

BRIDGE

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ANCHORING SUCCESS:

Interview with **BINDU
RANASINGHE**



TRANSFORMING SRI LANKA'S ROLE IN GLOBAL TRADE

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The line between disorder and order lies in logistics...

- Sun Tzu

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ANCHORING SUCCESS:

COLOMBO WEST INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL:

BINDU RANASINGHE
ON EXPANDING HAMBANTOTA
INTERNATIONAL PORT'S
GLOBAL REACH

06

**TRANSFORMING
SRI LANKA'S ROLE**

in

GLOBAL TRADE

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SOUTH ASIA GATEWAY TERMINALS

**NAVIGATING NEW
FRONTIERS IN
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ANCHORING SUCCESS:

The Hambantota International Port (HIP) with its advantageous location just ten nautical miles from one of the world's busiest shipping routes connecting the Far East and the West, is undoubtedly one of Sri Lanka's strategic assets.

The port is part of a significant Public-Private Partnership (PPP) between the Government of Sri Lanka and China Merchants Port Holdings (CMPort), a global player in the port and maritime industry.

The partnership, Hambantota International Port Group (HIPG) leverages Sri Lanka's geographic positioning while benefiting from CMPort's expertise and global reach. The port's deep water capacity and multi-purpose positioning allows it to accommodate various types of cargo and services, from roll-on/roll-off operations to container handling and industrial port services. Furthermore, the port's focus on integrating advanced technologies and adhering to environmentally sustainable practices reflects a modern, future-oriented approach to the maritime industry.

HIPG has aligned the port's expansion and diversification with global trends, opting for high tech modernisation combined with green port initiatives. Decarbonisation and reducing environmental impact play a significant role in the port's overall operations. This public private partnership is expected to boost Sri Lanka's role in global trade, attract further foreign investment, and contribute to the nation's economic development.

Bindu Ranasinghe, the Deputy General Manager (DGM) of Commercial and Marketing at Hambantota International Port Group (HIPG), plays a critical role in expanding the port's commercial activities. He has represented HIPG at discussions with international delegations, highlighting the port's advanced facilities and its capacity to support global trade.



**BINDU
RANASINGHE**

On —
**EXPANDING
HAMBANTOTA
INTERNATIONAL
PORT'S GLOBAL
REACH**

BRIDGE : Hambantota International Port Group has been in operation for almost a decade. What were some of the key milestones that defined the port's growth, and how has its commercial strategy evolved over the years?

If we look at the 99% of commercial ports across the globe that are success stories today, most of them have developed over centuries, or at least several decades. Hambantota International Port, in contrast, has been in operation for less than a decade, making its growth nothing short of phenomenal.

Additionally, Sri Lanka now has two commercial hubs, a factor that may have been previously overlooked due to the country's small size. However, this opens up new markets and attracts cargo movement in the region. As space increases, so does capacity, which is exactly what our report demonstrates. Since HIPG took over the port's management in December 2017, we've seen significant growth in this area.

With reference to the question:

Hambantota International Port (HIP), since it began operations under HIPG, has transitioned into a significant player in the global maritime industry. What started as a bold infrastructure project has now evolved into a diversified multipurpose port with a focus on multiple business segments, including RORO, Dry Bulk, Oil and Gas, Cruise, Marine Services and container operations.

Among HIP's key milestones is its development into a transshipment hub for RORO operations. In 2018, the port handled 235,000 RORO

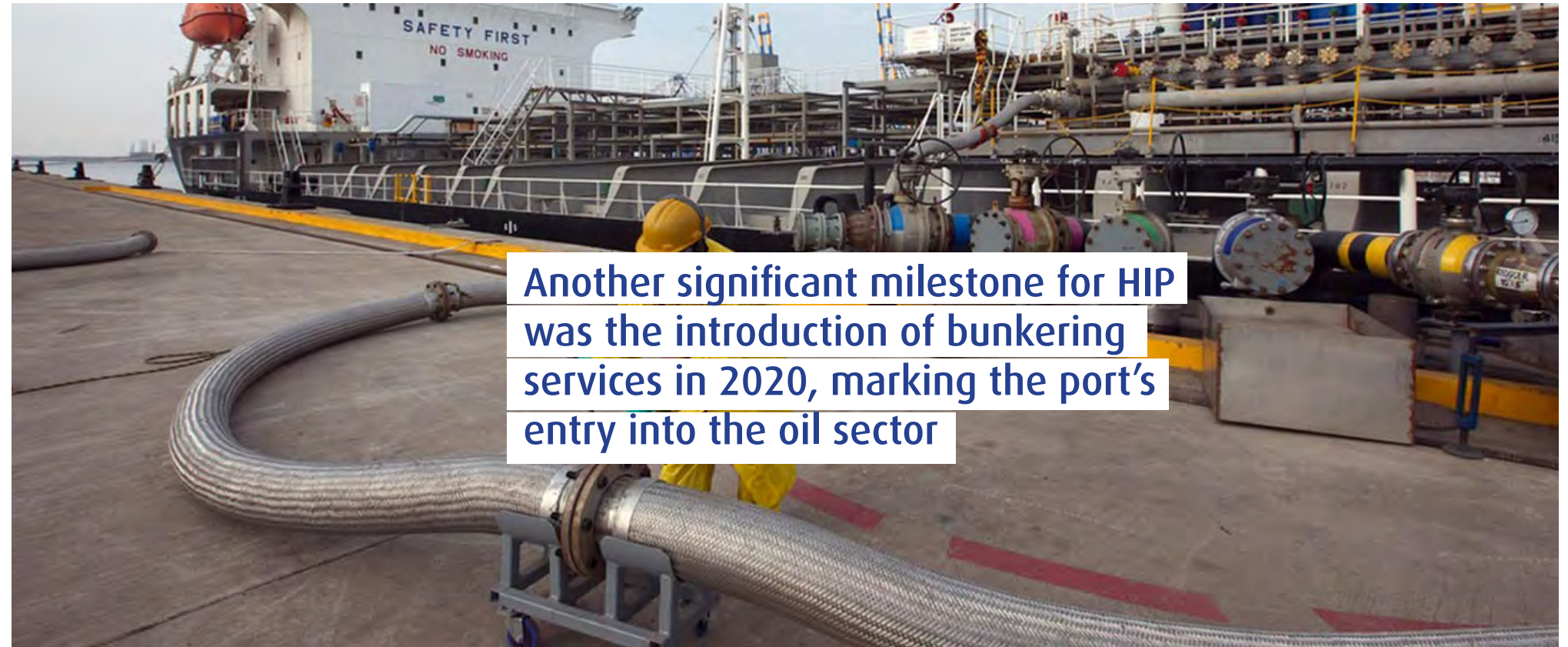
units, and through a combination of professional operational practices and a business-friendly environment, we increased that volume to over 700,000 units by 2023. This impressive growth emphasises HIPG's capacity to scale efficiently and its appeal to global automotive logistics operators.

Moreover, the strategic partnership with INSEE, the 1st dry bulk cargo operator at the port eventually increased the dry bulk volumes at HIP. This partnership enabled HIP to handle over 1 million MTs of cargo by a single customer recording the 1st of such operations.

Another significant milestone for HIP was the introduction of bunkering services in 2020, marking the port's entry into the oil sector. This venture, in partnership with Sinopec, one of the world's leading refiners, positions HIP as a key player in the regional energy market. Our strategic positioning allows us to offer refuelling services to vessels transiting the busy corridor.

HIPG has also made inroads into the marine services sector, partnering with Colombo Dockyard PLC to promote the port as a destination for ship repairs. These partnerships highlight our commitment to leveraging HIP's strategic location and expanding its service portfolio while supporting the broader shipping community in Sri Lanka and the region.

In addition, I must highlight the development of the cruise industry. Prior to 2023, only a few cruise vessels called at HIP, due in part to challenges such as the 2019 Easter attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent financial crisis. Despite these setbacks, we managed to attract 22 vessels in 2023, a significant achievement for the industry.



Another significant milestone for HIP was the introduction of bunkering services in 2020, marking the port's entry into the oil sector

In April this year, we commenced container operations at Hambantota International Port in partnership with MSC. I believe, this was a significant milestone as container operations has the attention of the majority in the industry.

In terms of strategy, HIPG has successfully diversified the port's offerings into logistics, energy, and industrial sectors, branding Hambantota International Port as a deep draft multipurpose port. The adoption of the Port-Park-City Model—inspired by its sister port, Shekou, in China has been pivotal in ensuring that the port captures value across multiple industries. This holistic approach, combined with its unique geographic location, is a cornerstone of HIP's growth and commercial success.

BRIDGE : What role does Hambantota International Port currently play in promoting Sri Lanka as a maritime hub and local economic development? What more could be done over the medium term

to develop Hambantota International Port as a significant regional port?

Hambantota International Port plays a crucial role in establishing Sri Lanka as a maritime hub, attracting both local and international businesses to its shores. HIP supports a wide array of business segments, making the port a focal point for shipping, logistics, and energy industries, all of which are vital for Sri Lanka's economic ambitions. We actively promote HIP and Sri Lanka on the global stage, through participation in international business forums and features in prominent maritime and trade publications.

Key infrastructure investments, such as expansion of the vehicle storage yard and additional berths for RORO operations, ensure the port's capability to cater to the growing demand from global automotive players. Similarly, HIP's container operations segment is set for growth, with new investments in equipment aimed at increasing throughput. The tank expansion project, which supports growing

demand for bunker fuel, further enhances the port's energy credentials.

Economically, HIP has had a profound impact. Its operations generate dollar revenue for the country while employing 91% local direct staff, creating a total of over 1,000 jobs within the port. Additionally, HIPG contributes to indirect employment through sectors like cruise tourism and maritime husbandry services, boosting the local economy.

Looking ahead, medium-term developments are focused on increasing local cargo handling alongside existing transshipment operations. This requires investments in container handling equipment and improving connectivity between HIP and Colombo Port to better support Sri Lankan importers and exporters. I believe these efforts will cement HIPG's role as a cornerstone of Sri Lanka's logistics and maritime strategy.

These are the key factors I wanted to highlight in response to your question.

BRIDGE: How does HIPG differentiate itself from other ports in the region, considering the strategic location of Sri Lanka in global trade routes? What key services which are not currently available at HIP do you hope to develop and what are the focus areas for growth?

What sets Hambantota International Port apart from other regional players is its strategic location with zero deviation from the main East-West shipping route. This unique advantage allows vessels to refuel, handle cargo, and receive services without significant detours, making it an attractive proposition for shipping companies.

Our port holds the distinction of being the first ISO-IMS certified port in Sri Lanka, which also sets us apart from regional competitors. The port's ISO-IMS certification underscores its commitment to high-quality, safe, and reliable services. This includes continuous

training for staff, customized services, and a strong focus on safety and security.

We have developed HIP as a true deep water multipurpose facility. Leveraging its strategic location, HIPG is developing six key hubs to create a port ecosystem and establish a world-class international shipping center for South Asia. These hubs consist of Energy Hub, RoRo TS Hub, Bulk and BB Cargo Hub, Marine Service Hub, Container TS Hub and Port Industrial Park. Despite facing numerous challenges, we have made significant progress in all the business sectors over a short period of time, with only two years between 2018 and 2023 free from any major disruptions.

In terms of operational standards, our commitment to quality and safety is paramount. While we are relatively young compared to other regional ports, we have consistently demonstrated high operational quality. This is reflected in our ability to secure contracts with major Japanese and Korean RO-RO carriers. Additionally, our port has maintained a remarkably low accident rate in the RO-RO sector, maintaining impressive safety records that were recognized by Mitsui O.S.K Lines for zero accidents in 2022 and 2023.

