



**EDB**

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Sailing around  
Sri Lanka's  
Blue Economy

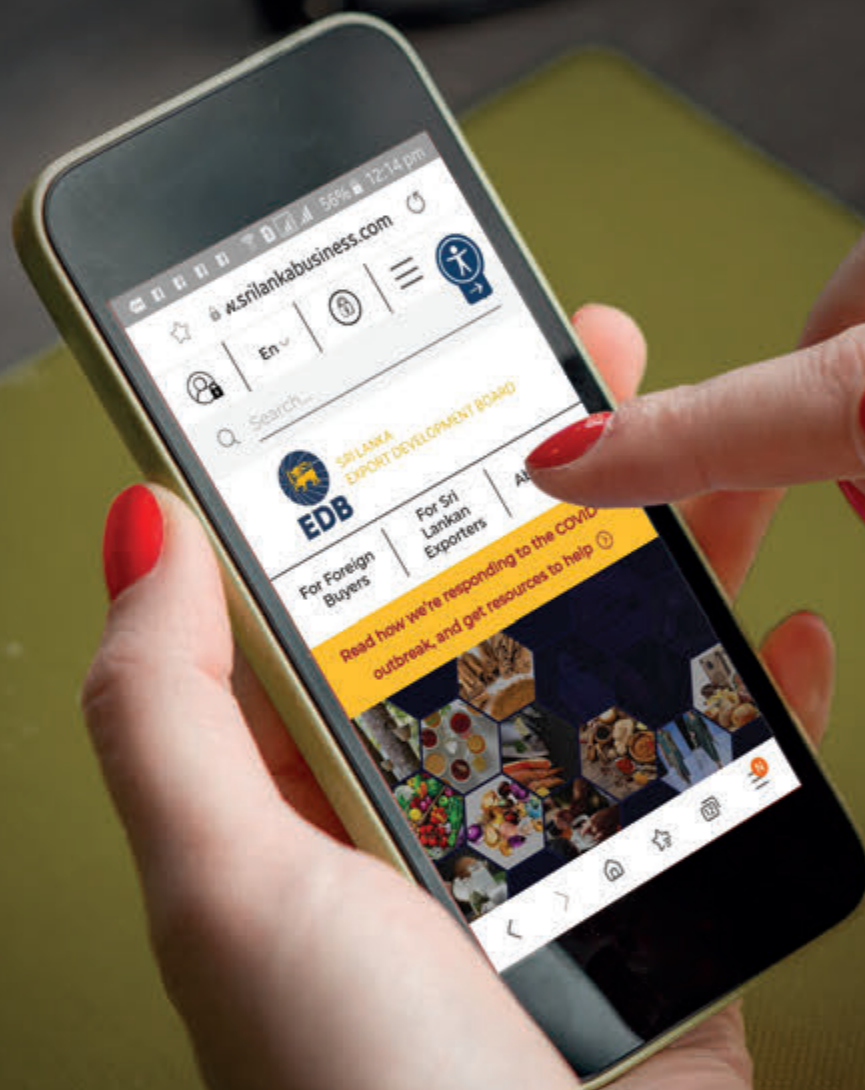
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## WELCOME



The cover photograph depicts the futuristic image of the Colombo Port City Special Economic Zone in Sri Lanka.

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# Ayubowan!

## The blue economy is the new frontier beyond the shores, brimming with great opportunities for economic growth.

The blue economy offers the world food and livelihood in fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, renewable energy, maritime transportation, and coastal infrastructure development. The ocean is used globally for food, energy, minerals, and transportation; however, Sustainable Development Goal 14 underscores its sustainable use, calling for international cooperation to ensure balance in the exploitation of the ocean.

There is much to be explored and harnessed in the blue economy for the good of humanity. Sri Lanka, an island nation which is surrounded by the beautiful Indian Ocean and its vast behemoth of resources, has immense opportunity to reap the benefits of its location for economic growth. In this issue of The Business Lanka Magazine, we focus on several Sri Lankan companies operating in the sectors of the blue economy that provide employment opportunities, invest in technology and innovation, and aid growth in the export sector.

Global Sea Foods is a seafood processing company based in Sri Lanka, leveraging Sri Lanka's unique position surrounded by the Indian Ocean to supply value-added seafood products worldwide. Colombo Dockyard is a leading shipbuilder and repairer in Sri Lanka, and it is backed by Japan's Onomichi Dockyard Company, bringing together the Japanese best practices in business and technology. Master Divers is the oldest marine, underwater, and offshore services provider in the South Asian Island, accompanied by over four decades of operations in the industry. Sea Leisure Yachting Group manufactures charter and cruising catamarans, rigid hull boats, and sailing dinghies on the Island and is a pioneer in the marine leisure and tourism market. A provider of energy logistics and support services in the country for international oil and gas companies seeking upstream and downstream opportunities as well as renewable energy solutions, Hayleys Energy Services Lanka intends to become a fully-fledged energy logistics provider.

The magazine's front page depicts the futuristic image of the Colombo Port City Special Economic Zone in Sri Lanka, poised to be more than just a business nucleus in the times to come. The ground-breaking infrastructure project – built on 660 acres of reclaimed land from the sea – aims to reshape Sri Lanka's economic landscape and become a central hub that intertwines business excellence with enhanced liveability. The Port City has integrated the latest sustainability measures and incorporated ESG principles from a foundation level, to establish and promote it as a "Green and Blue SEZ" focusing on the Live-Work-Play aspect.

As a key maritime location, the design of Port City offers activities and experiences that incorporate several key waterfront locations – such as the first beachfront development at the heart of the Colombo Business District coupled with a Luxury Yacht Marina. The unique relationship with the waterways allows for an array of water-based activities such as canoeing and water taxis – the latter focusing on reducing vehicular traffic and, thus, lowering the overall carbon footprint.

**Sri Lanka Export Development Board**

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Interview

# A Veteran Leadership to Steer the Nation's Export Quest

**The appointment of Dr. Kingsley Bernard – an experienced business leader in Sri Lanka – as Chairman and Chief Executive of the Sri Lanka Export Development Board (EDB) has provided hope and optimism to the nation's export community. His assumption of this coveted position comes at a time when the Island has begun its pursuit of economic recovery after undergoing political and economic upheaval.**



Dr. Kingsley Bernard, Chairman and Chief Executive of the Sri Lanka Export Development Board (EDB).

**T**he new EDB Chief is no stranger to the EDB, having been its Director – Marketing during the early 90s. Dr. Bernard had an illustrious career – spanning more than three decades – in the corporate sector, holding numerous responsible positions in export-related entities.

He is acclaimed for his noteworthy contribution to the development of exports in Sri Lanka, having held the positions of Management Consultant of Sri Lanka Export Credit Insurance Corporation (SLECIC), Vice President of the Exporters' Association of Sri Lanka (EASL) – the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, and President of the

National Chamber of Exporters of Sri Lanka (NCE) during a glorious period for the nation's exports. Bernard holds a Ph.D. from the Management and Science University (MSU) of Malaysia, an MBA from the University of Colombo, a Post-Graduate Diploma in International Marketing from Colorado State University (CSU)

– USA, and a Bachelor of Science Degree (BSc) from the University of Jaffna.

In this interview with Business Lanka magazine, Dr. Bernard explains how he intends to face this challenging task of leading Sri Lanka's export drive at a critical time, drawing on the enormous experience and expertise he has accumulated for more than three decades.

**How do you look forward to the challenge of heading the EDB at a time when the country is coming out of its worst economic crisis since independence?**

As you all know, exports are one of the apparent solutions available to overcome the problems associated with our economy. I don't want to overemphasize the importance of exports to any country. Still, in the Sri Lankan context, as you mentioned correctly, we are about to overcome the worst economic crisis this nation has ever witnessed. In addition to that, there are several other aspects as well. Our traditional export markets, such as the USA, EU, and UK, are encountering economic difficulties, and hence, the demand for our export products has declined. Therefore, this challenge is severe for a country.

To overcome this challenge, we need to look for new markets, products, and opportunities. Further, we must pursue a strategy of exploiting up-market niches, as we cannot be competitive in mass markets since we are not a large country. We also need to pay much attention to service exports, as the demand for service exports has multiplied in overseas markets over the last few years.

**You have been involved with exports in Sri Lanka for a long period of time. How do you assess the performance of the Island's export sector over the two to three decades?**

To be honest, I am not satisfied with the progress of the export sector

**Our focus on research has to be strengthened. We must pay special attention to assisting small and medium-sized companies to explore market opportunities and international buyers.**

over the last two to three decades. Because if you look at exports as a percentage of the GDP, it has declined over the previous few years. At one particular time, our exports represented about 1/3 of the GDP. This declining trend must be reversed as soon as possible. Furthermore, we have to focus on products by which we can increase our value addition. It is also essential that we strive towards joining global value chains. If you look at the dynamics of modern-day international trade, it is unnecessary to complete a good's entire production within one particular country. A country can manufacture selected components of industrial products based on their relative strengths and competencies without undertaking the entirety of the production. We must also learn from our experience in terms of the National Export Strategy 2018 -2022 and incorporate those lessons into our future strategies. Also, we as a nation have a good reputation for being a supplier of high-quality organic food and value-added agricultural products to Europe and the USA. We must fully capitalize on our strengths in those areas while using our location advantage to improve our prospects in shipping and logistics.

