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COUNTRY FACT SHEET

SRI LANKA

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I. General Overview

- Full name: Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
- Population: 20,483,000
- Capital: Colombo (commercial), Sri Jayawardenepura (administrative)
- Largest city: Colombo
- Area: 65,610 sq km (25,332 sq miles)
- Government: Republic
- Major languages: Sinhala, Tamil, English
- Major religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity
- Life expectancy: 70.3 years (men), 77.9 years (women)
- Monetary unit: Sri Lankan Rupee
- Main exports: Clothing and textiles, tea, gems, rubber, coconuts
- GNI per capita (PPP): US \$2,240 (2010)
- GDP per capita: US \$3,280 (2013)
- GNP per capita: US \$3,191 (2013)
- Internet domain: lk
- International dialing code: +94

1. Geography

Size: Pear-shaped island 29 kilometers off southeastern coast of India; total area 65,610 square kilometers, of which land area is 62,705 square kilometers.

Topography: Sri Lanka encompasses a varied topography. Irregular, dissected, central massif dominates south; highest elevation is Pidurutalagala (2,524 meters). Coastal belt (less than 100 meters elevation) succeeded by rolling plains (100-500 meters elevation) of varying width extends from seashore to foothills of central massif. In northern half of island, topography falls away to rolling plain, relieved only by isolated ridges. Rivers extend radically from central massif to coast; longest Mahaweli River (860 kilometers) flows in northeasterly direction. About 40 percent of island forested. Coastline is regular but indented by numerous lagoons and marked by sandy beaches.

Climate: Equatorial and tropical influenced by elevation above sea level, but marked by only slight diurnal and seasonal variations; temperature in Colombo (at sea level) varies from 25°C to 28°C, and in central massif (site of highest elevations) 14°C to 16°C. Subject to southwest monsoon from mid May to October and northeast monsoon from December to March. Rainfall uneven; divides country climatically into wet zone comprising southwestern quarter and dry zone on remainder of island. Annual precipitation in wet zone averages 250 centimeters; in dry zone precipitation varies from 120 to 190 centimeters.

II. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Sri Lanka is a medium human development country with a gross domestic product of about \$67 billion (approximate estimation). This translates into a per capita income of \$ 3,280 in 2013. Sri Lanka's 95.6% (2013) literacy rate in local languages and life expectancy of 75.1 (2012) years rank well above those of some of the other neighboring countries. English language ability is relatively high but has declined significantly since the 1970s after the change over to Swabasha (Sinhala).

There are striking differences in income between rural and urban areas. Over thirty years of conflict, decrease of agricultural labour productivity, lack of income-earning opportunities for the

rural population, and poor infrastructure outside the Western Province are impediments to poverty reduction.

In 1978, Sri Lanka shifted away from a socialist orientation and opened its economy to foreign investment. But the pace of reform has been uneven.

The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami killed more than 35,000 people, displaced 2.5 million people and caused an estimated \$1 billion in damage. The tsunami's overall economic impact was less severe than originally feared. From the end of 2007 to early 2009, the economic situation in Sri Lanka was hampered by intensification of the armed conflict which ended in May 2009 resulting in massive displacement in the north of the country. Many people have now returned to home districts following demining and resettlement programmes.

The Sri Lankan economy grew by 6.3 per cent in real terms during the first half of 2013, with a strong growth in the industry sector, a recovery in the service sector and a revival in the agriculture sector during the second half of the year. The industry sector recorded a growth rate of 9.9 percent raising its share of GDP to 31.1 percent. Services sector growth was higher than the previous year at 6.4 per cent, mainly due to improved performance in wholesale and retail trade and transport and communication sub sectors . The weak performance of the Agriculture sector during the first half of the year due to extreme weather conditions dragged its annual growth rate down to 4.7 per cent

1. Exports

Sri Lanka's export sector has successfully overcome challenges in the recent past, including the abolition of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA), the unusual increase in the prices of oil and other commodities, the increase in insurance premiums with regard to war risk etc.

Exports recovered in 2013, with the moderate recovery in the global economy. Earnings from exports, which decreased 7.4 percent in 2012, increased by 6.4 percent in 2013 with the gradual recovery of major trading partners. Contributing 61 percent to the overall export growth, industrial exports increased by 5.1 per cent in 2013, mainly due to the improved performance in textiles and garments. Earnings from textile and garment exports, which contributed 43.4 per cent of total exports, increased by 13 percent in 2013.

2. Imports

Expenditure on imports in 2013 declined by 6.2 per cent while that of non-fuel imports declined by 3.2 per cent. The largest contribution to the decline in expenditure on imports came from Intermediate goods which declined by 8.8 per cent in 2013 led by imports of fuel, and textile and textile articles. Expenditure on fuel imports declined by 14.6 per cent in 2013, mainly due to lower thermal power generation during the year.

With the end of the conflict the tourism sector and related industries performed well. Foreign financial inflows to the country declined considerably resulting from adverse global conditions but increased considerably with the ending of the conflict.

Foreign employment continued to be an important and stable source of foreign currency inflows to the country. The Middle Eastern region continued to dominate the foreign employment market.

