



**Vision**  
To secure Sri Lanka by nurturing visionary, collective, and decisive leaders in security policy and decision making

**His Excellency Gotabaya Rajapaksa**  
President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka



**Hon. Chamal Rajapaksa**  
State Minister of National Security,  
Home Affairs and Disaster Management



**General (Retd.) G.D.H. Kamal Gunaratne WWV RWP RSP USP ndc psc MPhill**  
Secretary, Ministry of Defence and State Ministry of National Security, Home Affairs and Disaster Management



**About Us**  
Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka (INSSSL) is the premiere think tank on national security in Sri Lanka under the aegis of Ministry of Defence

## INSSSL launches its inaugural national conference; 'Colombo Conclave 2020'



The Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka, (INSSSL), the premier think tank on national security established under the Ministry of Defence conducted its inaugural national conference 'Colombo Conclave 2020' under the theme "A Comprehensive Security Paradigm for Sri Lanka". The conference was held in a virtual platform at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 24th of November 2020. It brought 12 local scholars together to discuss thematic issues which played a dominant role in maintaining national security. At the outset Admiral Prof. Jayanath Colombage RSP, VSV, USP, rcds, psc the Director General of INSSSL welcomed the distinguished panelists and all those who attended virtually which was followed by an inspiring key note address by the Chief Guest, General (Retd.) Kamal Gunaratne WWV RWP RSP USP ndc psc MPhill, Secretary to the Ministry of Defence.

After displaying a short documentary of the institution, the webinar kicked off with its first sub theme moderated by Amb. HMGS Paliakkara, the former foreign secretary and former Governor of Northern Province under the theme of 'Redefining threats to National Security'. The speakers comprised of a team of security experts and narcotics Rear Admiral PDS Dias RWP, RSP & Bar, USP, NWC, psc of the Sri Lanka Navy spoke on implementing methods to set parameters to protect the Maritime space and responding to eradicating and addressing all types of smuggling to the shores and terrorism driven by ethnic and religious extremism. He also reflected on our traditional scheme of operations in situations such as pandemics and bio-hazardous environments. Major General Darshana Hettiarachchi RSP VSV USP ndu psc who was the second speaker for the first panel discussed on the collective measures taken to counter modern terrorism, highlighting the need to implement sophisticated policies, promoting interfaith dialogues between the ethnic races and how best to strengthen the overall unity among the society. Dr. Laknath Welagedra Chairman of the National Dangerous Drug Control Board spoke on the key issues affecting the people of Sri Lanka and especially the youth at hand and advised to strengthen measures to reduce the demand and supply of drugs internally and externally with the objective of achieving "a secure country free from drug abuse". He also proposed accelerated actions for strengthening coordination among law enforcement officers, other related agencies and with Indian Ocean countries with respect to conducting of intelligence-led joint investigations and implement joint coastal border control measures to promote and strengthen exchange of information and drug-related intelligence in timely manner among drug law enforcement agencies.

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The second session was followed by a panel consisting of doctors and the Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture which was moderated by Amb. Bernard Goonetilleke, Chairman of the Pathfinder foundation & former Secretary to Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the sub theme, 'Recognizing sustainability for healthy medical discourse'.

Major General Sumedha Perera WWV RWP RSP SPS and Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture highlighted the need to create a vibrant and dynamic agriculture sector, achieving self-sufficiency, by introducing appropriate technologies and mechanisms for food security as it is vital to the national prosperity. Subsequently, Dr. Dilhani Samarasekara Consultant Community Physician Quarantine Unit, Ministry of Health and Dr. Lal Pananpitiya Deputy Director General Medical Services Ministry of Health discussed the impact of Preventive medicine and curative medicine on health Security respectively. The health specialist stressed on necessities on implementing preventive medicine focusing on protecting promoting and maintaining health and well-being,



Emergency response operations, combating communicable and non-communicable disease.

The final sub theme was 'Eco-Responsibility towards a greener tomorrow' and the expert panel of environmentalists of this session was Dr. Terney Pradeep who discussed the importance of Blue economy, putting an end

to the long drawn Illegal fishing issues faced by Sri Lanka, and measures taken to protect marine life by banning the use of dynamite. The next speaker Prof. Hemanthi Ranasinghe, Senior Professor of the Department of Forestry and Environment, University of Sri Jayewardenapura urged on the importance of participating in green initiatives, climate change adaptations, formulating a national plan to recover from disasters and preserving the biodiversity.



