

Amidst growing volatility and with the world transforming at a tremendous phase, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, the roles of professionals, entrepreneurs, and businesses have significantly evolved within a relatively short span.

While some businesses were quick to embrace agility and adapt to the new normal amidst other interconnected challenges, other businesses refused to change, which ultimately affected their bottom line despite enjoying decades of success.

To help professionals, entrepreneurs, and businesses survive and thrive during these unforeseeable times, and to help them understand how to navigate forward, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka (CA Sri Lanka) organised its first-ever regional conference in Galle recently for the benefit of professionals, as well as business owners and entrepreneurs in the Southern region.

The thought provoking one day conference which concluded on a high note attracted a cross-section of participants ranging from small and medium business owners to entrepreneurs, as well as professionals from the accounting and non-accounting streams, who congregated at the Weligama Bay Marriott Resort & Spa for an eventful day of inspiration and motivation on "The Future" and how to navigate through the future.

The regional conference, which was the first of its kind in the Southern Province, was inaugurated by Mr. Sujeewa Rajapakse, Chairman of People's Bank and People's Leasing and Finance PLC and Mr. Dilith Jayaweera, Group Chairman of George Steuart & Co., Co-founder of Triad (Pvt) Ltd and Chairman of TV Derana, while Mr. Dulith Herath, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Kapruka Holdings PLC delivered the keynote on "Vision - To Succeed in The Future."

Mr. Sanjaya Bandara, President of CA Sri Lanka, Mr. Saman Sri Lal, Chairman of the Inaugural Regional Conference Committee, Mr. Rajeev De Silva, Alternate Chairman of the Inaugural Regional Conference Committee, Ms. Jani Ganeshan, Chairperson of the Inaugural Galle Regional Conference Sub-Committee, Mr. Dhammika Lokuge, Alternate Chairman of the Inaugural Galle Regional Conference Sub-Committee, Ms. Nishani Perera, Chairperson of the Inaugural Galle Regional Conference Technical Committee and Ms. Dulani Fernando, Chief Executive Officer of CA Sri Lanka also graced the event with their presence.

Kicking off his speech with a quote from T.S. Eliot, "Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go," Mr. Sanjaya Bandara highlighted that it was immaterial whether a person was a corporate chairman, business owner, an entrepreneur, or a professional, but what matters is that they adapt and embrace agility if they are serious about moving forward and if they want to continue to be successful.

"Vision and leadership must go hand in hand if we are to move forward and the biggest mistake everyone does is being too comfortable as soon as they become successful," Mr. Bandara said.

SMEs are considered the backbone of the economy, as it accounts for more than 75% of the total number of enterprises, providing 45% of the employment while contributing 52% to the GDP. Therefore, Mr. Bandara said that it is very accurate to identify SMEs as the driving force of Sri Lanka's economy.

Mr. Saman Sri Lal highlighted that it was key for the business community to be firmly established in the present to be able to comprehend the future and be prepared for it. According to him, the decision to organise regional conferences can also contribute to shifting the concentrated economic growth of the country from the Western Province to other provinces and thereby promote equality in the economic body of the nation through SMEs.

Ms. Jani Ganeshan said that CA Sri Lanka has taken a new turn in its highly sought-after conference journey with the inauguration of its first-ever regional conference. "It has been an absolute honour to have been part of this major milestone in the history of CA Sri Lanka, where business owners, entrepreneurs and professionals in the southern region are given the opportunity to reach out to multiple business leaders within the comfort of their hometown," she said.

The highly interactive forum was further boosted with several technical sessions featuring some well-known experts in the field. The first session on "SME – Driver of The Future" featured Mr. Ranel T. Wijesinha, Former Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission and Past President of CA Sri Lanka, utilised the platform to inspire and motivate participants on how and why SMEs will continue to be considered the driver of the future.

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Mr. Wijesinha's presentation was followed by a panel discussion comprising of Mr. Preshan Dissanayake, Managing Director of Thambapanni Leisure, Mr. Purasisi Jinadasa, Senior Vice President - Origination and Issuer Relations at the Colombo Stock Exchange, Mr. Rohan Senewiratne, Managing Director of Atarah Capital Partners and Mr. Russel Fonseka, Additional General Manager/ Chief Financial Officer of Bank of Ceylon, while Mr Chaaminda Kumarasiri, Edupreneur, Speaker, Management Consultant, Corporate Trainer, Money Guru, SME & Family Business Advisor moderated the session.

With the advent of information technology, the world has been moving at an extremely rapid pace, which has also affected the lives of individuals. New technologies are also playing a fundamental role in contributing to the social development and economic growth of nations. The second session on "Technology – Connector to The Future" saw Mr. Lasantha Bogoda, General Manager of DMS Software Technologies (Pvt) Ltd deliver an insightful presentation, followed by an interactive panel discussion featuring Prof. Thusitha S. L. W. Gunawardana, Professor in Business Management of the Faculty of Management and Finance of the University of Ruhuna, while Mr. Dhammika Lokuge, Country Managing Partner, T&D Associates, Chartered Accountant and Immediate Past President of the Galle District Chamber of Commerce and Industries, moderate the session.

The third session focused on "Leadership – Catalyst of The Future" featured an exciting line-up of speakers and panellists who highlighted that being a charismatic leader is a combination of nature and nurture, while noting the importance of relationships, ethics, and morale in leadership which was as important as having intelligence and extraversion.

The session featured Dr. P.A. Kiriwandeniya, Founder of Sanasa Movement as the speaker, followed by a panel discussion comprising of Mr. Kumara Dharmasena, Founder, Pintanna Plantation, Ms. Punya Nanayakkara, Director, Nelna Group of Companies, Dr. Kulatunga Rajapaksa, Chairman Emeritus, DSI Samson Group and Mr. Sugeeshwara Sirimanne, Director/CEO, Glanrich (Pvt) Ltd., Corporate speaker and visiting lecturer, while the session was moderated by Ms. Chamila Cooray, General Manager- Operations, WNS Global Services (Pvt) Ltd., Non-Executive Director / Audit Committee Chairperson, State Mortgage & Investment Bank of Sri Lanka.

### **CAPTIONS –**

DSC\_3847: A section of the delegates at the CA Sri Lanka inaugural regional conference in

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## Galle

DSC\_3874: Mr. Saman Sri Lal, Chairman of the Inaugural Regional Conference Committee delivering the welcome speech.

DSC\_3896: Ms. Jani Ganeshan, Chairperson of the Inaugural Galle Regional Conference Sub-Committee addressing the guests.

DSC\_3906: Mr. Sanjaya Bandara, President of CA Sri Lanka delivering his speech.

DSC\_4058: Panel discussion in session.

DSC\_4129: Panel discussion in session.

DSC\_4191: Panel discussion in session.

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# CA Sri Lanka inspires entrepreneurs and professionals in the south on how to navigate through challenges

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