**How do you compare the EDB now with how it was in the early 90's?**

There have been several developments within the EDB over the last few decades. However, we must reflect and determine whether those developments are sufficient to keep pace with our competitors. We were ahead of India, Vietnam, and Bangladesh regarding exports

at a particular point. But now those countries have overtaken us. They overtook us, as they were more proactive than us in decision-making and executed better strategies than us. Unfortunately, the EDB's progress had been hampered due to resource limitations. But even under such constraints, the EDB has been quite proactive in promoting Sri Lanka's export sector.

**How do you foresee Sri Lanka's export performance for 2023, given the economic slowdown in both the US and Europe?**

Economic downturns are not long-term phenomena. It is true that as both the US and Europe are experiencing economic issues, it would impact our exports during the first two quarters. However, we hope to get back on track during the last two quarters and revitalize our export drive.

**What significant changes do you intend to introduce to the EDB?**

Our focus on research has to be strengthened. We must pay special attention to assisting small and medium-sized companies to explore market opportunities and international buyers. More resources will have to be allocated towards market opportunity analysis. In this regard, we have a group of dedicated and knowledgeable officers whose know-how can be made use of to achieve this objective.

**How does the EDB aim to encourage SME exporters and regional enterprises?**

I can confidently state that this is one aspect in which the EDB has

excelled over the last few years. The EDB's New Exporter Development Program – the flagship initiative of the EDB Regional Product Division – has produced tremendous results. One Village One Product program – the brainchild of Dilum Amunugama, State Minister of Investment Promotion – is another program focused on SMEs and is quite relevant and timely. A dedicated division called Regional Development examines SMEs and regional enterprises. Our four regional offices also play an essential role in serving regional enterprises. SMEs require a lot of support and assistance from the Government, and the EDB is committed to fulfilling the SMEs' expectations.

**How does the EDB plan to promote export service sectors, given Sri Lanka's potential in industries such as IT and logistics?**

Our country has achieved considerable progress in service areas, particularly IT and software exports. IT and BPO exports have emerged as one of the leading export service earners to the economy, earning approximately US\$ 1 billion. Sri Lanka has a huge potential for IT/software exports due to our highly skilled pool of human resources. Our younger generation is exceptionally talented, and they can compete with the youth of any other nation. The service sector has an enormous capacity to reach greater heights, and the EDB is determined to promote the service sector to realize this promise.

**Could you comment on the proposed National Export Strategy (NES) 2023 - 27?**

When developing the NES 2023-2027, we need to be mindful of our experience with the NES 2018-2022. There were six focus sectors in NES 2018-2022, and some of those sectors brought the desired results, while a few others could have been more successful. Therefore, when formulating the NES 2023-2027, we



**Sri Lanka has a huge potential for IT/software exports due to our highly skilled pool of human resources. Our younger generation is exceptionally talented, and they can compete with the youth of any other nation.**

must reflect on those lessons to overcome future challenges.

**Can you share your career progression with our readers?**

I began my career as an executive as a fresh graduate from the University of Jaffna. I had the opportunity of working in multinational companies and large Sri Lankan companies. Further, I was fortunate to hold senior positions in the public sector too. I have gained considerable experience in the export sector. I served as Director – Marketing of the EDB in the early 90's.

Further, my active involvement with the National Chamber of Exporters (NCE) as its President (from 2004 to 2006) and having been Vice President of the Exporters Association of Sri Lanka (EASL attached to the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce) as well as leading the Joint Business Forum in addition to my tenure of office with the Sri Lanka Export Credit Insurance Corporation (SLECI) as its Management Consultant, which gave me sufficient experience as a policy maker in the export sector. As I have been

involved in multiple facets of the export field, it would serve me well enough to head the EDB. I was an exporter when I headed Dankotuwa Porcelain for about five years during the latter part of 1990's when its primary shareholder was a Japanese company. I also had the fortune of working under the guidance of some of the most iconic individuals in the history of Sri Lanka, such as the Late Ranjan Wijerathne (Former Chairman, Agricultural Development Authority), Late R. Rajamahendran (Former Chairman, Capital Maharaja Organization), and Late Dr. Upali Nanayakkara (top professional and an academic), and leading corporate personalities such as Mr. Jack Knous (Former MD – Volanka), Mr. John Kembster (Former Chairman, Lever Brothers, Ceylon) as well as Daya Gamage (Chairman, Daya Group of Companies) during my career and I cherish those experiences very much. ☐

Interviewed by **Asela Gunawardena**  
Photography by **Sanath Jayawardhana**



## Blue Economy

# Sri Lanka's Blue Economy

### How should Sri Lanka reframe its Marine Development Strategy to reap the full benefits of the Blue Economy?

President Ranil Wickremesinghe recently pronounced that his goal is to make Sri Lanka a rich country by 2048, when the country celebrates the centenary of independence from British rule. The accomplishment of this goal will crucially depend on how the key sectors of the economy contribute to economic development in their respective industries within the next 25 years. In this endeavor, the key players of the blue economy of Sri Lanka have an unchallengeable duty to take the country towards the desired goal in 2048 by taking appropriate strategies.

### What is the Blue Economy (BE)?

It is interesting to note that different international organizations have given different definitions to the BE about the purposes for which those organizations have been established.

- The World Bank says that the BE is the sustainable use of oceanic resources for economic growth, improved livelihood, and jobs while preserving the health of ocean ecosystems.

- The European Commission defines it as all economic activities in the oceans, seas, and coasts.

- The Commonwealth of Nations considers it an emerging concept that encourages better stewardship of our ocean or blue resources.

- The Centre for the Blue Economy says, "It is now a widely used term around the world with three related but distinct meanings – the overall contribution of the oceans to economies, the need to address the environmental and ecological sustainability of the oceans, and the ocean economy as a growth opportunity for both the developed and developing nations. However, a striking feature of all these definitions

is the common thread of the use of ocean resources in a sustainable manner.

### What is the Blue Economy of Sri Lanka?

The current and future prosperity of Sri Lanka is intrinsically linked to its marine and coastal assets, with fisheries and tourism being the two main pillars of its economy, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and source of employment. The Blue Economy's implementation hitherto was named "Fisheries and Ocean Development Movement". In a broader sense, it would be correct to say that the Blue Economy is the need of the hour for accelerated economic development.

In Sri Lanka, the BE is an umbrella term for several economic activities promoting inclusive growth and environmental sustainability, such as ocean-based renewable energy, fisheries, aquaculture, mariculture,

maritime transport, nautical tourism, recreational boating, and waste management. Based on these concepts, the ocean surrounding Sri Lanka has more dynamic economic sectors such as fisheries, transportation, minerals, water, health, leisure, tourism, employment, shipbuilding, boat building, and related industrial ventures. Let us quickly run through these dominant sectors and see how these sectors contribute to the national economy.

### Fisheries Sector

Fisheries contribute to food security, providing 65 percent of the nation's protein requirement. Its local production is as high as 90 percent. Export earnings for 2015 stood at US\$ 24 million—contribution to the GDP was 1.9 percent in 2021. Sri Lanka has a lot of untapped deep water potential resources in the ocean. We have 22 fishery harbors around the country.

**In Sri Lanka, the BE is an umbrella term for several economic activities promoting inclusive growth and environmental sustainability, such as ocean-based renewable energy, fisheries, aquaculture, mariculture, maritime transport, nautical tourism, recreational boating, and waste management.**



Dr. Sarath Obeysekera,  
Senior Advisor to the  
Chamber of Marine  
Industries of Sri Lanka.

Compared with the developed nations, our fishing industry is reportedly in a primitive stage due to a lack of technology and resources, wherewithal, and scientific personnel. Improved fish breeding technologies are essential to make the fisheries sector more sustainable. Expanding the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) network is beneficial to ensure the sustainability of marine diversity. About 60 percent to 70 percent of fish production is discarded. The post-harvest system needs definite intervention to ensure the maximum usage of fish offal. Against this backdrop, the fisheries sector needs a rapid, revolutionary, accelerated development program to provide an enhanced contribution to the national coffers. It demands an out-of-box approach to develop the industry. The private sector should be encouraged to deploy several stays in the mid-sea "Mother vessels" around the island to help fishermen store their catch in cold rooms and assist them with first-aid, fuel, and water during the week they stay in the mid-sea while catching fish facilities.

The provision of a speed boat ambulance service dedicated to sea fishermen is a dire necessity. Installing cold room services in every fishery harbor with facilities to store fish for the Japanese market (-60 Degrees for Export) would be desirable.

The opening of schools for fishing folks and providing land plots to build new sizeable multiday fishing vessels with seawater ice generating equipment is vitally important. A mandatory comprehensive annual inspection service should be enforced to ensure the safety of the fishing boats. They can be managed by private boat-building repair yards in Colombo, Negombo, Panadura, Galle, Mirissa, Kudawella, Oluvil, Trinco, Point Pedro, and Karainagar. Establishing a dedicated insurance scheme based on annual fitness checks of the vessels/boats for fishermen to cover their families, boats, and equipment would be most desirable.

## **It is the best time for Sri Lanka to develop a proper strategy to develop this sector as a poly-functional tourist activity with a strong maritime component and an action plan to bring nautical tourism as a dominant contributor to the country's development.**

### **Nautical Tourism**

Tourism is a growing sector in Sri Lanka, with a revenue of US\$ one billion in 2022. It is the third-highest foreign exchange earner for the country, preceded by worker's remittances and textiles and garments. However, it suffered a temporary setback due to Covid-19 and the Easter Sunday Bomb attack. The indications are that tourist arrivals will continue to grow at an unprecedented rate from this year's commencement.