Mr. Charith Pathirana, Scientific officer, Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board discussed on the environmental issues including natural resources (especially water), soil degradation and pollution that could be a cause of violent conflicts. He also stated that chemicals predominate these materials and human exposure is possible through raw materials, manufactured products, waste, combustion products or occupational exposure. The topics of discussion was of timely significance as the deliberations on health and food security gained widespread attention due to the current pandemic crisis and the facets on

Environmental security examining the state of human-environment dynamics that is very much a hot topic in media today brought about the dual responsibilities' of society and the government as a whole in protecting the environment. The maritime security aspects of the Indian ocean and the proliferation of drugs and narcotics by its littoral states making Sri Lanka not only a hub for drug dealers but a country that is fast catching up as a state that consumes dangerous drugs was alarming and the presentation on radicalization and violent extremism were also much pertinent topics that were discussed bringing out the importance of having a comprehensive security paradigm for Sri Lanka to safeguard its national security. By organizing this inaugural; national conference which comprised of topics was a timely significance to Sri Lanka, it paved way to facilitate knowledge sharing and multi-party discussions. This conference gave way to aid in early detection of security issues, prevention of possible conflicts as well as managing and mitigating existing conflicts among different parties.

This virtual conference was organized with the expectation of establishing a space for researchers, academia, former officials, and senior experts from around the country to engage in policy relevant, problem solving dialogues, carrying significance with respect to aspects of national security. The discussion helped to follow emerging health security, environmental security and maritime security trends together with Violent Extremism and Proliferation of Narcotic trends that are prevalent in the country. This conference achieved in helping participants to gain keener understanding of each other's perspectives on common issues. The conference provided a progressive platform for formulating options and solving problems.



## Director General, Admiral (Prof) Jayanath Colombage delivered keynote address at General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU) Book Launch; Comprehensive Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean Region: Challenges and Opportunities

General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU) organized a book launch on 06 October 2020, to launch the edited book Comprehensive Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean Region: Challenges and Opportunities published by KDU with Knowledge World (KW) Publishers, New Delhi.



Director General, Admiral (Prof.) Jayanath Colombage attending event as the Chief Guest, delivered the Key Note Address emphasizing that Indian Ocean's security is a crucial aspect for the national security of the neighbouring countries. The representatives of leading think tanks in Sri Lanka such as, Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies; Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS); Institute of Policy Studies (IPS); and Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute (LKI) were among the distinguished guests who graced this event.



## Director General Admiral (Prof.) Jayanath Colombage and Director (Communications and Publications) Rear Admiral Dimuthu Gunawardena spoke at the orientation programme for designated Ambassadors / Heads of Missions.

Admiral (Prof.) Jayanath Colombage, RSP, VSV, USP, rcds, psc Director General of INSSSL and Rear Admiral Dimuthu Gunawardena RWP\*\*,RSP, VSV, USP, nswc, psc, hdmc, Director (Communications and Publications) of INSSSL participated at the Orientation programme for Ambassadors / Heads of mission designates conducted on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020. It was conducted under the theme of “The Strategic Importance of the Indian Ocean” at the mini conference hall at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a panel of speakers in attendance. The Director General introduced the topic and elaborated the importance of the Indian Ocean and its opportunities and challenges in general while Rear Admiral Dimuthu Gunawardena spoke on Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean and Role of Sri Lanka, Role of regional organizations/forums in enhancing maritime security and governance



## INSSSL organized its first ‘Security Salon’ for 2020 virtually on the title; “Rise of Indo-Pacific: Opportunities and Challenges to South Asia”



The Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka (INSSSL)  
Security Salon  
on

**“Rise of Indo-Pacific : Opportunities and  
challenges to South Asia**



**Guest Speaker**  
Prof. Raja Mohan  
Director, Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS)  
National University of Singapore

On the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020  
From 9.00 am to 10.15 am  
CLOSED DOOR DISCUSSION



During the discussion the rise of China as an economic power in the Indian Ocean was viewed as a fundamental change, which makes it difficult for littorals to be disconnected from China. The impact of the rise of China is a challenge to many. Not only extra regional states, but China’s neighbors are concerned about China’s rise and the assertiveness.

The growing conflicts between US-China and India-China was observed from a political, economic, military dimension. The impact of this is long-term. On one hand, these pose challenges to traditional form of globalization. On the other hand, capabilities of many middle powers have grown. It was highlighted that there will be a global contestation, yet the impact on Asia will be severe. However, it was discussed that how each country will react to the great rivalries will depend on their interests.

