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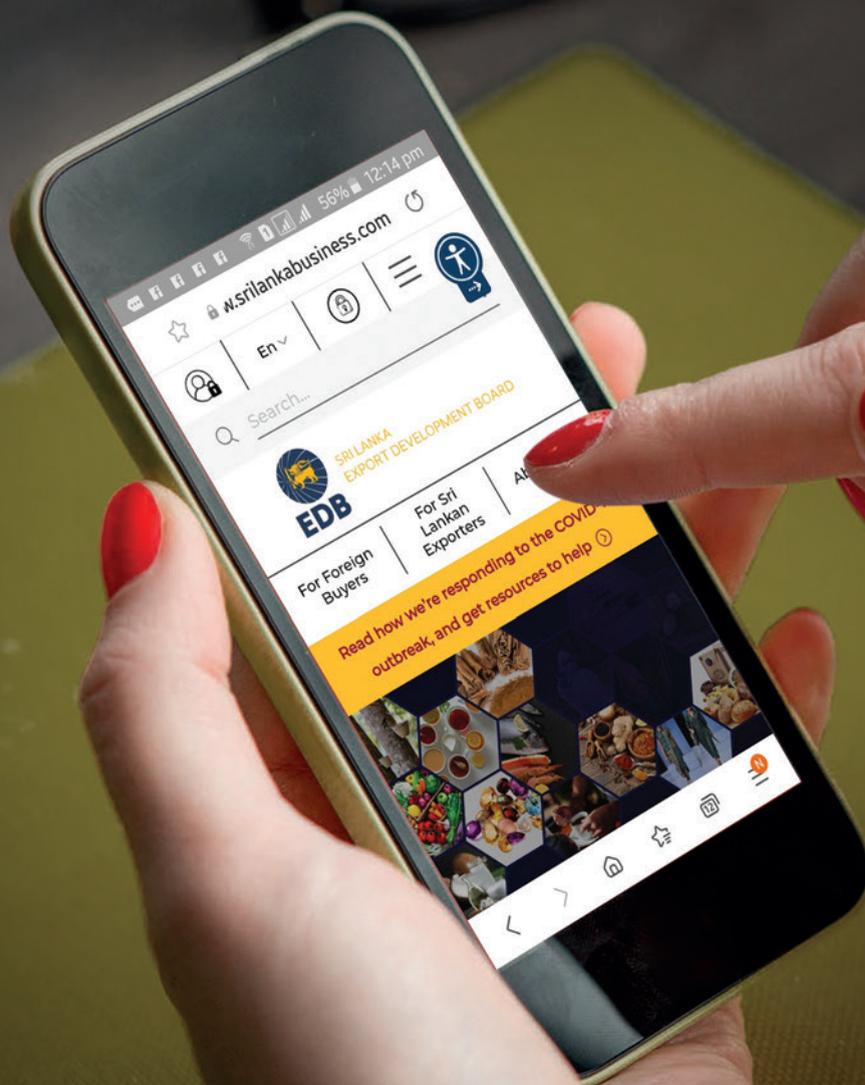


Social Entrepreneurship

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**Social entrepreneurship**

Social entrepreneurship focuses on solving social and environmental problems through scalable business models that prioritise people, purpose, and positive change alongside financial sustainability.

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Ayubowan!

The Sri Lankan wish ‘Ayubowan’ means “May Life be Long!”

Social entrepreneurship blends purpose with innovation to address community needs while creating sustainable economic value.

Social entrepreneurship brings together innovation and purpose, enabling businesses to address community challenges while generating sustainable profits and long-term impact. At its core, it is about building strong relationships within communities, understanding their needs, and delivering ethical, creative, and sustainable solutions that create shared value through profitability, positive impact, and corporate social responsibility.

Across Sri Lanka, social entrepreneurs and changemakers are driven by a mission to elevate the standards of the island’s produce. By empowering locally manufactured brands to access international markets, they are simultaneously strengthening grassroots communities and building globally competitive value chains. This edition presents an insightful overview of social entrepreneurship, highlighting Sri Lanka’s export resilience and its growing role as a trusted global trade partner. An in-depth article on Sri Lanka’s emerging economic identity explores how the country’s future is anchored in social enterprise, global reliability, and transparent governance.

This edition also carries an interview with Selyna Peiris, Chief Growth Officer of Selyn Group of Impact Companies and Board Director, World Fair Trade Organization at the Chamber of Commerce, who reflects on Selyn’s strategic evolution, the realities of scaling social innovation, and the critical steps Sri Lanka must take to build a value-driven export economy. Among the featured enterprises is PODIE (People’s Organization for Import and Export Development), a value-added organic spice exporter committed to responsible sourcing and ethical trade practices. Kiyota Coffee, a community-based social enterprise established in 2014, is highlighted for its success in exporting to multiple international markets. This edition also spotlights Primco Green Expo, which exports authentic Sri Lankan food varieties to global markets while upholding exceptional standards of freshness and quality. Dry Expo is also featured for its work with butterfly pea flowers—an emerging, high-demand wellness product, particularly within specialty tea markets worldwide. In addition, the Sri Lanka Expo 2026 International Trade Exhibition, which was officially launched, is highlighted in this edition.

Sri Lanka Export Development Board

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Sri Lanka Expo 2026
Your gateway to explore trade, investments, cultural diversity, and discover new new business opportunities.



OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social Entrepreneurship

The Sri Lankan Blueprint for Inclusive Prosperity



Empowering communities through social entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka.

From Grassroots to Growth: How Social Entrepreneurs are Redefining Sri Lanka's Economy

In the aftermath of prolonged economic contraction and deepening social challenges, Sri Lanka is witnessing a quiet yet transformative shift in how development is being imagined and enacted. Rather than emerging from traditional centers of industrial power or state-led planning, this transformation is being driven by a new generation of social entrepreneurs who are redefining the relationship between profit and purpose. Across rural villages, urban

centers, and environmentally sensitive regions, these innovators are building enterprises that directly confront poverty, inequality, and ecological degradation while remaining financially sustainable. Their work represents not an extension of corporate social responsibility, but a fundamental reimagining of business itself as a force for inclusive economic growth.

Social entrepreneurship is globally understood as the application of market-based strategies to achieve lasting social or environmental change, a definition articulated by

Mair and Martí in their foundational work on the subject.

In Sri Lanka, however, this concept has taken on a distinctive character shaped by local realities, cultural traditions, and historical forms of collective action. Ancient cooperative practices, particularly in agriculture and rural finance, have provided a strong foundation for modern social enterprises.