HIP's competitive rates and high productivity levels further differentiate the port from regional competitors like Singapore, and Dubai. Our ability to handle specialised services, particularly in vehicle transshipment and energy, positions HIP as a niche port with unique offerings. However, our growth strategy is far from complete. The introduction of container handling services and further investments in port infrastructure are set to further broaden HIP's appeal in the coming years.

In summary, our port has successfully differentiated itself through its operational excellence, strategic location, and ability to adapt and grow in challenging circumstances. We remain focused on further developing our service offerings and expanding our capacity to meet future demands.

As for the the second part of your question, we develop HIP as a multipurpose transshipment port. Over the last few years, we have commenced operations of all the business sectors a port could handle. Thus, the foundation of all major business sectors are in place and now it's a matter of developing them. We plan on soon reaching our goal of making HIP a major multipurpose TS port in the region.

BRIDGE : What strategies are in place to enhance container capacity? Are there plans to introduce additional cranes, allocate dedicated yard space, and expand warehousing facilities?

We anticipate the arrival of four additional gantry cranes, to add to the two we currently operate with. We have successfully handled over 50,000 Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) with the existing cranes during past few months, which in itself is a remarkable achievement.

The new cranes are expected to arrive before the end of the year, and we aim to commission them by February next year, along with 13 Rubber-Tyred Gantry (RTG) cranes. With these enhancements, we will be better-equipped for container operations.

Currently, our capacity stands at approximately 200,000 TEUs. However, with the addition of the four new gantry cranes and the expansion of our container yard,

we anticipate being able to handle up to 1 million TEUs annually. This increased capacity is a feasible target by the second quarter of next year.

Additionally, we have initiated dredging operations to ensure that our basin maintains sufficient draft levels, particularly to facilitate container operations.

BRIDGE : Are there any plans to develop the facilities when it comes to handling cruise ships, like duty free shops etc?

We have already established four duty-free shops within the port for the convenience of passengers arriving on cruise ships. To facilitate their movement, we provide shuttle services from the vessel to the port gate whenever feasible. While coordinating these services is primarily the responsibility of the tour operators and vessel agents, we step in to assist as needed. Additionally, we offer dedicated pathways for cycling and walking during vessel calls to enhance the passengers cruise experience.



Further, volatile political and economic conditions in Sri Lanka has created a challenging environment for long-term investment.

With the support from various government institutions, we have created additional facilities, for small-medium enterprises to showcase unique products. However, there is still much work to be done to fully develop a dedicated cruise terminal at HIP and it is work in progress.

Maintaining cleanliness in the berths, air cycle areas, and pathways is crucial for promoting the cruise sector, and we are committed to maintain stringent standards in these areas. We acknowledge the need for ongoing improvements and are actively pursuing necessary developments to enhance our services.

BRIDGE : What are the key challenges HIPG faces in maintaining competitive commercial operations at HIP, and how are you addressing them to stay ahead in the maritime industry?

Like any major ports in a rapidly evolving industry, HIPG faces

several challenges. Chief among these is the presence of established regional hubs, such as Singapore, Jebel Ali, and several ports in Malaysia, which have seamless operations. This creates a competitive environment as we aim to position ourselves as a significant hub in the region. Furthermore, as you maybe aware, the majority of commercial activities in Sri Lanka are concentrated in Colombo and its suburbs, making it particularly difficult to attract certain types of cargo.

Further, volatile political and economic conditions in Sri Lanka has created a challenging environment for long-term investment. Global trends also play a significant role in our challenges. While some crises can be viewed positively, others have adverse effects.

Additionally, we encounter challenges related to the availability of essential components in the region, such as banking facilities critical for import-export activities and logistical support. Currently, there are no nearby container carriers or container yards,

which could also be considered a challenge at the moment.

Moreover, it is important to highlight that the policies within the country are subject to change and lack consistency, making it difficult to establish a level playing field for all stakeholders involved.

However, we are persistent in addressing these challenges in order to deliver high quality services to our clients. HIPG has the advantage if leveraging the expertise of its parent company, China Merchants Port, which operates 51 terminals in 25 countries. This global network allows HIPG to draw on world-class expertise and innovative solutions. The development of an industrial park within the port itself is another key strategy. This move not only addresses the challenge of creating a hinterland market but also opens new revenue streams by attracting industrial activity to the area.

BRIDGE : With increasing demand for more efficient and larger port facilities, how would Hambantota

International Port needs to expand its infrastructure and services to meet the needs of modern shipping industry and cargo movements?

As the demand for larger, more efficient port facilities grows, HIPG is evolving to meet the challenges. We have successfully developed our master plan with the support of a global leader in the sector. This plan clearly identifies the areas we need to develop, and the specific facilities required in each location. As I mentioned earlier, we have initiated efforts to bridge the port to ensure sufficient depth for accommodating larger vessels, and we are currently expanding our yard areas.

Recently, we completed the expansion of several yard areas, increasing our parking capacities. Last year, we opened two new yards, adding approximately 7,000 parking slots. Additionally, I would like to highlight our significant investment in container business infrastructure, amounting to several million dollars, which will enhance our operational capabilities. While we face challenges, in terms of increasing demand, we are committed to meeting our customers' needs in this evolving landscape.

In summary, a phased expansion of berths and yards is already underway in line with our comprehensive master plan. The port is also preparing for the future by dredging its channels to accommodate larger vessels, a critical move in staying competitive in the global shipping industry.

Sustainability remains a key focus within the maritime industry, and we are dedicated to integrating sustainable practices into our operations.

In addition, digitisation is at the heart of HIPG's expansion strategy. The integration of smart port systems will allow for greater operational efficiency and a seamless service experience for customers. By embracing cutting-edge technology, HIPG aims to position Hambantota International Port as a leader in port digitization and automation.

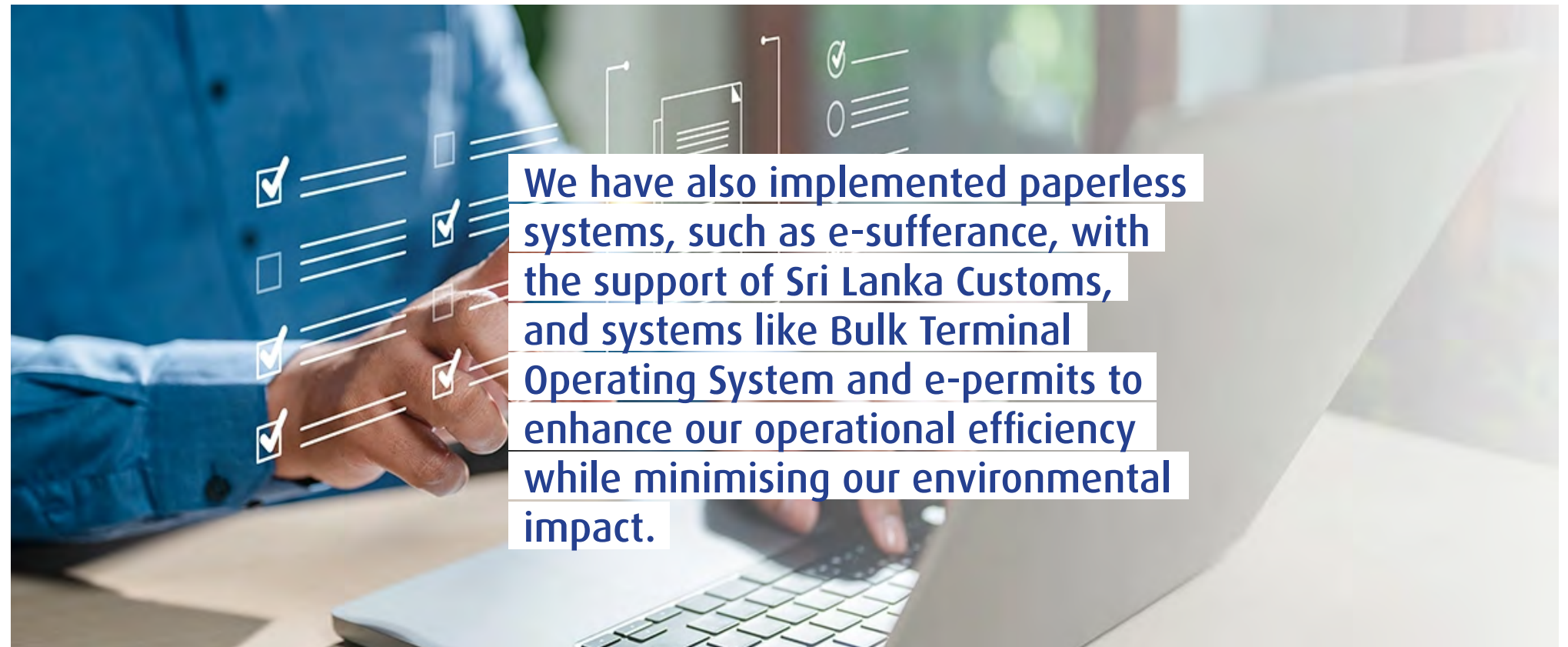
BRIDGE : Can you share any initiatives HIPG is taking to ensure environmentally friendly operations and how they align with global standards?

Sustainability is a key focus for Hambantota International Port. As previously mentioned, we hold ISO certifications in ISO 9001, ISO 14001, and ISO 45001, which encompass quality management, environmental management, and occupational health and safety, respectively.

Currently, we are incorporating a significant number of electric vehicles (EVs) into our port operations to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, aligning our practices with global Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) policies.

We have also implemented paperless systems, such as e-sufferance, with the support of Sri Lanka Customs, and systems like Bulk Terminal Operating System and e-permits to enhance our operational efficiency while minimising our environmental impact. Over the past five to six years, we have planted more than 14,000 trees within and around the port to help reduce our carbon footprint.

In addition to these initiatives, our team is actively engaged in environmental clean-up efforts, including beach clean-ups, further



highlighting our commitment to supporting and protecting the environment.

These efforts demonstrate HIPG's commitment to environmentally friendly operations and long-term sustainability, ensuring that Hambantota International Port remains a key player in the global maritime industry's transition to greener practices. Our commitment towards protecting the environment was recognized at International forums on a number of occasions.

BRIDGE : In your opinion, what additional action or policy support is needed from the government of Sri Lanka to strengthen the country's position as a leading regional maritime hub?

The primary focus should be on establishing more investor-friendly policies and fostering a conducive business environment, as this is essential for the development of our country.

We have also implemented paperless systems, such as e-sufferance, with the support of Sri Lanka Customs, and systems like Bulk Terminal Operating System and e-permits to enhance our operational efficiency while minimising our environmental impact.

To elaborate on what we mean by "investor-friendly policies," consider the experience of an investor coming to Sri Lanka. They expect to navigate the approval process efficiently, ideally under one roof, without the need to engage with multiple authorities or bureaucrats. It is crucial that investors are treated with the same regard we offer our customers—after all, the saying goes, "the customer is king." We must extend this sentiment to our investors, recognising their significance in our economic growth.

An effective approach would involve streamlining the approval process to ensure it occurs promptly. In my observation, some approvals can take years, resulting in delays that can be detrimental. For instance, if an investor initiates projects in Sri Lanka simultaneously with another country, they may find that while their project here remains in the planning phase, the other country has already commenced production.

Additionally, trade agreements are crucial for developing Sri Lanka as a maritime hub. However, the inconsistency in our policies

could negatively impact investors. To improve the situation, it is imperative that we adopt unified policies across all government bodies/departments. This would ensure that all authorities are aligned and working towards the same objectives, creating a level playing field for everyone involved. When the investors have confidence in the fairness of the system, they will be more inclined to invest and do business here.

Moreover, comprehensive maritime policies that foster growth across all Sri Lankan ports will be essential to positioning the country as a top destination for global trade. By working closely with HIPG and other stakeholders, the GoSL can help unlock new opportunities for the country's maritime industry and propel Sri Lanka toward its goal of becoming a premier international shipping hub.