3. Labour Market

The total labour force increased significantly by 7.4 per cent to 8.864 million during the first half of 2013 compared to 8.254 million in the corresponding period of the previous year.

During the first half of 2013, the unemployment rate increased to 4.5 per cent, from 3.9 per cent during the corresponding period of the previous year. The total number unemployed was estimated at 401,000 for the first half of 2013, compared to 324,000 recorded during the corresponding period of the previous year.

Foreign employment has continued to record a steady increase over the years contributing to foreign exchange earnings and reducing the pressure on labour market. Departures for foreign employment increased significantly by 7.7 per cent to 150,408 during the first half of 2013 compared to 139,685 during the same period of the last year. This is the highest number of departures recorded during the corresponding period in recent years. A shift of the migrant labour force from unskilled category to semi-skilled and skilled categories was evident in the composition of departures during the first half of 2013.

Proactive measures were taken by relevant authorities to generate more employment opportunities abroad and to create better working environments with enhanced social benefits for Sri Lankan migrants. Such measures include the amendment of the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) Act to curb irregular migration and to prevent exploitation of migrant workers, decentralizing of SLBFE services through the opening of provincial offices *in Badulla, Anuradhapura and Kandy* and district centres in *Trincomalee and Batticaloa*, fixing of minimum salaries especially for unskilled categories, supervision by Sri Lankan missions to strengthen prevention of abuse at work sites. SLBFE also organized a comprehensive database to facilitate the various stakeholders, including migrant workers and overseas job seekers.

Further, the SLBFE continued to explore new opportunities in new markets and in countries outside the Middle Eastern region. Efforts to explore new market opportunities in outside the Middle East and to streamline procedures and implementation of country specific training programmes to prepare job seekers to suit labour market requirements abroad will lead to further improvement in overseas job opportunities and foreign exchange remittance inflows to the country.

4. Micro Enterprises Registration process

To start-up a small business, the owner should be aware of the following procedures:

- a) Businesses must be registered with the local authority. Environmental approvals must also be received. Owners must obtain a business registration at their nearest Divisional Secretariat. Registration costs approximately LKR 1,000.00. A separate business license - renewable annually - must also be obtained from the Provincial Council, Municipal Council or Pradeshiya Saba. The cost for this varies according to the nature of the business concerned.
- b) The owner of the business has to pay a nominal amount as tax tri-monthly to the local authority on the basis of monthly turn over of the business. If the business is related to an industry that makes noise or ejects gas or vapor, an approval from the environment authority is necessary. If the business is related to food or beverages (for example a bakery, snack bar, restaurant or pastry shop), a certificate from the Public Health Inspector is a necessity.

There are special credit schemes for micro enterprises. For more information please visit,

Apart from the above programs a number of intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations provide support and financial assistance as well as required training for potential entrepreneurs and small scale business set-up.

III. HEALTH CARE

Sri Lanka's network of healthcare institutions are largely run by the state and the private sector. The government provides free healthcare for the public at all state hospitals.

Sri Lanka has also achieved remarkable standards in its health outcome focusing on communicable diseases, in improving maternal and child health by eliminating vaccine preventable diseases.

With a rise in the aged population consequent to the increase in life expectancy, there is a rising trend in the incidence of non communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, renal diseases, and cancer.

Health resource flows have increased in recent years and have been able to sustain the health infrastructure that has been developed over time. The health authorities have identified, the major health problems as;

- Inequities in the provision of health services and health needs of the elderly and disabled;
- Increased incidence of non-communicable diseases, suicides, substance abuse and malnutrition.

The Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition still faces a challenge in providing required infrastructures for health facilities in the Northern Province after the end of the war.

Information about these diseases and an update with the situation in the country has being made available on the official website of the Ministry of Health www.health.gov.lk, Epidemiology Unit www.epid.gov.lk.

1. Health Facilities

State owned hospitals are located in every city and major towns and are equipped with modern equipment to provide a range of medical facilities. Services provided here are generally free of charge. However, the major free health facilities in the country are congested and the patients' occupancy rates in most public hospitals are over 100 %.

There are also many private hospitals within Colombo that are equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment, providing high quality but expensive medical care.

Unlike in economically richer countries where a large part of the private health expenditure is borne by health insurances, in Sri Lanka, private health expenditure is almost entirely borne by users except in situations where private companies insure their staff.

For a list of state-owned, private hospitals and clinics in Colombo city please visit: <http://www.lankalinksystems.com/directory/newsinfo/healthinfo.htm>

IV. HOUSING

The demand for housing has increased with population growth and urbanization. The supply of housing continued to increase with active involvement of the private sector and improvement in the provision of finances for housing.

The National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) provides assistance to families by means of allocation of land, providing finances etc. NHDA is responsible for the implementation of key state sector housing programs. The government housing finance institutions were strengthened to deliver housing credit facilities to low-income families using their EPF (Employment Provident Fund) balance as security. Concessionary loan schemes were further expanded for the benefit of Sri Lankan workers returning from overseas.

Furthermore, there are also a number of large-scale private sector initiated housing, township and condominium development projects. An alternative option is also to rent/ lease houses though the prices vary widely depending on the location of the house.

