on a critical issue affecting the national economy.

In his speech, Mr. Siriwardana noted that SOEs play a significant role in the economy, accounting for over 13 % of government employees while using scarce resources. Mr. Siriwardana opined that there were legitimate strategic SOEs that the government should operate. Unfortunately, many SOEs had no strategic value while being suboptimal for society as they are monopolies.

He observed that stemming the losses of SOEs were the priority of the Government. He noted that SOEs such as CPC were responsible for the government

losing significant amounts of foreign exchange. He recalled that during the economic crisis in 2022, banks were no longer able to finance these losses. Cost reflective pricing was not present at that time while prices had not been adjusted for many years. As a result, a large adjustment became necessary, which



Furthermore, the unsustainable policy objectives of past governments led to balance of payment issues. The government was also implementing institutional

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reforms to improve the balance sheets of these enterprises. Mr. Siriwardana observed that the recent profits made by the CPC and CEB were used to set off legacy debt as part of this effort. As a result, balance sheets had improved significantly. Sri Lankan Airlines is also in the process of attracting foreign investors. The reforms being implemented included introducing new competitors to the petroleum sector and unbundling the CEB. He said that another key reform was bringing all SOEs under the control of a holding company.



The divesting of non-strategic SOEs would also take place. He pointed out that even if an SOE is profitable, a case could be made for divestment. SOEs were often exposed to corruption vulnerabilities and low transparency. Mr. Siriwardana also noted that strict regulations would be brought regarding the appointment of directors. Three bills which address these critical issues are in the process of being introduced by the government. He concluded by calling on all stakeholders to support these initiatives.

Mr. Suresh Shah stated that of roughly 130 SOEs, 17 are non-operational but have boards of directors. In addition, approximately 85 institutions were identified as being suitable for divestment. Among the challenges affecting these institutions were subsidies, the appointment of unsuitable directors, overstaffing, and circular debt. In addition, SOE assets were often unethically used, especially during election time. Consequently, the SOE Restructuring Unit had come up with a number of recommendations that included divestment of loss-making or non-strategic SOEs, bringing all enterprises under the Finance Ministry, while making them limited liability companies. He underscored the importance of not 'parking' subsidies with state banks and having the SOEs competing on a level playing field with private companies.



Mr. Shah maintained that commercial activities can't be undertaken by the regulator. He also noted that there was considerable pushback on divesting SOEs, with many querying why profit making enterprises were being sold. As an answer, he said that the profit made by SOEs is low compared to the value of the companies.

Addressing divestment criteria, he said that they included the question as to whether the enterprise was providing an essential product or service to the people. There was a need to examine if these products and services could be provided by the private sector and appropriately regulated. The SOE restructuring unit had subsequently come up with guidelines for the divestiture process.

Following the presentations with a lively discussion followed, which was moderated by Mr. Bhanu Wijayarathne, Chairman, National Issues Committee-OPA. In response to a question as to whether inefficiencies are reflected in cost effective pricing, Mr. Siriwardana admitted that that may be the case. However, he asserted that things were at least on the right track. Mr. Shah said that the government service could be reduced immediately. With digitization, the cadre could be brought down to 200,000, but those who are released must be able to get other jobs. On the selling of SLT, Mr. Siriwardana said they would have been happier if there had been more than three bids. However, an improved macro-economic situation and ease of doing business were necessary to attract more investors. Mr. Shah noted that they had been unable to attract more than \$2 billion in FDIs in a single year. Sri Lanka was a small market, in comparison to Bangladesh and other countries which offered a much better risk to reward ratio. On

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the ETCA with India, Mr. Shah noted that free trade agreements were an absolute must. Mr. Siriwaradana agreed, noting that they were essential for growth and progress as they provided access to other markets.

The conversations gave rise to several valuable proposals which will be forwarded to the authorities in due course and will help guide future government policy.



Seminar on "Data Science for Decision Making in Organisations"



A seminar on "Data Science for Decision Making in Organisations" was jointly organized by the Career Guidance and Skills Development Committee of the OPA and the Institute of Applied Statistics of Sri Lanka (IASSSL). The event, which took place on the 20th of February, 2024 at the OPA auditorium, featured Prof. Kapila Rathnayake, Professor of Mathematics and Statistics, as guest speaker. Dr. Priyath de Silva, Treasurer, IASSSL, also participated as a panelist while the moderator was Dr. Niroshan Withanage, President, IASSSL.