In this scenario, the tourism sector demands innovative products to revive the industry sustainably. Even though nautical tourism is not a completely creative idea, the country has no other option to diversify the industry at this juncture, as the full potential of nautical tourism has not been reaped. Thus, this writer believes it is the best time for Sri Lanka to develop a proper strategy to develop this sector as a poly-functional tourist activity with a strong maritime component and an action plan to bring nautical tourism as a dominant contributor to the country's development.

It is also a matter of solace that the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority has obtained the services of the Asian Development Bank to prepare a strategic marine development plan, thereby fulfilling a long-felt need.



Gamini B Herath, Secretary General of the Chamber of Marine Industries of Sri Lanka.

### **Non-conventional Methods needed**

Dr. Sarath Obeysekera, Senior Advisor to the Chamber of Marine Industries of Sri Lanka, former high-profile CEO of the multi-national Ship Building and Repair Company that handled ships, vessels, and boat construction and the Senior Advisor to the Chamber of Marine Industries, when consulted said that nautical tourism in Sri Lanka could be brought to a substantial level by developing and promoting mini marinas in the existing 22 fishery harbors and other protected lagoons around Sri Lanka. He is optimistic that nautical tourism could be substantially developed in Sri Lanka by implementing the "Harbor Village Concept" around fishery harbors, other lagoons/real estates, and coastal urban development areas near marinas. The concept of "Grow Boat" spearheaded by the Export Development Board (EDB), where the private individuals who own their boats with the facility to anchor in the mini marinas around the island, could be popularized.

### **Nautical Tourism and high-spending tourists**

Gamini B Herath, Secretary General of the Chamber of Marine Industries of Sri Lanka, who has gained a wealth of experience in the nautical tourism trade, said that Sri Lanka has a massive potential for nautical tourism,

given the high marine diversity and the potential to attract the reasonably high-spending tourists. Yacht building, chartering, and yacht operations are becoming attractive industry in Sri Lanka. Foreign yachts can come to the Sri Lankan waters and anchor and spend a few days in the country as Sri Lanka has beautiful onshore activities such as whale/dolphin watching, scuba diving, leisure fishing, snorkeling, windsurfing, and many other activities throughout the year. He said that nautical tourism could contribute to uplifting the local ship and boat building industry for developing the sector as an export industry.

This industry veteran further contends that nautical tourism must be considered a tourist product related to entertainment activities in contact with bodies of water where many different nautical activities can take place, always with an ecological outlook and respect for nature. In addition to it being an essential complimentary offer for a tourist destination, it is also a well-defined product whose main characteristic to offer is the ocean.

### Sub-sectors of Nautical Tourism

In submitting a well-studied article containing a series of proposals for developing the nautical tourism sector in Sri Lanka, he has identified



Professor Terny Pradeep Kumar, Sectoral Head of Marine Industries, the Marine Environment of the Chamber.

a wide range of subsectors of the nautical tourism sector where he has focused the attention of the policymakers on the main activities. These secondary and additional activities should receive priority in its quest for nautical tourism development.

Dr. Sarath Obeysekera, Senior Advisor of the Chamber of Marine Industries, sees much potential for the expansion of nautical tourism, and he identifies certain impediments to the developments in this sector. The need for well-defined rules and regulations for using boat builders is a key bottleneck. A major lacuna is the dearth of a ship repair/Hull cleaning development plan in the deep ocean during the voyage of supertankers from the Middle East to the Far East. The accelerated development power generation plan of offshore wind farms and wave energy should receive prominence in the nation's energy development strategy in the government policy agenda. Exploration of Oil and Gas in the Manner and Covery Basin in the Eastern province has to be expedited, considering its enormous economic benefits to the country.

### Potential area to tap on a Commercial basis

According to Professor Terny Pradeep Kumar, Sectoral Head of the Marine Environment of the Chamber

**Sri Lanka has a massive potential for nautical tourism, given the high marine diversity and the potential to attract the reasonably high-spending tourists.**

of Marine Industries, the potential areas for economic development in the sphere of whale watching, recreational diving, underwater archaeological diving, sun and sand sea concept, water sports are yet to tap on a commercial basis. According to him, diving has high potential in the tourism sector, especially through wreck diving as well as reef diving, rock diving, and night diving opportunities, which can be improved through a proper MPA system. To rejuvenate this sector, there must be a coordinated effort by the Department of Archaeology, the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, and the Department of Wildlife.

Professor Terny believes that the potential avenues in the non-conventional industries can be aggressively pursued for the expansion of nautical tourism. He says options such as rehabilitation of degraded beaches through sand nourishment, artificial reef establishments, and submerged wave breaker establishments are some of the key priority areas in the tourist development agenda. Similarly, sport fishing and water sports such as windsurfing, kite surfing, speed boating, and banana riding can be promoted to diversify the water sports sector, which will inevitably attract foreign exchange.

### Whale-watching tourism

With the expansion of the Colombo Southern Harbour, development projects of the new harbor in Hambantota and the available natural harbor in Trincomalee, surrounded by its unique landscapes, could be used to expand nautical tourism through the high-end cruise shipping sector. He says that the whale-watching industry in Sri Lanka provides a very high potential for tourist attraction and generation of foreign exchange, provided that the whale-watching industry is properly regulated through efficient management. He further says that the whale-watching industry in Sri Lanka has a very high potential

for tourist attraction, but the current practice of chasing whales must be stopped. Another plus point is that the major shipping route that connects the east and west passes just off the southern tip of Sri Lanka crossing the whale-watching and whale-abundant area with 350 to 400 ships passing Dondra daily.

### Employment Opportunities in the Nautical Tourism sector

Ocean-based employment opportunities available in the nautical tourism field are highly diverse and well-paid, according to Professor TERNY Pradeep Kumar. The potential available in this sector can be developed to generate much-needed foreign exchange with the assistance of knowledgeable entrepreneurs. Employment opportunities in navigation, naval engineering, seamanship, naval architecture, underwater technicians, and skilled operational activities in the ocean-based fisheries and tourism sectors fetch high remuneration packages. It would benefit the EDB to liaise with Vocational Training Authority and other specialized institutions to train and develop the workforce required for the above disciplines.

It must be stated here that CINEC has been at the forefront for the last few decades in supplying the required specialized workforce for the marine sector.

### Chamber of Marine Industries of Sri Lanka (CMISL)

Indhra Kaushal Rajapaksa, President of the CMISL, summarizing the significant strides the Chamber has achieved, said a series of development and promotional programs had been arranged for the benefit of the marine sector and its stakeholders.

CMISL was initiated as an activity of the National Export Strategy (NES) of the Boat and Ship Building Industry formulated and implemented with the initiation of the EDB to be the single most representative of the industry contributing to promoting the blue economy of Sri Lanka.

Under the national export strategy, this chamber supported the government in implementing the activities planned in the NES in promoting investments in boat and shipbuilding, infrastructure and marina development, and nautical tourism promotion, among others.

Rajapaksa further elaborated that the chamber also represents all the industries, businesses, and government-owned undertakings in the field of Boat and shipbuilding industry, Nautical Tourism, Maritime services, companies involved in the equipment, engines, electrical and electronics, marine environment protection, water sports, inland waterways

transportation, recreational boating, and others at national events and forums, international venues, and platforms such as local exhibitions, international boat exhibitions, business events and more specifically at the global policy lobbying organizations such as ICOMIA (International Council of Marine Industry Associations), ABF (Asia Boating Federation), IBSF (International Boat Show Federation), and, AMI (Association of Marina Industries) among others.

CMISL, similar to other national chambers, is involved with policy and regulation formulation relevant to the development of the industry in collaboration with the government and other organizations and also represents the industry in government structures established for the development of the sector in the overall blue economy promotion.

Chamber President elaborated on the initiatives the chamber has embarked on by representing Sri Lanka in promoting the country as a boating and nautical tourism hub in South Asia linking to Asia Pacific boating hubs and the Middle East and European boating hubs. An MoU has been entered into with the National Boating Association of the Maldives to jointly promote the blue economy activities in and around two countries, and negotiations are underway to conclude similar MoUs with Singapore, Thailand, and Hong Kong soon.

To showcase the industry commitment and the potential contribution to the development of the blue economy, "BOAT AND MARINE SHOW SRI LANKA 2023" and "AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SRI LANKA'S STRATEGY ON BLUE ECONOMY" will be held in October 2023. [E](#)



Indhra Kaushal Rajapaksa,  
President of the CMISL.

**The need for well-defined rules and regulations for using boat builders is a key bottleneck.**



**J.A.S. Ranasinghe**  
Consultant  
Chamber of Marine  
Industries of Sri Lanka  
(CMISL)

## Yacht Building

# Sea Leisure Yachting Group: Creating a New Culture in Sailing

Manufacturer of charter and cruising catamarans, rigid hull boats, and sailing dinghies in Sri Lanka and a pioneer in the marine leisure and tourism market, Sea Leisure Yachting Group (SLYG) aims to transform Sri Lanka into a global hub for yacht manufacturing, charters, yacht harboring and other yacht-related services.



Since 2014, the Sea Leisure Yachting Group has operated in four key verticals, contributing to Sri Lanka's maritime sector and the global yacht industry. SLYG comprises BAFF Polymech specializing in boat building, managing two BOI-approved boat yards in Koggala, and Welipatanwila, Sabrosa Rain Advance Technologies, the first yacht designing office in Sri Lanka, Solar

Impulse specializing in sail and mast making and other infrastructures, Sail Lanka, the boat chartering business, and joint ventures with several international companies.

Pierre Pringiers, a Belgian national, who has served in Sri Lanka as the general manager for Bergougnan Lanka, the first industrial tyre factory set up in Sri Lanka in 1980, is the man behind SLYG. He ventured to rebuild

the southern coast of Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the 2004 Tsunami through the Solideal Loadstar Rehabilitation Trust (SLRT) set up in 2005 with his partner Dr. Jinasena with a budget of US\$6.7 million, reaching 15,000 direct and 25,000 indirect beneficiaries.