With land becoming scarce in Colombo the popularity of high-rise apartments soared until 2006. High-rise apartments were initially concentrated mostly in the Colombo 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 regions. They tend to have higher rents than housing in the area due to all kinds of conveniences and services within the apartment complexes. However, as of recently high rise apartments are available in the greater Colombo area and in some principal towns away from the Colombo district for outright purchase and for modest rents.

With the island's 25-year-old conflict coming to an end in May 2009 the real estate market has started to pick up.

For more details please visit:

www.nhda.lk

http://www.lanka.info/Sri_Lanka/realestate/index.jsp

V. EDUCATION

The present educational system of Sri Lanka derives from the British educational system, which was introduced by the British colonial masters in the 19th century. The British colonial government established colleges for boys and girls separately. These colleges consisted of Primary Schools, Lower Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools.

In 1938, the education in Government schools was made free-of-charge as a consequence of the Universal Franchise granted in 1931. Subsequently many government schools called Maha Vidyalayas were established in all parts of the country. The medium of education of Maha Vidyalaya's is generally either Sinhala or Tamil and education to this day is free-of-charge.

Sri Lanka's education structure is divided into five parts: primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, collegiate and tertiary. Primary education lasts six years (grades 1-5) and at the end of this period, students in both private and public schools can choose to write an exam called the Scholarship exam. This exam allows students with exceptional skills to move on to better schools in the district or out of the district. After primary education, the junior secondary education lasts for 4 years (grades 6-9). According to the Sri Lankan law, it is compulsory that all children go to school until grade 9 (age 14) at which point they can choose to continue further or opt out and engage in a job. However, the Ministry of Education strongly advises all students to continue with their studies at least until the G.C.E. Ordinary Level in order to obtain a suitable job, later on. During this period, the students go through senior secondary education for 2 years (grades 10-11) to sit for the G.C.E Ordinary Level examination. The students must pass this examination to go on with collegiate education. Collegiate education lasts for 2 years (grades 12-13) at the end of this, there is another examination called the G.C.E. Advance Level. On successful completion of this exam, students can go on to pursuing tertiary education (University and beyond).

1. Primary & Secondary Education

Sri Lanka's population is highly educated with a literacy rate of 91.3%. Sri Lanka has one of the highest literacy rates of South Asia. This can mainly be attributed to the free education system. The Ministry of Education administers all government primary and secondary schools where education is free. The medium of instruction is mainly Sinhala and/or Tamil along with a few schools, located mainly in Colombo and Kandy, that teach in English medium.

There are also a number of private schools in Sri Lanka, due to the emergence of the upper-middle class crowd. Many of the private schools have access to better facilities than state run schools. The students in these schools have to pay a monthly fee and the amount varies according to the popularity of the school.

There has been a considerable increase in the number of international schools in the principal cities in and out of the Colombo district that are not only restricted to the expatriate community, but to anyone with the ability and willingness to incur the costs. In addition to costs, international schools are different in terms of:

Student population: Co-ed schools;

Curriculum: Edexcel General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary, Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced (A2) Level examinations. Preparation for Cambridge Examinations is also offered by a few schools on request.

These schools are not regulated by the Ministry of Education as they follow the British curriculum.

A student who wishes to join schools in Sri Lanka after schooling abroad can enter the appropriate grade in either government, private or international schools provided they have a copy of their 'leaving certificate' (*indicating the last grade passed*) from the school attended last and the birth certificate along with the application. Exceptions are possible if documents are not present depending on the case. However, getting admitted to a popular state or private school in populated districts like Colombo or Kandy during mid-term can be a difficult task.

The Overseas School of Colombo is the leading international schools for expatriates, the curriculum followed leads to an IB Diploma. This, together with The British School in Colombo is the sole IB World Schools in the country.

2. Tertiary education

University education in Sri Lanka is also free. The state university system is highly competitive, hence, only the top students from each district are guaranteed the chances of having tertiary education. As a result, most students who are not granted admission go abroad to pursue their studies at foreign universities or enroll themselves in degree awarding, state-funded or private, institutes in Sri Lanka. Students who fail to qualify for university entrance can also engage in higher education as external students of state universities or at the Open University of Sri Lanka. There are also vocational technical colleges which specialize in mechanical and electronic subjects. There are currently 15 major state funded universities in Sri Lanka. In recent years with changes to the University Act, institutes have been given permission to grant their own degrees, the most prominent is the government owned Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology.

Sri Lankan students who graduated through any international curriculum are generally required to complete their local A/L examination to enter local universities although exceptions are often made. Admission to the universities is very competitive and is based on the aggregate (Z score)

obtained by each student. These basic degree programs are also covered by the government free education system and some students are entitled for a grant under “Mahapola Scholarship Programme” (on a merit basis).

The universities conduct a number of postgraduate diploma and certificate programs, but are not covered by the government free education system. These programs are open to all students. If a student who has studied abroad wishes to follow a postgraduate/diploma or certificate programme he/she should furnish relevant documents such as certified copies of detailed educational certificates. There are external degrees, diplomas and post-graduate courses conducted by several other institutions. Admission criteria for these institutions vary and programs are usually advertised in the newspapers. The Open University of Sri Lanka conducts distant education programs (also not covered under the government free education system) including basic degree programs that are also open for students who studied abroad. There is no age barrier to follow the courses in the Open University of Sri Lanka.

