

The importance of embracing agility across the border spectrum including at a government level and corporate level took the centre stage recently at the 38th National Conference of Chartered Accountants organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka (CA Sri Lanka), which recently concluded with over 2000 delegates including business leaders taking part in the three day summit in Colombo.

Chief Guest at the inauguration ceremony, Deputy Minister of National Policy and Economic Affairs Dr. Harsha de Silva, emphasized the growing need for not just the professionals and the corporate community, but also for the government, politicians and public officials to embrace agility. "We need to have leaders who can deal with modern economy, modern technology and also welcomes digitization. We do not want people who are resistant to change," he told Sri Lanka's corporate glitterati comprising of top business leaders, decision makers, renowned accounting and finance professionals as well as diplomats.

The deputy minister noted that in today's drastically changing world, agility is mandatory for everyone including accountants. "We all need to develop agility, so we can use it to progress in this ever evolving world," he said. De Silva also said that it was important for the government to create change "With passion and with courage your government is attempting to lay the foundation so that all people are treated equally in this country, and based on this foundation we can build businesses and the economy."

The conference, recognized as the largest business summit in the country was further boosted with the presence of Dr. Binod K. Chaudhary, Chairman, CG Corp Global and Nepal's only Forbes listed billionaire, who delivered the keynote speech at the event. During his speech, Dr. Chaudhary said that success of a company is not about its size or capital, but was about inner attitude, about passion, courage and innovation. "Company success is the result of a revolutionary vision, a rousing mission and passionate people. These make up the organizational "DNA" that is behind the success story of innovative, agile companies," he said.

He said that success stands and falls with the inner attitude, and with passion, courage and innovative ability. "The success of Uber, Airbnb, Facebook, Alibaba, and Netflix - was made possible by a revolutionary vision, an exciting mission and passionate leadership assisted by passionate employees. Passion is the driving force and vitality of a modern and innovative company. For the passionate employees, work is fun and workplace is like homes. They form an emotional bond with their employers. Passion in conjunction with leadership-oriented corporate values "develops a corporate culture that is stronger than anything else that is needed for an organization's success," he said.

Dr. Chaudhary noted that passion cannot be performed extrinsically. Real Passion arises through intrinsic motivation and the necessary framework conditions. Employees need a clear goal, a connecting business philosophy and a meaningful order. "There is an elementary need for guiding values and goals which make sense for the work. Employees want to be part of something to be proud of. There is nothing more motivating than to make your own recognizable contribution to something meaningful," he said.

He added that profit or growth should never be the primary objective or purpose of a business. "Profit and growth are the result of a good strategy with a high benefit for the customer. The sole purpose of a company is to have satisfied customers and to offer competitive products and services that are rewarded in the market as much as possible. If your product is good and your customers are satisfied, then you don't need to worry about profit," he added.

Dr. Chaudhary also expressed his deepest respects to the Chartered Accountants, while sharing a small snippet from his early years. "At the age of 18, I was aspiring to be a Chartered Accountant but due to some unfortunate events, I had to abandon my plans. But, my respect for Chartered Accountants grow, because they are a tremendous source of stability. My respect for this community is immense. Some of the companies we own, actually one of the largest company of ours is headed by a Chartered Accountant. It's all about leadership and it's all about clear vision. So hats off to them. You not only hold fort in Sri Lanka, but hold fort all over the world," Dr. Chaudhary added.

President of CA Sri Lanka Mr. Lasantha Wickremasinghe speaking at the event said that everyone must understand that without embracing change, Sri Lanka can't move forward as a country. "To survive in this ever evolving world, we need to embrace change, and for that we need leaders who are willing to be agile and also dynamic," he said.

Mr. Wickremasinghe said that even though Sri Lanka is a small nation, it has great potential to become a global player due to its strategic location in the world map. But, he pointed out that this will not happen just by rhetoric pledges. "We need leadership with proper vision to reach this goal. Moreover, we cannot also only expect our government and policy makers to drive our country forward. As professionals, we too have a collective responsibility to help achieve this target," he said.

He also urged business leaders and professionals to move away from traditional and archaic methods of doing business, because businesses that didn't evolve over time no longer can stake claim of being successful. "We all know success can never be permanent, and success can be short lived if the vision of the leadership is short. This is why it's important to encourage agility across the broader spectrum, be it at a national level or corporate level and across both the public and private sectors," he added.

Speaking at the conference, Chairman of the National Conference Committee Mr. Tishan Subasinghe disclosed that the conference was the largest event as it attracted over 2000 delegates, including members who connected via webcast due to limited seating at the main hall venue in Colombo. "The conference is the biggest business conference, in our country," he said. Mr. Subasinghe said that at a juncture when Sri Lanka is at the threshold of renewed development, it is increasingly important for the corporate world to complement the forward journey of the country. "This can be done by giving the necessary leadership in this development drive. Thus, there is an increasing need to see more agility among our business leaders and this includes for Chartered Accountants, as well," he said.

Chairperson of the National Conference Technical Committee Ms. Anoji de Silva said that dynamism and agility are no longer luxuries but necessities in such a world. "All of us understand that we are now living in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous "or what is now known as a VUCA world. This was the inspiration for our theme this year "Dynamism- Agility in Leadership", she said.

She also said that for an agile leader to be successful one also need an agile strategy and an agile culture. "For this you need a proper focus on people and technology," she added.

The three day conference which revolved around the theme "Dynamism: Agility in Leadership" concluded after two days of technical sessions featuring local and international speakers.

CAPTIONS:

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The opening dance act at the 38th National Conference

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Chairman of the National Conference Committee Mr. Tishan Subasinghe delivering the welcome speech.

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President of CA Sri Lanka Mr. Lasantha Wickremasinghe addressing the guests.



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Chairman of CG Corp Global and Nepal's only Forbes listed billionaire Dr. Binod K. Chaudhary delivering the keynote speech

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A section of the gathering.



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Chairperson of the National Conference Technical Committee Ms. Anoji de Silva detailing the technical sessions.



Chief Guest, deputy minister Dr. Harsha de Silva highlighting the need for government, politicians and public officials



From L to R: CA Sri Lanka CEO Mr. Aruna Alwis, president Mr. Lasantha Wickremasinghe, Dr. Binod K. Chaudhary, Dr. H