These traditional values of mutual support and shared ownership are increasingly being combined with contemporary innovation, ethical branding, and access to

international markets, positioning social entrepreneurship as a viable pathway for national recovery and long-term resilience. Rather than conforming to a single organizational form, social entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka exists along a spectrum of models that balance impact and income in different ways. Some ventures operate as hybrid non-profit organizations that generate revenue through commercial activities in order to reduce dependence on donor funding. These models often focus on employing beneficiaries directly, such as persons with disabilities or marginalized youth, thereby combining income generation with dignity, skill development, and social inclusion. Other ventures operate as for-profit social enterprises, with the social mission embedded at the core of the business, with profits primarily reinvested to expand impact rather than distributed for private gain.

One of the most prominent Sri Lankan examples of this approach is Selyn, a fair-trade handloom enterprise that operates as a for-profit company while prioritizing artisan welfare and rural employment. By revitalizing the traditional handloom industry, Selyn has created sustainable livelihoods for thousands of artisans, the majority of whom are women, while preserving cultural heritage and ensuring ethical production standards. This model demonstrates how commercial success and social impact can reinforce one another when mission-driven principles guide business decisions.

Cooperative enterprises remain particularly significant within Sri Lanka's social entrepreneurship landscape, reflecting a deeply rooted tradition of democratic ownership and collective empowerment.

Networks such as SANASA have played a critical role in rural development by enabling members to pool resources, access affordable credit, and strengthen their negotiating power in markets that often disadvantage small producers. Agricultural cooperatives,



Eco-friendly gift and stationery products made from recycled elephant dung in Sri Lanka.

By addressing systemic challenges through market-based solutions, Sri Lankan social entrepreneurs are building businesses that generate resilience, equity, and long-term value.

in particular, allow smallholder farmers to achieve economies of scale, stabilize incomes, and reduce vulnerability to price fluctuations, contributing meaningfully to poverty reduction and rural economic resilience.

Alongside these locally rooted models, Sri Lanka has also seen adaptations of the social business concept pioneered by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus. These enterprises are designed exclusively to solve specific social problems, with investors recovering only their initial capital and all surplus reinvested into the mission.

While globally recognized examples such as Grameen Danone operate outside Sri Lanka, similar principles can be observed locally in initiatives focused on affordable healthcare, renewable energy access, and essential services for underserved communities. Although

still limited in scale, these ventures illustrate the potential for capital to be mobilized purely in the service of social outcomes.

Market intermediary enterprises represent another vital component of the ecosystem, functioning as bridges between marginalized producers and larger markets. These ventures connect spice farmers in regions such as Matale or lace makers in Galle with domestic and international buyers, ensuring fair pricing, transparent supply chains, and the preservation of traditional skills.

Sri Lankan companies such as Magicara in the spice sector and Aranya in natural dyes exemplify this approach by combining ethical sourcing with high-quality branding, thereby allowing rural producers to capture greater value from global markets.

The real impact of these models becomes most visible through the



Cashew nuts sourced from Sri Lanka.



Sri Lanka's coconut-based exports for food, wellness, and beauty industries.

These traditional values of mutual support and shared ownership are increasingly being combined with contemporary innovation, ethical branding, and access to international markets, positioning social entrepreneurship as a viable pathway for national recovery and long-term resilience.

work of pioneering enterprises that have reshaped entire market spaces.

Good Market stands out as a particularly influential example, operating not as a single business but as a platform that nurtures an entire ecosystem of social enterprises,

cooperatives, and responsible businesses. Through its weekly physical market in Colombo and its digital marketplace, Good Market provides critical market access for hundreds of small-scale producers of organic food, eco-friendly products,

and handmade goods. By curating a verified community committed to ethical standards, it has created a trusted space for conscious consumption while enabling micro-entrepreneurs to scale their operations sustainably.

Urban-focused social enterprises have also demonstrated how impact-driven business can address challenges beyond rural poverty. Colombo city foster exemplifies this by partnering with property owners to temporarily transform vacant buildings into vibrant pop-up spaces for designers, cafés, and artists. This model not only revitalizes underutilized urban spaces but also provides affordable commercial opportunities for creative entrepreneurs who would otherwise struggle to access retail locations. In doing so, it contributes to urban regeneration while fostering a dynamic local creative economy.

Environmental innovation is another defining feature of Sri Lanka's social entrepreneurship landscape, as illustrated by Eco Maximus. Addressing the twin crises of waste management and deforestation, the company collects discarded elephant dung from conservation centers and converts it into high-quality, tree-free paper. This process creates employment opportunities, supports wildlife conservation, and produces an environmentally sustainable product for international markets. By transforming waste into value, Eco Maximus demonstrates how environmental challenges can be reimagined as opportunities for sustainable enterprise.

These ventures collectively generate impacts that extend far beyond individual businesses, contributing to inclusive economic development as defined by the United Nations Development Program. By creating employment in underserved regions, strengthening rural supply chains, and promoting ethical production, social enterprises contribute directly to poverty alleviation and decent work.

Many of these ventures also play a significant role in advancing gender equality, particularly in sectors such as handloom weaving, agriculture, and handicrafts, where women gain income security, leadership opportunities, and greater decision-making power within their households and communities.

At the same time, social enterprises are reshaping consumption and production patterns by promoting sustainability, circular-economy principles, and responsible sourcing.

Platforms like Good Market and environmentally focused ventures such as Eco Maximus are gradually influencing consumer behavior, encouraging demand for products that align with social and environmental values.

Market intermediary models further reduce inequalities by ensuring that rural producers receive a fairer share of the final price, narrowing the economic gap between producers and urban or international markets. Despite their growing influence, social entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka continue to operate within a challenging ecosystem.

Access to finance remains a persistent obstacle, as traditional banks often struggle to evaluate ventures that pursue blended social and financial returns.

The lack of tailored impact investment funds and patient capital constrains the ability of successful enterprises to scale. Market awareness, while steadily increasing, also requires continued effort to build a critical mass of conscious consumers.

For social entrepreneurship to fulfil its potential as a driver of national transformation, a more enabling ecosystem is required. This includes policy innovation to formally recognize social enterprises, financial instruments designed for impact-driven ventures, stronger incubators and accelerators, and greater integration of social entrepreneurship into education and public discourse. Institutions such as Chamber of



Traditional Sri Lankan handicrafts showcasing vibrant cultural heritage.



Handwoven reed and rush products showcasing Sri Lankan craftsmanship.