In 2006, he set up the Building A Future Foundation (BAFF) as an extension of the SLRT to uplift the



Pierre Pringiers, Chairman,  
Sea Leisure Yachting Group.

Luxury Ocean  
Diamond.

## **At the core of SLYG's business is an ethos of adding value to lives, capacity building, empowerment, and creating economic self-sufficiency with an environmental, social, and sustainable approach.**

lives of the underprivileged youth depending on the resources of the ocean, create a sailing culture on the island, and develop a yachting industry from boat building, sails, and masts making to infrastructure and charter services.

At the core of SLYG's business is an ethos of adding value to lives, capacity building, empowerment, and creating economic self-sufficiency with an environmental, social, and sustainable approach.

His vision, he claims, is based on sailing boats built, owned, and operated in Sri Lanka and the region as a positive complement to Sri Lanka's tourism industry. He wanted to create and promote cruising as a new and ecologically sustainable tourist activity in Sri Lanka and the greater Indian Ocean region. The overarching objective is to maximize

the socioeconomic returns and benefits to the country and the people of Sri Lanka.

SLYG began its journey on a humanitarian mission governed by the astute business vision of its founder and chairman, Pierre Pringiers. Today, SLYG has earned a reputation for its boat-building prowess through its specialist companies focusing on expertise areas and business verticals.

In 2008, SLYG ventured into manufacturing light and rigid catamarans through BAFF Polymech. With a 250-strong team, the company uses high-tech materials and advanced boat-building techniques to take projects from design to finish. BAFF Polymech says it is the first and largest boat manufacturing company to use vacuum infusion technology for production.

The company has five well-known brands: the Ceycat for water-based tourism, the Minibee for calm journeys or competitive sailing, the Ocean Diamond, the Ocean Voyager, designed for professional day and overnight charter operators the Pulse rigid inflatable boat ranges, ideal for leisure and rescue purposes.

The Ocean Voyager day charter catamarans range debuted in 2017 when SLYG entered into a Joint venture with Grand Large Yachting (GLY), one of France's most prominent and fast-growing boat builders, birthing Grand Large Yachting Asia. In 2022 SLYG took over 100 percent of the business from GLY.

According to Pierre Pringiers, the joint venture and later on the total takeover of GLY were a natural progression of its Ceycat and Ocean Diamond charter catamaran range that the company was building in Sri Lanka. Moreover, SLYG understands the French brand and its offer to the charter boat industry well, having worked with it previously on selected boat models, with a commitment to continue the parent company's policies, such as hardware and software support and advice



Ocean Diamond with comfortable cabins and private balconies offering spectacular ocean views.

Ocean Diamond is the Group's flagship range, most suitable for luxury cruising.

to charter companies to ensure continued business success.

The Ocean Voyager range includes four designs, Ocean Voyager '40, Ocean Voyager '53, Ocean Voyager '64, and Ocean Voyager '78, which with their different dimensions, sizes, and features, cater to a range of customer requirements.

Ocean Diamond's range of yachts is the Group's flagship range, most suitable for luxury cruising,

highly customizable, and ideal for professional charter operations and live-aboard cruises. It has over 600 square meters of living area, allowing customers to design their bespoke yacht with the company's in-house team of naval architects and expert partners. The Ocean Diamond 80-foot floating boutique hotel has 12 cabins complete with private balconies offering a spectacular ocean view, customized specifically

for the tropical market, featuring an open flybridge and sea-facing configuration.

Supporting yacht building is Sabrosa Rain, SLYG's naval architecture bureau, focusing on yacht design. Led by a French maritime architect with ten specialist design engineers, SR operates with advanced 3D design software capabilities. SR works in cooperation with international design studios such



Private balcony deck.



Plush dining area.



as VPLP and close collaboration with international certification agencies such as Lloyd's and CE. The SR team works closely with the BAFF Polymech team.

SLYG manages its manufacturing processes from three large-scale boat yards, with two located in the south of Sri Lanka and one in the north. The Koggala Boatyard includes the Group's subsidiaries, BAFF Polymech and Grand Large Yachting situated inside the Koggala Export Processing

facility, which has a fully equipped gantry crane, a 25-tonne movable crane, and a dust extraction system.

Replicating the Building A Future Foundation of Pierre Pringiers, the Jaffna boatyard opened in 2021 with a training center conducting courses in the basic skills of mechanical engineering, electricity, welding, refrigeration, and air-conditioning, followed by hands-on experience

as the Ocean Diamond and the Ceycat, two vessels used for diverse requirements, one as a luxury floating boutique hotel and the other as a 55-foot sailing catamaran for water-based tourism.

Solar Impulse, a SLYG subsidiary since 2011, has been aiding the manufacturing process, specializing in marine electronics, mast, boom, and sail making, rigid hull boat manufacturing, modern sailing catamaran manufacturing, and commercial mini marina operations. SLYG currently operates two marinas in Sri Lanka – one in the Colombo Port City and the second in the Mirissa Fisheries Harbor.

SLYG sailing into the leisure sector in 2014 through Sail Lanka changed the leisure sector to a new horizon offering locals and foreigners a new experience around Sri Lanka's beautiful shores. Sail Lanka, the Group's leisure arm, is the only sailing company to operate around the island. It uses a fleet of 10 premium yachts, which travelers can charter to explore Sri Lanka's coasts and set out on a range of curated sea leisure experiences. Colombo Port City's notable yacht tours are Sail Lanka's

## **SLYG sailing into the leisure sector in 2014 through Sail Lanka changed the leisure sector to a new horizon offering locals and foreigners a new experience around Sri Lanka's beautiful shores.**

Zone. The Ceycat, Minibee, Iguana range of boats and the Ocean Voyager range of yachts are manufactured at Koggala.

The Welipatanwila boatyard in Ambalantota has two acres of land adjacent to the sea with a launching capacity of boats up to 160 feet. The Ocean Diamond and Ceycat range of vessels are manufactured at this

in dedicated boat building, and outboard and inboard engine repair and maintenance.

The yearlong courses include a mixture of theory and practical training to enable the graduates to work in the emerging boat manufacturing industry in Sri Lanka. Practical training provides training in the manufacture of yachts such





Marinas at Colombo Port City.



South Sea Sailing.

latest offering. Accompanied by the prominent location and the facilities available at the Port City, Sail Lanka is planning to enlarge the experience in the near future with a restaurant and sailing club.


Engaging with the sea also carries a responsibility to safeguard its ecosystem while providing guests with a genuinely one-off experience

of Sri Lanka's beautiful marine life and azure waters. While being environmentally conscious, the company also commits to being socially responsible, using its business of showcasing the island's beauty from the ocean to empower local communities and contribute to preserving the island's marine environment. Therefore, the yachts

operated by Sail Lanka are mainly designed and built by BAFF Polymech and Solar Impulse in Sri Lanka. Wind and solar power are the primary sources of energy that power the fleet.

Sail Lanka employees receive in-house training and education, including sailing skills, yacht maintenance, technical repair skills, and sailing-related sales and marketing, and operational and administrative skills. Sail Lanka operates a dynamic fleet of vessels, from high-speed inflatable tender or dinghy to 80 feet catamarans, making it the leader in the day and multi-day charter market in Sri Lanka.

As a BOI-certified group of companies engaged in multiple business verticals, SLYG has uplifted the lives of thousands by training and gainfully employing them in a sector that it has elevated to new heights and taken Sri Lanka's capabilities in human resources and technology in boat building to a global landscape.

Visit: [slyg.global](http://slyg.global) for more details. 

## Ship Building

# The Local Dynamo in Ship Building: Colombo Dockyard PLC

Colombo Dockyard PLC is a leading shipbuilder and repairer in Sri Lanka. Strategically located inside the Port of Colombo, a transshipment and maritime hotspot, the company backed by Onomichi Dockyard Company is the archetype of Japanese best practices in business and technology. It is the ultimate place where a consistent brand identity and quality excellence converge with customer requirements.



Misje Vita – 5000DWT Eco Bulker to Misje Eco Bulk AS Norway – First vessel to Europe by CDPLC.

Colombo Dockyard PLC (CDPLC) started operating as an integrated shipyard in 1974, primarily focused on ship repair and building. To its advantage, the new company leveraged the facilities built by the British in the Port of Colombo to service the Royal Navy ships docking and calling over for various services. In 1993, the State-owned enterprise went into an equity alliance with Onomichi Dockyard Company of Japan, which owns a 51 percent stake in the divested entity, with the State retaining 30 percent control and

the rest traded at the Colombo Stock Exchange. Today, CDPLC operates as a Board of Investment-approved company registered with the Colombo Stock Exchange in building and repairing ships for the international market through its shipyard inside the Colombo Port with a capacity of up to 125,000 DWT.

With Sri Lankan origins, CDPLC proudly positions itself as a “Built in Sri Lanka, blending Sri Lankan technology with Japanese quality” company. Japanese technology has helped CDPLC elevate itself

as a globally recognized brand. Combining Japanese quality standards into production appeals to leading global companies seeking to commission vessels from CDPLC who are confident of the stability and dependability factor strongly associated with Japanese technology-backed manufacturing. Therefore, the production process and floor have the advantage of incorporating the Japanese discipline of cleanliness and the 5S work environment improvement model backed by a workforce trained to work with

Japanese principles of efficiency and quality-driven values. When one adds the convenient location of CDPLC inside the Port of Colombo into this quotient, positioned in the intersection of significant sea routes from the East coast of America, Europe, West and East Coasts of Africa, the Arabian Gulf, and West and East Coast of India, the Far East and Australia, it has all the right ingredients to become a formidable shipbuilder in South Asia.

