



# OPA NEWS

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Newsletter of  
The Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA)

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The OPA being the apex body of 52 professional member Associations catering to 34 disciplines with a total membership of more than 60,000 professionals could & should make a huge & immense contribution towards recovery & stability of our motherland out of current worst crisis since its independence in 1948.

The OPA Newsletter which is published quarterly provides a platform for readers to gain first-hand information on professionals & all other activities conducted in OPA within a quarter. This year we were able to ensure timely publication of three quarterly newsletters in January, April & July, facilitating entire membership to gain access for most updated & current information. In addition, we were able to publish OPA journal also, covering a wide range of areas such as Supply Chains, Medical, Education, Economic, Science, Health, Cyber Security, Geology, Textile Technology, Human Resource Management, Energy, Geo-Politics etc on 26th August 2024, during OPA flagship event, Annual Conference in Shangri-La & present its first copy to the Chief Guest, HE the President.

I must acknowledge the commitment & dedication of all members in OPA Publication Committee with sincere gratitude & appreciation, who extended their contribution to formulate the "OPA Publication Policy" & subsequent process for timely publication of OPA newsletters & Journal during this year. OPA with the approved "Publication Policy" could encourage all authors to work to the standards &

guidelines stipulated in OPA Publication Policy & such emphasis on methodological rigor is vital to ensure that conclusions reached from publications contained in the journal are valid and reliable.

I will fail in my duty, if I do not mention about the excellent & cordial guidance & assistance extended by President OPA, President Elect OPA, Immediate Past President, General Secretary, all Office Bearers & also Center Director with all staff for their cooperation extended to the Publication Committee for timely publication of Newsletters & Journal.

The OPA Newsletters & Journal with the online availability & higher dissemination will create an ideal platform not only to provide evidence-based solutions & discuss on innovative approaches to find sustainable solutions for national issues, but also provide an opportunity for all readers to gain access for most updated & current information.

**Maj Gen Renaka Udawatta (Rtd)**  
**Editor - OPA**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As President of the Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka, it gives me great pleasure to report that our 37th Annual Conference was held with great success on the 26th and 27th of August 2024. The Inauguration was graced by Hon. Ranil Wickremesinghe, President of Sri Lanka, as Chief Guest, underscoring the importance of the Conference, both as our flagship event and as a gathering of eminent professionals and distinguished leaders. Our Guest of Honor, Dr. Nandalal Weerasinghe delivered the keynote address, which provided greater insight into the theme of this year's conference - "Towards Sri Lanka's Sustained Economic Growth". The evening was also an opportunity for the attendees to network, develop new friendships and discuss new initiatives with fellow professionals.

We were fortunate to have industry leaders and renowned experts for the Technical Sessions which were held the next day. The topics of the Sessions were carefully curated as having the greatest potential in advancing the country's economies. During the course of the day, participants were able to gain an in depth understanding each subject. The panel discussions at the end of each session provided an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and present their own suggestions. At a time of economic upheaval, it is essential that the OPA leverages its unique platform and the combined expertise of its members to provide solutions for the development of the economy to the government and other stakeholders. Consequently, the Technical Sessions will act as a springboard for the OPA to prepare a concept paper containing proposals and recommendations that would lead

to economic progress. The Annual Conference also saw the digital launch of the OPA Journal 2024 by the President. Printed copies of the Journal were subsequently distributed to the Chief Guest, Guest of Honour, distinguished invitees and audience members. Despite the time and resources that are required to organize an event of the scale of the Annual Conference, we were also able to organize a series of seminars and other events for the benefit of our members. A free medical health camp, which was held in partnership with HelpAge Sri Lanka, allowed members and their families to avail themselves of a variety of free medical services.

The seminar on "Value addition to fruit and vegetables" focused on a very important sector comprising mostly of smallholder farmers who would profit greatly from enhanced revenue. The use of the latest techniques to preserve the shelf life of these produce would also help to open up export market, allowing us to boost our foreign exchange.

The seminar on "Implications of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing on the National Economy and the Country," examined a highly relevant topic as Sri Lanka is due to be evaluated soon and is at risk of being greylisted for technical deficiencies in anti-money laundering measures. This topic also has a serious bearing on our national security, particularly at a time of heightening international tensions. Artificial intelligence has become a 'hot topic' of late, particularly with recent advancements in the field. The seminar on "Transforming Industries - The Role of AI and GenAI" enabled members to better understand the uses of this technology and the way it can be used for the benefit of enterprises.