It was mentioned that strengthening the economy with a strong leadership to face external risks and reorganizing regional institutions to reduce the dangers that arise from great power rivalry are necessary.

Asia’s rise and West’s decline was on limelight for years, yet this seems to be an illusion. According to the speaker, when China emerged, challenging the power of the West, it was Asia’s rise. However, it is noted that Asia is not one entity in operational terms, as there are various divisions and imbalances within Asia. This internal polarization has changed the system internationally.

Finally, he highlighted that while policies and a national strategy should be in place to secure the national interest, it should also facilitate greater connection. It is practical for any state to cooperate with others and achieve goals sub regionally, without totally depending on grandeur outcomes, as big powers do not always abide by rules.

Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka, organized a ‘Security Salon’ a closed door discussion on Rise of Indo-Pacific: Opportunities and Challenges to South Asia” on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020. The guest speaker was Prof. Raja Mohan, Director of Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) at National University of Singapore. Admiral (Prof.) Jayanath Colombage, Director General of INSSSL welcomed the Guest speaker and gave a brief introduction of him to the audience which was followed by a preamble to the topic. The event was attended by a limited number of academics, researchers, diplomats and military officers.

The discussion covered strategic geography of Indo-Pacific, players in the IO and opportunities and challenges. Strategic Geographical features have become fundamental when discussing the concept of Indo-Pacific. Ideas of geography has evolved from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific.

## Rear Admiral Dimuthu Gunawardena, Director (Communications and Publications) of INSSSL was the guest speaker at the video conferencing lecture organized by the National Defence College, UAE.

He spoke on aspects of national security and defence on the title “Understanding Sri Lanka’s defence policy and security priorities” on May 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2020, as a part of the NDC (UAE) 8 Regional Study Tour to Sri Lanka. Representing Sri Lanka, he focused his lecture mainly on national security decision making process, strategic leadership challenges in national security and analyzed the strategic context and national security issues pertaining to security threats, challenges and opportunities.



## Ms. Mahesha Jayawardena highlighted the “Emergence of LTTE Activists in Front Organizations and Propaganda” at the ‘Threat Lens’ organized by INSSSL.



Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka, organized a ‘Threat Lens’ a closed door discussion under the theme of “Emergence of LTTE activists in front organizations and propaganda” on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 at the main auditorium in the Ministry of Defence. The guest speaker for the event was, Ms. Mahesha Jayawardena, the Acting Deputy Director of International Security and Counter Terrorism Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The event was graced by the presence



of Major General (Retd) J R Kulathunga RSP the Chief of National Intelligence, Ms. C Samanthi Weerasinghe, Additional Secretary (National Security), State Ministry of National Security, Home Affairs and Disaster Management. It was attended by several other experts from the intelligence and operational fields that were invited to attend from other security agencies. The Threat Lens was moderated by Admiral (Prof) Jayanath Colombage RSP VSV USP rcds psc, Director General of the INSSSL and Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The discussion disclosed the emerging threats and challenges caused by the front organizations of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which was a Tamil militant organization based in northeastern Sri Lanka. When the LTTE was eventually militarily defeated and its leadership killed on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2009, the



remnant LTTE elements within the global Tamil Diaspora under different names have been trying to revive the organization by trying to create various forms of violence within the island. The speaker explained how such elements use the holocaust tag as a new dimension to discredit the government of Sri Lanka and various steps taken by the Government in coordination with intelligence agencies against these campaigns conducted by the LTTE front organizations both externally and internally. The discussion ended after obtaining views and comments of other stakeholders present and a brief Q and A session.

## “We wish to insulate the Indian Ocean from great power rivalries” Director General Admiral (Prof) Jayanath Colombage delivered the keynote speech at Pathfinder Indian Ocean Security Conference 2020.

**Inaugural Session**  
10<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
12:15 p.m. (IST)



Amb. Bernard Goonetilleke (Retd.)  
Chairman, Pathfinder Foundation  
Co-Chair of PFIOSC



Adm. (Prof.) Jayanath Colombage,  
Foreign Secretary  
Keynote Speech



Amb. Shivshankar Menon (Retd.)  
Former National Security Adviser of India  
Co-Chair of PFIOSC



Amb. Alaina B. Teplitz  
U.S Ambassador to Sri Lanka



Amb. Geetha De Silva (Retd.)  
Secretary General- PFIOSC



Amb. Akira Sugiyama  
Japan Ambassador to Sri Lanka

Register

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of the Indian Ocean and the location of Sri Lanka which frames the Economy and Foreign Policy directives; 1) Neutrality 2) Friendly relations with everyone 3) Not to be caught up in major power game and not accepting ‘hedge’ or ‘choose’ between states or ‘Band Wagoning’ 4) Maintain “Strategic Autonomy” 5) Not ceding control of strategic assets to foreign concerns. And he pointed out that Sri Lanka should also understand India’s strategic security concerns especially in maritime and air domains and not to be a strategic security concern to India.