There are a number of government technical colleges in different districts. They conduct vocational training programs, diploma programs and certificate courses. The Tertiary & Vocational Education Commission administers a number of public sector institutions such as the Department of Education and Training, Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Council and National Institute of Technical Education. A large number of private sector institutions are also providing vocational training facilities. The target group is generally diverse and consists of unemployed youth, rural men and women and school leavers.

The private sector has in the recent past become very popular in the country with off-shore campuses and distance learning facilities. There are a number of institutes in principal towns affiliated to foreign academies and professional institutes offering a wide range of courses from diplomas to degrees and postgraduate programmes from food and beverages, hospitality to hair dressing mainly engaged in the provision of professional education, particularly in areas of accountancy, management and information technology.

For more details please visit:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_universities_and_colleges_in_Sri_Lanka

<http://www.moe.gov.lk/>

VI. TRANSPORTATION

Transportation in Sri Lanka is based mainly on the road network which is centered on Sri Lanka's capital, Colombo. There is also an extensive railway network. There are also navigable waterways, harbors and airports, including an international airport, located in Katunayaka, 22 miles North of Colombo. The highways and roadways around the capital are usually in good condition and being upgraded for the future.

The transportation sector reflected a noticeable improvement in the last five years. The improvement was reflected particularly in road development and passenger transportation.

1. Highways

Road transport accounts for about 93 percent of the land transport in Sri Lanka. The country has about 96,695 km (60,083 mi) of roads. The road density is highest in the southwest, especially in the area around Colombo.

Many "A" Class roads have been upgraded to a smoother bitumen surface, as well as being widened with road markings. The construction activities of major highway and road development

projects were continued during the first half of 2013. Section I of the Southern Transport Development Project, from Kottawa to Galle, was opened in November 2011, and the construction of Section II, from Pinnaduwa to Godagama, is currently underway. The construction of the Colombo-Katunayake Expressway was completed and opened to traffic on October 27, 2013. The opening up of this expressway has lessened the travel time from the Katunayake International Airport to Colombo significantly. The construction of Phase I and Phase II of the Outer Circular Highway project was under progress while the feasibility study and land acquisition for Phase III were completed during the first half of 2013. Approximately 72 per cent of Phase I of the project which comprises of 11 km from Kottawa to Kaduwela had been completed by end June 2013. Feasibility studies are currently being conducted for the Hambantota – Mattala Airport Highway and Enderamulla to Kurunegala section of the Colombo-North/East Highway. Contracts have been awarded for the construction of 6 bridges out of 46 bridges which have been earmarked for reconstruction or rehabilitation in seven provinces.

The main roads around Colombo and its suburbs are in good condition. The roads that are widely used around Colombo are being upgraded and repaved.

Construction of highways and flyovers, repair of existing roads with special focus on roads in the Northern and Eastern Provinces and construction of rural roads under the *Maga Naguma* programme continues. The A9 road which connects the North and South was also opened for civilian traffic after the decades long conflict.

The Government continued with the construction of planned flyovers at selected locations (Dehiwala, Orugodawatta, Flyovers at Gampaha and Pannipitiya were also completed with more flyovers underway) to reduce traffic congestion.

Repair of national roads in the Northern and Eastern provinces has already commenced under the Northern Spring and Eastern Revival programmes.

2. Railways

Sri Lanka Government Railway operates the country's railway network, which includes about 1,459 km (about 900 mi) of track. Colombo is the node of the network, and train routes connect the main cities of all nine provinces in the country.

After independence from Britain, the Sri Lankan economy became focused more on industries than plantations and agriculture. The road network also grew, and with the introduction of lorries, which were a faster means of transporting goods, the amount of goods transported by railways declined.

The railway transportation sector showed moderate growth during the first half of 2013.

The SLR continued to implement several infrastructure development projects to improve domestic connectivity. The Northern railway line from Omanthai to Kilinochchi was completed and declared open for passenger traffic in mid-September. The Cheddikulam, Neriyaikulam, Madu Road and Kilinochchi railway stations were reconstructed and opened for passenger services. Accordingly, new train services have been introduced to operate from Anuradhapura and Medawachchiya to Madu Road and from Madu Road to Anuradhapura. The third line from Colombo to Ragama was also opened for traffic during this period. While the implementation plan of the double tracking of the Seeduwa – Katunayake section was being finalized during the first half of 2013, the double tracking of the Ja-Ela – Seeduwa section was completed.

Also ExpoRail is another train service provider in [Sri Lanka](#). It provides services on several routes in Sri Lanka, in partnership with [Sri Lanka Railways](#). Although it does not yet operate its own trains, it operates compartments that are attached to trains operated by Sri Lanka Railways. And it was fully air-conditioned, carpeted, have first class toilets facilities, free Wi-Fi, side racks to store passenger's luggage, on board snacks, tea/coffee and steward service.

3. Public Transport

Buses are the principal mode of public transport. Bus services are provided by the state-run Sri Lanka Transportation Board, better known as the CTB. There are also private buses.