The past year has been a period of great activity which has reached its climax with the OPA's 37th Annual Conference. At this pivotal juncture in our country's history, the OPA continues to serve as a vital forum where the knowledge and expertise of the Sri Lanka's professionals can be harnessed for the betterment of the nation.

**Sarath Gamage**  
President - OPA

## SECRETARY'S DESK

### SECRETARY'S MESSAGE



The past 3 months have seen the culmination of the OPA yearly activities, with our flagship event, the 37th Annual Conference, taking place on the 26th and 27th of August at the Shangri-La Hotel. The event was a tremendous success and received wide publicity in the electronic and print media, providing the OPA with considerable prominence and exposure.

Despite the time and resources required for the organization of the Annual Conference, we also managed to conduct 4 seminars during this period on relevant and timely topics. These seminars were very well attended and were covered by several newspapers, underscoring their importance to our society.

The Medical Camp, which provided a range of medical services free of charge to members and their families, was held at the OPA premises. Several important events organised by our members associations were also attended by the office bearers of the OPA. The HR policy was revised and approved by the Executive Council, based on the current practices of the OPA administration.

My appreciation goes to the Editor and members of the Publications Committee for successfully publishing the fourth newsletter for this year.

**Tisara De Silva**  
General Secretary

## INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE 37<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE 26<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2024

The flagship event of the Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA), the 37th Annual Conference, took place on the 26th and 27th of August at the Shangri-La Hotel, Colombo.

The theme of this year's event was "Towards Sri Lanka's Sustained Economic Growth". The Inauguration Ceremony on the 26th took place under the patronage of Chief Guest, Hon. Ranil Wickremasinghe, President of Sri Lanka. The Keynote address was delivered by the Guest of Honour, Dr. P. Nandalal Weerasinghe, Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. The Inauguration was further distinguished by the presence of over 300 eminent professionals from member associations and other organizations.



# 37<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE OPA

In his address, Chief Guest President Ranil Wickremesinghe emphasized that to sustain economic growth, transforming our economy from being import-dependent to export-oriented is essential. He noted that achieving this objective would also require increased productivity, particularly in sectors like apparel, where it is necessary to move towards high-end markets and backward integration.

The President pointed out the need to modernize agriculture, capitalizing on the growing global demand for food. He identified tourism as another key area that must be developed. Expanding logistics, advancing technology-intensive manufacturing, and fostering digitalization, including AI, were also critical. He stated that four new universities focused on technology would be established to build the necessary human resources. The President said that the country had the talent, and would succeed with the right environment.



Dr. Nandalal Weerasinghe, Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, stated in his keynote address that the economy has regained its normalcy to a greater extent within a shorter period. He observed that a key driver of our progress has been restoration of macroeconomic stability, achieved through a sound monetary policy measure, strong fiscal consolidation measures and implementation of long-overdue structural reforms. He emphasized that the enactment of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka Act in September 2023 was a milestone achievement, enabling the formal recognition of flexible inflation targeting as the Central Bank's monetary policy framework, complemented by a flexible exchange rate policy.

However, Dr. Weerasinghe observed that with the current sovereign debt crisis, the Government did not have any fiscal space to drive the economic growth through higher spending or lower taxes as in the past. Therefore, going forward, the growth should be driven by the private sector and the Government's role would be to create a facilitating and conducive environment for the private sector to thrive.



In his speech, OPA President Mr. Sarath Gamage observed that devising a far-reaching plan that would serve the needs of the people while addressing the many challenges facing the economy requires the active participation of all stakeholders. It was essential to use Sri Lanka's enviable talent pool of many internationally-respected experts to create the most effective strategy to achieve economic rejuvenation. He expressed the belief that the OPA has a unique role to play in the formulation of a comprehensive, long-term policy for economic advancement as it can leverage the collective expertise of its members to devise innovative, multi-disciplinary solutions to revitalize the country's economy.