In his presentation, Prof. Rathnayake described data

science as the process of discovering patterns in large data set using methods that combine machine learning, statistics and mathematics. As such, it has valuable applications in business, including prediction and description, customer relationship marketing, customer profiling, customer segmentation.

In travel, data science can be used for dynamic pricing and predicting flight delay, while in marketing it can be used for upselling, cross selling and predicting the lifetime value of a customer. It is also useful in social media when it can be used for sentiment analysis and digital marketing. Data science can play a valuable role in healthcare in predicting diseases and the effectiveness of medicine. The creation of self-driving cars as well as pilotless aircrafts and drones is also done with the aid of data science. In the field of sales, it can be used for discount offering and demand forecasting while in credit and insurance, it is used for claims prediction and fraud and risk detection.

He also provided an overview of common data science techniques, such as data collection, data cleaning, data mining, and visualization. The data science process was detailed, beginning with defining the problem when data mining goals were identified. The required data had to be identified, followed by the cleaning, preparing and pre-processing of data. The data then had to be modeled, after which the model can be implemented by the decision makers. The final stage was results visualization, when the results of the data mining are explained to the decision makers.

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Prof. Rathnayake explained that machine learning can be divided into supervised learning and unsupervised learning. Supervised learning can in turn be divided into classification and regression while clustering comes under unsupervised learning. It was pointed out that regression analysis, which is used to forecast volatility, represents a particularly important topic in the fields of science, finance and engineering. Meanwhile, classification algorithms are used when the output variable has two classes.

Unsupervised machine learning is used to all kinds of unknown patterns in data, and allows the user to perform more complex processing tasks. It is particularly useful in real-world scenarios when where input data is not always available with corresponding output. To solve such cases, unsupervised machine learning can be used as it is capable of interpreting raw data to find hidden patterns from the data, and then applying suitable algorithms.

Prof. Rathnayake also described the use of multivariate analysis and data mining in solving real world problems.

The participants were able to expand their knowledge in the Q & A session that followed.



Seminar on “The Role of Banks in Supporting SMEs”

A seminar on “The Role of Banks in Supporting SMEs” was held at the OPA auditorium on the 19th of March at 6.00 p.m. Jointly organized by the National Issues committee of the OPA and the Association of Professional Bankers of Sri Lanka, the event featured Mr. Wickrema Narayana, Deputy General Manager, Enterprise Banking, People’s Bank and Mr. Indika Ranaweera, Vice President, SME, Middle Market and Business Banking, National Development Bank as guest speakers. In addition, the panelists were Mr. Aasiri Iddamalgoda, Senior Vice President, Retail Banking and SME, DFCC Bank and Mr. Asitha Pinnaduwa, Assistant Vice President, Consumer Products and Portfolio Management, Nations Trust Bank.



The audience was treated to enlightening presentations on how the banking sector can contribute to the revitalization of SMEs. The importance of digitalization, encouraging export-oriented SMEs and driving financial inclusion were among the topics discussed during the seminar, which concluded with a Q&A session moderated

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by Mr. Bhanu Wijyaratne, Chairman, National Issues Committee and Vice President - OPA. The fact that SMEs comprise 52% of the GDP of the country was also highlighted.

The speakers noted that much had been said about the recent \$100 million ADB loan for businesses. However, as \$50 million was provided only as a guarantee, the final amount that would reach Sri Lankan SMEs would be small. It was observed that



ecommerce values were very low. On providing financial assistance, it was pointed out that banks were willing to help, but a lack of accounting and financial discipline were major issues. However, the resource persons observed that bankers face a challenging situation themselves as they operate in a volatile environment. Therefore, they needed to vary their interest rates in order to cope with the volatility of the economy. In addition, banks face difficulties in taking possession of movable assets. A lack of data sharing has also enabled companies to mortgage assets to more than one bank. The necessity of having an Act to deal with these issues was stressed. The absence of development banks in the country was also highlighted, which made it difficult for SMEs to access capital at concessionary rates.

Seminar on "New Trends in Dengue Prevention and Treatment"



A seminar on "New Trends in Dengue Prevention and Treatment" was conducted on the 25th of March by

the Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA). The event, which was organized by the Health and Nutrition Committee of the OPA, featured Dr. Sudath Samaraweera, Director, Dengue Control Program and Consultant Community Physician, Dr. Jayantha Weeraman, Consultant Pediatrician, and Dr. Sanath Hettige, Consultant in Family Medicine and Chairman, Health and Nutrition Committee of the OPA, as guest speakers.