BRIDGE : That sounds promising, and I hope it materializes soon. We remain optimistic about the future. Now, turning

to your career, how has your professional growth within the Hambantota International Port Group reflected the overall development of the shipping industry in Sri Lanka and the port itself? Additionally, what key experiences have influenced your leadership in steering the port's commercial expansion?

I began my career at the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) in 1998, where I worked for eight years. During this time, I gained extensive experience in the container business learning the industry from foundation up. Following my tenure at the Ports Authority, I joined Express Container Lines as a central planner. This role allowed me to acquire significant international experience and learn how to collaborate effectively with various local and international stakeholders.

I continued to build my expertise by working for a shipping agency representing Emirates, which further enhanced my experience as a shipping agent. Subsequently, I was offered a position as a consultant and mentor for Transnet terminals in South Africa, which enriched my professional journey.

Upon my return to Sri Lanka, I joined Sharaf Shipping, gaining valuable insights into the nonlinear, marine sector, and roll-on/roll-off (RoRo) sector. Eventually, I got the opportunity to join Hambantota International Port Group (HIPG), where I was able to further develop my skills and knowledge.

My career at Hambantota International Port Group (HIPG) has closely paralleled the dynamic growth of both the shipping industry in Sri Lanka and HIP's transformation into a key regional player. I witnessed first-hand how the port evolved from a developing infrastructure project into a diversified, multi-purpose facility, now integral to Sri Lanka's maritime strategy.

In my role as Deputy General Manager for Commercial and Marketing, I am responsible for crafting and executing business strategies that align with HIPG's growth vision. Few key turning points for both the port and my career are signing TSAs with major RoRo lines to develop the port as a TS hub, signing contracts with major players in the industry to develop dry bulk volumes and contracts under Marine Services. My hands-on experience in negotiating some of these contracts has contributed greatly to my professional development.

I owe much of my current position to the foundation laid during my early years at the Sri Lanka Ports Authority and the expertise I have accumulated since. My academic background and work

experience has equipped me with skills to manage complex logistics and marketing challenges in an increasingly competitive maritime landscape. As the port navigates these changes, I remain focused on building strong relationships with stakeholders and ensuring that HIP continues to serve as a critical gateway for trade in the Indian Ocean.

Being part of the China Merchants Port (CMPort) global network has offered me unique opportunities to work with global experts and implement best practices across our operations. This exposure has not only enhanced my professional growth but also allowed HIP to leverage international expertise in its commercial expansion.

Looking ahead, I see tremendous potential for both HIP and the shipping industry in Sri Lanka. My focus is on continuing to innovate, expand our service offerings, and positioning HIP as a leading port in the region. The journey so far has been incredibly rewarding, and I look forward to contributing further to the growth of both the port and the broader maritime sector.

BRIDGE : With the expansion of HIP and the surrounding areas within the industrial zone, is there opportunity for private companies to consider investment, both locally and internationally?

Currently, all of our investors are from the private sector, both locally and internationally. We have investors from countries such as China, the Maldives, India, and Japan.

For example, INSEE, part of Siam City Cement, is one of our key investors from Thailand, and Onomichi Dockyard, Japan is the



partner company of Colombo Dockyard.

While many private sector investors are actively engaging with us, there are others whose identities cannot yet be disclosed, as discussions are ongoing. Overall, we are collaborating with a diverse range of private entities at this time.

BRIDGE : What are the projections for HIPG over the next 10 to 15 years? How do we envision Hambantota International Port's positioning in that timeframe?

As mentioned earlier, CM Port, our parent company, brings extensive experience in the sector, with numerous examples of successful projects. This will guide HIPG to develop the port in line with our master plan.

Our strategy is to develop this port following the Port-Park-City (PPC) model, which has proven to be highly effective in similar projects globally. I would also like to place

HIPG is developing this port as a major commercial hub in the region. That is our target and our focus.

on record that we will certainly witness Hambantota International Port becoming one of the most sought-after regional trading hubs in the next 10-15 years.

BRIDGE : Please elaborate on the concept of the PPC model

The Port-Park-City (PPC) model focuses on integrated development, where the port serves as the core, looking after port operations. The park functions as the industrial zone, where the land is utilised for industries to generate cargo and an artificial island is designated for recreational activities, which serves as the city.

Our master plan is built around this model to strategically develop the port. Over the next decade, we envision HIP evolving into a comprehensive maritime hub—not just a key port, but a centre of significant commercial activity. This development will position HIP as a major economic region in Sri Lanka. That is our long-term vision.

BRIDGE : Are there any

additional topics or concerns from the HIPG side that we have not addressed in our questions?

I need to touch again on the backing that we are getting from CM Port. Having such a recognised global entity as our parent company is a huge strength in terms of finance, knowledge sharing and expertise.

We started container operation in April. By the end of the year, we are bringing four more cranes with CMPort's backing. Bringing new cranes into the port within such a short time is not a common occurrence but this is possible because of CMPort.

That is the strength we have. HIPG is developing this port as a major commercial hub in the region. That is our target and our focus. As an employee of HIPG, I can give the assurance that we are marching towards that goal.

BRIDGE : It is encouraging to learn about the plans, and we look forward to

the development of both Hambantota International Port and the surrounding region.

Among our workforce, approx. 97% are Sri Lankan nationals. While we have more than 1,000 employees, this number includes those who are outsourced but work permanently at the port. As per my understanding, since HIPG took over the port, we have tripled the employment generation compared to 2016. This represents a significant positive change in our employment landscape. This growth not only reflects our revenue generation but also our commitment to sharing the benefits with the local community.

Additionally, the number of shipping agency offices in the area has also expanded. When we initially took over the port, there was only one agency. Now there are more than 20, demonstrating our growth and influence in the maritime sector.



SOUTH ASIA GATEWAY TERMINALS

NAVIGATING NEW
FRONTIERS IN
REGIONAL TRADE



Positioned strategically along one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes, South Asia Gateway Terminals (SAGT) has emerged as a key player in South Asia's shipping and logistics industry. Since its inception, SAGT has played a pivotal role in transforming the Port of Colombo into a competitive, efficient, and globally recognized transshipment hub. Through its commitment to operational excellence, cutting-edge technology, and sustainable practices, SAGT continues to set benchmarks in port services, facilitating seamless trade connectivity between Asia, Europe, Middle East and the world. This article explores SAGT's remarkable growth, its contributions to regional trade, and its ambitious plans for the future in an increasingly complex global shipping landscape.

THE FUTURE OF SAGT AND SRI LANKA'S PORT INDUSTRY

South Asia Gateway Terminals (SAGT), established in 1999, was Sri Lanka's first public-private partnership (PPP) container terminal operator in the Port of Colombo. The terminal was developed through a consortium of local and international organizations, and today includes shareholders A.P. Moller Group, SLPA, Peony Investments and John Keells Holdings (JKH). It is noteworthy that through the SLPA and JKH, SAGT is the only PPP in which a majority of the shares are held by Sri Lankan entities.

Since its inception, SAGT has transformed the historic Queen Elizabeth Quay into a modern facility equipped with advanced technology and infrastructure.

Over the past 25 years, SAGT has played a pivotal role in positioning the Port of Colombo as a primary transshipment

hub in the region. The terminal has consistently delivered high performance to its customers and stakeholders, earning global recognition through numerous awards for best practices. This commitment to excellence is evident in its highly skilled and motivated staff, coupled with investment in advanced IT networks, real-time tracking and monitoring systems, web-based e-port solutions, and safety management and ERP systems, all of which ensure that customers receive reliable and world-class service.

SAGT has also been at the forefront of driving sustainable operations within its terminal. Since launching its sustainability strategy in 2018, the company has implemented initiatives such as the hybrid conversion of its Rubber Tyred Gantry (RTG) cranes, leading to a significant reduction in greenhouse gas

emissions. In the 2023/24 period, diesel consumption per RTG move reduced by 23% compared to the previous reporting period, with a total emissions reduction exceeding 36% over a five-year period. Ongoing projects include feasibility studies into implementing green hydrogen technology, the installation of solar energy solutions, and retrofitting existing equipment with more energy-efficient and green technology. Each RTG conversion costs over half a million dollars (over Rs 300 million each), but it is a conscious investment towards reducing the company's carbon footprint.

As of 2024, SAGT continues to lead in operational excellence, safety, and sustainability, contributing significantly to Sri Lanka's maritime industry and the global shipping community.

BRIDGE: Could you share insights into SAGT's current operations and key initiatives?

Romesh: Our focus at SAGT remains on providing exceptional service to our customers, primarily shipping lines, while embracing sustainability. We are aligned with Sri Lanka's decarbonization commitments under the IMO, particularly the actions leading up to the net-zero target for 2050. Over the past few years, we've made substantial investments aimed at reducing our carbon footprint, such as transitioning to hybrid RTGs, installing solar capacity, and incorporating new technologies to optimize energy consumption.

We've been tracking our environmental performance for about six years now. Our reports are globally accredited by an independent, external audit process, and we provide customers with detailed data on their carbon

footprint per container moved. Beyond carbon emissions, we monitor water use, food waste, and other environment impacting sustainability metrics. We also partner with universities on projects like reforestation and mangrove regeneration, which tie into our broader environmental goals.

BRIDGE: What are the key developments you foresee for SAGT in the coming years, particularly with the new terminals?

Romesh: The expansion of new terminals like ECT, WCT, and CICT will increase inter-terminal transfers, which is something we're working closely on with other terminals and the Ports Authority to ensure smooth, efficient operations. The introduction of a new highway will also significantly ease truck traffic, which is a major concern for port logistics. Digitization is another big focus for us—collaborating with the port, customs, and other

stakeholders to shift to paperless operations and streamline data flow.

Electrification will be a major challenge, as we need to replace diesel-powered equipment throughout the port. This requires significant investment, and we're working on securing funding from various sources. However, one exciting development is that for the first time, all primary transportation sectors—aviation, rail, and maritime—are under a single ministry. This alignment creates a unique opportunity for more cohesive planning and growth across these sectors.

BRIDGE: How do you see the role of technology and innovation shaping the future of SAGT?

Romesh: Technology is transforming the industry, and we are already leading the way in adopting automation, AI, and

other technological innovations. We've recently made significant strides by employing women in shift operations at SAGT, which is a first in port history. This move was made possible by overcoming outdated legislation that previously restricted women from working at night or entering the port after 6 pm. With the support of the relevant ministries, we've hired 12 young female graduates, who now work alongside their male counterparts in our control room.

BRIDGE: That's a significant milestone. Could you tell us more about your gender equality initiatives?

Romesh: Gender equality is a core focus for us. We've moved from a predominantly male workforce to one that is more inclusive. Our target is to increase the percentage of women in our workforce to 25% within two years. We've already seen positive results—80% of the applicants for our recent graduate recruitment drive were women, and the majority of the top candidates were female. This change has also been supported by parents, who are more comfortable with the idea of their daughters working in the port because of the investments we've made in creating a safe and supportive environment.

BRIDGE: How do you see these changes impacting the broader industry?

Romesh: I believe that SAGT's efforts in improving gender parity and embracing new technology will set an example for the wider industry. We've already seen a shift in the perception of women working in traditionally male-dominated industries. Once we prove the concept through action, it will open the door for others to follow suit. In the next few years, we expect to have 150 women in our workforce. This is a significant change in a

sector that has long been male dominated.

BRIDGE: Looking ahead, what's your vision for the future of Sri Lanka's port sector?

Romesh: The future is very promising. As long as we continue to stay ahead of demand by increasing capacity and improving efficiency, the sector will thrive. But it's not just about the port—we also need to consider how the entire logistics network, from sea to land transport, can work together more cohesively. The government's decision to bring all transport sectors under one ministry is a positive step in this direction, and it will allow for better coordination across rail, sea, and air transport.