# 37<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE OPA



OPA President-Elect and Chairman of the 37th Annual Conference Organising Committee, Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake noted that this year's conference theme, "Towards Sri Lanka's Sustained Economic Growth," embodies the urgent need to formulate a lasting strategy that would restore the economy to stability and progress. Pointing out that the Annual Conference brought together eminent economists, leading professionals, industry veterans, and academics, he encouraged the participants to leverage their collective knowledge, insights, and perspectives to pinpoint issues, address deficiencies, and devise innovative strategies to stimulate economic growth.



## TECHNICAL SESSIONS OF THE 37<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE 27<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2024

The second day of the Annual Conference consisted of five Technical Sessions where eminent guest speakers, consisting of leading figures drawn from industry and academia, made informative and educational presentations.



### TECHNICAL SESSION ONE “International Trade, Tourism and Economic Engagement”

The first technical session focused on the topic of “International Trade, Tourism and Economic Engagement”. The session chairman was Prof. Lakshman R. Watawala, OPA Past President and Founder President of the Association of Accounting Technicians of Sri Lanka. The subtopics were “Road to Export-Oriented Economy” by Mr. Anushka Wijesinha, Co-founder/Director, Centre for a Smart Future, “In search of Capital”, by Mr. Murtaza Jafferjee, Chairman, Advocata Institute and “Enhancing Skills to make Sri Lanka a more attractive destination for Investment” by Mr. Dinesh Weerakkody, Chairman, Board of Investments of Sri Lanka. The panelists were Mr. Chalaka Gajabahu, Chairman, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, and Mr. Thisum Jayasuriya, Chairman, Sri Lanka convention Bureau. The speakers stressed the importance of export-led growth and fostering non-debt creating inflows such as FDIs to the national economy. The need for deliberate policy actions on economic diversification as well as an innovation ecosystem, FDI promotion, export diversification, and SME upgrading were also highlighted. It was claimed that the

country was run for the benefit of a thousand people. The audience was also reminded that Singapore had made a number of mistakes during the course of its development, but was able to pivot when needed.





## TECHNICAL SESSION TWO

### “Enhancing Infrastructure for Economic Growth”

The second session examined the theme “Enhancing Infrastructure for Economic Growth”. The session chairman was Mr. Duminda Hulangamuwa, Chairman, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. The subthemes were “Renewable Investment – a Sri Lankan perspective” by Eng. Dr. Narendra De Silva, General Manager, Ceylon Electricity Board, “Supply Chain: Transport and Logistics” by Ms. Shehara de Silva, Managing Director, Mclarens Group of Companies, “Public Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development”, by Prof. Sirimal Abeyratne, Emeritus Professor in Economics, University of Colombo. The speakers observed that, in order to reduce costs and curtail borrowing, many governments have opted for Public-Private partnerships (PPP). Another advantage of PPP was it focused on rate of returns and consequently, projects such as empty airports and ports would be avoided. The speakers bemoaned that fact that Sri Lanka has very few PPP projects. Instead public finance and credit

were used, contributing to the debt crisis. However, it was stressed that PPP must be done properly.



## TECHNICAL SESSION THREE

### “Law Reforms & Enhancing Regulatory Frameworks”

The third session, which explored “Law Reforms & Enhancing Regulatory Frameworks” was chaired by Mr. Kuvera de Zoysa, President’s Counsel. The sessions were “Strengthening Intellectual Property Rights Protection,” Ms. Lihini De Silva, Faculty of Law, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, “Reforming Commercial Laws to Promote Business Growth” by Mr. Harsha Fernando, President’s Counsel and “Improving Regulatory Framework to attract FDIs” by Dr. Arittha Wikramanayake, Precedent Partner, Heritage Partners (Pvt) Ltd. The speakers observed that business operations in Sri Lanka were constrained by corruption regulatory inconsistency, adhoc and arbitrary changes, and politicization. Furthermore, the provisions & framing of tax laws were outdated. It was stressed that improvement to Sri Lanka’s commercial law should include simplifying and streamlining laws and regulations, enhancing contract enforcement and speedy dispute resolution while modernizing commercial transactions and digital commerce.





