

Amidst an ongoing unprecedented crisis which has engulfed Sri Lanka, resulting in both the country and its people looking for holistic transformational change from people-to system-centric together with enhanced transparency and accountability, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka (CA Sri Lanka) on Wednesday ceremoniously inaugurated the 43rd National Conference of Chartered Accountants with the ambitious aim of taking the lead to transform self, society, corporate and the country.

Hon. Yasantha Kodagoda, PC, Justice of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, was the Chief Guest, and Mr. Rohan Pethiyagoda, Biodiversity Scientist, delivered the keynote speech at the conference, which is recognised as Sri Lanka's biggest annual business summit. The inauguration ceremony which was held at the Monarch Imperial attracted the country's corporate glitterati, including business leaders, c-suite executives, and high-profile accounting personalities.

Among the other special invitees present were Mr. Sanjaya Bandara, President of CA Sri Lanka, Mr. Heshana Kuruppu, Vice President of CA Sri Lanka, Ms. Anoji de Silva, Chairperson of the National Conference Committee, Mr. Anura Perera, Chairman of the National Conference Technical Committee, and Ms. Dulani Fernando, Chief Executive Officer of CA Sri Lanka.

The three-day sold out mega event, which is held under the timely theme "Transform: Self, Society, Corporate, Country", attracted over 2000 delegates from Sri Lanka and overseas, and was further boosted with 14 speakers and 7 panelists who will delve into detail during two days of technical sessions on 13th and 14th

October on the need not just to transform strategic areas, but the fundamental requirement for everyone to transform as individuals, professionals, and citizens, apart from society-level transformation, without which Sri Lanka cannot achieve holistic country-wide transformation.

In his speech, Mr. Sanjaya Bandara said that as a nation, Sri Lanka is not going to see the light at the end of the tunnel unless we walk forward together. "Often, we expect change when we ourselves are not willing to change. Therefore, we decided to use this conference to cultivate a new thinking among our Chartered Accountants as well as other professionals," he said.

He highlighted that Chartered Accountants have always been identified as change makers and are widely

recognised as the hidden force behind the success of many organisations. "We are also known to play an integral part in sustaining success." Therefore, he said, this time, instead of only being a co-pilot for the company, Chartered Accountants must take one step further and help fly Sri Lanka out of this crisis.

Mr. Bandara however, emphasised that as much as the Accounting profession can do much more to contribute to the nation, this must be matched with a solid foundation in place where ethics, transparency, and accountability will be the primary cornerstones. "Without these fundamentals in place, transformation will not be successful. So, we all must strive and ensure that we make these changes not just for our sake, but also for the sake of our future generations," he added.

Justice Kodagoda called on the professional community to reflect introspectively as well as in an outward direction as to how everyone can contribute towards the development of a united, peaceful, economically viable and a proud nation.

He noted that as much as everyone expected political leaders to transform as visionary, honest and strong leaders, it was imperative for everyone else to also transform in the same direction that is expected of the country's leadership. "We must engage in sincere and critical introspection. We must identify where we too may have gone wrong and we must see how we can enhance our professionalism, efficiency and productivity and become economically strong and sustainable," he said.

Delivering the keynote, Mr. Rohan Pethiyagoda emphasised that men and women are not equal due to fundamental differences in them, although they deserve the same consideration. "You only have to go to Welikada prison or any other prison on the planet to find that 95 percent of the prisoners are men. Everyone in prison is in prison because of their behaviour, so anyone who claim that men and women are equal must tell me why there aren't more women in prison."

Mr. Pethiyagoda highlighted that the fact that men and women are different must be turned into strength, including the strength of diversity, rather than being forced to imagine that men and women have equal behaviour.

Ms. Anoji de Silva emphasised that failure is no longer an option for the country. "It's time for all of us to ask what we can do to help our country to survive and come out of the current crisis. All of us have a huge responsibility to take these ideas forward and implement a successful national transformation strategy. So, let's all work together to make it happen," she said.

Delivering the rational of this year's theme, Mr. Anura Perera said that the root cause of the ongoing unprecedented crisis is largely self-inflicted. "Our pride has been shattered, and our credibility is under the spotlight and this deepening crisis has compelled us to think afresh and envision a new course. We cannot depend on the world unless we help ourselves," he added.

CAPTIONS □

- CANC2289: Justice Yasantha Kodagoda, PC, Justice of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka and Mr. Rohan Pethiyagoda, Biodiversity Scientist being accorded a traditional welcome.

- CANC3318: An entertainment act.

- CANC3365: Mr. Sanjaya Bandara addressing the guests.

- CANC3408: Mr. Rohan Pethiyagoda delivering the keynote.

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