BRIDGE: You mentioned your transition from John Keells. How has that experience been for you?

Romesh: It's been an exciting and rewarding experience. Being close to such a vital industry is incredibly fulfilling. You get to work with a diverse group of people, from unionized labour to shipping lines and international organizations. At SAGT, the key to our success is our people. We have a dedicated team that is truly committed to the company's success through fulfilment of our customers' expectations. The culture here is one of collaboration and respect, which makes it a great place to work.

BRIDGE: It seems like SAGT is on a positive trajectory, both in terms of innovation and social responsibility.

Romesh: Absolutely. We've made great strides, and we're only just getting started. With the ongoing investments in technology,

sustainability, and diversity, I'm confident that SAGT will continue to lead the way in Sri Lanka's port sector and contribute to the country's economic growth.

SAGT's Commitment to Diversity and Sustainability: A Conversation with Leadership

In an insightful conversation with the leadership at South Asia Gateway Terminals (SAGT), we delve into the company's pioneering efforts in promoting diversity, its innovative sustainability initiatives, and the broader vision for the maritime industry in Colombo.

What Does Diversity Mean to You?

For Ted, the leadership at SAGT, diversity is about "the best available talent, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, or any other demographic." This ethos reflects a commitment to creating an inclusive environment that thrives on meritocracy, where opportunities are based on skill and potential, not constrained by traditional barriers.

The Future of Diversity in Colombo's Maritime Industry

Colombo, and by extension, the maritime sector, is experiencing a transformation. "Colombo is an exciting place, even when compared to just 12 months ago. Diversity is being recognized as a critical factor, with growing awareness, broader acceptance, and a shift in socio-political narratives surrounding stereotypes," Ted explained. However, he acknowledged that there is still work to be done, particularly in updating statutory frameworks to reflect the needs and realities of the 21st century.

SAGT's Commitment to Diversity



With the ongoing investments in technology, sustainability, and diversity, I'm confident that SAGT will continue to lead the way in Sri Lanka's port sector and contribute to the country's economic growth.

SAGT's proactive approach to diversity is evident in several key initiatives:

Affirmative Action for Female Representation: One of the most significant steps is the company's commitment to increasing female representation in management and senior management positions. This initiative aims to break down barriers and create pathways for women to thrive in leadership roles within a traditionally male-dominated industry.

Integrating Diversity into Company Values: Diversity has been incorporated into the very fabric of SAGT's organizational values. This ensures that equal opportunities are not just an aspiration, but a guiding principle in all company operations.

Diversity as a Driver for Sustainability: Beyond gender, SAGT views diversity as a broader societal benefit, particularly within their sustainability agenda. By embracing diversity, the company believes it can foster innovative solutions for

the future, including environmental sustainability.

Empowering Women in Maritime: A Focus on Gender Equality

At the core of SAGT's diversity efforts is a commitment to empowering women, especially in areas where their participation has traditionally been limited. "We've identified affirmative action, focusing on roles within the terminal where females can excel," said Ted. This includes targeting commercial and marketing areas, where the company has created an environment that is welcoming and conducive to female leadership. The team in commercial and marketing, for example, is entirely female, as part of SAGT's effort to fill positions that are often seen as unglamorous but provide significant opportunities for growth and development.

Looking Ahead

As SAGT continues to innovate in both diversity and sustainability,

it is clear that the company is leading the way for the maritime industry in Colombo on these fronts too. With an unwavering commitment to creating equal opportunities, fostering an inclusive environment, and driving forward-thinking sustainability initiatives, SAGT is well-positioned to set new standards for corporate responsibility in the region.

In the words of Ted, "Our goal is simple: to operate in a clean environment, reduce our carbon footprint, and provide equal opportunities for all, ensuring a future where everyone can thrive."

Supporting Vulnerable Communities: The Role of Corporate Responsibility During Economic Crisis

For years, the Sri Lankan government has provided free distribution of 'Thripasha'—a nutritious food supplement targeted primarily at pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children under the age of 5 years, who have

been diagnosed as malnourished. While many in the higher economic brackets might not have given much thought to this initiative, it has been a lifeline for families at the lower end of the economic spectrum.

However, when Sri Lanka faced a severe economic crisis, the government, struggling with financial constraints, had to suspend this program, which had previously reached an estimated 1.5 million beneficiaries. Despite the scale, the programme's overall impact had not garnered much attention or traction among the broader population.

Recognizing the importance of sustaining such a vital initiative, SAGT stepped in to make a difference. "We approached the government with a proposal to continue the programme, particularly focusing on the critical need for support," said a company representative. Working alongside the government, the company engaged with shipping lines and suppliers to bring in essential items such as milk powder and soybeans from various regions.

What made this effort particularly impactful was SAGT's commitment to underwriting the cost of the program, ensuring that the distribution could continue without placing additional financial strain on the government. As a result, approximately 1.5 million beneficiaries received continued support, marking a significant contribution to addressing hunger and malnutrition among very vulnerable sections of communities during a time of crisis.

By stepping in to fill the gap created by the government's inability to fund the programme during the crisis, this initiative highlighted the important role of corporate responsibility in times of national hardship. It is a testament to how the private sector can work collaboratively with the government

to ensure that essential support programmes continue, providing much-needed relief to those who need it most.

Sustainability Initiatives: Reforestation and Mangrove Conservation

As part of our sustainability efforts, we have launched reforestation initiatives in partnership with the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. One of our key projects involved restoring five acres of the Yagirala Forest in southern Sri Lanka, with active participation from our staff. Looking ahead, we are planning a mangrove restoration project covering five acres, targeted to begin in 2025.

Initially, we focused on traditional tree-planting projects. However, as research evolved, we realized that achieving significant carbon offset through forest plantations alone was impractical. Mangroves, on the other hand, offer a far greater impact. Additionally, mangroves play a vital role in coastal protection, preventing erosion, and supporting local fisheries.

To ensure transparency and effectiveness, we apply a rigorous scorecard system when evaluating sustainability projects. The scorecard assesses key criteria, such as employee engagement, societal impact, and alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Out of the 17 global SDGs, we focus on six that are most relevant to our operations.

In line with our commitment to sustainability, we also publish an annual sustainability report detailing our progress and initiatives.

Digital Transformation at SAGT: Enhancing Efficiency

SAGT has long utilized advanced

terminal operating systems, but its major digitalization efforts began during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, clearing import containers required in-person visits to Canal Yard. To adapt to social distancing and curfews, SAGT introduced an online delivery advice (E-DA) system, allowing customers to generate an E-DA 24 hours a day/7 days a week, eliminating physical visits.

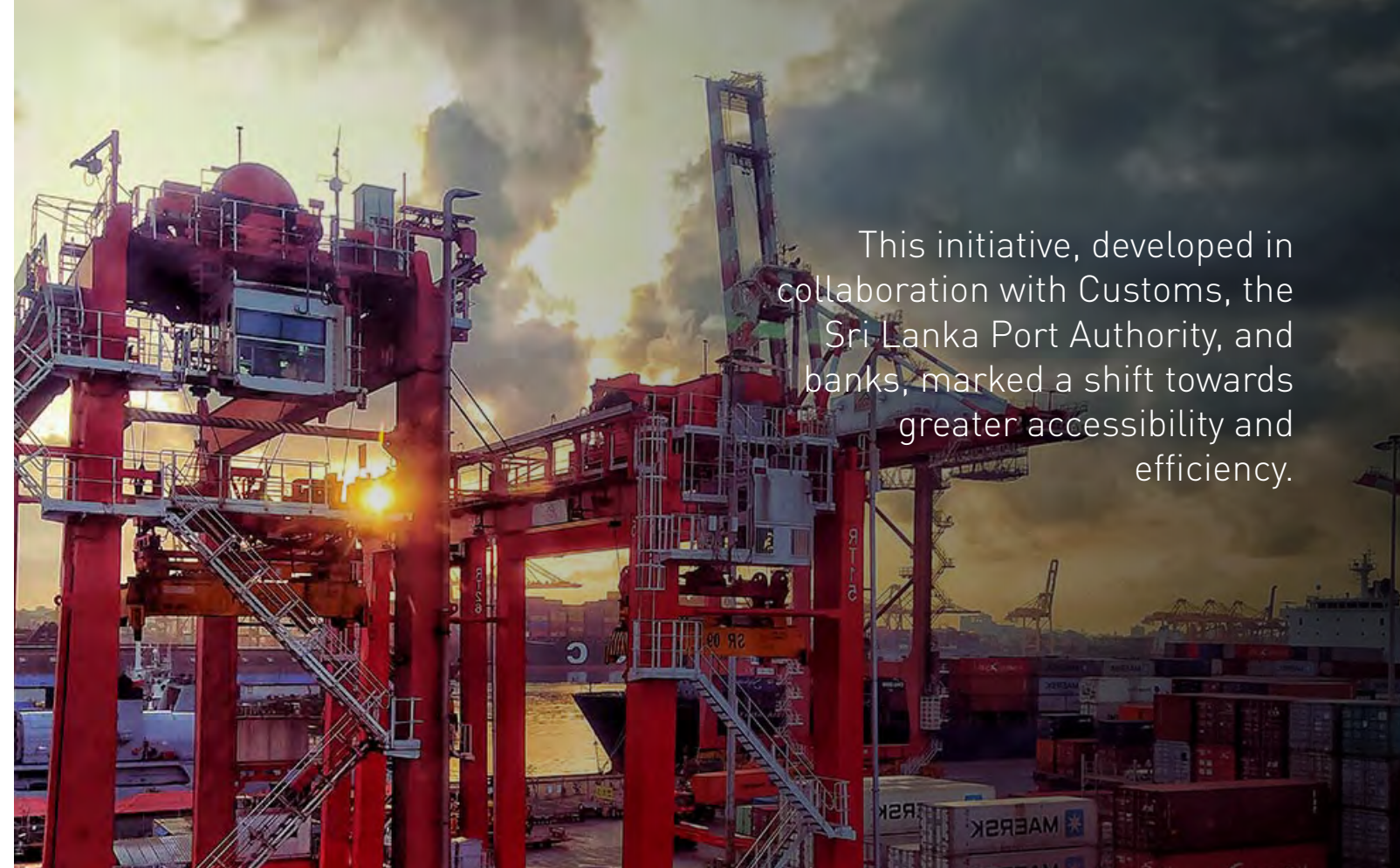
This initiative, developed in collaboration with Customs, the Sri Lanka Port Authority, and banks, marked a shift towards greater accessibility and efficiency.

Following this, SAGT launched further automation projects, including gate and quay operations. A key project is the vehicle booking system (VBS), enabling exporters, importers and truck operators to reserve time slots in advance, similar to booking appointments. Expected by mid-2025, VBS aims to reduce gate congestion and hidden costs like truck detention fees, which currently burden importers and impact consumers.

Hidden costs arise when truck drivers charge detention fees for delays attributed to congestion. With VBS, delays will be transparent, and adherence to time slots will improve operations, reducing unnecessary costs for importers.

Before COVID-19, SAGT also introduced the e-Port system, a secure platform giving shipping lines real-time access to business data, shipment volumes, terminal status, and financial records. This eliminated the need for frequent staff contact, improving efficiency.

Additionally, the Quayside Performance Dashboard was launched, providing global stakeholders real-time vessel operation updates. Previously, such information required multiple calls, especially at night. Now, users



This initiative, developed in collaboration with Customs, the Sri Lanka Port Authority, and banks, marked a shift towards greater accessibility and efficiency.

can access performance metrics instantly.

These digital advancements have transformed operations, enhancing time and cost efficiency while improving customer experience. SAGT remains committed to full automation and facilitating ease of business.