## TECHNICAL SESSION FOUR

### “Role of Financial Sector in Economic Growth”

“Role of Financial Sector in Economic Growth” was the subject of the fourth session which was chaired by Mr. Damith Pallewatta, Acting CEO, Hatton National Bank. The subtopics were “The Role of Financial Markets towards a Sustainable Economy” by Dr. Anil Perera, Director of Domestic Operations and Deputy Secretary to Governing Board, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, “Access to finance for Small & Medium Enterprises”, by Mr. Indika Ranaweera, Vice-President - SME, Middle Market & Business Banking, National Development Bank and “Making Maritime Connectivity for Finance & Economic Growth”, by Rear Admiral Y. N. Jayarathna, Former Chief Hydrographer, Sri Lanka Navy. The speakers pointed out that well-functioning financial markets are fundamental to long-term economic growth as they help in implementing environmental and social goals, including green finance, socially responsible investing, social inclusion. They maintained that modern day financial markets should

aim at promoting sustainable growth through efficient market-orientated financial systems via sound policies, such as developing capital markets, promoting sustainable finance, and harnessing digital finance.



## TECHNICAL SESSION FIVE

### “Ensuring Economic Transformation through Advanced Digital Technology”

The final session of the day focusses on “Ensuring Economic Transformation through Advanced Digital Technology”, chaired by Dr. Ajantha Atukorale, President, Computer Society of Sri Lanka. The presentations were “Cybersecurity Challenges and Solutions for Sri Lankan businesses”, by Mr. Shanaka De Silva, Principal/Partner, Ernst & Young, “E-commerce and Digital Payments to Drive Economic Growth.” by Mr. Dhanika Perera, Founder, Bhasha Lanka (Pvt) Ltd., and “Use of Technology for Efficient Revenue Collection”, by Mr. Sudattha Silva, Additional Director General, Sri Lanka Customs. The speakers noted the growing threat of cybersecurity attacks to Sri Lanka businesses, exacerbated by lack of awareness and training, use of legacy systems and infrastructure, and insufficient investment in cybersecurity. Enhancing cybersecurity awareness and training, greater investment in modern security technologies, strengthening regulatory compliance, collaborating with cybersecurity experts and continuous monitor-

ing and incident response were recommended in order to meet emerging cybersecurity challenges.





## Launch of OPA Journal

The OPA Journal for 2024 was officially launched at the Inauguration of the 37th Annual Conference of the OPA on the 26th of August 2024. The digital copy of the Journal was launched by Chief Guest Hon. Ranil Wickremesinghe, President of Sri Lanka, who received the first printed copy from the Editor and Chairman of the Publications Committee Maj Gen Renaka Udawatte (Rtd). The Journal was then distributed to the Guest of Honor, OPA Office Bearers, distinguished invitees and audience members. A digital copy of the Journal can be downloaded free of charge from the OPA website.



## 37<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE MEDIA BRIEFING

The media briefing for the 37th Annual Conference of the OPA was held on the 17th of July at the OPA auditorium with the attendance of President Sarath Gamage, President-Elect and Chairman of the Annual Conference Organising Committee, Mr. Sujeewa

Lal Dahanayake, General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva and Convenor Mr. Jayantha Gallehewa.

Media personnel from all leading print and electronic media organizations were present for the press conference where details of the 37th Annual Conference were revealed. The logo of the Annual Conference was unveiled at this event. The Platinum, Silver and Bronze sponsors of the Annual Conference were also recognized for their valuable support.





## Seminar on “Value Addition to Fruits and Vegetables”



A seminar on “Value Addition to fruits and vegetables”, organized by the Land Management, Human Settlement, Environment and Agriculture Committee, was held at the OPA auditorium on the 2nd

of August. The guest speakers were Prof. (Ms.) Ilmi Hewajulige, Director General and CEO, Industrial Technology Institute and Dr. (Mrs.) Narmada Perera, Deputy Director of Agriculture (Research), Fruit Research and Development Institute, Department of Agriculture. The event was moderated by Mr. Nelson de Silva, Former District Director, Ministry of Agriculture, and Senior Consultant, Open University of Sri Lanka.

The speakers noted that value addition for fruits and vegetables involved the application of processes and techniques to enhance their market value, shelf life and consumer appeal. This would enable more produce to be exported as exports in this sector currently only accounted for 0.6% of Sri Lanka’s GDP. It was pointed out that, as most growers of fruits and vegetables are smallholder farmers, value addition would boost economic growth, particularly in rural areas. The need for technology transfer and capacity building to strengthen food processing was also highlighted.