In his speech, Dr. Samaraweera explained dengue was a viral illness, that is spread by the mosquito species *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*. The virus had four serotypes with an infection conferring lifelong immunity for the infected serotype. Dr. Samaraweera noted that there has been a marked

increase in global incidence over the past two decades. In South-East Asia, dengue is endemic in 10 out of 11 countries with Sri Lanka being among the 30 most affected countries. Describing the current state of dengue in the country, he stated that there have been over 19,000 cases in the first three months of 2024, with 35.4% of the cases being reported in the Western Province and 23.4% cases from the Northern Province. Enumerating on dengue prevention and control, Dr. Samaraweera explained vaccinations have proven useful for dengue control, but most vaccines only provide immunity to one serotype, limiting their usefulness. He observed that dengue mosquitoes feed primarily in the morning and at dusk.



Dr. Samaraweera stressed the importance of removing of potential breeding sites, environmental modifications and the application of larvicides and adulticides. Although space spraying or fogging is used extensively, he pointed out that it was of limited use, besides being damaging to the environment. The dengue mosquito can breed in very little water with construction sites being most responsible for the spread of dengue.

The authorities have increasingly turned to innovative methods of mosquito control that have yielded very promising results. These included the mosquitoes being artificially infected with the Wolbachia bacteria, which prevented the transmission of the dengue virus. The experiment, which had been conducted in high impact areas within the Colombo municipal council such as Colombo 15 and Mattukkuliya, had been very successful. Accordingly, the authorities were planning to expand the areas in which this method of dengue control is used. In Gampaha, the release of male mosquitoes that have been sterilized through radiation has also shown promise. New

forms of mosquitoes' repellants such as sprays have also proved very effective.

Most people who are infected with dengue show no symptoms, but some patients may develop symptomatic reactions, Dr. Weeraman said. Dengue typically has an incubation period of 4 - 14 days. The natural course of dengue fever consisted of a febrile phase that lasts 1 - 7 days, followed by a convalescent phase that may take 2 - 5 days. While the pattern is similar for dengue hemorrhagic fever, the critical phase is followed by a critical leakage phase which can last 1 - 2 days.

Dr. Weeraman explained that during the febrile phase, the patient may suffer from high fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, nausea, pain behind the eye, vomiting, skin rash and flushing. Subsequently, bleeding may occur, which is a sign of dengue hemorrhagic fever, and could lead to death. In such cases, the patient should be immediately hospitalized. Speaking on the general management of the febrile phase, he emphasized the importance of rest. In addition, patients should take plenty of liquids such as king coconut water, fruit juice, kanji and soup rather than plain water. While aspirin should be avoided, paracetamol may be given. In addition, these patients must use a bed net to prevent transmission to others at home.

Most dengue deaths occur in those between the ages of 25 and 49 years. Dr. Weeraman said that pregnancy, obesity, secondary infection and chronic medical conditions were risk factors that could complicate recovery. In addition, infants and the elderly should obtain hospital care if infected.

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Dr. Sanath Hettige highlighted the importance of reducing mosquito density in the house by using methods such as covering the louver of windows with mosquito protective mesh and using mosquito repellents. Besides destroying breeding sites, he urged people to wear protective clothing and use mosquito repellent vaporizers in enclosed spaces such as classrooms, offices, and conference rooms.

Parents were advised to ensure that their child wear protective clothing of sufficient thickness to prevent mosquito bites. In addition, they should wear socks and shoes when they go outside to play. Dr. Hettige stressed that the use of repellants, such as vaporizers, mosquito coils, electric lights, infrasonic devices and sprays, plays a vital role in the prevention of mosquito bites.



A seminar on "Countering Maritime Crime - Challenges and Potential of Sri Lanka"

Sri Lanka is positioned strategically in the Indian ocean and maritime domain awareness is paramount in countering emerging threats such as terrorism, drugs smuggling, IUU fishing, human trafficking and smuggling, according to the speakers at a seminar on the topic of "Countering Maritime Crime - Challenges and Potential of Sri Lanka" conducted by the Organisation of Professional Associations. Mr. Vikum de Abrew, Additional Solicitor General, Attorney General's Department, Rear Admiral Y. N. Jayaratne (Rtd), former Chief Hydrographer and Consultant, and Ms. Dushanthi Fernando, National Project Coordinator - Global Maritime Crime Program, UNODC were the guest speakers for this event.