Breaking Barriers: First Female Shift-Based Recruits at the Port

The following were a few of the new recruits who were available for the interview, providing an insight as to how these trailblazing women are paving the way for others in a non-traditional industry by breaking stereotypes and embracing new opportunities.

BRIDGE: This is a non-traditional job for women. What motivated you to take up this kind of work?

Nayana: I've always wanted to work at a terminal, and even though this

involves shift work, it appealed to me. Before this, I worked standard 8-to-5 jobs but often had to work overtime until midnight. Compared to that, shift-based work seemed more manageable. My parents were also supportive of my decision.

Bindula: I'm from Tissamaharama and hold a degree in Economics from the University of Peradeniya. I was interested in port operations, and my lecturers encouraged me, saying that my background in Economics would be valuable.

Dhananjani: I studied Town and Country Planning at the University of Moratuwa. Since this job involves planning and monitoring, I found it a natural fit. The company's reputation was another major factor. I had experience working night shifts in a previous role, so I was comfortable with the demands of shift work.

BRIDGE: How has your experience been so far?

Dhananjani: It's been great! The team is incredibly supportive and helpful, making it easier for us to

learn and adapt.

BRIDGE: You're the first group of women to take on such roles here. How does that feel?

Nayana: Many people, including friends, warned me about the challenges of working in a male-dominated environment, especially during night shifts. Despite the concerns, my ambition to work at a terminal motivated me to take this up. The company assured us about safety and provided a secure environment, which helped us feel confident.

BRIDGE: What advice would you give to other women considering a similar path?

Dhananjani: I'd encourage them to go for it! The work environment here is supportive, and the company ensures the safety and well-being of female employees. We've worked here for three months without any issues, and there's no reason to worry.



Connect • Collaborate • Contribute

COLOMBO WEST INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL:

TRANSFORMING
SRI LANKA'S ROLE
in
GLOBAL TRADE

As Sri Lanka solidifies its position as a key maritime hub in the Indian Ocean, the Colombo West International Terminal (CWIT) emerges as a game-changer for the country's logistics and trade sectors. Engineered to enhance the Port of Colombo's capacity to accommodate some of the world's largest container ships, CWIT strengthens Sri Lanka's connectivity to vital global trade routes. This development is set to boost regional commerce and unlock significant opportunities for economic growth.



In this exclusive interview, **Dhashma Karunaratne** delves into the terminal's strategic importance, its impact on regional trade, and the broader potential it holds for Sri Lanka's economic future.

In 2024 PoC handled an unprecedented 7.8Mn plus TEUs which is the best in its history.

BRIDGE : Can you give us a brief overview of the Colombo West Terminal and its role within the Port of Colombo?

CWIT is here to augment the Port of Colombo (PoC). The proposition of Port of Colombo has stood the test of time, from the silk route days to date. Our God given strategic location on the main east west shipping route indeed gives a competitive edge that has been sustained over centuries. Our proximity to the Indian Sub-Continent and our complimentary role to the ever increasing trade flows in the region give us a competitive edge as a hub.

In 2024 PoC handled an unprecedented 7.8Mn plus TEUs which is the best in its history. All the terminals in the Port of Colombo have contributed to this significant growth, its remarkable that the two terminals managed by SLPA were the highest contributor to this growth.

The shipping community is seeking supply chain resilience, as disruption and change have become the norm of the game. CWIT will enhance the capacity of the port and improve the customer experience through innovation and enable the lines to regain schedule integrity.

This will make POC the optimum hub of the region.

BRIDGE : What are the key objectives of this project, and what milestones have been achieved so far?

With a design capacity of 3.5Mn TEUs CWIT will be the only terminal at PoC that will be able to handle three ultra large vessels concurrently on its 1400 metre quay. The draught of 20m along with the 60ha yard will make this terminal the longest, deepest and widest in the region.

BRIDGE : How did the partnership between the Adani Group, John Keells Holdings, and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority come into play?

The partnership between the Adani Group, John Keells Holdings (JKH), and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority has brought significant advancements to the Port of Colombo, particularly in terms of automation. While automated terminals are new to Colombo, Adani Group brings extensive expertise in this area, enabling the transfer of valuable knowledge to the local team. Automation is set to

revolutionize operations, enhancing efficiency and improving working conditions for crane operators and other port workers.

Previously, roles such as RTG (Rubber-Tired Gantry) operators required long hours in physically demanding environments, often exposed to weather conditions. Automation eliminates these challenges, improving work-life balance and creating opportunities for upskilling and job enhancement. This transformation is similar to how platforms like PickMe and Uber have upskilled and modernized traditional roles. Additionally, indirect employment opportunities—such as transport and logistics—are being enhanced to align with these advancements.

During the project phase, the development site has employed approximately 1,000 people, contributing significantly to the local economy. Once fully operational, the terminal is expected to generate both direct and indirect employment for around 1,000 individuals. Furthermore, the partnership provides opportunities for skill development, with employees traveling to Adani's terminal in Vizhinjam, India, for specialized training.

A notable impact of this

modernization is the increasing inclusion of women in roles traditionally dominated by men, such as crane operations. The ability to operate cranes from a Port Operations building has encouraged more women to enter the workforce, breaking traditional gender stereotypes. For many, these opportunities not only provide career growth but also empower them within their families and communities, particularly in remote areas of the nation.

In essence, this partnership is not just shaping the future of the Port of Colombo but also transforming lives and contributing to the nation's progress.

BRIDGE : What are the timelines for the completion of the project phases? Are there any delays or challenges?

Despite the multiple challenges our nation faced due to COVID, followed by civil unrest, political instability, forex crisis, CWIT is very much on schedule to commence operations in the first quarter of 2025.

BRIDGE : What are the handling capacities of the Colombo West Terminal, and

CWIT is very much on schedule to commence operations in the first quarter of 2025.



We are committed towards youth empowerment and have a strong representation of Gen Z in our team.

how does it differ from the existing terminals in the Colombo Port?

Once completed, CWIT will be the only terminal that can concurrently serve three mega vessels at any given time with quay cranes will reach across 26 rows of containers. With a draught capability of 20 CWIT is a terminal built for the future, designed for the biggest ships afloat as well as the future new builds. These features make CWIT the Futurity of Shipping.

BRIDGE : How will the terminal cater to Ultra-Large Container Vessels (ULCVs), and what changes does this bring to regional trade?

PoC serves all the top global shipping lines and brands. With the backing of our JV partners we are poised for exponential growth in line with the growth of India. As per the World Banks Global Economic Prospects, advanced economies are expected to grow at 1.7% GDP Emerging and Developing markets are expected grow at 4.1%

Indias GDP growth of 7% - 8% has propelled the region and will continue to do so, the capacity created along with the leverage of both domestic and transshipment volume of the network of terminals, we have a competitive and unique proposition to the maritime community.

BRIDGE : What kind of economic impact will the terminal have on Sri Lanka's economy and local employment?

USD500Mn FDI and at project stage we have created over 1000 jobs and once commissioned another 1000 direct and indirect jobs will be created. Additionally royalty lease rental and dividends will cascade to the authority these are incremental flows to our economy.

BRIDGE : How will the new terminal influence Colombo Port's competitiveness with other regional ports such as Singapore, Dubai, or India?

PoC has been in 20 plus ranking for

over a decade and with the entry of CWIT, we are confident that we will propel the ranking to be among the top 20 ports in terms of throughput and will sustain our connectivity index to be among the top 10 in the ensuing years.

BRIDGE : What steps are being taken to ensure operational efficiency and environmental sustainability at the terminal?

Sustainability is integrated from design to execution. We have implemented the "needle-moving" actions that embed sustainability into the core of our strategies, operations, and cultures. We herald the new year by receiving our first batch of Electric Terminal Vehicles, the first of its kind to arrive at PoC. We have pledged to drive a robust Diversity Equity and Inclusivity agenda. We are committed towards youth empowerment and have a strong representation of Gen Z in our team. Furthermore, we have partnered with training institutes and universities and retained local talent within the nation and created opportunities for talent to return to home. Our Safety and

Ops teams have gained exposure in other automated terminals and benchmarked with good safety practices and processes.

BRIDGE : How is technology—like automation, digitization, and AI—being utilized to optimize container handling and logistics?

We are piloting many automation features such as auto hand off which are first in the world. These initiatives ensures safe handling of cargo, ability to track and trace at real time and enhance Turnaround time by quicker vessel berthing and departure - Faster cargo clearance - Improved terminal productivity.

Furthermore CWIT will propel the following enhancements;

- Series of groundbreaking technological innovations
- World's First Auto Handoff between ITV and Crane_ For the first time in the container terminal industry, auto handoff on quay landside operations

USD500Mn FDI and at project stage we have created over 1000 jobs and once commissioned another 1000 direct and indirect jobs will be created.

In terms of throughput, the Port of Colombo has maintained the 23rd position for several years.

- Seamless container transfer between ITV and crane
- System-defined speed and acceleration control
- Enhanced safety and reduced risk of accidents
- Improve container integrity and reduce damage rates
- Decrease container handling times
- Increased operational speed and efficiency
- Reduced manual errors and improved productivity
- Enhance overall terminal efficiency

BRIDGE : What safety and security measures are in place to protect cargo and vessels?

All the safety measures are implemented according to international standards with a number of new innovations been set in motion.

BRIDGE : What are the major challenges faced during the development and operational phases of the Colombo West

Terminal?

Ease of doing business is an area of improvement for SL, therefore all investors have to overcome multiple barriers to invest and sustain a business.

BRIDGE : How do you plan to address global shipping disruptions or changes in maritime trade patterns?

We must strengthen our position as the Port of Colombo. While disruptions are inevitable, especially during periods of change, they have become the new norm in the industry. Embracing this, we must position ourselves as game changers by integrating innovation into our operations.

Investing in a port is a long-term commitment, typically spanning 20 to 30 years, making it challenging to introduce substantial innovations due to the high costs of equipment and the time required. Additionally, it's critical to avoid disrupting the existing customer base. However, with the development of a new terminal, we have the opportunity to incorporate forward-thinking strategies and cutting-edge solutions from the outset. Its like designing a new City versus converting an old one.

BRIDGE : What are your

expectations for the terminal's performance over the next 5-10 years?

We are steadily positioning ourselves as the optimal hub through continuous optimization and enhanced reliability. The Port of Colombo is currently ranked as the ninth most connected port globally and stands as the only port of its kind in the region. This partnership and development will further strengthen that position, enabling us to aspire for an even higher ranking.

In terms of throughput, the Port of Colombo has maintained the 23rd position for several years. However, with the increased capacity and volume that CWIT brings, we are confident of breaking into the top 20, solidifying our standing on the global stage.

BRIDGE : Is there any message or insight you would like to share with stakeholders or the business community regarding this project?

Our tagline, Connect. Collaborate. Contribute, encapsulates our purpose and commitment. We strive to connect the region, foster collaboration with all stakeholders, and actively contribute to sustainable development.

Launch of LABOUR MIGRANTS FROM SOUTH ASIA

Issues and Concerns
Highlights Key Regional
Challenges and Policy
Recommendations



From left to right :

1. Mr. Moritz Matthias Fink - Policy Advisor, Political Dialogue Asia Program, KAS, Singapore
2. Prof. Suba Chandran -Dean, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru
3. Dr.Mallika Joseph Anila -Senior Fellow, WISCOMP, New Delhi
4. Mr. Binod Kumar Poudel - Foreign Affairs Expert, Office of the Right Honorable Vice President of Nepal
5. Sumith Nakandala- Former Secretary General- BIMSTEC
6. Dr. Nishchal Nath Pandey -Director, Centre for South Asian Studies and Convener COSATT
7. Dr Maneesha Pascual - Senior Lecturer - University of Colombo
8. Dr. Benuka Ferdousi - Senior Research Fellow, BISS, DHAKA
9. Colonel Nalin Hearth, RSP, Director General and Acting Director (Research)- INSS

The highly anticipated publication, Labour Migrants from South Asia: Issues and Concerns, was officially launched on November 12 at the Hilton Colombo. This comprehensive volume compiles insights and policy recommendations from a pivotal regional seminar on labour migration in South Asia, held earlier this year.