## Seminar on “Implications of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing on the National Economy and the Country”

Sri Lanka must strengthen measures against money laundering and terrorism financing to avoid being greylisted. This was emphasized at a seminar on “Implications of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing on the National Economy and the Country,” organized by the National Issues Committee of the OPA. The event featured insightful presentations by Rtd. Justice of the Supreme Court and Chairman of Seylan Bank, Hon. Justice Buwaneka Aluwihare and Dr. Subhani Keerthiratne, Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. In his thought-provoking presentation, Justice Aluwihare highlighted that many criminals, particularly those involved in narcotics, have built vast empires, often operating from overseas. He pointed out that their substantial financial gains empower them to run their operations with seeming impunity. However, to spend their illicit earnings without raising suspicion, they rely on money laundering to disguise the origin of their criminal proceeds, making them appear legitimate.

Justice Aluwihare observed that a crucial component of anti-money laundering legislation is asset recovery, which involves locating, freezing, and forfeiting the proceeds of crime. Depending on the asset, it may also need to be managed. He explained two types of regimes for recovering criminal proceeds: conviction-based, where forfeiture depends on the

criminal’s conviction, and non-conviction based, where ownership of assets must be justified by proof of income. If an individual cannot justify their assets, the authorities have the power to seize them.

Justice Aluwihare mentioned that, as part of IMF requirements, Sri Lanka is considering the introduction of these provisions to further combat money laundering. He asserted that stringent anti-money laundering measures would significantly reduce drug proliferation. He also highlighted the detrimental impacts of money laundering on the economy, including undermining financial stability, decreasing government revenue, distorting competition, increasing inequality, and hampering economic growth.

Dr. Subhani Keerthiratne emphasized that inter-agency coordination and the highest level of political commitment are crucial to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, which pose significant risks to both domestic and global financial systems, peace, and development. She highlighted relevant international conventions, including the Vienna Convention of 1988, the Palermo Convention of 2000, the Merida Convention of 2003, and the Terrorist Financing Convention of 1999, which guide global initiatives against these illegal activities.



# NATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Global action against money laundering, terrorist, and proliferation financing is led by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental body established by the G-7 countries. The FATF promotes effective measures and monitors country compliance based on 40 recommendations.

ing greylisted can also have severe repercussions. For instance, the last time Sri Lanka was greylisted, it resulted in EU blacklisting, causing several EU banks to cease dealings with Sri Lankan institutions. This could lead to increased interest rates, low investor confidence, and potential downgrading by rating agencies. The IMF's Technical Assistance report on Sri Lanka also highlighted several areas of concern in combating money laundering and terrorist financing, including the lack of skilled resource personnel, legal barriers, gaps in the legal framework, absence of clear strategy and technical coordination, and lack of transparency. Dr. Keerthiratne emphasized the need for concerted action to address these issues and prevent the country from being greylisted again.



Dr. Keerthiratne noted that terrorist financing was criminalized in Sri Lanka through the Convention on the Suppression of Terrorist Financing Act No. 25 of 2005, and money laundering was criminalized by the Prevention of Money Laundering Act No. 5 of 2006. Additionally, the Financial Transaction Reporting Act No. 6 of 2006 outlines the obligations of financial and non-financial institutions and the powers and functions of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU).

She explained that the FIU functions as a department of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka but operates independently and autonomously. It serves as the focal point for anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism measures and ensures Sri Lanka's compliance with all 40 FATF recommendations. Institutions under the FIU's purview include financial institutions and designated non-finance businesses and professions, which must report suspicious transactions to the FIU. Dr. Keerthiratne stated that Sri Lanka's 3rd Mutual Evaluation is scheduled for March 2025. The country must address remaining technical deficiencies and implement necessary changes to avoid being designated as a greylisted or blacklisted country.

Dr. Keerthiratne noted that, while members are required to act only against blacklisted countries, be-





## Presentation of SOE Concept Paper

The Concept Paper on “Enhancing Efficiency and Governance of State-Owned Enterprises in Sri Lanka: A Roadmap for Reform” was formally presented by the Chairman of the National Issues Committee, Mr. Bhanu Wijayarathne to OPA President Mr. Sarath Gamage. The report addresses the obstacles faced by the sector, registering a course towards revitalized efficiency and governance within SOEs, thereby fostering a climate conducive to sustained economic progress and equitable development. It was prepared by the National Issues Committee and included suggestions and recommendations made by OPA members and leading experts. This Paper will be forwarded to the government and other stakeholders where it will play a vital role in shaping future development policy. Also attending the presentation were President-Elect

Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake and the Convenor of the National Issues Committee Mr. V. Rameshkumar.



