

While staking claim to becoming the biggest challenge since World War II, the ripple effect of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic has reverberated through every corner of the globe, including Sri Lanka resulting first in a health emergency followed by an economic crisis with many businesses fighting to stay afloat.

Bounded with uncertainty and as businesses and the professional community navigate through these unprecedented and unthinkable times, the dynamic role of the accounting professionals including Chartered Accountants has been redefined as the world battles to come out of the deepest recession in 150 years.

Undeterred by the pandemic, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka (CA Sri Lanka) has set the stage for the 41st National Conference of Chartered Accountants to play an important catalyst role in helping inspire Chartered Accountants including business leaders and c-suite executives to navigate through these extraordinary and challenging times of uncertainty.

The 41st National Conference which is dubbed Sri Lanka's biggest business summit will be held from 18th to 20th January 2021 at the BMICH, Colombo under the theme "Abnormal: Navigating through shattered norms."

For the first time in its four-decade long history, the conference will take on a hybrid format with a combination of traditional physical sessions as well as virtual sessions due to the prevailing COVID-19 global pandemic and due to the limited number of participants permitted this year at the venue.

Addressing a press conference organised to unveil the theme of the conference, President of CA Sri Lanka Mr. Manil Jayasinghe highlighted that exceptional times such as these call for exceptional measures. "Sri Lanka is known for its fair share of man-made and natural disasters, but COVID-19 is perhaps the biggest challenge we are facing in our lifetime. Therefore, it is imperative that professional bodies such as CA Sri Lanka come forward to help navigate the professional community including Chartered Accountants through such uncharted territories," he said.

Mr. Jayasinghe said that the road to recovery both at a global and local level is likely to be long and arduous, but he was confident that Sri Lanka with the help of its dynamic business and professional community will overcome this challenge too, just like in the past. "These 'Abnormal' times are a reminder to us to understand the importance of thinking outside the box and moving away from our comfort zones. Abnormal is going to be our new normal and we need to adapt to change fast and remain innovative and creative, while utilising technology to the maximum advantage. Being agile to embrace the abnormal and rising above it to rebuild better and stronger businesses will be the key to success in the future," he added.

Every year, the National Conference attracts over 2000 participants. however, the organisers are confident of attracting a larger number of delegates this year due to the hybrid format the conference will take on. The conference attracts some of the country's well-known business leaders and c-suite executives among other high-profile chartered accountants.

Chairman of the Conference Committee, Mr. Tishan Subasinghe elaborated that the National Conference Committee was determined to go ahead with this year's conference despite the challenging situation surrounding everyone. "I believe this conference will be an important platform to engage and assess the issues facing us all, and also explore solutions from the perspective of the accounting profession, how we can assist the corporate world to embrace the abnormal and create new and innovative businesses.

Mr. Subasinghe assured that health guidelines will be given utmost attention at the conference venue, and the arrangements will be in line with the Health Ministry approved regulations. "The safety of the delegates attending the physical sessions at the venue will be our top priority," he said.

Chairperson of the National Conference Technical Committee, Ms. Anoji De Silva highlighted that despite the gloom since COVID-19, the pandemic has actually given many an opportunity to 'redefine' and come up with a new corporate culture which focuses on stakeholder capitalism and not just shareholder profit. "We must use the pandemic as an opportunity to redefine our values which will ultimately have a long-term sustainable benefit to all stakeholders," she said.

Ms. De Silva said that the technical sessions during the 3-day conference have been tailored to inspire participants to be motivated to look beyond the horizons and play a lead role in helping Sri Lanka rebuild in a post-COVID scenario. "The conference will be complemented with a high-profile line up of local and foreign speakers and panelists who will steer the technical sessions by sharing their insights and expertise on how to rethink and rebuild businesses in times where 'Abnormal' has become the order of the day and where the business norms that we were comfortable with has been shattered, giving us the opportunity to build better businesses," she added.

[Sinhala Version](#) | [Tamil Version](#)



(From left to right) Mr. Channa Gunasekara, Alternate Chairman of the National Conference Technical Committee, Mr.

Sanjaya Bandara, Vice President of CA Sri Lanka, Mr. Tishan Subasinghe, Chairman of the National Conference Committee, Mr. Manil Jayasinghe, President of CA Sri Lanka, Ms. Anoji De Silva, Chairperson of the National Conference Technical Committee, Ms. Dulani Fernando, CEO of CA Sri Lanka and Mr. Danuka Cooray, Alternate Chairman of the National Conference Committee.



CA Sri Lanka President Mr. Manil Jayasinghe delivering the welcome speech.





□ Chairman of the National Conference Committee Mr. Tishan Subasinghe addressing the media.



Ms. Anoji De Silva, Chairperson of the National Conference Technical Committee, elaborating on the rationale of this year's theme 'Abnormal Navigating through shattered norms'.