Commerce with 'Trade Support Institution', universities, development agencies, and the media all play a role in supporting this transition.

Ultimately, the rise of social entrepreneurship signals a profound shift in Sri Lanka's economic narrative. These enterprises demonstrate that profitability and social impact are not opposing forces but mutually reinforcing ones. By addressing systemic challenges through market-based solutions, Sri Lankan social entrepreneurs are building

businesses that generate resilience, equity, and long-term value.

As the country charts its path toward recovery and sustainable growth, its work offers a compelling lesson: the most enduring prosperity is created when economic development is designed to include everyone, leaving no community behind. [\[1\]](#)

J.H.T.K. Jayalath, Deputy Director / Sri Lanka Export Development Board

GLOBAL IDENTITY

Sri Lanka's New Economic Identity

Social Entrepreneurship, Export Resilience, and a Renewed Global Promise



Renowned worldwide, Ceylon tea from Sri Lanka reflects a legacy of craftsmanship and global trade.

In an era defined by fragile supply chains and rising expectations for ethical business, an island nation in the Indian Ocean is quietly reshaping its global identity.

Sri Lanka, long known for Ceylon Tea and pristine coastlines, is now emerging as a model for socially

driven, export-powered development, a strategy blending commercial discipline with social impact to create an economic revival rooted in resilience, transparency, and innovation.

At the center of this shift is social entrepreneurship: ventures designed

to address social or environmental problems while maintaining financial sustainability. Unlike traditional philanthropy, social enterprises embed social value into their business models.

In Sri Lanka, this means export-oriented firms that empower



Colombo Port plays a central role in facilitating fair trade practices and resilient export supply chains.

Sri Lanka's biggest selling point is more than its variety of export products; it is its unmatched reliability.

rural communities, champion environmentally responsible production, and deliver premium products to the world, often at standards exceeding those of far larger economies.

This alignment of purpose and performance is reshaping Sri Lanka's proposition to the global marketplace. As buyers increasingly prioritize ethical sourcing, traceability, and sustainable production, Sri Lankan exporters are leveraging their values, not just their products, to build stronger, more durable global partnerships.

Resilience under Pressure: A competitive advantage few can match

Sri Lanka's biggest selling point is more than its variety of export products; it is its unmatched reliability. Over the past two decades, the country has endured a series of crises that would cripple most economies, including a devastating tsunami, political upheavals, a pandemic, severe supply-chain disruptions, and, most recently, the Ditwah Cyclone in 2025.

Yet throughout, Sri Lankan exporters maintained a level of

continuity that global brands still commend.

- After the 2004 tsunami, apparel, agriculture, and fisheries exporters restored operations within weeks, fulfilling orders without defaults.
- During the long civil conflict, export industries continued to operate with discipline and predictability.
- During COVID-19, factories pivoted to produce PPE and sanitation products, sustaining nearly 95 percent of export commitments.
- The 2025 cyclone damaged agricultural belts and disrupted logistics, yet exporters activated contingency plans, relied on digital tracking, and avoided order cancellations.

This consistency has built a rare global trust. For multinational brands navigating climate shocks, geopolitical tensions, and unpredictable suppliers, Sri Lanka has demonstrated a remarkable ability to bend, not break.



Business planning and strategic growth amid opportunities and challenges.

For investors, it creates: scalable businesses aligned with Sustainable Development Goals, low-market-entry costs, opportunities in high-value agriculture, wellness, and digital sectors, partnerships within a transparent, reform-aligned economy...

At the very moment Sri Lanka continues to prove its reliability, the nation also calls upon the international community for understanding and partnership as it rebuilds from the unprecedented impact of the 2025 Ditwah disaster. The cyclone affected nearly every province, damaging infrastructure, agricultural zones, and export value chains. Despite exporters fulfilling orders and maintaining operational discipline, the wider economy absorbed a significant shock.

A Reforming Nation: Digitisation, Governance, and Transparency

Sri Lanka's renewed economic momentum is supported by a wave

of structural reforms aimed at restoring international confidence.

● A Fully Digitized Trade

Ecosystem: The government's National Digitization Agenda is transforming the way trade happens. The introduction of a National Trade Single Window integrates customs, ports, and other border agencies, reducing clearance times, curbing bureaucratic inefficiencies, and increasing predictability.

● Governance and Anti-Corruption:

A new Anti-Corruption Act, mandatory asset declarations, and e-procurement mechanisms have been introduced to restore investor confidence.

● Empowering MSMEs and Community-Based Enterprises:

Small and mid-sized enterprises, many of which are social ventures, receive support through export-readiness programs, climate-resilient agriculture assistance, and digital skills training for youth and women.

These reforms signal a commitment to building a cleaner, more transparent, investor-friendly economy, an assurance international partners have long sought.

A Recovery built on Sustainable and Inclusive Growth

Sri Lanka's macroeconomic trajectory is stabilizing. Low Inflation, significant foreign reserves, and higher GDP growth in 2025. The country's debt restructuring process is reinforcing fiscal discipline and policy predictability. But Sri Lanka's ambition goes beyond recovery. Its next chapter focuses on value-added, climate-aligned, innovation-driven exports.

With a highly literate workforce, a strategic geographic location, and deep cultural knowledge in agriculture and craftsmanship, Sri Lanka is



Green business and sustainable investment concept.

Sri Lanka's new economic identity is deeply rooted in social enterprise, global reliability, and transparent governance.

positioning itself as a global hub for purpose-driven commerce.

Why Global Buyers and Investors are taking notice

Social entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka offers global partners a unique blend of commercial value and measurable impact.

For buyers, it provides: ethical sourcing backed by traceability, consistent delivery despite geopolitical or climatic disruptions, and premium, sustainable, high-quality products.

For investors, it creates: scalable businesses aligned with Sustainable Development Goals, low-market-entry costs, opportunities in high-value agriculture, wellness, and digital sectors, partnerships within a transparent, reform-aligned economy, and, for development agencies and

multilateral lenders, Sri Lanka presents a compelling case for blended finance, impact investment, and climate-resilient value chain development.

The Road Ahead: A Vision for 2030

Sri Lanka aims to become a global leader in impact-driven exports by 2030, with goals to:

- Generate USD 36 billion in exports by 2030
- Generate significant exports from socially impactful ventures
- Create new jobs, especially for women and youth
- Lift many people out of poverty through export-linked community enterprises
- Embed world-leading sustainability and traceability standards in all major sectors

- Expand high-value green and digital export industries

A Nation Ready for Partnership

For the international community, Sri Lanka's message is clear: partner with us, and you invest not only in commerce but in communities, climate resilience, and shared global prosperity.