The company's changing fortunes are evident in its expanding portfolio of products and clients. Its most significant victory was in winning the confidence of the European market, which it did in 2020, marking a milestone in its journey as a local shipbuilder. It also marked a transition into becoming a responsible shipbuilder adopting new technologies to manufacture eco-friendly vessels.

An order for six ships from Norwegian Misje Eco Bulk AS sealed its image as a significant player in the shipbuilding industry. CDPLC delivered the first vessel of the series Misje Vita, a 5000DWT Eco Bulk Carrier valued at nearly €10 million in 2022, with subsequent reservation of dock slots for an additional four vessels in 2022, totaling the Norwegian order to ten vessels, a testament to CDPLC's recognition as a quality-driven, compliance honoring, and customer focused entity. Despite domestic challenges, timely delivery has elevated its image globally to greater heights.

CDPLC ventured into building submarine telecommunication and power cable installation and maintenance ships before 2019. The company made the very first cable laying vessel KDDI Cable Infinity in 2019 for Japan's Kokusai Cable Ship Company, the first of its class to be built by a Sri Lankan company for a Japanese entity, which at 113.1 meters in length, 21.5 meters in breadth and 8.8 meters in depth, is the largest vessel constructed by CDPLC to date, which demonstrates the company's expertise and repertoire in shipbuilding to the global market. Subsequently, Sophie Germain for



BTV delivered to Iraq.



Pilot Station Vessel delivered to Iraq.



KDDI Infinity – Cable Laying Vessel (CLV) delivered to Japan.



Underwater Restaurant Structure to the Maldives.



Tourists enjoying the underwater view.

Orange Marine of France became the first cable-laying vessel contracted for Europe. Launched in 2022, the ship, worth around €50 million, is set for delivery in 2023.

CDPLC specializes in building Passenger Vessels, Pilot boats, landing crafts, merchant vessels, tugboats, offshore vessels, and Cable Layers. Its entry into building eco bulk carriers, which began with its European client, marks a turning point in its manufacturing journey, focusing on eco-friendly vessels with fewer emissions than conventional bulk carriers. A four-stroke diesel engine with an electric hybrid system supplying additional power through a battery system powers an eco-bulk carrier. Its foray into building cable laying and repair vessels is also capable of low fuel consumption owing to an optimized hull form, diesel-electric propulsion, and additional power through a battery storage system.

CDPLC has obtained ISO 9001:2015 quality management system, ISO 14001:2015 environment management system, and ISO 45001:2018 occupational health and safety management system standards, and most recently in 2022, as an organization committed to addressing the impact of its business, conserving resources and

## Shipbuilding can only become an industry in Sri Lanka with adjunct facilities, such as manufacturing and service support, classification facilities, and government-backed subsidies.

improving the bottom line through efficient energy management has integrated the ISO 50001:2018 Energy Management System. In line with such commitments, the company has improved energy efficiency through lighting replacements and reduction, rainwater harvesting for ship washing, and recycling biomass waste into energy for cooking. The company's transition to manufacturing eco-friendly vessels by producing eco-bulk carriers demonstrates its commitment to preserving the environment, with its first eco-bulk carrier to Norway nominated for the Next Generation Ship Award at the Nor Shipping 2023 exhibition in Norway.

An international business operation of this magnitude has to adhere to the regulatory requirements of the International Maritime Organization, the global standard-setting authority for the safety, security, and environmental performance of international shipping. Additionally, CDPLC adheres to Classification Societies in the maritime industry, ensuring benchmarks for vessels

and other operations. Locally, the Merchant Shipping Secretariat (MSS) acts as the regulatory body empowered by an Act of Parliament to ensure the safety of life and property at sea. As its overarching responsibility in Sri Lanka, the MSS develops and implements the Government's maritime safety policy. Its many roles include ship inspection for compliance with Sri Lankan and international safety regulations.

As CDPLC continues its focus on maximizing efficiency, improving productivity, and reducing costs, the management's focus on developing human resources capacity is a top priority in achieving its growth objectives. The company has 1,700 permanent employees, including industrial workers and 150 engineers, in addition to employees of subcontractors, totaling around 3,000 despite the challenge of retaining talent at times and personnel willing to engage in physically demanding industrial operations. Most of their senior workers received training at Onomichi Dockyard in Japan. Today,



80 Passenger Ferry made to Jaffna Authorities.



Tug Boat FEMUNU delivered to the Maldives.



CS Sophie Germain Cable Laying and Repair Vessel (CLR) to Orange Marine France.

its in-house training center provides comprehensive training to employees, geared to cater to timely training needs and improve every aspect of the performance of its employees. The company also offers opportunities to marine universities, vocational training colleges, and schools to use the in-house training facility to provide training to a limited number of candidates, giving employment opportunities within CDPLC or a valid certificate for work elsewhere. With some of the best welders serving within CDPLC, the company also offers welding certification that make them eligible for employment outside.

CDPLC is poised to reach greater heights as it advances, having conquered new markets and showcased its Japanese-backed technological and quality prowess to the European market. However, the company could leverage its potential and image if there greater thrust to augment the facilities essential

for shipbuilding. Shipbuilding can only become an industry in Sri Lanka with adjunct facilities, such as manufacturing and service support, classification facilities, and government-backed subsidies. Such an environment makes the company's operations wholesome and comprehensive, helping to build confidence among potential clients and making the operating environment more conducive and flexible for manufacturers. Despite that void, thanks to the support of Japanese-backed technology and efficiency, CDPLC has built a track record acknowledged globally.

The company prides itself on being a significant contributor to the country, at one point contributing 1.5 percent of its total export revenue to the exchequer, which today is nearly .3 percent. It is also proud of its role as a robust business providing employment to significant numbers, bolstering the lives of almost 15,000

individuals dependent on its large workforce.

Japanese discipline incorporating cleanliness and the 5S principles defines the work at CDPLC and its global image. Confidence in Japanese technology and the Japanese work ethic remains steadfast, as evidenced by the changes that the company has been through since its buy over and the increasing confidence of markets that hitherto overlooked Sri Lankan manufacturing capability but have since returned with fresh orders, CDPLC having won over clients with the desired end product. Today Japanese quality stands for delivering every order on time, deemed critical from a client's and international business perspective. Timely delivery, quality, and customer satisfaction extending to delighting customers are prized inheritances from the company's Japanese association, which has helped it win many accolades and new customers. ☐

Global Seafood Supplier

# The Proud Global Seafood Seller with a Sri Lankan Footprint: Global Sea Foods

Global Sea Foods (GSF) is a seafood processing company based in Sri Lanka. Established in 1999, GSF is a Board of Investment-approved venture that supplies value-added seafood products to Europe, the USA, the Middle East, and Japan.



Fresh Tuna Sashimi

Under the stewardship of Prabash Subasinghe, Managing Director of GSF, and a team of well-qualified and trained personnel maintaining coherent quality standards, the company emerged at an opportune moment in 1999, filling a vacuum in Sri Lankan seafood suppliers in the European market, a market that was brimming with promise owing to high demand

for seafood. Hence, GSF as a new entrant was poised for growth for two reasons – first, strategically selecting a market with substantial demand, and second, embracing quality as its slogan and investing heavily in infrastructure and technology to ensure the best standards in seafood production accompanied by a pledge to global quality standards. In Sri Lanka, GSF has state-of-the-

art processing facilities spanning over 50,000 sq. ft. with a capacity to produce 300 tons of fish per month.

GSF is leveraging Sri Lanka's unique position surrounded by the Indian Ocean and its vast ocean resources by preparing and exporting a particular variety of tuna – Yellowfin tuna in fresh and frozen forms, a type found in the ocean surrounding Sri Lanka. Its taste, texture, and color



Sampath Ragindha  
Padmawansa, CEO,  
Global Sea Foods (GSF).

## By committing to its standards, GSF undertakes to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by embarking on sustainable fishing practices.

are distinct, as European markets desire. Additionally, the fishing method Sri Lankan fishermen use, unlike their regional competitors, also helps maintain the desired quality of the tuna. Attention to detail in every aspect of the process sets the company apart. Their wild-caught fish are healthier for consumption. And the artisanal longline method of fishing ensures minimal damage to the environment and the ocean ecology, with fish caught at a depth of 65 to 70 meters in colder waters displaying a richer color and texture that appeal to the European palette.

Quality standards are the cornerstone of the food business. For GSF, adherence to quality is sacrosanct. It invests substantially to commit to quality through certifications and compliance to ISO 22000, HACCP, BRC "A" Grade, IFS "Highest Level", Friend of the Sea, Dolphin Safe, and SA 8000. Its processing facilities conform

to the strict EU standards for microbiological, chemical, physical, and hygienic parameters. The teams involved in the production process are on a constant learning curve, qualified to ensure that products adhere to the requirements in the certifications and compliances and are ready for inspection at any time by global standards institutions' personnel.

GSF works with clients that employ company-specific quality parameters applied at their whim to ensure that GSF is committed to their quality requirements. On its part, GSF tests and grades every catch for compliance with its quality parameters. The company is expanding its responsible stewardship motto to the production process as it prepares to obtain the carbon neutrality standard and certification for processing.