Private sector bus operators account for about two thirds, while the balance is provided by public sector bus services consisting of 11 Regional Transport Companies (also called cluster bus companies), the Northern Region Transportation Board and Vavuniya Passenger Transportation Services Ltd. monitored by the Sri Lanka Central Transportation Board (SLCTB).

The lowest bus fare at present is Rs. 10.00 In addition to the normal buses the private sector operates luxury bus services between cities and it is called "Intercity Bus Service". These buses are air-conditioned, less crowded and faster but the fare is double that of other buses.

Several measures have been taken to improve the efficiency of the state owned bus service including a new IT system to monitor the performance of the regional depots with online links to the head office, improving human resource capabilities, introducing management changes and re-allocation of buses.

Several programmes were also launched by the SLTB to recommence the transport services in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Under the Northern Spring programme, bus services have commenced to Jaffna from various places including Colombo, Vavuniya and Trincomalee, on a daily basis.

In addition to these programs in the Northern and Eastern provinces, the SLTB continued with several other services such as a reliable transport service to the rural masses, school bus service and night time bus service. Furthermore, bus-rail connecting services were continued covering several railway stations. Several other services such as, 'Colombo City Liner Coach Service' and 'park and ride service' have been introduced to reduce the number of private vehicles entering Colombo city limits.

4. Civil Aviation

Sri Lanka has two international airport and three domestic airports. The international airport, Bandaranayake International Airport (BIA), is located 30 kilometers from Colombo city, in Katunayake. And the newly opened Mattala Rajapaksha International Airport (MRIA) is Srilanka's second International airport after BIA and located in Hambantota. One of the domestic airports is in Ratmalana, seven kilometers from Colombo.

The two domestic airports are in Jaffna peninsula, Palali airport, and in Galle, Koggala airport. The national carrier, Sri Lankan Airlines, flies to most of the main cities in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Sri Lanka as of recently has started a budget airline, Mihin Air. Internal as well as external flights (to neighboring countries) are available.

Then there are three domestic private airlines that operate from Ratmalana to Palali airport in

Jaffna and there is one flight thrice a week (this is occasionally subjected to change). A return air ticket from Ratmalana to Palali cost Rs.19.100,00 and the flying time (one way) is 01hour and 10 minutes.

VII. TELECOMMUNICATION

The telecommunication sector is the most dynamic service industry in Sri Lanka at present. There is one fixed line operator, Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT), two wireless local loop operators (Suntel and Lankabell) and several mobile phone operators including (Dialog GSM, Mobitel, Hutch, Airtel and Etisalat).

Sri Lanka Telecom, the primary telecommunications provider in the country covers all districts while private operators cover most major cities and secondary switching areas in Sri Lanka.

The introduction of low cost CDMA (Code Division Multiple Access) technology allows many Sri Lankans who live in rural areas can to communicate with each other faster and easier than before.

Broadband Internet access was introduced to Sri Lanka in 2003 by provider Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT). Faster connections up to 2 Mbit/s are available, but the price is considerably higher. .

Several private operators also provide radio paging, data communication, internet service and satellite link-ups.

VIII. SOCIAL SUPPORT

1. Pension Schemes

There is no universal state pension available to the elderly in Sri Lanka and 72% of the working age population (predominantly informal sector workers and those outside the labour force) are not covered by formal retirement savings schemes (ODI Apr. 2004, 17). Formal sector coverage consists of "civil servant pensions and provident funds (EPF/ETTF/APPF) and pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) schemes covering both formal and informal sector workers". Sri Lanka's retirement system included the following pension schemes:

- 1 - Employees' Provident Fund;
- 2 - Public Service Pension Scheme;
- 3 - Farmers', Fishermen and Self-Employed Scheme;
- 4 - Approved Private Provident Fund (ibid. 47-48).

A returnee can apply for pension only if s/he has been under a pension scheme while working in Sri Lanka. The prospective applicant should have been an employee of the public sector such as a Government Department, bank, Armed Forces, etc. Additionally, the applicant must have been an employee for a minimum period of 10 years at a stretch. In case of Armed Forces personnel the period of employment is 20 years for officers and 22 for soldiers.

Furthermore, s/he should have been retired from the employment at the age of 55 or left employment early on medical reasons. The application forms should be forwarded through the

department s/he worked at retirement.

The application forms that are termed 'General 55' or 'B' can be collected from the respective Divisional Secretariat (formerly known as AGA Office) or from the Dept. of Pensions (which is located in New Secretariat Building, Maligawatte, Colombo 10). The pension is 75-90 % of the last salary drawn.

It usually takes six months to one year to process the application if all your documents are in order. If the documents are not in order it will take a much longer time to receive the pension, sometimes years.

2. Samurdhi

This empowerment scheme has been the single largest social assistance programme in the country since its inception in 1996 and the assistance is provided for families whose monthly income falls below SLRs. 1, 500. The programme aims to raise the economic standards of individuals and alleviate poverty, strengthen their moral and ethical standards and also encourage Samurdhi recipients to save and the Samurdhi Development Bank plays a key role in this regard.

Over 1000 Samurdhi Development Officers support the public at field level on the benefits available under the programme. These officers identify the families who should receive assistance based on their income or resources to meet their daily needs in their respective areas and register them as Samurdhi recipients. Also families lacking sufficient income could register with these officers and could become entitled to Samurdhi benefits. Each Grama Niladhari Division has a Samurdhi Development Officer serving in that respective area.