Sri Lanka's new economic identity is deeply rooted in social enterprise, global reliability, and transparent governance. In a world seeking stable, ethical, resilient suppliers, the country offers something rare: a trusted partner with a proven track record and a bold vision for sustainable growth.

International businesses seeking meaningful, long-term relationships will find in Sri Lanka a nation poised to rise, responsibly, reliably, and with purpose. [\[1\]](#)



Dinesh de Silva
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Connect and International
Trade Consultancy

BUILDING HIGH-IMPACT COMPANIES

Selyn

Building High-Impact Companies for a Value-Driven Export Future

An interview with Selyna Peiris, Chief Growth Officer - Selyn Group of Impact Companies and Board Director, World Fair Trade Organization.



Manufacturing shift at Selyn's fair-trade toy facility in Sri Lanka.

Selyn is one of Sri Lanka's largest impact businesses, with over 35 years of experience across ethical production, women's employment, and export manufacturing.

Founded as a craft-based organization, it has grown into a group of impact-driven companies balancing social purpose with commercial viability. For over three decades,

Selyn has shaped Sri Lanka's social enterprise and ethical export landscape.

Under the leadership of Selyna Peiris, Chief Growth Officer at Selyn Group of Impact Companies and Board Director at the World Fair Trade Organization, Selyn continues to scale social innovation, strengthen rural livelihoods, and advance a value-driven export economy.

Selyn was once positioned at the intersection of social innovation, blockchain, and regenerative business. How has that vision translated into operational reality?

Following the COVID-19 disruption, Selyn deliberately reassessed its long-term strategy. With decades of rural livelihoods dependent on the organization, continuity and income

stability became non-negotiable. One key realization was that Sri Lanka's export competitiveness cannot be built on volume. Competing with large-scale manufacturing economies would undermine both quality and livelihoods.

Selyn therefore chose to focus on high-value, differentiated products, supported by systems that could meet future compliance and transparency requirements.

Investments in traceability and blockchain during this period did not all scale commercially, but they strengthened Selyn's readiness for emerging regulatory frameworks and reinforced the importance of system-level thinking.

What have been the biggest challenges in sustaining a decentralized rural production model while entering demanding export markets?

A fundamental tension exists between decentralized craft production and the requirements of international export markets.

Exports demand formalized systems, certifications such as Sedex, strict quality benchmarks, and cost efficiency—conditions that are difficult to align with dispersed, community-based craft models. Rather than



Selyna Peiris, Chief Growth Officer, Selyn Group of Impact Companies and Board Director, World Fair Trade Organization.

Selyn made a strategic decision to separate craft from export-driven growth. Craft continues as a protected, boutique, heritage-driven vertical serving local, hospitality, and design-led markets.

forcing craft to scale in ways that would erode its social and cultural foundations, Selyn made a strategic decision to separate craft from export-driven growth. Craft continues as a protected, boutique, heritage-driven

vertical serving local, hospitality, and design-led markets. Export growth is driven by other verticals where production, compliance, and quality systems can be structured without compromising worker wellbeing.



From playful beginnings to powerful strides — crafted for every stage of life.



Empowering women through craft and opportunity.



Banana leaf fibers, transformed through design and skilled hands.

How has the shift from sustainability to regeneration shaped product development and cost structures?

Selyn has consistently prioritized fair employment and long-term community engagement. As the organization expanded into export manufacturing, it also confronted practical constraints.

While natural fibers remain central to Selyn’s branded lines,

export manufacturing—particularly in toys and hygiene products—often requires client-specified or globally standardized materials to meet safety, durability, and regulatory requirements.

For Selyn, regeneration is therefore not defined solely by material inputs. It is understood as the creation of economically viable systems that sustain livelihoods, formalize employment, and strengthen rural

economies, while continuously improving environmental performance.

With around 600 individuals engaged in village-based production, how has Selyn adapted skills development and income stability?

As export-focused verticals expanded, Selyn introduced professionalized, factory-based production alongside village-based craft. These environments enable efficiency, standardization, and compliance while offering predictable workflows and stable income.

Significant investments have been made in upskilling—training artisans and operators in new production techniques, quality control, and the use of machinery.

Village-based, home-centered work continues where culturally appropriate, but growth is increasingly driven by structured manufacturing systems. This dual model allows Selyn to preserve heritage craft while ensuring income stability through scalable export activity.

How do you see Sri Lanka’s export brand evolving beyond ethical sourcing?

Sri Lanka’s competitive advantage lies in niche, value-driven manufacturing, not mass production. The opportunity sits in mid-sized orders that deliver value while maintaining quality, ethics, and design integrity.

To move beyond ethical sourcing, the country must strengthen capabilities in product development, technical design, materials engineering, safety standards, and testing infrastructure. Ethics alone are no longer differentiators; buyers expect innovation and reliable execution.

What policy support has helped Selyn, and where are reforms needed?

While some export support mechanisms exist, medium-scale enterprises continue to face rising costs, regulatory complexity, and



Sandra Wanduragala, Founder of Selyn with daughter Selyna Peiris, Chief Growth Officer, Selyn Group of Impact Companies and Board Director, World Fair Trade Organization.

delays—particularly in standards and certification processes for emerging sectors.

Greater alignment is needed between standards bodies, export agencies, and private-sector strategies.

Targeted, sector-specific support would enable firms to identify viable niches, navigate regulatory pathways, and scale responsibly.

How critical is collaboration in scaling social innovation?

Collaboration is essential. Medium-scale enterprises lack the scale to compete on their own, yet Sri Lanka often operates in silos. Shared standards, joint training, coordinated market access, and collaborative representation—particularly at international trade fairs—are critical to building competitive ecosystems.

Social innovation scales best when trust and shared purpose replace isolation and internal competition.

Selyn is continuing its evolution as a group of purpose-driven impact companies, each with a clear mandate and appropriate growth pathway. Export-oriented verticals such as boutique toy manufacturing and sustainable menstrual care provide the financial backbone that protects craft.

What does the next phase of Selyn's growth look like?

Selyn is continuing its evolution as a group of purpose-driven impact companies, each with a clear mandate and appropriate growth pathway. Export-oriented verticals such as boutique toy manufacturing and sustainable menstrual care provide the financial backbone that protects craft. Across the group, the primary risks are mission drift, overextension, and the loss of human-centered decision-making. Growth is hence pursued with discipline and intention—focused on integrity rather than scale at any cost.

What mindset shifts are needed for Sri Lanka's ethical export future?