During the seminar, Rear Admiral Jayaratne revealed that large amounts of narcotics flow into the country from Afghanistan and Pakistan and are often brought by Iranian vessels through the Arabian Sea. As these drugs are primarily intended for local consumption and not, as previously thought, for onward shipment to other countries. they posed a significant threat to our society. As a result, the Sri Lankan Navy has begun to patrol the Arabian Sea and has succeeded

in capturing many consignments of drugs. Other significant threats that Sri Lanka was facing included poaching, dumping of environmentally harmful materials such as plastics, dynamite fishing and the threat of terrorism.



Admiral Jayaratne emphasized the challenges that Sri Lanka faces in countering maritime crime and the role of information sharing in addressing these challenges. He further mentioned that Sri Lanka has established an information fusion center in accordance with the international standards to share information between local and international partners.

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He also explained the multi-national resources that have become available and constitute an invaluable resource in combating maritime crime. This includes Seavision, Skylight, IORIS, Global Fish Watch and Joint Analytical Cell.

Apart from these international resources, Sri Lanka depends on the Coastal Radar Network of the Sri Lanka Navy, which was established in 2007, to monitor Sri Lanka's maritime domain. The radar system has the capability to detect ship movements and fishing vessel activities throughout Sri Lanka's seas. In addition, Sri Lanka possesses its own Maritime Patrol Aircraft operated by the Sri Lanka Air Force. These aircraft, which have been provided by the US Government and meets global requirements, plays a valuable role in monitoring the country's territorial waters.

Additional Solicitor General Mr. Vikum de Abrew explained that ships essentially function as legal 'islands' where the law of the nation of the flag that she carries are applicable. Furthermore, international law recognizes several modes for the granting of nationality to different types of ships. He also noted that states can't enforce their legislation outside their territory.

He noted that crimes committed in the maritime domain presented several challenges, including the identification of the maritime zone, proving the commission of the offense, the accused and witnesses leaving the country after getting bail, and the admissibility of digital evidence such as Whatsapp and other social media. Mr. de Abrew stated that piracy, dynamite fishing and illegal dumping are some of the threats that Sri Lanka face in the maritime domain. He pointed out that increased use of electronic and other forms of surveillance, undercover operations, and financial analysis would enable more of these crimes to be successfully prosecuted. Ms. Fernando explained the work of the UNODC in providing technical assistance and financial support in combating drug smuggling to countries such as Sri Lanka. Established in 1997, its mission is to deal with the trafficking of illicit drugs, crime prevention, international terrorism and political corruption. As such, the UNODC deals with anti-corruption, criminal justice, prison reform, crime prevention, drug prevention, treatment and care, human trafficking, organized crime, pi

Mr. de Abrew further detailed the maritime zones where the country's jurisdiction applies. This includes the internal water of a country where the state enjoys absolute sovereignty over foreign ships. In a country's territorial waters, the state still enjoys sovereignty, but foreign ships have the right of innocent passage. In addition, Sri Lanka lays claim to an Exclusive Economic Zone. Extending 200 nm, this marks Sri Lanka's maritime boundary. Finally, in the high seas, only the laws of the flag nation apply on board the ship, except in extreme cases such as piracy.



racy, and terrorism prevention. She pointed out that the agency's work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime as well as drug related treaties. In the Q & A session which followed after the presentations, it was observed that protection of deep-sea digital infrastructure is very vital for the national security of a country. This is due to the fact that these underwater cables are responsible for 97% of Sri Lanka's communications.



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Admiral Jayaratne highlighted that there have been unprecedented maritime developments with even non-state actors coming into possession of ballistic missiles. Noting the existing laws and regulations were insufficient to deal with these emerging threats, he stressed the importance of strengthening decision-making. Mr. de Abrew observed that piracy is considered a universal crime, with anyone having the legal right to apprehend pirates. However, even though Sri Lanka has a Piracy Act, it is restricted to acts committed against Sri Lankan ships and nationals. Strengthening of anti-piracy laws and establishing of regional partnership to maintain law and order in the maritime domain were also highlighted



Vision Care Discount Offer for OPA Life Members

Vision Care Optical Services have extended the following special discounts for all OPA Life Members and their families.

- Spectacles - 11%
- Sunglasses - 12%
- Hearing Aids - 15%
- Bungalows, Hotels and Villas of Vision Care - 20%

Members also can enjoy a Complementary testing

package, which includes eye screening test, colour vision assessment and hearing screening test free of charge.