Many of the Samurdhi recipients have become small scale entrepreneurs with the support provided by the Samurdhi Authority. This included low interest bank loans for self employment activities, training on skills development and facilities made for them to obtain machinery and raw materials from cheaper sources.

Samurdhi assistance includes:

Samurdhi Assistance Scheme

Destitute, disabled and elderly persons, widows and those who do not have a regular monthly income

Food Stamp Scheme

The objective of this scheme is to strengthen the nutritional standards of nursing mothers and children.

Kerosene Assistance Scheme

Samurdhi recipient families living in areas that lack electricity are given LKR 100 each month as assistance to purchase kerosene.

Dry Food Ration Scheme

Dry Food Ration cards worth LKR 168, LKR 308, LKR 420, LKR 504, LKR 630 are provided monthly under this scheme to families displaced by the conflict in the North and the East.

Samurdhi Society Insurance Scheme

Under this scheme, families are provided with financial assistance at the times of death, births, marriages, hospitalization and as assistance for education of children. In addition to

this based on the G.C.E.(Ordinary Level) results, Sipdora Scholarships amounting to LKR 500 per month to study in the Advanced Level stream is provided to a maximum number of 6300 students selected from the Divisional Development Secretarial Divisions, The Samurdhi Authority is also considering the possibility of launching a new scheme to grant LKR 5,000 for students getting selected to Universities from the Samurdhi recipient families.

Infrastructure Development

The Samurdhi Authority is implementing a programme to develop infrastructure and economic development of villages with the participation of the Samurdhi recipients in the respective areas. Such projects include: road development, tank renovation, construction of wells and clearing of canals, construction and repairing of school buildings etc.

Economic Development

For economic development of villages, the Samurdhi Authority implements programmes for the development of agriculture, animal husbandry, marketing and industrial projects with the participation of Samurdhi recipients. At present, priority is given to projects related to improvement of agriculture and food production as a part of Api Wavamu Rata Negamu programme.

Animal Husbandry and Fishery Development Projects

The Samurdhi Authority pays special attention to the development of animal husbandry and fishery development projects by providing training and other facilities to Samurdhi recipients helping them to engage in these activities.

Social Upliftment Programmes

This programme offers assistance to persons addicted to alcohol, drugs to help them reform and curb their addiction. Special programmes are provided on the harmful nature of such practices, to themselves, to their families, to the village and to the country at large.

Samurdhi Recipient Housing Projects

The most vulnerable homeless Samurdhi recipients in Samurdhi Divisions are provided assistance up to Rs. 100,000 for construction of a house, or for renovating their houses. The Samurdhi Bank provides 50% of this amount as a free grant and the balance 50% as an interest free loan repayable in 5 years.

Marketing Programmes

The Authority holds periodical Samurdhi fairs in various parts of the country bringing together entrepreneurs supported through Samurdhi to participate at regional and national levels.

Samurdhi Bank

Presently there are over 1,000 Samurdhi Bank branches throughout the country and arrangements are underway to expand this network. Initially it was started as a place for Samurdhi recipients to deposit their savings and to obtain easy term loans. The Bank provides easy term loans for Samurdhi recipients to set up small scale industrial units, for purchase of animals, for purchase of fishing gear and boats, for agricultural work and other skill development and production activities. Although it was started as a bank serving only Samurdhi recipients the Bank is now open to others as well.

The pension scheme is the other government assisted social scheme in operation and the prospective applicant should have been a public servant for a minimum period of 10 years. In the case of armed forces personnel, the period of service to be completed in order to qualify for the pension is 10 years for commissioned officers and 12 years for other ranks. To receive the benefits of these pension schemes, a person should be over 55 years of age or retired early on

medical reasons. The monthly pension of a retired person is normally around 70-90% of the last salary drawn. The application for a pension should be submitted to the Department of Pensions through the department he/she worked at retirement. In both government and private institutions in Sri Lanka, the retirement age falls between 55 and 60.

As a new initiative, the government established a 'Divi Neguma Combined Rural Department' to expedite development activities and thereby reduce poverty at the regional level. Samurdhi livelihood Development Programme carried out under 'Divi Neguma' has provided necessary capital goods, equipment, plants, plant material, chicks and animals for beneficiary and low income people to initiate and develop their own self-employment projects.

3. The President's Fund

The President's Fund was established under an Act of Parliament in 1978, to provide funds for programmes beneficial to a large segment of the population, whose poverty and the lack of resources do not enable them to access certain specialized facilities in the health and education sector and also for the promotion of religious and cultural activities.

Disbursements from the President's Fund are being made primarily under the following programmes

- ❖ Financial assistance to set up new medical units for hospitals, improve hospital facilities, supply of modern medical instruments, and for needy patients undergoing Heart Surgery, Kidney Transplantation, Cancer treatment, Hip and Knee cap replacement, Scoliosis (correction of spinal cord deformity) and certain other life threatening illnesses.
- ❖ Financial Assistance for religious, sports and cultural activities
- ❖ Financial Assistance to develop the education sector Presidential Scholarship Scheme for Postgraduate studies, in selected priority areas, Presidential Scholarship Scheme for G.C.E Advance Level students implemented island wide through the Provincial Councils and Scholarship scheme for grade 6-11 students in Northeast Province

For more information please visit www.presidentsfund.gov.lk

4. Elderly persons

There are homes for elders across the country but the vacancies are limited. Most elders' homes operate under the guidance of Social Service Department and are open to elderly persons who have no immediate relation to look after them. Services provided are free-of-charge and hence admittance very difficult with long waiting lists.