The most critical shift is from isolation to collaboration. Ethical narratives alone are no longer sufficient.

What matters is how effectively businesses work together to build value-driven ecosystems.

Sri Lanka's export future will be shaped not by isolated success stories, but by networks of enterprises growing together with shared standards, mutual trust, and long-term purpose. 

ORGANIC SPICES

People's Organization for Import and Export Development (PODIE)



Proudly packed — Sri Lankan spices ready for the world.

The People's Organization for Import and Export Development (PODIE) is widely recognized as a successful and well-established social enterprise in Sri Lanka. Founded in 1974 and headquartered in Negombo, the organization was initially created with the purpose of safeguarding small-scale farmers and businesses from exploitative intermediaries. At the same time, PODIE aimed

to strengthen product quality and create direct pathways for local producers to access export markets.

During its early years, PODIE mainly focused on exporting primary products. In addition, it operated a retail outlet that catered largely to tourists visiting Negombo, helping introduce locally produced goods to a broader audience. By 1985, the organization had expanded significantly by developing a

structured network of rural farmers and suppliers, and it has continued to operate as a social enterprise ever since. Today, PODIE is particularly known for its emphasis on organic-based products and responsible sourcing practices.

PODIE currently produces and exports more than 18 varieties of spices and spice blends, as well as over 50 spice-based gift items. To support this expanding product



Freshly harvested green cloves, cradled in hardworking hands — the beginning of a fragrant journey.



Little hands holding mace and nutmeg, nature's spices wrapped in a smile.



Split green cardamom.

During its early years, PODIE mainly focused on exporting primary products. In addition, it operated a retail outlet that catered largely to tourists visiting Negombo, helping introduce locally produced goods to a broader audience.

portfolio, the organization has established production groups across seven out of Sri Lanka's nine provinces.

Its community-based entrepreneurship model is implemented through seven farmer networks, including chili and paddy farmers; nutmeg and clove farmers; cinnamon farmers; black pepper, white pepper, and cocoa farmers; lemongrass farmers; vanilla farmers;

and turmeric and ginger farmers. Altogether, the network includes approximately 3,000 farmers.

Beyond ensuring a consistent supply of raw materials, PODIE prioritizes farmer empowerment through training, technical guidance, and continuous encouragement. This support is strengthened through infrastructure assistance, enabling farming communities to maintain quality standards and improve productivity.

A key element of this approach is PODIE's dedicated division for producing high-quality organic fertilizer that meets appropriate standards. This fertilizer is distributed within the farmer network, allowing PODIE to ensure that all produce collected is fully organic and aligned with internationally recognized practices. A significant portion of PODIE's farmer groups are based

in remote rural areas, far from the country's capital and major industrial centers. In some locations, farmers face limited access to basic facilities such as electricity—an essential requirement for certain post-harvest and production activities. In response to this challenge, PODIE has supported these communities by providing solar panels. In addition, the organization has funded the construction of community centers for each farmer group, creating shared spaces for post-harvest processing. PODIE further contributes to agricultural sustainability by operating a seed farm, ensuring farmers have access to high-quality seeds to strengthen cultivation outcomes.

Environmental challenges are also a major concern, particularly for farmers in Sri Lanka's dry zone, where rainfall can be minimal or



Careful hand-sorting of peppercorns in the processing unit — quality checked at every step.



Winnowing grains by hand — a timeless ritual of care and tradition.

inconsistent during certain periods of the year.

One notable example was shared by Tyril Fernando, Managing Director of PODIE, who described an instance in which chili and paddy

PODIE’s social entrepreneurship model also extends beyond farming networks by creating inclusive income opportunities for rural women.

farmers in the Navagaththegama region of the North-Central Province requested support to renovate a lake that had been destroyed in their village. Known locally as the Vanni Amunukole Lake, the renovation was viewed as an essential solution to improve water access for cultivation. The project was completed with joint financial support: 50 percent was funded by the New Zealand government and a local investor, with PODIE contributing the remaining 50 percent. As a result, farmers who once depended solely on rainfall were able to cultivate year-round using reservoir water, ensuring a more stable, continuous supply of export-grade agricultural produce.

To protect farmers from market volatility, PODIE purchases produce from its network at a fixed, predetermined price. This pricing approach is designed to reduce the uncertainty farmers experience due to fluctuating market rates. When market prices rise, PODIE pays above-market rates, and when prices fall, the organization guarantees a minimum price. This system ensures fairness, stability, and continuity for farmers, allowing them to carry out their farming activities without disruptions from unpredictable income fluctuations.

PODIE’s social entrepreneurship model also extends beyond farming networks by creating



From sorting to sealing — spices carefully packed by skilled hands.



Ceylon Cinnamon, peeled by hand with care.

inclusive income opportunities for rural women. Women’s groups have been trained to produce recyclable, eco-friendly packaging materials, supporting export product

packaging needs while promoting environmental responsibility. This initiative not only supports PODIE’s sustainability commitments but also empowers and provides financial independence to women in rural communities.

The organization’s management structure reflects its broader commitment to ethical and fair trade principles. It incorporates representation from a range of stakeholders, including the board of directors, farmers, laborers, staff members, female representatives, and social workers. This inclusive governance approach ensures that operations remain aligned with fair trade values and socially responsible decision-making.

For nearly four decades, PODIE products have been exported to a wide range of international markets, including Europe, Scandinavian countries, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Canada, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and the United

States. The organization also holds membership in the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) and has earned multiple internationally recognized certifications, such as HACCP, ISO 22000:2018, EU Organic, JAS Organic, and USDA Organic. These certifications highlight PODIE’s commitment to product quality, food safety, and strict adherence to globally accepted production standards.

Over the years, PODIE has received numerous awards in recognition of its performance and contribution to Sri Lanka’s export sector. By directing investments toward rural communities and cooperative systems, PODIE continues to reinforce the long-term sustainability of its social entrepreneurship model. ☐

U.I.Galappaththi
Export Promotion Officer, EDB

COFFEE

Kiyota Coffee Company

A Model of Community-Based Social Entrepreneurship



Fresh coffee cherries on the plant, signaling harvest readiness.

Social entrepreneurship is fundamentally rooted in the development of strong community relationships and active community participation. A social entrepreneur prioritizes addressing society's essential needs through sustainable, inclusive solutions, with the primary objective of generating long-term benefits for the community as a whole.