The event was graced by Mr. Sumith Nakandala, Former Secretary of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), as the Chief Guest. Ms. Dammika K. Wijesinghe, Chief Secretary of the Western Provincial Council, attended as the Guest of Honour.

The launch was jointly organized by the Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks (COSATT), the Political Dialogue Asia Programme of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), and the Institute of National Security Studies (INSS) under Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence. In particular, the initiative in Sri Lanka was driven by Dr. Nishchal N. Pandey, Director of COSATT. The successful execution of the event was made possible through the collaboration of COSATT, KAS, and INSS.

The distinguished audience included senior officials from the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Labour and Foreign Employment, along with representatives from diplomatic missions across South Asia, leading academics, civil society members, and think tanks.

Insights from the Conference

The book is an outcome of a conference held on April 23, 2024, by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) in collaboration with COSATT and KAS. At this seminar, Colonel Nalin Herath, Director of Media and Spokesperson for Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence, and Acting Director General and Director (Research) at INSS, shared Sri Lanka's perspective on labour migration. He emphasized both its economic potential and the social challenges associated with it.

The seminar brought together eminent speakers who addressed critical issues, including exploitation, inequality, and social displacement. Discussions underscored the necessity for collective regional action to safeguard the rights of migrant workers across South Asia.

Key Themes and Policy Recommendations

The newly launched publication provides in-depth analysis and policy guidance, drawing on the collective expertise of South Asian scholars and policymakers. It seeks to promote ongoing regional dialogue and cooperation for the implementation of fair and equitable labour migration policies.

The book identifies six key contributions of labour migrants:

- Strengthening national and global economies
- Filling global labour shortages
- Generating employment opportunities
- Increasing remittances, GDP growth, and household incomes
- Transferring new skills and technologies to home countries
- Influencing consumer patterns, land holdings, and labour market dynamics in their countries of origin
- Upholding human dignity and preventing exploitation
- Addressing the social costs of migration, including family well-being
- Strengthening regional cooperation in South Asia
- Advocating for migrant rights and skill development in home countries
- Incorporating a gender perspective in labour migration policies
- Improving documentation and legal frameworks for migrant workers

Additionally, the book outlines critical policy recommendations to enhance migrant protection and welfare, including:

This publication is expected to serve as a vital resource for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders working toward more sustainable and just labour migration practices in South Asia.



INSS Hosts Round table Discussion on Leveraging Sri Lanka's Strategic Location for Economic Security



INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES
PREMIER THINK TANK ON NATIONAL SECURITY

Round Table Discussion

“IMPROVING SRI LANKA'S ECONOMIC SECURITY THROUGH ITS STRATEGIC LOCATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN”

SPEAKER



Rear Admiral YN Jayarathne (Retd) RWP, RSP, USP
Maritime Analyst and Consultant/Coach, Professional Hydrographer

SPEAKER



Mr. Ravinatha P. Aryasinha
Executive Director (Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute)

MODERATOR



Dr. Ganesan Wignaraja
Visiting Senior Fellow, ODI Global, UK and Former Executive Director, LKI

SPEAKER



Mr. Bingumal Chandika Thewarathanthri
FCMA, CGMA, Chief Executive Officer - Standard Chartered Bank

SPEAKER



Mr. Nishan Mendis
Chairman (Sri Lanka Association of Software and Service Companies)

 **Date / Time**
December, 05 Thursday / 1500 - 1700 hrs

Venue
Nandimithra Auditorium, Ministry of Defence



A roundtable discussion titled “Improving Sri Lanka’s Economic Security Through Its Strategic Location in the Indian Ocean” took place in December at the Ministry of Defence, organized by the Institute of National Security Studies (INSS).

The event was graced by Air Vice Marshal Sampath Thuyacontha (Retd), Secretary to the Ministry of Defence, as the Chief Guest. The forum brought together a distinguished panel of experts to explore how Sri Lanka can leverage its unique geographic position to drive economic growth and enhance resilience. Colonel Nalin Herath, Director General of the INSS and Director of Media/Spokesperson for the Ministry of Defence, welcomed the Chief Guest and the expert panel.

Moderated by Dr. Ganesan Wignaraja, Visiting Senior Fellow at ODI Global (UK), the session featured a diverse range of insights into Sri Lanka’s strategic and economic future. Rear Admiral Y.N. Jayarathne (Retd) emphasized the importance of modernizing maritime infrastructure, advocating for the enhancement of port capabilities and the adoption of cutting-edge technologies to increase efficiency and global competitiveness, positioning Sri Lanka as a regional transshipment hub. Mr. Ravinatha P. Aryasinha, Executive Director of the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute, stressed the importance of balancing relationships with global powers and engaging in regional economic initiatives. He highlighted how effective geopolitical navigation could bolster Sri Lanka’s standing in the region and foster economic security.

Mr. Bingumal Chandika Thewarathanthri, CEO of

Standard Chartered Bank, provided an in-depth analysis of the geopolitical challenges Sri Lanka faces amidst shifting global political dynamics. In parallel, Mr. Nishan Mendis, Chairman of the Sri Lanka Association of Software and Service Companies, shared a vision for expanding regional digital connectivity, advocating for the integration of air, maritime, and digital networks to solidify Sri Lanka’s position as a comprehensive regional hub and enhance economic resilience.

The discussion underscored the significance of Sri Lanka’s strategic location in the Indian Ocean, sitting at the crossroads of vital East-West maritime trade routes. Panelists collectively stressed the need for a cohesive national strategy to optimize Sri Lanka’s economic security. Key strategies included modernizing maritime infrastructure, enhancing port capabilities, and adopting advanced technologies for increased efficiency and competitiveness. Expanding regional connectivity, integrating air, maritime, and digital networks, was also identified as critical to strengthening Sri Lanka’s role as a regional hub. Further, reducing bureaucratic barriers and digitizing government services were seen as vital for attracting both local and foreign investments.

Panelists also highlighted the importance of fostering a sustainable blue economy, prioritizing sustainable fisheries, marine tourism, and offshore energy exploration to diversify economic streams. Strategic geopolitical maneuvering, including balancing relationships with global powers and engaging in regional initiatives like BIMSTEC and IORA, was emphasized as key to ensuring long-term economic resilience.

The experts called for robust policy reforms, public-private partnerships, and investments in innovation to drive sustainable growth and bolster Sri Lanka’s economic security in the years to come.

CASA & MACN COLLABORATION *to* COMBAT CORRUPTION

The Ceylon Association of Shipping Agents (CASA), the voice of Sri Lanka's shipping industry, has taken the initiative to collaborate with the Maritime Anti-Corruption Network (MACN) to address corruption and elevate the country's maritime sector to global standards. By incorporating MACN's acclaimed projects and proposals, CASA aims to position Sri Lanka as a leading maritime hub.

The Maritime Anti-Corruption Network (MACN) is a global business network dedicated to creating a corruption-free maritime industry that fosters fair trade for the benefit of society. Established in 2011 by a small group of committed maritime companies, MACN has expanded to include over 200 member organizations worldwide. It has become a pioneering platform for collective action against corruption in the industry.

MACN and its members strive to eliminate all forms of maritime corruption by:

Raising awareness of corruption challenges within the industry;

Implementing the MACN Anti-Corruption Principles and sharing best practices;

Collaborating with governments, NGOs, and civil society to address the root causes of corruption;

Promoting a culture of integrity across the global maritime community.

In response to CASA's proposal, MACN has expressed its willingness to extend support to Sri Lanka. Recognizing the significant impact corruption has had

on the industry's growth and reputation, CASA has actively engaged with relevant authorities throughout the year. These efforts aim to gain stakeholder buy-in and ensure the successful implementation of MACN's programs in Sri Lankan ports, scheduled to commence in 2025.

The introduction of MACN's initiatives to Sri Lanka offers multiple benefits. Firstly, it will enhance legal and regulatory compliance, both locally and globally. Increasingly, businesses operating in European and other developed markets are required to report activities across all ports, including those in Sri Lanka. Corruption at any port can negatively affect a shipping company's ability to operate internationally, making compliance essential for global competitiveness.

Secondly, implementing anti-corruption standards will strengthen Sri Lanka's position as a reliable and ethical maritime destination. By fostering transparency and integrity, the country can attract greater trade volumes and investment, unlocking the full potential of its maritime sector.

Ultimately, CASA's collaboration with MACN reflects a shared commitment to creating a corruption-free industry. This initiative aligns with Sri Lanka's broader vision for national development, offering practical solutions to stakeholders in both the public and private sectors. By addressing systemic challenges and cultivating a culture of integrity, CASA and MACN aim to transform the maritime industry into a benchmark of excellence.

Through these collective efforts, Sri Lanka can look forward to becoming a prominent and trusted maritime hub, benefiting businesses, authorities, and the nation as a whole.

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COMMERCIAL SHIPPING AND MARITIME SCIENCE

(PART FOUR)

By Chair Professor Lalith Edirisinghe



Note from the author

The maritime industry plays a crucial role in global trade, yet many young Sri Lankans remain unaware of the vast opportunities it offers. Recognizing this gap, Sri Lanka celebrated its inaugural National Seafarers' Day on March 21, 2024, with the ambitious goal of increasing the number of seafarers from 16,000 to 50,000 by 2030. A major breakthrough in this effort is the introduction of shipping as a subject in schools from Grade Six, announced by Professor Prasad Sethunga, Director General of the National Institute of Education.

This article is part of a special series extracted from the newly launched textbook Commercial Shipping and Maritime Science. Originally published in Sinhala, it has been translated for The Bridge Magazine to provide readers with insights into the evolving maritime sector. By enhancing awareness, we hope to inspire the next generation to explore rewarding careers in shipping and seafaring, contributing to Sri Lanka's maritime aspirations.

The part three of the article series focused on the involvement of the concepts in Commerce and Science in the Shipping industry, basics of Designing a ship, and brief introduction about the Deadweight tonnage (DWT). It was reiterated that the time a ship spends in port, or "turning time," depends on berthing, cargo handling, and departure efficiency. Poor port coordination wastes efforts of shipowners and captains. Since operating costs accrue regardless of cargo, balancing freight demand and supply is crucial to ensuring timely, safe cargo delivery in a volatile market.

The Density and the sailing of a ship

It is vital to understand the scientific background with the practical situation about the Dead Weight Tonnage (DWT) of a ship. This requires some examples of the density of different fluids and substances.

To consider the above values as examples, let me first remind you of a simple test of how different fluids act against the same material. No doubt you took this test during your five-year scholarship. Take two glasses. Fill both with water. Stir in a substantial amount of salt. Now take two eggs and put one each in these glasses.

The egg in the saltwater floats while the egg in the freshwater glass sinks. The reason for this is that the density of salt water is higher, so it exerts a force of 1025 N upwards, while the density of fresh water is relatively low, so it can only exert a force of 1000 N.

Now compare this with the example of a ship. This is not difficult to understand, and it is essential to read more about the Buoyancy as a person concerned about the maritime industry. It is the upward force exerted by a fluid on an immersed object, opposing its weight. Pressure increases with depth, creating a pressure difference that results in an upward force. According to Archimedes' principle, this force equals the weight of the displaced fluid, determining the object's flotation.