There are also a significant number of private homes that provide better facilities and services that are charged for. These mainly cater to people with retirement pensions and those who can afford the costs.

5. Child welfare

There are special laws enacted to protect children and the National Child Protection Authority ensures the rights of the children. Free education for all children is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Government run orphanages are managed by the Department of Social Service with government and private funding. The children are well looked after and are provided free education to suit their abilities and skills. In addition, there are also orphanages run by several charities and

through private contributions and donations.

Please visit: <http://www.childprotection.gov.lk/>

6. People with learning disabilities

People with special abilities are looked after by the Department of Social Services and provided with appropriate education and vocational trainings to sharpen their abilities. The Social Service Department has established necessary schools with dormitory facilities for this purpose in all main cities. In addition, there are several schools and centers which are run by non state partners usually at a higher cost.

For more information on the Department of Social Services please visit:

<http://www.socialservices.gov.lk/>

7. Women /Girls

Girls have free access to schooling and university education. More and more women are also now engaged in jobs be it self employment or as hired labour.

Sri Lanka also has a separate Ministry for Women's Affairs. A separate bureau has been created for the prevention of abuse of children, young persons and women under the Department of Police.

<http://www.priu.gov.lk/index.html>

http://www.ips.lk/publications/series/poverty/microfinance_in_sri_lanka/microfinance_in_sri.html

IX. PROFILE OF THE CAPITAL COLOMBO

Colombo is recognized as the commercial hub of Sri Lanka. Many government and private sector establishments have their headquarters or main offices in and around the city. Colombo is one of the highly populated districts. There is an excessive concentration of the population in the city of Colombo. It has a mixed ethnic composition.

Men and women are equally literate. There are four universities in the district and one is at the centre of the capital. The city also has many national, private and international schools with all facilities (super grade schools) in Colombo City. Most of the government departments and offices are located in the city. Courts complex also is at the center of the capital. Many jobs in the city exist in the service and manufacturing sector causing many people to migrate into the district.

For more information on the city of Colombo please visit:

<http://www.colombocity.org>

X. PROFILE OF THE NORTH-EASTERN PROVINCES

1. Ampara

Located on the East Coast of Sri Lanka, about 320 km from the capital city of Colombo, Ampara belongs to the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. Ampara has a population of over 600,000.

The district has preschools, primary schools (grades 1-5) and secondary schools with classes that cater to collegiate level education. However, due to the tsunami and the island's 25-year-old conflict, operation of some of these schools has been affected. The government health structures currently functioning include the base hospital, district hospitals and a number of small clinics and dispensaries.

The government under the *Negenahira Navodaya (Reawakening of the East)*, a rapid economic development programme combining the efforts of central and local Government authorities and foreign donors reconstructs and improves social infrastructure, housing developments, livelihood options and sanitation facilities.

Most occupations exist in the agricultural and fisheries industries. The Vocational Training Authority has many government certified training centers throughout the district educating and encouraging students to look for self-employment, private sector employment opportunities and also help some to look for foreign employment.

For more information on the District secretariat and related topics, please visit: http://www.ds.gov.lk/dist_ampara/english

2. Batticaloa

Batticaloa is on the East coast, 314 km from Colombo.

The Eastern University of Sri Lanka, a significant and perhaps the only educational institute in the eastern province of Sri Lanka, is located in Batticaloa. It also houses St. Michael's College and other British colonial era educational institutions. It is the cultural and economic focal point of the local Tamil people. A career service center is also functioning in Batticaloa. Main activities of this centre are job listing and providing employment.

Rice and coconut are the two staples of the district, and steamers trading round the island call regularly at the port. The lagoon is famous for its "singing fish," supposed to be shell-fish which give forth musical notes. Prior to the civil war, there were large scale shrimp farms as well as fish and rice processing activities. Currently, the economic activities are related to trading.

There is sufficient medical care available to people with the Government Teaching Hospital and four private hospitals present within the Batticaloa town, with many small scale clinics and nursing homes in the rural areas.

In addition, there are many non-governmental organizations (NGO's), local and international, present that are involved in rehabilitation, infrastructure development and healthcare within the district. Many of which conduct mobile clinics and mother and child health care programmes.

Batticaloa district also benefited from the development projects under the *Negenahira Navodaya (Reawakening of the East)*.

For more information on the District secretariat and related topics, please visit: http://www.ds.gov.lk/dist_batticaloa/english/

3. Trincomalee

Trincomalee is a port city on the northeast coast of Sri Lanka, about 110 miles northeast of Kandy. The Bay of Trincomalee is landlocked; the harbour is renowned for its large size and security; unlike every other in the Indian Sea, it is accessible to all types of craft in all weathers. The beaches are used for surfing, scuba diving, fishing and whale watching. The town also has the largest Dutch fortress in Sri Lanka.