This approach is commonly identified as a community-based social enterprise model, where close ties with local stakeholders encourage the circulation of resources within the

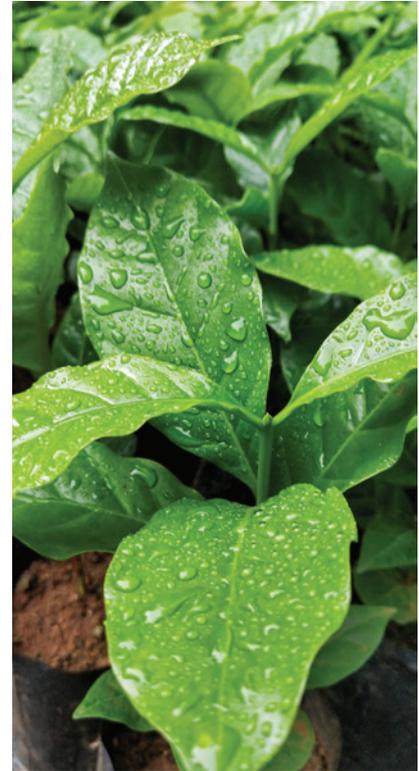
community through established social networks.

Kiyota Coffee Company, founded by Nalin Priyantha, represents a notable example of a community-based social enterprise. Established in 2014 as a sole proprietorship, the company's journey toward success was initially met with skepticism. In Sri Lanka, tea cultivation dominates the beverage industry, and coffee production has traditionally been perceived as a challenging alternative. Within this context, developing a successful coffee-based enterprise posed a considerable challenge.

The success of Kiyota Coffee can be largely attributed to its strong community-oriented operational model and extensive public participation. During its early stages, the company faced financial constraints that limited its ability to invest in large-scale production facilities and modern machinery. In response, an innovative outsourcing approach was adopted by engaging rural women in production activities. A small group of women from villages surrounding Udupihilla in the Matale district were trained and provided with raw materials to refine coffee at



Nalin Priyantha, Founder, Kiyota Coffee.



Young coffee plants with fresh green leaves.

Japan remains the primary export market, with Australia ranking second. In addition, these products reach international markets, including Dubai, the Maldives, and Singapore, through third-party distributors.

home. As market demand expanded, this network grew to include approximately thirty women actively involved in production.

By 2017, Kiyota Coffee had reached a stable operational phase and began exporting its products to Japan. Japanese buyers showed strong appreciation for the company's socially responsible business practices, particularly the inclusion of rural women as key stakeholders in the production process. During the same period, the company developed sufficient financial capacity to invest in essential machinery for primary coffee processing. Despite these advancements, reliance on women's labor was intentionally maintained to ensure sustainable income opportunities for rural households. Production stages requiring higher precision, such as roasting, were supported by the selective adoption of modern technological equipment.

Currently, Kiyota Coffee Company employs 37 permanent staff members, while approximately 40



Clusters of ripe red coffee cherries.

rural women contribute to production activities through contract-based or outsourced arrangements. The company exports a diverse range of coffee and cocoa products, reflecting continuous product diversification. Japan remains the primary export market, with Australia ranking second.

In addition, these products reach international markets, including Dubai, the Maldives, and Singapore, through third-party distributors. In Sri Lanka, the Kiyota Coffee brand has established itself as one of the country's leading coffee suppliers, with a market volume of 4.5-6 tons.



An instructor conducting a training session on coffee cultivation and harvesting techniques.



Involvement of female staff in coffee processing operations.



Single-origin Sri Lankan coffee showcased for international buyers and specialty markets.

Its products are widely available across the island.

The company currently operates 16 nurseries to produce high-quality coffee seedlings, which are distributed under company supervision to farmers in Sri Lanka's mid-country regions. To date, more than two million seedlings have been distributed. Alongside this initiative, farmer organizations have been formed, and continuous technical guidance, cultivation support, and advisory services are provided. The total land area cultivated under this program now exceeds 600 hectares.

With the objective of strengthening the supply chain and enhancing export capacity, Kiyota Coffee Company has received substantial support from the Sri Lanka Export Development Board and several other government institutions. Through this inclusive social enterprise model, approximately 4,000 farming families currently benefit from the company's engagement. On average, a farming household cultivating as little as half an acre of coffee earns over 600,000 rupees per harvest season.

A strong commitment to employee welfare is also evident within the organization. A monthly contribution is allocated from company funds and collectively matched by employee



Unroasted coffee beans.

The company exports a diverse range of coffee and cocoa products, reflecting continuous product diversification.

contributions to support a dedicated staff welfare program. Financial assistance is additionally provided to former employees who are no longer able to work due to physical disabilities.

Kiyota Coffee began operations as a sole proprietorship in 2014 and was formally incorporated as a private limited company in 2017. Sustained company operations as a socially responsible enterprise have generated tangible economic and social benefits for farmers, rural women, and remote communities. At the same time, operational flexibility, cost efficiency, and long-term sustainability have been achieved by minimizing heavy capital investment in large factories and plantations. Kiyota Coffee Company, therefore, stands as a compelling example of how social entrepreneurship can successfully balance commercial viability with community development.^[8]

U.I. Galappaththi
Export Promotion Officer, EDB



Sustainably packaged Kiyota coffee.



A perfect cup of Kiyota Coffee, crafted for everyday moments.

PRIMCO GREEN EXPO

Primco Green Expo

Bringing Authentic Sri Lankan Flavors to Global Markets through Social Entrepreneurship



A complete range of Disnie's Ceylon plant-based delights—bringing authentic Sri Lankan flavors to your table.

A successful social entrepreneurship model is built on a clear understanding of purpose and impact. It begins with identifying a real-world problem, designing practical solutions, selecting appropriate business models, and aligning products with clearly defined target markets. Equally

important is the ability to introduce innovation that creates measurable social and economic value. When these elements come together, social enterprises can deliver sustainable growth while uplifting communities.

In social entrepreneurship, special focus is often placed on rural and small-scale communities, where access to stable markets and

economic opportunities remains limited.

The true measure of success lies not only in commercial performance but also in the tangible benefits delivered to farmers, producers, and the regions in which such enterprises operate. By strengthening community relationships and stimulating local economic activity, social

entrepreneurs contribute meaningfully to long-term development.

Primco Green Expo, a Sri Lankan export-oriented company, exemplifies this approach. The company specializes in exporting value-added agricultural products and traditional Sri Lankan food varieties to international markets, positioning authenticity and quality at the core of its offering.

The foundation of Primco Green Expo's social enterprise model was shaped by a clear market insight. Many Sri Lankans living overseas seek authentic Sri Lankan food products that reflect traditional tastes and preparation methods. Recognizing this unmet demand, the company adopted a structured approach to transform locally sourced agricultural produce into export-ready, value-added food products that retain their cultural identity.