## Seminar on “Economic Transformation Act - Implications and Benefits to the National Economy”

Sri Lanka must engage in structural reforms and take advantage of the latest technology in order to achieve economic progress. This was stated at the seminar on “Economic Transformation Act - Implications and Benefits to the National Economy”, conducted by the Organization of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka. The speakers at this event were Dr. W. A. Wijewardena, former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and Mr. Uditha Egalahewa, PC, Chairman, DSI Samson Group (Pvt) Ltd. In his speech, Dr. W. A. Wijewardena noted that, while the current focus is on an economic transformation, what Sri Lanka really needs is a structural transformation due to its use of simple technology in production. Since 98% of the goods and services produced by the country are based on simple technology, they could be copied by low-cost countries such as Cambodia and Myanmar, which resulted in Sri Lanka losing its competitive edge. Dr. Wijewardena observed that, although there had been 4 industrial revolutions and they were in the midst of the 5th revolution, Sri Lanka was still stuck in the 2nd revolution. He asserted that, if Sri Lanka wants to become a prosperous nation, it needs to

leapfrog from the 2nd to the 4th industrial revolution, which would entail a quantum leap in structural reform. He pointed out that India had established the National Institute for Transforming India (NITI) which was focused on transforming the entire system while Sri Lanka’s economic transformation was focused more on foreign trade. He opined that Sri Lanka should follow the economic example set by India. Dr. Wijewardena stated that one of the challenges in increasing investment in Sri Lanka was the lack of savings. Another challenge is a rapidly ageing demographic, which is projected to result in a decline in population in 2035. Dr. Wijewardena underscored the importance of focusing on IT, which had high income-generating potential. In contrast, there was significant local spending on tourists, which reduced the amount of revenue to the country. On the setting up of Economic Zones, he stated that the entire island is essentially a BOI zone, but most goods produced were consumed locally. He also declared that, if international standards were applied, the poverty level in Sri Lanka would be around 60%. Striking a more critical note, Mr. Egalahewa claimed that the Economic Transformation Act lacked origi-

# NATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE



nality and reflected the thinking of the IMF. He stated that one of the issues with the Act was that it bound future governments to specific targets, hindering their ability to respond to new developments. He further observed that the exemption list had been expanded. He cited that fact that, while DSI made a variety of products for exports making it a valuable foreign exchange earner, it would find it difficult to compete with foreign companies if they were permitted to export similar products from Sri Lanka. Mr. Egalahewa observed that the original BOI law had been very effective when first introduced, but had become ineffective over time due to corruption, politicization and inefficiency. The same pitfalls were present in the ETA as the majority of members of the proposed Economic Commission would be appointed by the President. He stressed the importance of measures to maintain the independence of these institutions. Claiming that the ETA was hurriedly drafted to meet the requirements of the IMF, he noted that it has set many attractive targets, but it remained to be seen if they could be achieved. In the lively Q & A session moderated by Mr. Bhanu Wijayarathne, Chairman, National Issues Committee of the OPA, Dr. Wijewardena agreed that one of the issues with the ETA was that it bound future governments to certain targets, which was not feasible as they have to respond to emerging conditions. He also

stated that the IMF strongly disapproved of the granting of tax concessions, adding that the government is forced to introduce new taxes in order to cover the resulting loss. Mr. Egalahewa pointed out that, although the Act prohibits various activities, no punitive measures are specified, greatly reducing its effectiveness. The seminar was attended by OPA President Mr. Sarath Gamage, President-Elect Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake and General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva. It was organized by the National Issues Committee of the OPA.