All three major ethnic communities live in the district. Several major development and reconstruction programs are underway to rebuild the society.

There are over 250 schools in the district, which provide education to a student population of around 90,000. Although Trincomalee has no universities of its own, it has a campus of the Eastern University of Sri Lanka which has its main site in Batticaloa.

The main occupation is either paddy cultivation or fishing. A number of international and local NGOs are working in the district and provide services and facilities in the areas of housing, rural credit and income generation, health and sanitation, education and vocational training.

Trincomalee's strategic importance has shaped its recent history. The great European powers vied for mastery of the harbour. The Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, and the English, each held it in turn, and there have been many sea battles nearby. The harbour, the fifth largest natural harbour in the world, is overlooked by terraced highlands, its entrance is guarded by two headlands, and there is a carriage road along its northern and eastern edges.

The government medical structures are functioning in the district. There is one base hospital and a number of district and rural hospitals. A few private hospitals are functioning in Trincomalee town.

Trincomalee district too benefited from development projects under the *Negenahira Navodaya (Reawakening of the East)*.

For more information on the District secretariat and related topics, please visit:
http://www.ds.gov.lk/dist_trincomalee/english/service_centers.html

4. Jaffna

Jaffna is the capital city of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, about 410 km away from Colombo. Most of the residents of Jaffna are Sri Lankan Tamils with a presence of Sri Lankan Moors. The conflict and the tsunami have had an effect on the district's infrastructure, economy and population. Segments of population have suffered from displacement at some stage. Many have migrated and now living in different regions of the world or different districts in Sri Lanka.

The district is divided into 15 administrative divisions (Divisional Secretariat divisions) and 435 Grama Niladhari divisions. There are 17 local government bodies that include a Municipal Council of Jaffna city, three urban councils and 13 Pradeshiya Sabhas. There is one teaching hospital situated in the Jaffna town and many primary healthcare institutions dispersed across the district. In addition, there are also a few private dispensaries and nursing homes.

Jaffna was considered to be the most literate district in Sri Lanka and education is given top priority within the people. There are over 600 pre-schools and over 400 primary and secondary schools. The standard of education of the district is high and there are eight higher educational

institutes that comprise one university (Jaffna University), Advanced Technical Institute, National College of Education, Technical College, Teacher's Training College, Information Technology Park and National Apprentice Industrial Training Authority.

Sea products, red onion, and tobacco are the main products in Jaffna. Prior to the civil war it was a place of many small scale industries manufacturing household items as well as packaging and food processing for export. The prices of goods in Jaffna are relatively very high compared to the south. Currently, the primary economic activity is related to trading. The foreign remittances from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora sustain many people.

Many international and local organizations partnered with the government on the post-tsunami reconstruction efforts. Following the end of armed conflict in Sri Lanka in May, post conflict recovery and reconstruction activities are underway in the district.

For more information on the District secretariat and related topics, please visit:

http://www.ds.gov.lk/dist_jaffna/english/

5. Mannar

Mannar district is situated in the northern province of the country. The district was affected due to the conflict and about 27% of the total population consists of displaced persons from other districts. Mannar is mostly an agricultural district with about 62% of the population engaged in cultivation. At present, the main sources of income are farming, fishing and animal husbandry. There are a few private and state banks that provide loan facilities for small and medium scale industries.

There are a large number of local and international NGOs engaged in providing assistance in the fields of education, healthcare, employment including job listing, psychological treatment and children's rights etc. There are a few vocational training centers run by the state. The government social assistance schemes such as "Samurdhi" and "the public assistance monthly allowance" welfare programs are available for those that need it.

For more information on the District secretariat and related topics, please visit:

http://www.ds.gov.lk/dist_mannar/english/

6. Vavuniya

Vavuniya is in the North of Sri Lanka, situated in the Northern Province. Most of the residents are Sri Lankan Tamils with a notable Sri Lankan Moors and Sinhalese presence. Because of the civil war many Tamils and Muslims from Northern districts migrated and settled in Vavuniya.

Vavuniya was a front line town in the war between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Army and fighting between the two have caused much violence in the past.

Vavuniya has over 180 schools with a large student population. The Town Council in Vavuniya, other urban councils and some non-governmental institutions maintain many pre-schools and vocational training centers across the district. Community-based NGOs, conduct educational, vocational and technical programs for school dropouts. The Vocational Training Authority has established rural vocational training centers in each District Secretariat division and a District vocational training center for the entire district. A career service centre is functioning in the National Youth Service Council for job listing and provision of employment services.

Cultivation of field crops and livestock farming are the more important income generating

activities that take place. Several organizations carry out social assistance programs. These include assistance provided for shelter to displaced persons, loan facilities for permanent government and corporation employees to build houses and income generating activities. Samurdhi, Public Assistance Monthly Allowance, and payments for patients suffering from tuberculosis, leprosy and cancer, casual relief and mothers' special stamps are a few of the social assistance schemes provided by the state.

Aid workers from local and international agencies work on rehabilitation and reconstruction projects.

For more information on the District secretariat and related topics, please visit: http://www.ds.gov.lk/dist_vavuniya/english/about_us.html