At the heart of Primco Green Expo's operations is a strong commitment to community impact. All spices and agricultural raw materials are sourced directly from farmers located around the company's processing facility in the Kurunegala district. This direct sourcing model ensures freshness and consistent quality of raw materials while providing farmers with reliable market access and fair pricing. Both agricultural and fisheries-based inputs are procured to optimal quality standards, strengthening trust across the supply chain.

This approach has delivered a sustainable solution to one of the most persistent challenges faced by rural Sri Lankan farmers: the absence of dependable markets for their produce. By integrating farmers into a structured export supply chain, Primco Green Expo has helped reduce post-harvest losses and improve income stability within farming communities.

Traditional Sri Lankan foods are often highly perishable, making international distribution particularly challenging. Primco Green Expo addressed this constraint through innovation in processing and packaging techniques. Products are developed without compromising



Ajith Somaratne,
Chairman, Primco
Green Expo and
Disna Wanasinghe.

The foundation of Primco Green Expo's social enterprise model was shaped by a clear market insight.



Every step handled with care—the team preparing ingredients under strict hygiene standards.



Slow-cooked the traditional way—where authentic Sri Lankan flavors begin.



Sealed with care—ensuring safety, freshness, and consistency in every pack.



Clearly labeled for traceability, safety, and trust.

authentic taste or relying on artificial preservatives. The company has also introduced a range of ready-to-cook food solutions, enabling international consumers to quickly and conveniently prepare traditional Sri Lankan dishes while preserving their original flavors.

The product portfolio now includes approximately 40 varieties of value-added food items. These products are exported to key international markets, including the United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, Russia, Bahrain, and several European countries. Additional export orders are generated through the company's digital channels, including its website and social media platforms, further expanding global reach.

According to Chairman Ajith Somaratne, a significant share of fruits and vegetables produced in Sri Lankan villages is lost due to limited post-harvest handling and processing capabilities.



Convenient ready-to-cook food solutions.



Traditional recipes, thoughtfully preserved — Ash Gourd Curry.

Primco Green Expo was established to address this gap by adding value to agricultural outputs and connecting farmers to global markets that reward quality and consistency. At present, 25–30 farmers are directly linked to the company's supply network, with plans to expand participation in line with rising international demand. Product development efforts are also underway to introduce new export-oriented offerings, including innovative items derived from avocado leaves.

Production capacity stands at approximately 3,000 cans per month, supported by appropriate technological infrastructure and a skilled workforce.

The company operates under strict food safety and quality standards, with continuous oversight from relevant health authorities to ensure compliance with international expectations.

The rapid entry of Primco Green Expo into international markets within a year reflects strong institutional support and growing buyer confidence. Assistance from the Sri Lanka Export Development Board has played a pivotal role in facilitating this progress, while trust from international importers and consumers has reinforced the brand's credibility.

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Ready for shelves, packed with bold Sri Lankan flavor—tempered chickpea.

Looking ahead, Primco Green Expo remains committed to showcasing Sri Lanka's rich culinary heritage on the global stage. By combining authentic flavors, innovative processing, and a socially responsible

business model, the company continues to offer overseas importers a reliable source of premium, value-added Sri Lankan food products with a compelling story of sustainability and community impact. [\[6\]](#)

DRY EXPO

Cultivating Value from the Ground up:

Dry Expo and Sri Lanka's Next Export Frontier



Fresh butterfly pea flowers thriving on the vine.

In the rural landscapes of Walasmulla in Sri Lanka's Southern Province, an export story is unfolding far from ports, factories, or industrial parks. It begins instead in home gardens, where women farmers cultivate the vivid blue pea flower—an increasingly sought-after ingredient in global wellness and specialty tea markets. From these modest origins, Dry Expo has emerged as a compelling example of how a community-owned enterprise can be successfully integrated into Sri Lanka's export economy.

Organized as a cooperative society, Dry Expo brings together over 50 rural women as both producers and owners of the enterprise. This dual role has proven transformative. Rather than functioning as price-taking suppliers at the margins of the value chain, members participate directly in strategic decisions, revenue sharing, and reinvestment. The cooperative structure ensures democratic governance while supporting commercial discipline, reflecting a modern evolution of Sri Lanka's long-standing cooperative movement.

What distinguishes Dry Expo in the export landscape is its control over the entire value chain. Cultivation is carried out organically across decentralized home gardens, reducing production risk while supporting environmentally responsible agriculture. Processing,



Roselle in bloom.



Fresh butterfly pea flowers, picked by hand.



Tending the blue blooms, one row at a time.

drying, packaging, and quality assurance are handled in-house, enabling the society to meet international standards and secure certifications such as SLS and GMP. Through this vertically integrated approach, raw agricultural output is transformed into premium, export-ready products, including dried flowers, tea bags, and powdered formulations, tailored to global market demand.

Operating on a fully commercial basis, Dry Expo generates its revenue exclusively through exports. Yet the enterprise retains a strong social orientation. Profits are distributed among members or reinvested into community

By transforming a locally grown flower into a globally traded product, the society illustrates how exports can serve as a powerful vehicle for inclusive growth.

development, strengthening household incomes while building collective resilience. Significant monthly earnings have contributed to tangible improvements in livelihoods, particularly for women who have been excluded from formal economic participation. In this way, export growth is directly

linked to inclusive development outcomes. The evolution of Dry Expo also highlights the importance of institutional collaboration in enabling grassroots exporters. Early engagement with the Walasmulla Divisional Secretariat provided organizational legitimacy and foundational support, while technical



Inspecting the butterfly pea flowers to ensure quality and standards.



Freshly harvested butterfly pea flowers.



L-R: Thilak, Presad, Samanthi, Kumudu C Lokuhewagama, Sagarika, Dimuthu and Aruna Pathmasiri from the Small Enterprises Development (SED) Division.

Operating on a fully commercial basis, Dry Expo generates its revenue exclusively through exports. Yet the enterprise retains a strong social orientation.

assistance and market guidance from the Sri Lanka Export Development Board facilitated export readiness and international market access. This partnership underscores the power of targeted public-sector intervention to unlock the export potential of rural enterprises. At the same time, the journey has revealed structural challenges faced by hybrid enterprises operating at the intersection of commerce and social impact. Access to patient growth capital remains limited, and the absence of a dedicated legal framework for social enterprises

can constrain scale-up efforts. Addressing these gaps through policy innovation and tailored financial instruments would not only benefit enterprises like Dry Expo but also strengthen Sri Lanka's broader export ecosystem.