FLUID/SUBSTANCE	DENSITY (WEIGHT/VOLUME)
FRESH WATER	1,000 kg/m ³
SEA WATER	About 1"025 kg/m ³
OILS (SOME)	About 850 kg/m ³
STEEL	8"000 kg/m ³
WOOD	About 700 kg/m ³

Table 01: How density varies for different materials

This article series may cover complex things such as the Plimsoll line and the load line convention, and if the fundamentals are unclear, it may be difficult to understand the scientific concepts in shipping later.

Now imagine that in the picture above, it is not eggs, but a ship made of thousands of tons of steel. Compared to the same block of steel as the ship, the block of steel sinks even though the ship remains unsinkable. So, when two steel pieces of the same weight are placed in water, one (i.e. the ship) will float. At this point, more scientific explanations are required as it happens because of the difference between these

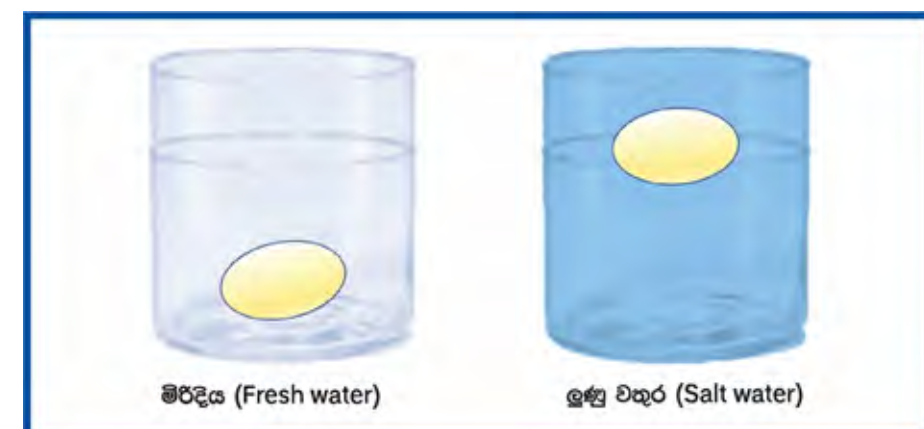


Fig. 01: Egg floating test



Fig 02: Trajectory of a ship under different water conditions
(World map in background courtesy of Hapagloid Shipping Company)

two shapes. There is a big hole in the ship. But not so in steel block. That means there is a lot of air in the shape of the ship. You know very well that air weighs less than water. Here, density is the value obtained by dividing the weight by the volume, so the weight of the water displaced by the ship is relatively high. The above steel cube exerts an upward force of 1025 N at sea (due to the density of seawater being 1025 Kg/m³) and a downward force of 8000 Kg/m³. (Because the density of steel is 8000) then more force is downward. That is, the shape of solid steel cannot be stopped from sinking. This is because the solid can displace relatively little water. This explains the ships' ability to sail in the seawater with cargo loaded on board.

Salty Level of surface seawater and its impact on the sea passage

But this situation becomes more complicated by the fact that the density of surface seawater varies with salt concentration and temperature. By now you are well aware that when a ship is traveling around the world under different seas and weather conditions with cargo, the weight of the cargo the ship can carry must vary according to the seas it is sailing. In the "egg floating" experiment described above, you saw an egg of equal weight floating in salt water sank in normal water. So, a ship with maximum cargo in a dense sea may sink when it reaches a less dense sea. If so, we should firstly use the scientific knowledge gained

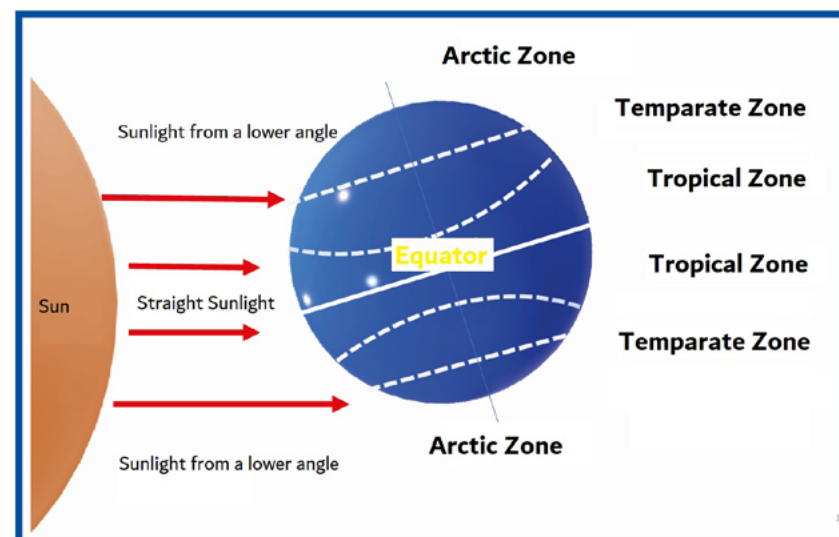


Fig. 03: How and why the density of surface seawater varies with its salt concentration

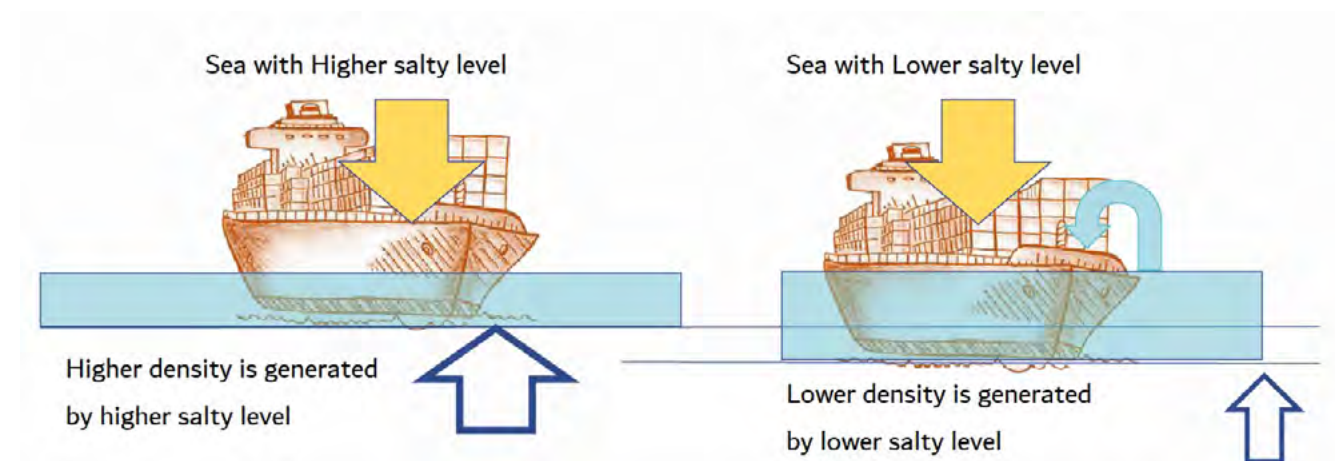


Fig 04: Sinking of the ship during transition from a high density to a low density sea state

through Archimedes' principle to travel around the world without sinking the ship. Secondly, it is important to understand how and why the density of surface seawater varies with its salt concentration.

Seawater salinity varies with evaporation and freshwater input. High evaporation increases salinity by leaving salt behind, while rainfall and river inflows dilute seawater, reducing salinity. Seawater salinity varies with temperature as warmer water evaporates more, increasing salt concentration, while colder water evaporates less, reducing salinity. This process influences ocean currents and global thermohaline circulation, where temperature and salinity differences drive water movement.

Let's see how to relate these scientific concepts with a sailing ship. A careful look at table 01 above shows that only some oil and wood should float in water. This is because the density value of that fluid and substance is lower than the density of water. You know this is practically true. In other words, the buoyancy of an object is determined by the density of the object relative to the density of the liquid in question. It is clear, then, that when the ship enters oceans of varying salinity and temperature, the dimensions of the water will change. If you look closely at picture number 02, you will see that a ship is traveling across different oceans. Thus, you will understand that the salinity level of the water in these oceans takes on different natures due to the influence of the sun and the load a ship can carry varies due to the influence of the salinity. The illustration shown in picture number 02 makes this more clearer.

Introduction of the Plimsoll line

In the past, cargo ships built in Europe sometimes sank when they first reached the tropics. It is a scientific fact that ships with cargo float in cold, salty water but sink when the ship reaches warmer, less salty seas. Because it moves from a denser marine environment to a less dense marine environment. The reason why

ships sink like this is because Archimedes' principle described above is not taken into account. When the ship was first loaded, it floated without sinking because cold, salty water was denser than fresh water, which meant that less water had to be displaced to equal the mass of the ship. Once the ship entered warmer, less saline waters, more water had to be displaced to maintain equilibrium. Then the ship will be pulled down (vertically) in the water. If it falls below the water level, the ship will sink.

Therefore, the ship must know the sea and weather patterns to be passed on the way to the destination where the cargo is to be loaded. Otherwise, if you have loaded the ship only to fit in a denser ocean, it will sink when it enters a less dense ocean.

The Plimsoll line

As a solution to this, the great navigator Samuel Plimsoll introduced the limit of maximum load. I think we need to deviate a little from our main topic and become aware of this concept. Plimsoll had done long research for these new discoveries. He had observed that sailors who had no knowledge of these scientific complications in crossing ocean zones, without a sense of "safe capacity" loaded cargo insecurely and suffered from severe shipping disasters.

Thus, many British sailors died prematurely due to ignorance about the scientific input in the shipping industry. Plimsoll's felt shock about this scenario and made a serious concern about this. Considered to have been an active member of the British Parliament, Plimsoll is respected as a person who played a very important role in the shipping industry, having a great influence in the preparation of the British Merchant Shipping Act of 1875. Thus the solution he presented is internationally accepted today under the name "Plimsoll Line". It is the maximum load limits established by this have greatly benefited the safety of ships and their crews.

Next article

The contents of above article are extracted from the textbook of the newly introduced subject in school, namely, Commercial Shipping and Maritime Science. The scientific explanations are vital in understanding the shipping business. The next article will carry the International Convention on Load Lines, Ballast Tank, and the Ships’ Draft.

About the author

Professor Lalith Edirisinghe



Chair Professor Edirisinghe commenced his career in 1981 as a Cadet Officer in Merchant Navy. He holds a Ph.D. in Transportation Planning and Logistics Management. He is a Chartered Logistician and Chartered Marketer. He is an Expert Consultant to the United Nations Secretariat and a member of Wellness Tourism Advisory Group of the European Union (EU). As a member of IORA-EDF Project of the Australian Government he contributed for the development of transnational skills standards to support the maritime sector in the Indian Ocean Rim. He is also a member of the subcommittee of the Sri Lanka Export Development Board on Capacity building and involved in drafting the National Transport policy and National Tourism policy documents in Sri Lanka. He counts 43 years of work experience in the corporate sector and is the author of the first logistics textbook and shipping textbook written in the national language, introducing many theoretical models in shipping, and developing new transportation theories and concepts. Professor Edirisinghe and CINEC was instrumental in introducing Logistics in the school curriculum in 2017 and establishing a National day for Logistics in 2021 in Sri Lanka. In 2021 he published a textbook in Sinhala on Shipping and worked with National Institute of Education to introduce the new subject in school and also to establish a National Day for Seafarers in consultation with the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Aviation. Prof. Edirisinghe is the Dean of the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, and the head of World Bank’s Technology Transfer office of the CINEC Campus.

A TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY AT THE INAUGURAL YOUNGSHIP GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

The inaugural YoungShip Global Leadership Summit (YGLS) concluded in Sri Lanka on the 18th of November 2024, leaving an indelible mark on the maritime industry and its emerging professionals. A YoungShip International event held for the first time in Asia, the three-day Summit brought together emerging leaders, seasoned professionals, and global experts, highlighting youth’s pivotal role in shaping the maritime world’s future. With its core theme surrounding emerging leadership in the international maritime trade, the event underscored the importance of innovation, sustainability, and collaboration in a rapidly evolving industry.