## Honorary Associate Research Fellow at INSSSL, Ruwanthi Jayasekara attended Daniel K. Inouye Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI APCSS)'s International Workshop on 'Strategic Competition in the Indian Ocean'



The three-day interactive workshop was conducted by Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI APCSS) in partnership with Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESAS) from 8-10 December 2020. Ms. Ruwanthi Jayasekara was one of the participants from Sri Lanka, which brought together participants from Asia and West.

This workshop defined the complex strategic scenario developing in the Indian Ocean region and China's expansive maritime strategy focus in the South China Sea to include the Indian Ocean, with the ultimate goal of displacing India and the United States as

primary power actors there. Different perspectives on the Indian Ocean Region was discussed on the topics of geopolitics, strategic competition and regional approaches to Indian Ocean.

Ms. Jayasekara presented on 'Diverse Perspectives on Strategic Competition and its effect in the Indian Ocean Region'. She highlighted that US-China competition is not the accurate framework for viewing IOR dynamics, absence of investment in IO from US/West has created a vacuum for China to fill in and littoral states do not wish to bandwagon with one against another and look forward to regional or sub regional cooperation.

## Director General Spoke at the launch of "UN Network on Migration in Sri Lanka" in November held virtually.



The UN Network on Migration in Sri Lanka was formally launched virtually on 11 November by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the UN Resident Coordinator and 11 UN entities in Sri Lanka in partnership with the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL).

Director General of INSSSL expounded upon the process of repatriation of Sri Lankans due to pandemic situation as a panelist at the discussion held at the launch. He stated that since February 2019, the Ministry has been carrying out the task of repatriation for almost a year now and to date 60,470 Sri Lankans, composed of pilgrims, students,

Officials of Government or Armed Forces, migrant workers, short term visitors, sea farers and cases on compassionate grounds have been repatriated from 137 countries by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Sri Lanka Missions overseas.

Moreover he explained that as the conditions abroad deteriorate and due to the large number of layoffs and other courses of unemployment, the number of prospective returnees keep rising and currently an estimated 68,000 Overseas Sri Lankans from various regions have been wait listed by the Ministry for repatriation.

Elucidating forthcoming schedules on ensuring secure repatriation, he further stated that the latest fortnightly schedule of flights are finalized to be operated between 2-9 January 2021, and will include 1400 passengers from Chennai, Melbourne, Kuwait, Doha, Canada, Cyprus and Dubai.

The significance of managing the repatriation process and ensuring safe return of Sri Lankans abroad, under Covid 19 health guidelines and precautions will surely guarantee the security of the nation.

**“Holistic national growth and holistic national security is of paramount importance”  
Director General chaired the plenary session of the Defence and Strategic Studies at the  
13<sup>th</sup> International Research Conference organized by  
General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University under the theme of  
‘Holistic Approach to National Growth and Security’**



General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University commenced its two-day International Research Conference under the theme “Holistic Approach to National Growth and Security,” on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

Director General, INSSSL, chairing the session on Defence and Strategic Studies, spoke about the significance of prioritizing national security without compromise as even a minute glitch can inflict suffering. He focused on present challenges posed by Global pandemic, ensuring national growth and mentioned that national security has become a novel challenge.

He further expounding on national security opined that, while Sri Lanka had to fight a war for over 30 years and the country's development was stagnant, other countries moved forward. The need of a grand strategy towards national growth and national security was emphasized as he mentioned how grand strategy, a great resolve in political leadership and synergy between the armed forces and political leadership led to bring 30 year war to an end.