Members should produce the **OPA Life Membership Card** at any of the 68 branchers situated Island wide to get the above special discounts.

Please call 0766857236, 0914944500 for VC Hotel, Bungalow and Villa reservations.

Washroom Repairs

As part of ongoing efforts to provide members and visitors to the OPA center with improved amenities, the refurbishment of the 1st floor washrooms was completed. The latest fittings have been used, along with high-quality tiles, ensuring

that users are able to have a comfortable and convenient experience in an upscale environment. In addition, the staff washrooms on the ground floor were also refurbished for the comfort of OPA employees.



Activities at National Level

Parliamentary Select Committee meetings

President-Elect Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake and Mr. Mahinda Lokuge, AAL, Forum Member of the OPA were invited to the Select Committee of the Parliament to make recommendations for the Review and Reform of Legal Education in Sri Lanka, chaired by Minister of Justice, Mr. Wijayadasa Rajapaksha PC.

The meeting was held to obtain views/proposals on Restructuring of the Governance of Legal Education,

Curriculum Development, Teaching Methodology, Infrastructure and Resource Management and Inter Institutional Connectivity (Local and International). The Committee Meeting, which was held in the Parliament Complex on the 24th of April, was attended by Former Minister of Justice Mr. G. L. Peiris, MP, Mr. Suren Raghavan, State Minister of Higher Education, Mr. Chandima Weerakkody, Former Deputy Speaker, MP Mr. Jayantha Weerasinghe, PC, MP and Sagala Kariyawasam, MP.



Networking and Engagement Activities with Member Associations

Architect '24

Architect '24
"Architect '24", an exhibition and trade fair that brought together leading companies in the construction industry, was conducted by the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects from the 23rd - 25th February at the BMICH. Held under the theme of 'Resilience, Resourcefulness, Revival', the exhibition featured design work by its members and students and showcased the latest architectural innovations.

A variety of activities and events also took place. The Inauguration Ceremony took place on the 22nd of February, 2024, and was attended by President Mr. Sarath Gamage, President-Elect Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake and General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva.



Sinhala & Hindu New Year Celebrations



The Sinhala and Hindu New Year was celebrated in grand style at the OPA at the "Bakmaha Ulela". The occasion provided an opportunity for members as well as staff, together with their families, to partake in traditional customs and games. Following a sumptuous breakfast, the attendees took part

in a variety of activities and contests, with the children especially being encouraged to participate. During the course of the day, a delicious lunch and refreshments were served. The event concluded with prizes being awarded to the winners and the DJ providing music for those who took to the dance floor.



Maritime Domain Awareness: A Key Factor For Sri Lanka's Strategic Location

By sulochana ramiah mohan -April 6, 2024

The Professional Association of Sri Lanka hosted a seminar on 2 April titled 'Countering Maritime Crime: Challenges and Potential of Sri Lanka', where several distinguished guest speakers addressed the attendees. Among them was Rear Admiral Y.N. Jayarathna (Retd), former Chief of Staff of the Sri Lanka Navy and Chief Hydrographer of the Sri Lanka Navy, who concurrently held the appointment of Joint Chief Hydrographer of the Government. Admiral Jayarathna is renowned for his expertise in oceanic and maritime affairs, geopolitics, and marine science research. He holds a Master of Arts Degree in Hydrographic Surveys and serves as a visiting Lecturer at the National Defence College. Additionally, he is recognised as an expert in asymmetric warfare at sea. In his address, Admiral Jayarathna emphasised the critical state of Sri Lanka's maritime affairs, stressing that it cannot be overlooked any longer. He highlighted the crucial role of hydrographers in comprehending nautical charts and discerning their intricacies. The Admiral reiterated the importance for Sri Lanka to remain vigilant across various maritime domains, including shipping routes, fishing activities, oceanographic and hydrographic data, and the underwater environment. He emphasised the urgency of addressing threats, risks, and security concerns, such as illegal activities, pollution, and dumping. Furthermore, the Admiral stressed

the importance of monitoring naval activities and considering environmental and meteorological factors. By adopting a comprehensive approach to these issues, informed decisions can be made to protect Sri Lanka's interests and resources in the maritime domain. Displaying the nautical chart of the Northern part of the Indian Ocean, the Admiral outlined that Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) encompasses understanding all activities in the maritime sphere. He highlighted that the underwater domain includes the seabed, underwater terrain, and the water column itself.