With its rich maritime history & location along key trade routes, Sri Lanka served as the ideal backdrop for the inaugural YGLS 2024. As such, the Summit showcased the country as a key maritime hub, blending its cultural vibrancy with its growing influence in the global maritime sector. From engaging discussions on industry trends to immersive local experiences, YGLS celebrated both professional and cultural exchange, solidifying Sri Lanka’s position on the global maritime map.

SPORTS, HERITAGE, AND CULTURE: WELCOMING THE WORLD TO YGLS 2024

The first day of the Summit kicked off with a golf tournament at the Royal Colombo Golf Club, providing participants an opportunity to bond over sports while fostering camaraderie with Sri Lanka’s Maritime Golf Community. This was followed by a Colombo city tour, which introduced international attendees to the city’s iconic landmarks and heritage, offering a glimpse into Sri Lanka’s history, as well as modern development.



The day culminated in a spectacular opening ceremony at Nuga Gama, Cinnamon Grand Colombo, an authentic Sri Lankan village-style venue. Attendees were treated to traditional cuisine, music, and cultural performances, setting a warm and vibrant tone for the days ahead. The opening remarks by YGLS Chairperson and YoungShip Sri Lanka Chair - Ms. Maleena Awn, and Ms. Keshia Janssens - Chair of YoungShip International, emphasised the Summit's mission to empower emerging maritime professionals to lead the industry into the future with resilience and innovation.



EXPLORING TRENDS, BUILDING NETWORKS: N INSIGHTFUL AND INSPIRING SECOND DAY



The 17th of November began with a breakfast hosted by WISTA Sri Lanka (Women's International Shipping & Trading Association), spotlighting gender equality and the critical role of women in maritime leadership. This session underscored the importance of diversity and inclusivity in fostering a robust and innovative maritime industry.

Afterwards, attendees visited Port City Colombo - a landmark development redefining Sri Lanka's position as a global maritime and logistics hub. The site visit provided insights into how infrastructure and technology are shaping the future of maritime trade in the region.



The heart of the Summit was the conference, featuring distinguished speakers and thought-provoking panel discussions at the Kingsbury, Colombo. Topics included:

- Global Economic Trends in Shipping: Exploring the economic forces driving the industry.
- Innovation Driven by the Need for a Progressive Maritime Industry: Highlighting technological advancements and their impact on maritime operations.
- Human Resources in a Changing Maritime Landscape – Skills Needed by Future Generations: Addressing the evolving skillsets required to thrive in the industry.



These panels and keynotes encompassed discussions on sustainability, digital transformation, and strategic leadership; equipping participants with practical tools and insights, empowering them to tackle industry challenges and drive meaningful change. The conference was also complemented by a series of cultural dance performances between panel discussions, adding a unique touch of Sri Lankan entertainment to the event.

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF YOUNGSHIP INTERNATIONAL

The conference was followed by the anniversary gala dinner of YoungShip International commemorating 20 years of empowering emerging professionals in the maritime industry. The evening was nothing short of spectacular; with a perfect blend of celebration, networking, and entertainment. Participants from across the globe came together to honour two decades of achievements, forge new connections, and create memories to last a lifetime.



SIGNING OFF WITH COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP AND A CELEBRATION OF SUCCESS

The final day began at the Radisson Blue, Galle, with the YoungShip International board meeting, where leaders discussed strategies to further strengthen the global network and expand its impact.



This was followed by an inspiring leadership programme conducted by Vidusha Nathavitharana, a renowned leadership coach. Participants engaged in interactive discussions aimed at developing the skills and mindset required to lead with confidence, vision, and empathy.



The Summit concluded with a grand closing dinner hosted in collaboration with CASA (Ceylon Association of Shipping Agents). The dinner celebrated the success of the Summit and the vibrant maritime community it brought together. Attendees reflected on the insights gained, the connections made, and the inspiration to drive the global industry forward.



At its core, YGLS 2024 was a transformative platform for empowering young maritime professionals. It addressed the need for a forward-thinking, diverse, and inclusive leadership that can navigate the challenges of an ever-changing global maritime landscape. By equipping participants with knowledge, skills, and networks, the Summit set the stage for the emerging leaders to make a lasting impact on the industry. By addressing pressing issues like digital transformation, climate change, and workforce development, YGLS provided actionable insights that attendees could bring back to their organisations and communities.



As the first event of its kind in Asia, YGLS 2024 has set a high benchmark for future Summits. It leaves behind a legacy of empowered youth, strengthened global networks, and a shared vision for a sustainable, innovative maritime industry. Moreover, it not only highlighted Sri Lanka's potential as a maritime hub driving progress, but also introduced the country as an emerging tourist destination to the visiting delegates.

The success of YGLS 2024 is a testament to the dedication of YoungShip International, YoungShip Sri Lanka, and the numerous partners and sponsors who made the event possible - Platinum Sponsor – Meridian Maritime Services Limited; Gold Sponsor – Hayleys Advantis; Silver Sponsors – McLarens Group of Companies, Pacific International Lines Pte Ltd, Prime Lands Residences PLC; Bronze Sponsors – Colombo International Container Terminal Limited (CICT), Evergreen Line, Inchcape Mackinnon Mackenzie Shipping (Private) Limited and MAC Holdings (Private) Limited; Support Associations – Ceylon Association of Shipping Agents (CASA), Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA Sri Lanka) and Sri Lanka Association of NVOCC Agents (SLANA); Training and Development Partner – Ceyline Group; and Education Partner - Colombo International Nautical and Engineering College (CINEC) Sri Lanka; Tour Partner - Helanka Vacations, and all other valuable sponsors, along with the endorsement by the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau, whose contributions have made this stellar event an enormous success.

As attendees return to their respective countries, they carry with them not only memories of Sri Lanka's warmth and hospitality but also the tools and inspiration to lead the maritime industry into a brighter future.

YOUNGSHIP SRI LANKA ELECTS NEW CHAIRMAN AT 12TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

YoungShip Sri Lanka, an organisation dedicated to empowering young professionals in the maritime & logistics industry, successfully held its 12th Annual General Meeting (AGM) on the 30th of January 2025 at the Grand Ballroom, Galle Face Hotel. The AGM marked another milestone in the organisation's journey, as the chapter elected its 7th Chairman Mr. Nirmal Dissanayake along with the Executive Committee to lead YoungShip Sri Lanka as it fosters leadership, innovation, and collaboration amongst emerging professionals in the country's maritime & logistics industry.

YoungShip Sri Lanka is a chapter of the globally recognised YoungShip International, which has been instrumental in shaping the future leaders of the industry globally. With over 4,000 members across 30 countries, YoungShip International fosters networking, knowledge sharing, and professional development through various events and initiatives.

The 2025 executive committee is composed of eleven dedicated and enthusiastic young professionals from their respective fields, eager to contribute to the maritime & logistics industry, its community, and related fields.

- **Chairman** – Nirmal Dissanayake (Eastern Maritime (Colombo) Ltd)
- **Vice Chair** – Aruni Wijepala (Hayleys Energy Services Lanka Pvt Ltd)
- **Secretary** – Patali Karunaratne (Centrum Marine Consultancy Pvt Ltd)
- **Treasurer** – Sunera Wijesekara (Eastern Maritime (Colombo) Ltd)
- **Assistant Secretary** – Shanga Jayawickreme (McLarens Group of Companies)
- **Assistant Treasurer** – Adrian Jansz (Hayleys Energy Services Lanka Pvt Ltd)
- **Immediate Past Chair** – Maleena Awn (Meridian Maritime Services Ltd)
- Dakshith Jayawardena (McLarens Group Management Limited)
- Hiran Malintha (OOCL Lanka (Pvt) Ltd)
- Shane De Alwis (Hapag Lloyd Lanka (Pvt) Ltd)
- Surith Sriyantha (Inchcape Mackinnon Mackenzie Shipping (Pvt) Ltd)

In 2024, YoungShip Sri Lanka organised 29 impactful events and initiatives, highlighting its commitment to maritime industry development, community outreach, and sustainability.

The pinnacle event of the year was hosting the Inaugural YoungShip Global Leadership Summit (YGLS) in November 2024. The 3-day summit included events ranging from the Golf Championship and cultural Opening Ceremony at Cinnamon Grand to the Main Conference at Kingsbury Hotel, attended by over 300 participants from 25+ countries. Moreover, the Summit commemorated the 20th Anniversary of YoungShip International and also featured a leadership workshop, a visit to Port City, and historical tours in Galle.

Other networking and educational sessions included the annual Patrons Forum, and a visit to Colombo Dockyard; together with entertaining quiz nights and member events for Ifthar, Avurudu and Christmas.

The organisation also focused on women's empowerment through the YoungShip WISTA "Run For Her" charity run and subsequent awareness programs addressing period poverty and menstrual health across Sri Lanka.

Giving back to the community has been a key element in the calendar of YoungShip Sri Lanka, and projects throughout the year included the renovation of the Family Room at the Mission to Seafarers Centre in Colombo, inaugurated by Her Royal Highness Princess Anne; and the Caring Hands Programme, supporting underprivileged children with donations and educational supplies. With this, environmental responsibility was also showcased through the Coral Restoration Project in Seenigama, planting 70 coral nubbins to protect marine ecosystems.

YoungShip Sri Lanka's initiatives in 2024 embodied a blend of industry advancement, environmental stewardship, cultural celebration, and social responsibility, making a lasting impact on the maritime sector and the wider community.

Looking ahead, incoming Chairman Dissanayake outlined YoungShip Sri Lanka's primary objectives for the upcoming year to further its mission of empowering emerging professionals and the community:

Professional Development of Youth: The organisation will enhance knowledge sharing through educational seminars and industry-related visits, ensuring



members are exposed to veteran insights and the latest maritime trends.

Promoting Industry Networking: A variety of activities and events will be organised to build a network that fosters friendships; celebrating a shared passion for the maritime industry

Enhancing Educational Benefits: YoungShip Sri Lanka is committed to upskilling its members to become future-ready maritime professionals through collaborations with maritime institutes and programmes.

Strengthening Global Ties: Continued development of stronger relationships with YoungShip International and other global chapters will be a focus, aiming to enhance member value, expand networks, and promote cross-border collaboration.

Supporting Community Engagement: Through its continuing "Caring Hands" program, YoungShip Sri Lanka will actively participate in social responsibility initiatives, creating a positive impact on local communities and the environment.

With a vision to further strengthen its presence, YoungShip Sri Lanka will focus on these pillars alongside its commitment to knowledge and skills amplification, building strong maritime communities, championing sustainability, and driving operational excellence and innovation.

On behalf of the Committee, Dissanayake conveyed his sincere appreciation to its Patrons Mevan Peiris, Navin Perera, Hasitha Dissanayake, Jehan Rodrigo, Rishantha Mendis and Immediate Past Chairperson Maleena Awn for their continuous support and guidance in conducting the activities of YoungShip throughout the past years.

Further gratitude was also extended towards the unwavering support from all of YoungShip Sri Lanka's partner and support associations, industry stakeholders, and all generous sponsors who have continuously supported the empowerment of Youth and the growth of YoungShip since its inception.

As the organisation embarks on another promising year, it remains dedicated to empowering young maritime and logistics professionals, and creating a vibrant platform for future industry leaders.



Seated from left: Sunera Wijesekara, Patali Karunarathne, Nirmal Dissanayake, Aruni Wijepala, Maleena Awn
Standing from left: Dakshith Jayawardena, Hiran Malintha, Shanga Jayawickreme, Shane De Alwis, Surith Sriyantha, Adrian Jansz.

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