As a responsible company operating in the thriving Blue

Economy predicted to grow exponentially, the management takes the discourse on the exploitation and dangerous methods used to procure ocean resources, leading to their decline and environmental damage seriously. GSF takes pride in operating in a highly regulated environment, adhering to the Fishery Improvement Program introduced by the Sea Food Exporters Association in 2016 on the guidelines of the Marine Stewardship Council. GSF prides itself on pioneering the initiative. The commitment to adopt the 28 parameters of the Marine Stewardship Council gives the global body the authority to assess if a fishery is well-managed and sustainable. By committing to its standards, GSF undertakes to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by embarking on sustainable fishing practices. Committing to such standards reflects the company's pledge to work with global organizations influencing the choices people make when they buy seafood and working in tandem to transform the seafood market to a sustainable level. Locally, regulatory institutions monitor the catch and the size of the harvest, including the traceability of the harvest's location.

While GSF can confidently assert its commitment to responsible harvesting of ocean resources, fishermen are essential stakeholders in the process, the primary group that lends the initial line of support to ensure that they responsibly catch the harvest while maintaining the quality standards set by GSF. Company representatives provide advice and awareness, education on fishing methods and standards, avoiding juvenile prey, and monitoring to reduce bycatch, the non-target catch, a phenomenon the company is determined to avoid. Preventing incidental captures and needless fishing is part of responsible stewardship of the ocean's resources. Hence GSF ensures that the fishermen are well aware of the desired harvest, gathering only the type and quality



Vannamei shrimps

**GSF has invested substantially in capturing the overseas market, a meticulous process of evaluating client credibility by visiting them or meeting them through trade fairs as they pitch their well-thought-out, client-centric product portfolio to a global marketplace.**

of fish the company will accept for processing.

The processing factory in Badalgama is a few hours away from the southern harbor and western harbors and 30 minutes from the airport. Within three days of procuring the harvest from the ocean, the finished products in fresh and chilled forms are on their way to their destinations, through air freight.

Since its inception, GSF has invested substantially in capturing the overseas market, a meticulous process of evaluating client

credibility by visiting them or meeting them through trade fairs as they pitch their well-thought-out, client-centric product portfolio to a global marketplace. GSF takes pride in navigating the entire marketing process while acknowledging the presence of the Sri Lanka Export Development Board to bolster their initiatives through interventions such as the tuna branding program that could elevate the image of Sri Lanka's tuna to a premium brand.

Despite rising costs in the post-COVID operating environment,

GSF's commitment to quality continues with greater thrust and accountability. Air freight charges have increased threefold, and for companies like GSF that use air transport to send 80 percent of their products, the new landscape is challenging. But the company is unwavering in preserving its image among its reputed overseas clients. It is determined to rise above the unscrupulous practices of new entrants to seafood exporting, who undermine reliable exporters like GSF, who have invested tremendously in infrastructure, technology, and quality and are constantly looking to innovate. Sri Lanka is the biggest loser to such callous operators. These exporters use a third party to process the fresh seafood, lure their competitors' customers with lower prices, and reduce the country's foreign earnings. GSF reiterates the importance of maintaining the quality and ethical standards Sri Lanka is known for by following a stringent process for issuing seafood processing and export licenses while evaluating the foreign companies that buy from new entrants who disregard principles as their forex contribution remains static. It shows that there are too many licenses being issued to exporters who do not own processing facilities

The country cannot have an unlimited number of exporters exporting an indefinite quantity of seafood, sometimes compromising the standards and the image of Sri Lanka. According to GSF, an even playing field and proper checks and balances will ensure the country gets the returns it deserves.

The good thing is that despite the challenges, the undercutting, and a lack of credit insurance for companies like GSF that have walked the talk and maintain impeccable track records, they continue their journey of continuous improvement, the risk of finding new customers, train their personnel, and invest while securing highly priced quality





Tuna cubes.



Tuna loins.



Swordfish loins.

certifications and in bringing foreign auditors for quality checks. The fact that most companies in the export sector spend a significant amount in promoting their businesses and invest heavily in various initiatives which drive up their volumes and their bottom lines often go unnoticed. Behind the forex that they earn and buttress the country's reserves lies tremendous hard work and massive investments to ensure they mean business by following every rule in the client's rule books. Companies

such as GSF have to be abreast of the rest in a highly competitive market. Like most credible companies operating under the radar, GSF's immersion in promoting its business and pitching its business model in international markets is serious work involving monetary and personnel commitment. It is confident in what it sells and does so with a conscience that it is doing justice to customers who give back to the company, the country, and the ocean that gives them a rich and unpolluted bounty

that shines globally for its matchless taste and quality.

GSF is looking for tremendous growth, with plans for expansion into untapped markets such as China and Russia for shrimp. The company, in 2023, is committed to increasing its shrimp production with a colossal investment of US\$1.7 million on processing equipment while expanding to value-added seafood products for leading supermarkets and distributors in Europe and USA. 🇨🇪

## Marine Engineering

# Masters at Their Work

**Master Divers, the oldest marine, underwater, and offshore services provider in Sri Lanka, are today the pioneers in the sector, providing a full scope of services required by shipping vessels and the shipping community in and around the Indian Ocean.**



Master Divers have a qualified and trained team, ensuring safety is paramount in operations.

**A**riyaseela Wickramanayake, Founder and Chairman of Master Divers, has created a company of great value not by accident. Passion lies at the heart of its origins. And the yearning to become an accomplished diver has given this country the gift of the knowledge and expertise of one of the greatest minds in the business.

His foray into the ocean began as a schoolboy at Saint Aloysius College Galle, witnessing British divers at work during the construction of the Galle harbor. He was the fastest

swimmer in Sri Lanka in the halcyon 1960s, and watching the Englishmen dive into the sea fascinated him so much that he wanted to extend his swimming prowess to become a diver. He loved the thrill of diving into the sea, and the monetary perks that went with it, because professional diving, dominated by a “chosen” few, primarily foreigners, enticed him greatly. And dive he did into the ocean’s depths to become one of the first three Sri Lankan licensed divers, which was a very exclusive and closed-door profession, the

privilege of a few. Having become an accomplished licensed diver, accompanied by two years of foreign training in repairing ships, Wickramanayake became the first few Sri Lankans permitted to repair vessels and carry out salvage work as an employee at the Colombo Port, a privileged position for a Sri Lankan who back in the 1970s was earning foreign exchange for the country.

Recounting how underwater services and ship salvaging operations were in the Colombo Port, Wickramanayake explained that the



Ariyaseela  
Wickramanayake,  
Founder and Chairman  
of Master Divers.

## As the inspiration and executor behind this great Sri Lankan name, Wickramanayake is pushing to achieve his vision of becoming South Asia's foremost diving and marine service provider by maintaining efficiency and speedy responses...

business of ship repair and salvaging was principally under the domain of the government, which contracted multinationals and their foreign divers for the purpose. At one point, the Colombo Port used to have at least 57 ships anchored at any given time and staying anchored for months unloading cargo, which ensured that Wickramanayake and other divers had a lot of work on those ships. It was when leading ship salvage companies from Europe came to Colombo for ship repair during the monsoons. From the end of April to December, at least three to four vessels belonging to foreign companies anchored at the Colombo Port to salvage ships.

Master Divers' journey in 1978 began as a local contractor to foreign salvage companies based in Sri Lanka. When Ariyaseela Wickramanayake floated his ambitious project, he took the risk of treading into a powerful domain. Still, just like the young man

who dared challenge the status quo to become one of three divers in Sri Lanka, he ventured confidently, purchasing barges and tugs from a

departing British company. Today, Master Divers has a formidable fleet assisting in its wide-ranging operations, laying ownership to the largest salvage tug in the region and the biggest hull cleaning machine in the world, with 11 seagoing and supply service vessels, two large deck barges, anchor handling, and water barges.

The company's services are comprehensive. From towage and salvaging to marine and civil engineering to shipbuilding and certifications, Master Divers understands the complexities of maritime problems operators confront and offers the entire gamut of naval solutions and associated services with speed. Their comprehensive services extend to wreck removal operations, ship repairs, hull and machinery repairs, underwater welding and cutting, and ship-to-shore and ship-to-ship services such as crew transport, material and equipment, and fresh water. The shipyard at Colombo Port, belonging to Master Divers, has infrastructure for dry docking, ship repair and conversion of ships, and afloat repairs. In time, the company expanded its services to include assisting in port construction, specializing in rock blasting, cables and oceanographic instruments laying, underwater filming, and



Specializing in a range of repairs and services.



Master Divers engage in underwater operations.

## Once the domain of multinationals, today, Master Divers is in sole charge of executing all maritime-related operations for Sri Lanka.

monitoring. Understanding their clients' requirements after more than four decades in the maritime sector, growing exponentially, the company is the first point of contact for ship owners and agents seeking solutions to their problems.

The company's portfolio of assisting port-related work and canal deepening and building marinas involves rock blasting, which the company has made a reputation for, given its emphasis on strict safety guidelines with minimal environmental impact carried out by personnel qualified in handling explosives. Their two self-elevating maritime platforms

equipped with drilling units are used for port canal excavating, making yacht marinas and deep water ports in rocky coastal areas. Master Divers carried out rock blasting of the entire Colombo Port to a depth of eight to fifteen meters. Thailand contracted Master Divers to help build the first deep sea port in Phuket, where their workers remained stationed for two years.

Safety is a paramount principle in operations, resulting in zero accidents. The company does not allow their divers to stay underwater for more than 20 minutes at a time to avoid exertion so that standards are

maintained, ensuring that they remain fit to continue working the following day. As for their divers, they employ divers with basic training. They provide them with advanced diving training at Ocean University and all-inclusive ship repairing and salvaging training.