This encompasses various features such as mountains, valleys, plains, and trenches, as well as valuable resources like minerals, oil, and gas deposits. Additionally, the underwater domain comprises diverse ecosystems and marine life, including coral reefs, marine plants, and aquatic animals. Understanding and managing this complex underwater environment is crucial for effective maritime governance and resource management. Understanding and managing the

underwater domain is crucial for navigation, resource exploration and exploitation, environmental conservation, scientific research, and national security. Activities in this domain include hydrographic mapping, submarine cable laying, mining, marine exploration, underwater archaeology, fisheries management, and submarine warfare operations

Threats

He also said the risks and security threats in the maritime domain must be addressed to ensure maritime transparency and provide actionable intelligence to protect our oceans. Illegal, unreported,



and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a significant concern impacting billions of dollars and millions of people globally, affecting economic, human rights, and food security issues. Maritime analysts play a crucial role in identifying suspicious vessel behaviour and alerting authorities for investigation. They also help in identifying incursions or loitering by commercial fishing vessels near Marine Protected Areas and tracking networks involved in illegal activities, such as ves.

Press Articles



vessels engaged in bunkering other illegal fishing vessels. The Admiral said even long-haul flights flying over waters are considered part of MDA due to their impact. Legal issues, particularly environmental and ecological concerns, are also significant within the maritime domain. The MDA encompasses these aspects, making it a vital and current geopolitical and geostrategic subject he added. He also elaborated on the instruments of MDA that one should be familiar with. One prominent example is Seavision, a system of the US government shared with partner nations, including Sri Lanka. Authorised officials from Sri Lanka's Coast Guard, Customs, and Navy have full access to Seavision, which serves as a comprehensive platform for monitoring maritime activities such as fishing vessels

restricted to designated officials of partner countries. These provisions offer valuable insights into maritime activities and enhance the effectiveness of MDA efforts while maintaining controlled access to sensitive information. "There are also privately-owned platforms such as Global Fishing Watch, designed specifically to monitor fishing activities, primarily focusing on Chinese fishing vessels," stated Admiral Jayarathna. He highlighted that Chinese fishing vessels operate extensively across the globe, making it a global concern and platforms like Global Fishing Watch serve to address this issue. He emphasised that this particular web link can also track activities within Sri Lankan waters and fishing vessels, ensuring transparency and eliminating secrecy surrounding such activities. Another MDA system is the Joint Analytical Cell (JAC) which is a collaborative initiative established by the IMCS Network in partnership with TM-Tracking and Global Fishing Watch. They analyse and provide advice to partner countries or subscribers regarding the analytical aspects of these activities at sea. This includes assessing the implications

activities, such as fishing, on local and international waters. Through their analysis, they aim to provide valuable insights and recommendations to stakeholders, enabling informed decision-making and effective management of maritime resources and security concerns. In 2022, the founding partners were joined by the Allen Institute for AI, the developers of the Skylight maritime monitoring tool, and C4ADS, bringing the number of JAC collaborators to five. The JAC has facilities to develop into a larger coalition of like-minded State and Non-State organisations to increase the understanding of and access to, the growing number of technologies and technology



and yachts. Due to its restricted access, Seavision is a valuable tool for educating about MDA and observing sea-related events. Similarly, he explained Skylight, a semi-governmental entity with operations akin to Seavision, the USA, gathering and consolidating data on shipping vessels from various sources into a single platform. Additionally, he spoke about IO-RIS, a European Union-led initiative accessible on the Internet but



and impacts of various maritime

partners that are available today. JAC also supports, including training and analytical products and access to technology platforms is provided free of charge. The Joint Action Centre has identified five initial focus areas for its initial phase: Port controls and vessel risk assessment, fisheries patrol planning and support, transshipment monitoring, MCS capacity building, and global issues of interest. The top hydrographer also elaborated on the Coastal Radar Network of the Sri Lanka Navy, which is owned by Sri Lanka and moni-



Press Articles

tors Sri Lanka's 200-nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The radar, located in HSFWR in Nilaveli, was established in 2007 as part of our network mechanism. It has the capability to detect ship movements and fishing vessel activities within the designated area. Additionally, Sri Lanka possesses its own Maritime Patrol Aircraft operated by the Sri Lanka Air Force, which contributes to the MDA initiative. Moreover, he noted that the US Government has provided maritime aircraft, highlighting their role in meeting global requirements. Through the network, the Admiral demonstrated the presence of poaching vessels in Palk Bay, providing clear evidence for discussions with Indian counterparts regarding illegal poaching activities. Similarly, the network can also share information about the increasing accumulation of plastic debris on the seabed around Colombo, posing a significant threat to marine life entangled in the debris.