The significance of Dry Expo extends beyond its own commercial success. Its model, community ownership combined with value-added processing and export orientation, offers a replicable blueprint for rural export development. As global markets increasingly value traceability,

sustainability, and ethical sourcing, enterprises rooted in community engagement are well-positioned to compete.

Dry Expo demonstrates that Sri Lanka's export future does not lie solely in large-scale industrial production, but also in empowering rural communities to move up the value chain. By transforming a locally grown flower into a globally traded product, the society illustrates how exports can serve as a powerful vehicle for inclusive growth. In doing so, Dry Expo contributes not only to foreign-exchange earnings but also to a more resilient, diversified, and socially grounded export economy for Sri Lanka. □

U.I. Galappaththi
Export Promotion Officer, EDB

SRI LANKA EXPO 2026

Sri Lanka Expo 2026

International Trade Exhibition Officially Launched



Sunil Handunneththi, Minister of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development, is launching the official website of "Sri Lanka Expo 2026".

The Sri Lanka Export Development Board officially announced the launch of an international exhibition titled "Sri Lanka Expo 2026" aimed at promoting Sri Lanka's export potential and investment opportunities. The official website for the exhibition, srilankaexpo.lk, was also launched at the event, enabling local exhibitors and foreign buyers to register online.

This international exhibition, scheduled for June 18–21, 2026, at the Bandaranaike Memorial

International Conference Hall, will showcase Sri Lanka's export capabilities and investment opportunities to the international community.

The official launch ceremony of "Sri Lanka Expo 2026" was held under the patronage of Sunil Handunneththi, Minister of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development. The event was attended by Engineer Kumara Jayakody, Minister of Power and Energy; Chaturanga Abeysinghe, Deputy Minister of Industry and

Entrepreneurship Development; Arun Hemachandra, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Employment; Eranga Weeraratne, Deputy Minister of Digital Economy; Thilaka Jayasundara, Secretary to the Ministry; Prof. Gomika Udugamasooriya, President's Senior Adviser on Science and Technology; Mangala Wijesinghe, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Sri Lanka Export Development Board; along with other Secretaries to Ministries, diplomats, representatives of international organizations, banks,



Sunil Handunneththi, Minister of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development.

The main objectives of Sri Lanka Expo 2026 include showcasing Sri Lanka's diverse export industries to global markets, creating a platform for business people, investors, and policymakers, building buyer and investor confidence in Sri Lanka's capabilities, promoting Sri Lanka as a leading trade and investment hub in South Asia, and facilitating pathways to achieve the national export target of USD 36 billion by 2030.



Mangala Wijesinghe, Chairman, Sri Lanka Export Development Board.

chambers of commerce, heads of institutions collaborating with Sri Lanka Expo 2026, as well as exporters and officials from both public and private sectors.

"Sri Lanka Expo 2026 is not just an event; it is a strategic platform for our exporters to reach new markets, attract international buyers, and showcase the best of Sri Lanka. It is a platform where our policies, our products, and our people come together to create real business opportunities in international markets," said Sunil Handunneththi, Minister of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development.

"For exporters, this Expo is an opportunity to expand into new markets, form strategic partnerships, and move up the value chain. For international buyers and investors, it is a chance to engage with Sri Lanka's quality products, skilled talent, and resilient business environment," said Mangala Wijesinghe, Chairman, Sri Lanka Export Development Board.

Approximately 750 local exporters and 1,500 international buyers, investors, and media personnel are expected to participate in Sri Lanka Expo 2026.

The main objectives of Sri Lanka Expo 2026 include showcasing Sri Lanka's diverse export industries to global markets, creating a platform for business people, investors, and policymakers, building buyer and investor confidence in Sri Lanka's capabilities, promoting Sri Lanka as a leading trade and investment hub in South Asia, and facilitating pathways to achieve the national export target of USD 36 billion by 2030. Under the industrial export sector, the exhibition will include apparel, textiles and fashion, gems and jewelry, boat building, engineering and automotive components, rubber and polymer products, electrical and electronic products, lifestyle and handicraft products, pharmaceutical products, and mineral and mineral-based products. Under the agricultural export sector, it will feature tea,



Thilaka Jayasundara, Secretary to the Ministry of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development, addressing the gathering at the launch of "Sri Lanka Expo 2026."

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From right: Eranga Weeraratne, Deputy Minister of Digital Economy; Thilaka Jayasundara, Secretary to the Ministry of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development; Mangala Wijesinghe, Chairman, Sri Lanka Export Development Board; Eng Kumara Jayakody, Minister of Power and Energy; Sunil Handunneththi, Minister of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development; Chathuranga Abeyasinghe, Deputy Minister of Industry and Arun Hemachandra, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Employment.

spices, and concentrate products, coconut-based products, fisheries products, processed food and beverages, ayurvedic and herbal products, cut flowers and foliage, ornamental fish, fruits, and vegetables.

Under export services, the exhibition will showcase information and communication technology/ business process management, maritime and offshore services, logistics, construction and renewable energy, wellness and healthcare services, and other services.

Sri Lanka Expo 2026 will also include an investor forum, industry-specific sessions, structured business-to-business (B2B) meetings, fashion shows featuring Sri Lankan designers, culinary demonstrations highlighting local cuisine, cultural events, and live product demonstrations. The Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing (SLIM) and Sri Lankan Airlines are serving as partners for Sri Lanka Expo 2026.

For registration and further information about the exhibition, visit srilankaexpo.lk. 



Attendees included business leaders, diplomats, international organizations, banks, chambers of commerce, exporters, and public and private sector officials.

K.S.A.N. Madushan
Assistant Director, EDB

GO DEEPER



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Your gateway to explore trade, investments, cultural diversity
and discover new business opportunities



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- Minerals & Mineral-based Products

Agriculture Sector

- Tea
- Spices & Concentrates
- Coconut-based Products
- Fisheries Products
- Processed Foods & Beverages
- Ayurveda & Herbal Products
- Cut Flowers & Foliage
- Ornamental Fish
- Fruits & Vegetables

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- ICT / BPM
- Marine & Offshore Services
- Logistics
- Construction & Renewable Energy
- Wellness & Healthcare
- Other Services

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- Future Export Leaders

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- Pre-arranged B2B meetings with leading Sri Lankan exporters.
- Invitations for Investment forum and Industry sessions.
- Invitations for fashion, culinary, and cultural shows.

Registration Buyers and Investors



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