As the company is on a growth trajectory, expanding its services portfolio, Master Divers, on behalf of classification societies that develop and apply technical standards for the design, construction, and survey of ships, carries out surveys and inspections on board ships, yet again holding the record of being the only authorized Sri Lankan organization entrusted to carry out the statutory survey and certification on behalf of classification societies.

Master Divers takes pride in being a responsible corporate citizen involved in a very sensitive business. It has



Technical team on alert – looking into services.



Barging operations.




Multiple vessels for various tasks.

material from the port to convert to fertilizer. Maintaining standards on par with international benchmarks has increased the company's profile tremendously.

While Wickramanayake is the excellent influencer and strength behind the company's success, his success mantra is simple. Speed, efficiency, and excellence govern their work, accompanied by a wide-ranging set-up of a 24-hour office operation to respond to an emergency at port or sea along with a fleet operated by captain and crew supported by teams of salvage masters, engineers, and divers anchored at sea complemented by the necessary mobile salvage equipment available on site.

The company has had many proud moments serving the nation in some of its most challenging times. As the country's armed forces waged war before 2019 in the north of Sri Lanka, Master Divers rose to the occasion by transporting personnel, fuel, and armory required for the effort in its vessels while salvaging ships damaged by attacks. Another historical moment was when their divers dived into a flooded Victoria dam to release its blocked outlets and averted a disaster. Wickramanayake is proud to have served the country during such crucial times in history and is willing to go the extra mile to do the same even today, ensuring that Sri Lanka shines brightly as a country with good practices in the maritime sector.

Once the domain of multinationals, today, Master Divers is in sole charge of executing all maritime-related operations for Sri Lanka. As the inspiration and executor behind this great Sri Lankan name, Wickramanayake is pushing to achieve his vision of becoming South Asia's foremost diving and marine service provider by maintaining efficiency and speedy responses while investing robustly in acquiring the best infrastructure with state-of-the-art technology to push boundaries in terms of service delivery as well as in expanding its reach beyond the region. 

invested substantially in equipment to minimize damage to the environment. It uses underwater cleaning equipment to remove barnacles

and other encrustations from ships and vessels, preventing them from entering the port. They also operate the only machine that collects waste

Energy Logistics Provider

# Unleashing Sri Lanka's Blue Economy: A Path to Sustainable Growth and Prosperity



De Bunker Re Bunker - Semi Sub Louisiana 2023.

The concept of the Blue Economy refers to the sustainable use of ocean resources to promote economic growth while preserving the health of marine ecosystems. To Sri Lanka, a country blessed with abundant coastal resources, the Blue Economy holds immense potential. It presents a tremendous opportunity to revive the country's ailing economy and develop it into a key sustainable economic pillar.

As an island nation located in the beautiful Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka is blessed with a solid foundation to build its blue economy with a 230,000 km<sup>2</sup> of marine economic zone, which is almost four times its land area and 1,600 kilometers of coastline.

With Sri Lanka's diverse and rich marine resources, the country has

yet to explore and realize its blue economy potential fully. Today, the country's most famous blue economy activities are marine-based transportation & logistics activities, fisheries, and tourism. Understanding the blue economy concept will provide ample opportunities and ideas to ignite economic growth, job opportunities, entrepreneurship, and the development of sustainable business enterprises in the country.

## What sectors comprise the 'Blue Economy'?

The Blue Economy is paramount to Sri Lanka due to its extensive coastline, rich biodiversity, and strategic location. It extends beyond the traditional maritime industries such as Maritime Transportation, Fisheries, and Tourism to areas

such as Offshore Renewable Energy, Oil & Gas exploration and production activities, Aquaculture, Ship/Boat building and repairs, Offshore & Marine Industry asset lay-ups/stacking, Diving and Subsea Engineering and many more. Developing and harnessing these resources sustainably can drive economic growth, generate employment opportunities, alleviate poverty, ensure food security, and promote environmental conservation. It is crucial to adopt a comprehensive approach that integrates multiple sectors and stakeholders to maximize the potential of the island's Blue Economy.

As such, the country aims to move beyond 'business as usual' and targets a long-term strategy to support sustainable and equitable

economic growth through oceans-related sectors and activities.

As an island nation, the harvesting and trade of marine living resources play a significant role in the Blue Economy, with seafood harvesting being driven by the demand for food and nutrition, particularly protein. This includes primary fish production, secondary fisheries, trade of seafood products, and trade of non-edible seafood products for cosmetics, pets, and pharmaceuticals. Additionally, aquaculture contributes to food and nutrition demands.

The extraction and use of marine non-living resources, such as minerals and energy sources like oil and gas, are crucial drivers for the Blue Economy in Sri Lanka. Additionally, renewable energy generation utilizing wind, wave, and tidal energy sources is another key aspect of this industry, as the country seeks new alternative energy sources to serve its growing demand. With this, all marine support services that aid and enhance such projects are also a significant part of the island's

maritime activity, commerce, and trade within the oceanic realm, including shipping, boat building and repairs, coastal development, and tourism.

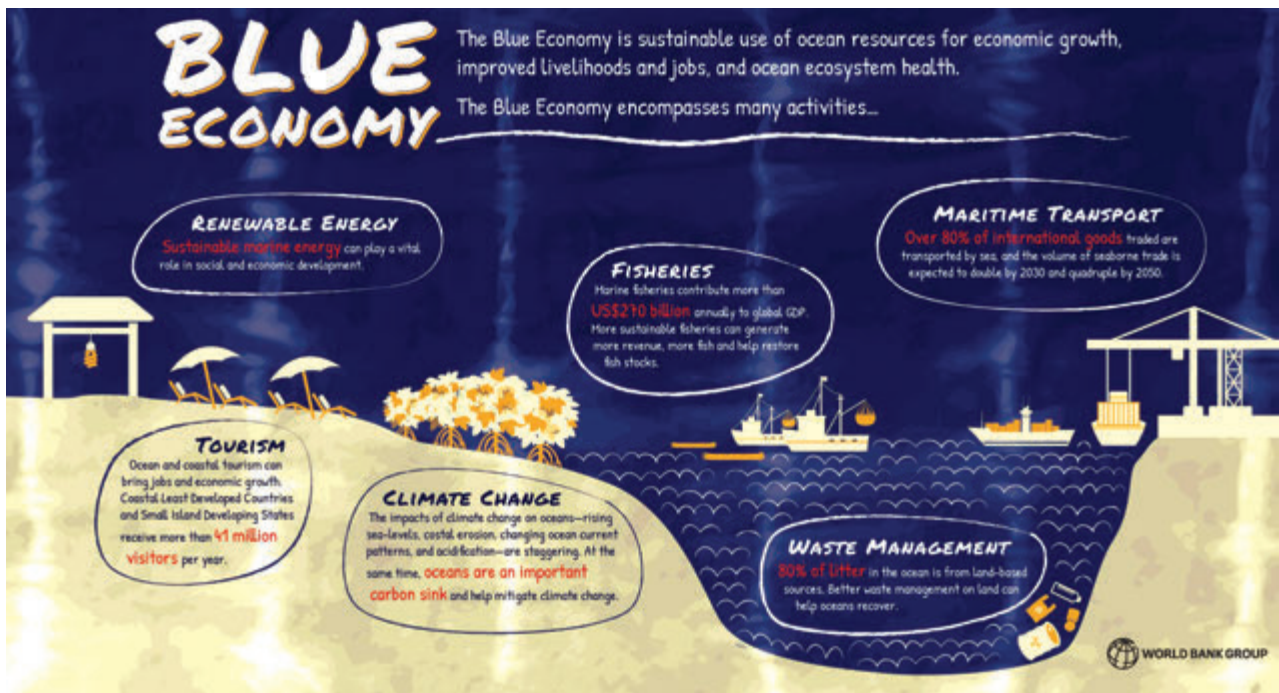
**An important intervention**

Sri Lanka's Marine & Offshore industry holds significant potential but must be developed. Despite its advantageous geographical location, proximity to major shipping routes, and presence as a tourism hotspot in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka has yet to establish a solid and vibrant blue economy. Addressing technical challenges,

improving institutional structures, modernizing support systems, and providing technological and financial assistance are crucial interventions needed to boost the country's Blue Economy.

To bridge the knowledge gap and introduce innovative ideas and technologies, partnerships with foreign companies are essential, supported by incentives like tax breaks and visa waivers to attract investors. Promoting Sri Lanka's marine and offshore sectors globally is a priority, necessitating marketing campaigns, exhibitions, and joint promotions with Colombo Port City.

**Hayleys Energy Services is a pioneering force in driving the growth of Sri Lanka's Blue Economy through its diverse range of Marine and Energy Services. The company utilizes advanced technologies, expert knowledge, and strategic partnerships to conduct oil and gas exploration support services, aiming to tap into untapped hydrocarbon reserves.**



The activities involved in Blue Economy.



Utilizing investor incentive acts such as the Strategic Development Project Act can attract and retain foreign investments.

Upgrading and expanding infrastructure is crucial to support marine and offshore businesses. Investing in training programs, curriculum revamping, securing funding and scholarships from local and foreign universities, and collaborating with the corporate sector for internships and workforce development are vital steps. By focusing on these measures, Sri Lanka can fully explore its blue economy potential and navigate its path to success.