Dynamite used for fishing

Furthermore, instances of dynamite fishing, captured on video by navy divers in the South, highlighted the indiscriminate killing of fish shoals and the environmental damage caused. These activities are not limited to the South; they also occur along the East Coast. Dynamite explosions underwater not only devastate marine life but also affect underwater ecosystems. Awareness of such activities necessitates a collective societal approach, involving the government and citizens alike. The Navy's proactive measures, including the arrest of individuals involved in dynamite

fishing, demonstrate a commitment to addressing these issues.

Drug trafficking

Additionally, Admiral Jayarathna addressed the critical issue of controlling Drug and Narcotics Trafficking at sea, which demands coordinated efforts for effective management and enforcement. Through video evidence, he demonstrated how drugs were smuggled from Iranian Dhows. These Iranian vessels traverse the Arabian Sea and enter Sri Lankan waters, where they are intercepted and arrested by



the Navy. Such arrests have been ongoing since 2015, primarily in

the Southern waters of Sri Lanka. The operational area of the Arabian Sea falls beyond Sri Lanka's jurisdiction, prompting the Sri Lanka Navy to seek support from the Indian Navy and the Combined Maritime Force operating from Bahrain. Unfortunately, both entities declined assistance due to a lack of assets, which was disappointing and reflected less concern for the issue. But, Sri Lanka's Navy began to operate in the Arabian Sea to combat drug trafficking effectively. This shift in strategy yielded positive results, leading to the apprehension of

numerous drug traffickers, he said. He highlighted the misconception from seven years ago when it was believed that drugs were merely passing through Sri Lanka en route to other countries. However, it became evident that these drugs were intended for local consumption in Sri Lanka. Moreover, Admiral Jayarathna highlighted the influx of Cannabis through the Tamil Nadu coastline, emphasizing the significant drug-related challenges and social issues Sri Lanka is currently facing. "It's Iranian Dhows originating from the Makaran Coastline, loaded in Northern Arabian waters and transported to Southern Arabian sea for recipient crafts! Sri Lankan High sea Fishing Vessels do the transportation from the mother vessels (that is Iranian Dhows) to the Sri Lankan coastline." Speaking on the Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure, he emphasised its significance for government officials, students, researchers, policymakers, law enforcement agencies, investors, and anyone interested in understanding our maritime space. He highlighted that the collection of information sources and facts is part of the national spatial infrastructure. To enhance the utilisation of spatial data and facilitate SMART and spatial-based decision-making, the Government of Sri Lanka has implemented a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) program. NSDI has been recognised as a key initiative under the National Digital Policy - 'Digitalisation of the Economy' by the Government of Sri Lanka. Since its inception in 2016, the primary focus of the NSDI has been to develop world-class infrastructure

and solutions aimed at standardising spatial data, preventing data duplication, enhancing data quality, promoting transparency in data sharing across departments, and providing a technological platform for the creation of spatial data decision support tools. NSDI aims to create an ecosystem where government and private sector organisations can collaborate to manage, improve, and exchange spatial data and information. Platforms like <https://www.marine-traffic.com/> and the Notation Monitoring System enable the monitor-

ing of vessels, including Sri Lankan vessels engaged in high-sea fishing. Such awareness and links are invaluable for making informed decisions, as emphasised by the Admiral. He stressed the importance of drafting national policies to guide decision-making processes. Furthermore, the Admiral highlighted the progress made by the Indian Government in constructing the proposed International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP) at Galathea Bay, on Great Nicobar Island. This development is significant as it is closer to ma-

ior sea lanes of communication. It is speculated that the Port will be operational within the next five years. Such developments underscore the importance of closely monitoring activities in both sea and land domains of neighbouring countries for strategic and operational purposes. With access to the MDA facts and figures, there will be a better position to plan activities for further coordination and response. Additionally, the Admiral emphasised the significance of undersea ridges, which serve

BUSINESS

OPA hosts seminar on Dengue Prevention and Treatment

April 9, 2024 1:08 am

Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA) setting an example for other similar organisations and Chambers hosted a timely seminar on 'New Trends in Dengue Prevention and Treatment' recently.

Consultant Community Physician, Dr. Jayantha Weeraman, Consultant Pediatrician and Dr. Sanath Hettige, Consultant in Family Medicine and Chairman, Health and Nutrition Committee of the OPA, as guest speakers.

