



Institute of National Security Studies

“From Insight to Action: Destruction and Trafficking of Cultural Property in Sri Lanka”

Press Release

Institute of National Security Studies (INSS), the premier think tank on national security established under the Ministry of Defence, organized a Round Table Discussion titled “From Insight to Action: Destruction and Trafficking of Cultural Property in Sri Lanka” on Thursday, 24th of August 2023, from 1400hrs to 1530hrs (IST) via Zoom. The three esteemed Guest Speakers of the event were Senior Prof. Anura Manatunga, Senior Professor in Archaeology, University of Kelaniya, Prof. P. B. Mandawala, Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nagananda International Institute for Buddhist Studies and Prof. Gamini Ranasinghe, Director General, Central Cultural Fund. The moderator for this informative and timely session was Rear Admiral Dimuthu Gunawardena RWP** RSP VSV USP nswc psc hdmc, Acting Director General, Director (Communications & Publications), of the Institute of National Security Studies. The audience comprised of ministry officials, academicians, researchers, representatives from Sri Lankan armed forces, think tanks and academia. The moderator commenced the proceedings along with the elaboration of uniqueness of the cultural property in Sri Lanka and the importance of protecting same.

Commencing with Senior Prof. Anura Manatunga, who spoke on the topic of “Current Landscape of Destruction and Trafficking of Cultural property in Sri Lanka”, he elaborated on the antiquities under the topics of types of antiquities and possible reasons for destruction of antiquities. Moreover, he extensively elaborated focusing on the illicit trade while demonstrating the nexus between the illicit trade and the antiquities. Moving on to the second speaker, Prof. P. B. Mandawala, provided clear insights into the “Addressing Legal Framework of Destruction and Trafficking of Cultural Property in Sri Lanka: Loopholes and Recommendations”. In his discussion, he deeply elaborated on the legal framework related to the destruction and trafficking

of cultural property in Sri Lanka and addressed about necessary steps to be taken in order to prevent it. Prof. Gamini Ranasinghe, as the final speaker, delivered a speech on “Challengers on the preservation of cultural property against destruction and trafficking”, he explained the challengers on the preservation of cultural properties such as lack of public awareness on the heritage value of cultural property, irresponsible reporting of incidents of theft and destruction of cultural property in social media, Absence of a national inventory of movable and immovable cultural properties in Sri Lanka, less awareness of the custom officers regarding the trafficking of cultural property.

Following up, several timely related questions under the discussed topic of concern were posed by the audience in the Q and A segment, where each speaker was directed with a question as per their topic of discussion. The speakers responded constructively along with adequate facts as well as realistic concerns of the current context. Finally, Mr. Thamindu Devinda, Intern (Research) of the Institute of National Security Studies, delivered the Vote of thanks, marking the end of yet another insightful and engaging Round Table Discussion conducted under a timely theme of debate.