**Director General, INSSSL delivered the Keynote Speech at the GPPAC Workshop on  
“The implication of COVID-19 pandemic for South Asia: Civil Society Perspectives.”**



Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) organized GPPAC Workshop on “The implication of COVID-19 pandemic for South Asia: Civil Society Perspectives” on 26 November 2020. Admiral (Prof) Jayanath Colombage spoke on the impact of Covid 19 to South Asia and especially Sri Lanka and management of it. He stated that the total recovered rate of COVID-19 positive cases in Sri Lanka stands at 74% and the death rate is of only 0.4%. Therefore, he identified the significance of examining Sri Lankan Covid-19 strategy

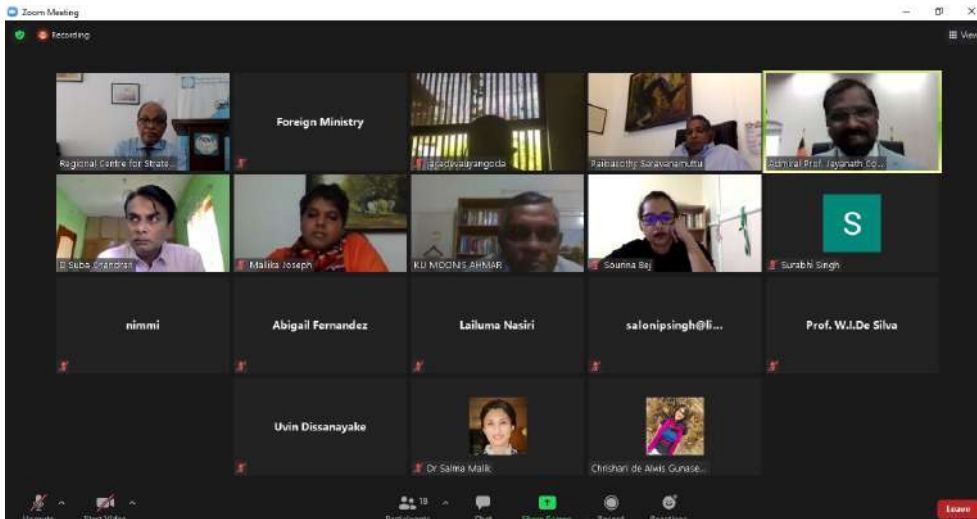
when it comes to regional approach.

“The top pillar of Sri Lanka’s strategy is ‘prevention’. Sri Lanka restricted the ports of entry and took much effort in preventing COVID-19 coming into the country. The Sri Lankan Government together with the responsible authorities planned on how to act immediately to prevent COVID-19 spreading out to the society. While many countries had given up fighting against the COVID and letting it to settle down on its own, Sri Lanka worked hard for her citizens standing by the motto ‘Life Matters’. Sri Lanka understands the fact that protecting the Right to Life is of critical importance and undertook this as a humanitarian mission.”

He further focused on the multidimensional threat posed by COVID-19 and the implication to South Asia, and stated that it is clearly visible how COVID-19 has posed huge challenges to capacities, especially in the areas of health, economy, and also in our food production.

Looking at a regional perspective he opined that as the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on the region’s economies linger, South Asia is set to plunge into its worst ever recession in the coming year 2021. As a result, informal workers who earn daily wages are at risk and millions of South Asians may fall into extreme poverty.

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“Now, the whole world is waiting for the vaccine to come. It is a doubt whether this vaccine will also be caught up or dominated by the so-called medicine mafia. Affordability and availability of this vaccine to less developed countries like Sri Lanka, as we are not producing it, also pose several questions in our minds.” Stated Director General INSSSL

**Admiral (Prof) Jayanath Colombage delivered the keynote address on Web Dialogue held with the collaboration of Pathfinder, RIS-New Delhi, Indian Council of World Affairs and Indian Confluence titled Deepening India- Sri Lanka ties in the New World Order on 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2020.**

**#AsConConversations**

**Web Dialogue on**

**Deepening India - Sri Lanka Ties in the New World Order**

29 October 2020 | 2:00 pm India Time & Sri Lanka Time

**Chair**

**Keynote Address**

**Welcome**

**Opening Remarks**

Register at:  
<https://forms.gle/hRF1HymhWEnUZkC79>

<https://www.facebook.com/AsianConfluence/>

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**“Given the enormity of the challenges we face we are left with two options; One where we retreat to our individual silos and hope for the best or we view this present juncture as an opportunity to build bridges for us to work towards greater cooperation that will bring about peace and prosperity for all.”**

Director General, Admiral (Prof) Colombage delivered the keynote speech at Virtual Conference on “Promoting SL’s interests in the Maritime Domain: Strengthening Regional cooperation with the EU” organized by Lakshman Kadiragamar Institute on 03<sup>rd</sup> December 2020.