Daily News

with over 19,000 people being infected this year.

This is in the backdrop of traditional methods such as 'fogging' having limited usage while being damaging to the environment. Most people who are infected with dengue show no symptoms, but some develop dengue fever or dengue hemorrhagic fever, Dr. Weeraman said. Dr. Sanath Hettige highlighted the importance of reducing mosquito density in the house by using methods such as covering the louver of windows with mosquito protective mesh. In addition, he urged people to destroy breeding sites, wear protective clothing and use mosquito repellent vaporizers in enclosed spaces. "All SOEs under holding company"

The health authorities are trialing innovative methods of dengue control in a bid to stop the spread of the disease, such as infecting mosquitoes with the Wolbachia bacteria, sterilizing male mosquitoes and using spatial repellents. In his speech, Dr. Samaraweera explained that mosquitoes were being artificially infected with the Wolbachia bacteria as this prevented the transmission of the dengue virus. The authorities were focusing on these new techniques in a bid to stop the spread of dengue, which is showing signs of resurgence in Sri Lanka,



The event, which was organised by the Health and Nutrition Committee of the OPA, featured Dr. Sudath Samaraweera, Director, Dengue Control Programme and



BUSINESS

“All SOEs under holding company”

February 2, 2024 1:30 am

Daily News

SLT should be privatized for betterment of people Govt should create better environment to attract investors



Head of State owned Enterprises (SOE) Suresh Shah highlighted that among 130 SOE's in the country 17 are non-operational but the boards of directors are still working in them!! He said that enhancing efficiency of state owned enterprises is immensely important considering the country's current economic situation and said that Sri Lanka Telecom should be definitely privatized for the betterment of people in the country. He made these observations at a seminar on "Enhancing Efficiency of State Owned Enterprises" (SOE), organized by the Organization of Professional Association of Sri Lanka (OPA) attended by a large number of professionals by representing their respective fields. Responding to the media he said not only Sri Lanka Telecom but

also some major parts of the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) should also be privatized to enhance its services being provided to people in the country. "Even the CPC should also be privatized for the sake of people who need a better service." Shah also focused attention towards the appointments to state boards and said all appointments for Boards must be done through the constitutional council. "Politicians should not get involved in appointments." In addition, approximately 85 institutions were identified as being suitable for divestment. Among the challenges that had been identified by the SOE Restructuring Unit were subsidies, the appointment of unsuitable directors, overstaffing, and circular debt. Consequently, they had come up with a number of recommendations that included divestment of loss-making or non-strategic SOEs, bringing all enterprises under the Finance Ministry, while making them limited liability companies. He underscored the importance of not 'parking' subsidies with State banks. He also said the government should create a better environment to attract investors to the country and said Singapore is a fine example of this. Secretary to the Treasury and Ministry of Finance Mahinda Siriwardena highlighted that state

owned enterprises have both positive and negative impacts on the economy. The government was also implementing institutional reforms to improve the balance sheets of these enterprises. He said that another key reform was bringing all SOEs under the control of a holding company. Siriwardena also noted that strict regulations would be brought regarding the appointment of directors. He said reducing the losses of some SOE's are the priority of the Government and strict regulations will be brought in future when appointing directors, chairmen etc.



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Rs. 12,500/- for first three hours
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Rs. 1,900/= for only one hour
(during 8.30a.m. – 4.30p.m.)

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Rs. 3,900/- for first three hours.
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(All charges are exclusive of relevant taxes)

This brochure was created by the Membership Committee of the Session 2023/2024 and aims to inform professionals of the OPA about the resources that the organization offers to its members.



Developed by:
Membership Committee
2023/2024



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The Auditorium has a seating capacity for 100 persons and is a hub for all the major events, catering to meetings, presentations, training programmes, workshops, conferences, lectures, celebrations, functions, gatherings etc. It is well-equipped, with state-of-the-art lighting, sound system and audio-visual aids, making it a big hit among the members.



COMMITTEE ROOMS

The committee rooms, with 20 seats and multimedia projection facilities, are perfect for board meetings, mini-management gatherings and presentations.



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A star class restaurant welcomes OPA Members for their larger gatherings where they can enjoy high-quality cuisine, warm hospitality, and unparalleled service in the middle of Colombo city.



OPA FACILITIES

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Well-stocked with both domestic and foreign liquor, wines, cocktails, with all drinks available at the best prices in town, exclusively for members.





Founded in 1975
"Voice of Professionals"

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