## Seminar on “Transforming Industries - The Role of AI”

A seminar on “Transforming Industries - The Role of AI and GenAI” organized by the Career Guidance and Skills Development Committee of the OPA jointly with the Computer Society of Sri Lanka was held on the 9th of August at the Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA). The guest speaker was Dr. Romesh Ranawana, who is Group Chief Analytics and AI Officer of Dialog Axiata PLC. In his speech, Dr. Ranawana defined AI as the simulation of human intelligence in machines programmed to think, learn and solve problems like humans. He observed that AI was already a big part of our lives as it is integral to many commonly used applications, such as Apple’s Siri, Amazon’s Alexa, Instagram, Facebook, Google maps, eBay, Netflix and YouTube. He noted that AI has revolutionized professional practices by automating routine tasks, reducing errors, providing deeper data analysis and promoting new solutions across various fields. This, in turn, has allowed professionals to focus on strategic activities and improved the decision-making process. Dr. Ranawana noted that preparing for AI integration required proactive learning, investment in technology

and people, strategic process changes and continuous updates to strategies. He encouraged the audience to use AI to transform their industries and drive innovation. The event was moderated by Dr. Ajantha Athukorala, President - Computer Society of Sri Lanka.



# SENIOR PROFESSIONALS' COMMITTEE

## Free Medical camp

A free medical camp was held on the 14th of July at the OPA premises. Organised by the Senior Professionals' Committee, it was an opportunity for members of the OPA and their families to obtain a range of medical services, all of which were free of charge. Professionals over the age of 55 years were given the opportunity to get their eyes tested and receive a free pair of spectacles, courtesy of Helpage Sri Lanka. In addition, dental care was provided to all age groups. Those who attended the health camp were also able to check their blood pressure, blood sugar, weight and BMI. Free consultations with doctors were also offered. Numerous special programmes were held throughout the day to educate participants on cancer, heart diseases, asthma, dengue, HIV/AIDS and other illnesses.





## Presentation of Papers on Construction Industry

The Concept Papers on “Ethics, Rules and Regulations of Construction Industry and the Way Forward” and “Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) of the Construction Sector” were formally presented by the Chairman of the Construction Industry Committee, Eng Mrs. Tharangika Jayasundara to OPA President Mr. Sarath Gamage. President-Elect Mr. Sujewa Lal Dahanayake also attended the presentation. The papers were the result of brainstorming sessions on the subject that were conducted by the Construction Industry Committee and included a series of recommendations and proposals for the development and progress of the industry.



## PREMISES MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE

### AUDITORIUM FLOOR VARNISHING

The floor of the OPA Auditorium, which was discoloured, was varnished by the OPA Technician. This will ensure that that Auditorium retains a professional, high-quality appearance which is important as it hosts many high-profile events.



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Organisation of Professional associations of Sri Lanka will be held on the 30th of October 2024. All General Forum members are requested to be present to vote and elect office bearers for the forthcoming term.

## Recognition of long-serving employees

Working for one organization for many decades is a great achievement for both the employee as well as the organization. It is only appropriate that such employees, who have devoted the major part of their working lives to an organization, are recognized in a fitting manner. The OPA felicitated two such employees, Ms. Wasanthi Nelumdeniya and Ms. Samanma-

lee Perera, who each received a gold coin worth Rs 200,000 by the OPA President Mr. Sarath Gamage in the presence of Chief Guest Hon. Ranil Wickremesinghe, President of Sri Lanka. The recognition took place at the Inauguration of the 37th Annual Conference, held at the Shangri-La Hotel on the 26th of August.



## NETWORKING AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES WITH MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS



## CMA National Management Accounting Conference 2024

The Institute of Certified Management Accountants of Sri Lanka held its 20th annual flagship event, the CMA National Management Accounting Conference 2024, on the theme 'Navigating Stability towards Dynamic Growth'. This event took place on 24th and 25th July at the Shangri-La Colombo. The conference was inaugurated by Chief Guest, Dr. P. Nandalal Weerasinghe, Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, who delivered an address on 'Navigating Stability towards Dynamic Growth'. President Mr. Sarath Gamage, President-Elect Mr. Mr. Sujeeva Lal Dahanayake and General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva represented the OPA at the event.

# NETWORKING AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES WITH MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS



## ARFRO'S 10<sup>th</sup> Annual General Denis Perera Memorial Oration

The 10th Annual General Denis Perera Memorial Oration, organized by the Association of Retired Flag Ranked Officers (ARFRO) was held on the 1st of September at the General Sir John Kotelawala Academy. This distinguished event, orated by the Commander of the Air Force, Air Marshall Udeni Rajapaksa, centered on the theme "Role of Air Forces for Collective Security in an Ocean of Geopolitical Uncertainty." The event was attended by President-Elect Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake and General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva.





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