**Hayleys Energy Services: Enabling the Growth of Sri Lanka's Blue Economy**

With its strategic geographical location and abundant resources, Sri Lanka possesses immense potential for developing its Marine & Offshore industry. The country's proximity to major shipping routes, its position between East Asia and the Middle East, and its status as a popular tourism destination in the Indian Ocean are all exciting opportunities for establishing a robust blue economy.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka's accessibility to nautical tourism markets and its potential in renewable and non-renewable energy sectors further adds to the prospects. By harnessing these advantages and capitalizing on its

strengths, Sri Lanka can unlock the true potential of its Marine and Offshore industry, paving the way for a prosperous and thriving blue economy.

Hayleys Energy Services is a pioneering force in driving the growth of Sri Lanka's Blue Economy through its diverse range of Marine and Energy Services.

The company utilizes advanced technologies, expert knowledge, and strategic partnerships to conduct oil and gas exploration support services, aiming to tap into untapped hydrocarbon reserves. By successfully supporting these new areas of play, Hayleys Energy Services is helping to create economic benefits, and job opportunities and unlock new blue economy business opportunities for Sri Lanka.

The company also significantly promotes clean energy sources by conducting engineering and technical studies for offshore renewable energy solutions. This includes the design of zero-emission vessels using alternative fuels like green hydrogen, methanol, and biofuels. Through these initiatives, Hayleys Energy Services contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, addressing climate change, achieving energy security, and contributing to Sri Lanka's Blue Economy. The company's expertise ensures minimal impact on marine ecosystems, safeguarding the environment. Additionally,

Hayleys Energy Services attracts foreign investments by providing specialized rig moves and marine asset layups/stacking services.

The company's proficiency in managing complex offshore logistics and vessel movements ensures efficient operations and significant cost savings for its clients. Its comprehensive maritime support services, including vessel management, port agency, and onboard and subsea maintenance, promote eco-friendly practices and comply with international maritime regulations.

Sri Lanka's maritime industry holds vast potential for commercial growth, sustainable development, and environmental conservation through all components of its Blue Economy.

Companies in this space have a pivotal role to play in enhancing the Blue Economy by adopting sustainable practices, promoting renewable energy, and collaborating with various stakeholders for its growth. With careful planning and responsible action, Sri Lanka is set to achieve a prosperous and resilient marine business environment that harnesses the full potential of Sri Lanka's Blue Economy. ■



**Ricky Barnett**, Director / CEO of Hayleys Energy Services Lanka.



## Awards

# Presidential Export Awards



Dr. Kingsley Bernard,  
Chairman of EDB launching the  
online application portal.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Presidential Export Awards 2023 (PEA) ceremony will be held at the BMICH on November 23, 2023, under the patronage of President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

PEA 2023, organized by the EDB, honours and acknowledges exporters who have demonstrated outstanding achievements in fostering growth in economic development. Around 1,500 invitees, including Ministers, Diplomats, Government officials, well-wishers and exporters, are expected to be present at the event.

This year's award ceremony will be held to recognise the country's best exporters for two financial years – 2021/22 and 2022/23. The awards will be presented in two main categories, with 13 overall awards and 51 product and service sector awards for each financial year. The Merit certificates for

the deserving sectors will also be awarded as decided by the panel of judges based on the performance of the applicants. The selections for the awards will be made by an eminent panel headed by a retired Judge of the Supreme Court.

In line with the new Government policy framework, the EDB has implemented new strategies to expand Sri Lanka's exports, which is expected to increase Sri Lanka's exports substantially. The exporters took initiatives in market diversification, product diversification, innovation, value addition, the introduction of indigenous brands to the world, sustainable initiatives in exports, and the development of regional value chains, which were considered when designing the overall awards.

The selection of sectoral awards will be competitive as evaluation is based on export earnings and

several other criteria, such as value addition for exports, employment creation, growth of export earnings, export proceeds repatriation, environment sustainability, and corporate social responsibility.

This year, the EDB has introduced an online application portal, [pea.edb.gov.lk](http://pea.edb.gov.lk), dedicated to the Presidential Export Awards. Exporting companies could submit online applications through this portal till August 7, 2023. Apart from the online application, exporters could obtain details such as award categories, guidelines, evaluation criteria, and instruction videos to fill out the application and view the testimonials given by past winners.

The award winners will receive a trophy and a certificate. They will receive the privilege of using the Presidential Export Award logo as a marketing tool for three years from this date. □

## GO DEEPER

# Sri Lanka's Electronic and Electrical Industry



Sri Lanka can be a top player in the global value chains powering today's electronic and electrical manufacturing industry. In a world that no longer looks to a single destination for a finished product, where smaller economies like Sri Lanka can specialize in one or more activities associated with a product according to the rules of competitive advantage, becoming a valuable conduit in the assortment of production processes that cross several borders can provide an easy breakthrough in export revenue enhancement for Sri Lanka. The island's journey in expanding its footprint in the electronic and electrical industry is evident from the numbers, establishing a name as a Design to Delivery Destination in the sector.

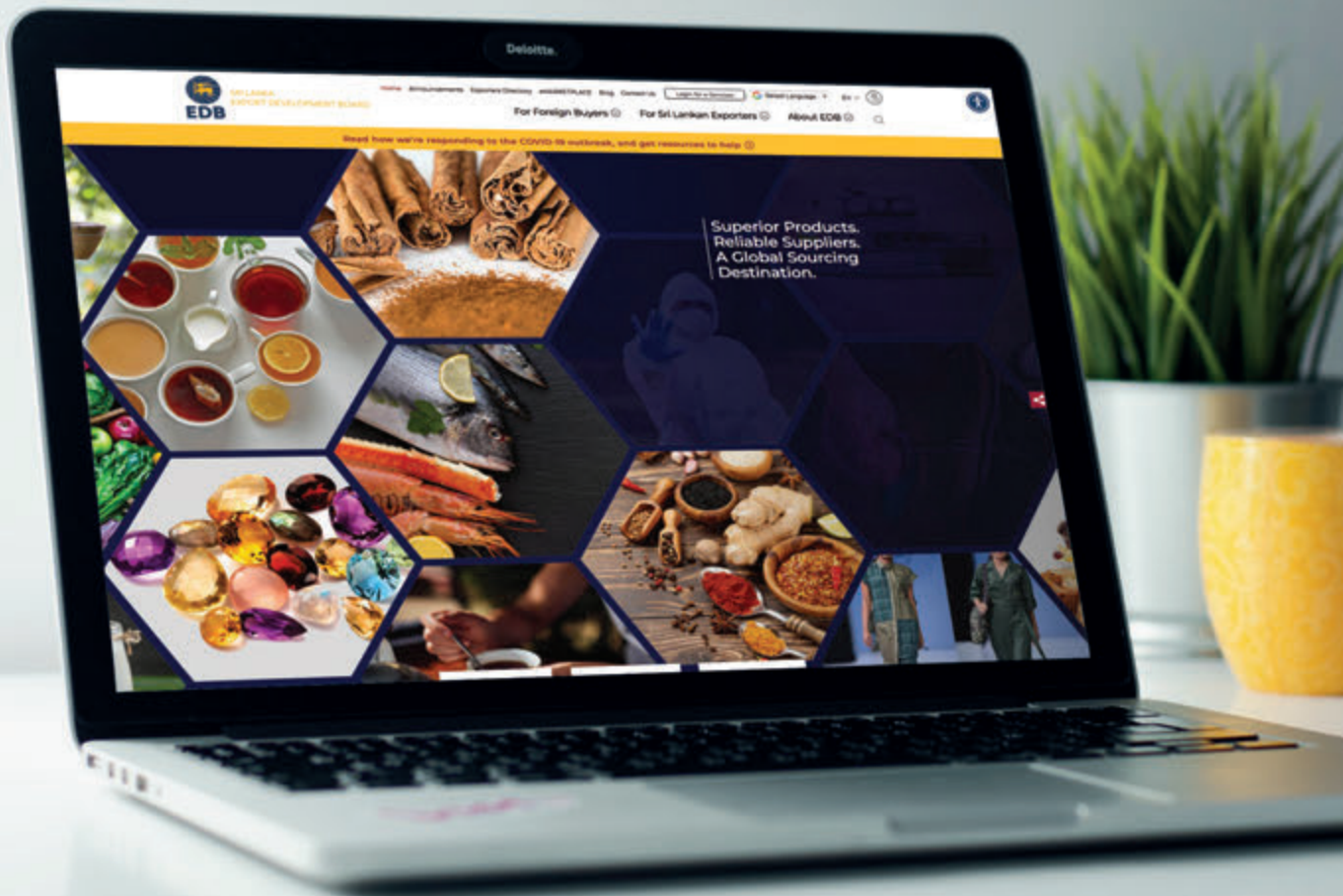
Over the past five years, the industry has advanced significantly, posting an export revenue growth of

22 percent between 2015 and 2022. Over one hundred companies in this sector manufacture automobile components, power generation and distribution, telecommunication, medical, construction, consumer electronics, and industrial automation for the export market. The potential in this sector is reflected in the large number of skilled workers employed, 38,000, generating an export income of US\$ 483 million in 2022.

The sector's adoption of cutting-edge emerging technologies defines its overarching emphasis on innovation, which includes the internet of things, robotics, analytics, bio-medical, and R&D. It is a testament to the pursuit of quality excellence to become a strong player in the global value-added supply chain. Sri Lanka's strategic location with air and shipping connectivity augmented by a highly skilled young

**The island's journey in expanding its footprint in the electronic and electrical industry is evident from the numbers, establishing a name as a Design to Delivery Destination in the sector.**

and tech-savvy workforce makes it a favored destination for procurement of specific components and investment in the sector. The Business Lanka Magazine will open the doors to Sri Lanka's growing electronic and electrical industry in the next issue, demonstrating the sector's dynamism to expand its global footprint. [\[E\]](#)



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