## Fighting Deforestation in Sri Lanka

The focus on Sri Lanka's deforestation and the conservation of forests this year can be traced back to widespread discussions about deforestation in Wilpattu National Park back in 2019. Deforestation in Wanathawillu, Anawilundawa and Sinharaja has been the recent focus of discussion. However, reports of more deforestation and illegal commercial or developmental projects have been reported from many parts of the country. Since then, the topic has become affiliated with politics and certain political figures. The blame game has advanced amid the lack of political authority.

The forest cover of Sri Lanka in 2019 was reported to be 16.5 percent, down from 29.7 percent in 2017. According to Dr. Ravindra Kariyawasam, in 1882, the country's forest density was around 82 percent. Between 1990 and 2000, Sri Lanka lost an average of 26,800 hectares of forest per year, which amounts to an average annual deforestation rate of 1.14 percent. In total, between 1990 and 2005 alone, Sri Lanka lost 17.7 percent of its forest cover.

### Controversial Legal Moves

Recently, environmentalists have taken issue with the Sri Lankan cabinet's recently announced plan to revoke Circular No. 5/2001, which protests the country's Other State Forests (OSFs), and transfer jurisdiction for these protected areas from the Forest Department to the authorities at the divisional and district levels. Amid the public uproar, further discussions are to be held, with the cabinet instructed to form a committee to investigate the potential negative impacts of the move, and to gather feedback.

According to RMC Herath, Sri Lanka's land commissioner general, the "circular will not be revoked immediately. It will happen step by step. The Forest Department, the Wildlife Conservation Department, the Land Commissioner's Department, the Land Policy and Planning Department, the Land Survey Department, the Land Reforms Commission and other relevant authorities will together consider the best way forward."

While the formation of a committee is exemplary, "the step by step" approach to revoking the measure makes it urgent for environmentalists and other stakeholders to analytically observe the committee's recommendations and decisions. The circular safeguards around 500,000 hectares of OSFs that are not otherwise protected. As these forests are used by animals, especially elephants, as migratory corridors, their segregation into agricultural lands might lead to increased elephant-human conflict, thus again adversely affecting the economy and livelihoods of communities living in the area.

Also sparking debate were provisions made under the Extraordinary Gazette 2192/36 of September 10, in which the government planned to issue legal documents confirming ownership to eligible claimants who have occupied state lands, for agricultural or any development activity, without possessing formal documents. Coupled with the attempts to revoke Circular No. 5/2001, the protection of OSFs appears to be in danger. On a positive note, the Extraordinary Gazette allowing persons to occupy state lands has been cancelled amid complaints that the gazette promoted people to illegally take over lands, hoping for the granting of official land deeds. However, the damage caused to forest patches during the few days the Gazette was in force has not yet been calculated.

### The Politics of Forest Protection

The current government has committed to increase Sri Lanka's national forest cover by 30 percent during its term in office. Under the "Vistas of Splendor and Prosperity" plan, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has emphasized the need for a sustainable environmental policy and emphasized the need for sustainable development.

The ongoing deforestation in Sri Lanka needs to be tackled and mitigated if the country is to reach the 30 percent target. Given such a goal, news of the deforestation of protected areas is a nightmare for conservationists



By Savithri Sellapperumage

and environmentalists. The construction of the Neluwa-Lankagama-Deniyaya Road, along with deforestation in Anawilundawa in order to establish a prawn farm, caught the attention of social media and several interest groups. Furthermore, the involvement of a few newly elected parliamentarians was reported, creating an uproar from the public. Investigations are underway.

The issue has caught the president's attentions as well, and Rajapaksa reiterated that development has to take place without harm to the environment. However, the diffusion of the president's aims and vision to the relevant political authorities and bureaucratic authorities seems questionable, amid incidents of deforestation and increased human activity. Development projects within forest areas have failed to produce environmental assessments, and make little effort to steer clear of illegal intrusion.

Election promises, a lack of political authority and a lack of sustainable strategies have led to the blind advancement of unsustainable development projects. This needs to be evaluated and altered accordingly, through a process in which each point of authority will be held responsible from the political level to the bureaucratic level.

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**Author is a Honorary Associate Research Fellow of the Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka (INSSSL). Views expressed are author's own.**

**Full article can be accessed at: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/fighting-deforestation-in-sri-lanka/>**



**Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka**

8<sup>th</sup> Floor, 'SUHURUPAYA', Battaramulla, Sri Lanka.

Voice: +94 112 879 087

E-mail: [inss.srilanka@gmail.com](mailto:inss.srilanka@gmail.com)

Web: [www.insssl.lk](http://www.insssl.lk) Facebook: [www.facebook.com/INSSSL](https://www.facebook.com/INSSSL)

