

# The Daily News Line by Faraz



## Sri Lanka's President confirms impending arrests of former Army officers in Easter Bombings case.

President Anura Kumara Disسانayake says one or two former Army officers are to be arrested in the future in connection with the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks.

Addressing a meeting of Lankan expatriates in New York on the sidelines of his visit there to attend the annual UNGA sessions, President Disسانayake said that the ongoing investigations are focused on finding those responsible for the attacks.

He said that the incumbent government had received a botched investigation, stating that the government might be required to conduct fresh investigations.



"Politics is a main reason for the failure to find those responsible for the attacks. People suspected of being responsible for the attacks came into power soon after the Easter attacks. People suspected of being involved in the attacks were also found to be holding high-ranking posts. Then how do you presume their actions would be?" he questioned.

President Disسانayake went on to note that evidence being erased and concealed, and the investigation being misled, are among other incidents that have taken place.

"We have received findings of an investigation under such circumstances. It is not where an incident occurred yesterday, and the investigation was launched today. This is a difficult task. But I believe the CID is capable. As we saw, several CID officials were recently arrested. Several former military officers are to be arrested soon. Therefore, investigations are continuing and advancing," he said.

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## Can the world's best travel destination make an economic comeback?: Sri Lanka's economic recession and its roaring passage.

By *Kithmi Gunaratne*

Sri Lanka, often believed to be the 'Pearl of the Indian Ocean' has long attracted tourists for its unprecedented coastal lines, nature adventures, rich heritage, and the warm and comforting hospitality of its people.



In recent years, the country has grappled with a severe economic crisis with high inflation, foreign exchange shortages, and sovereign debt recall.

Paradoxically, despite Sri Lanka's economic collapse, the tourism industry of the country has shown remarkable resilience and resurgence.

The tourism industry of the country, being the country's 3rd largest foreign exchange earner, raises a compelling question: can tourism alone or tourism as the central pillar drive a sustainable economic comeback, and how can we use it to make a comeback?

I argue that Sri Lanka can make a sustainable economic comeback with the proper utilization and marketization of the tourism industry; however, it cannot be achieved alone.

For the country's complete recovery, it demands proper structural reforms, political stability, and economic diversification.

### *The Down Swing*

The economic degradation that occurred in Sri Lanka was not a sudden realisation, but it had rather shown the crackdowns early, illustrating a trickle-down effect of the economic collapse. A series of overlapping shocks began long before the 2022 sovereign debt recall.

The Easter Sunday terrorist attacks of 2019 that shook the nation were an early trigger, striking the heart of the country's tourism industry.

The foreign arrival rates of the country dropped by 70% in the month following the bombing, severely damaging employment in hotels, transport, and hospitality. Just as this had begun in Sri Lanka, the world was struck by the global pandemic, bringing foreign travel to a halt; this took a heavy toll on Sri Lanka.

These external shocks were compounded by deepening political instability and policy mismanagement.

The government's implementation of unsustainable tax cuts, heavy foreign borrowing, and delayed debt restructuring posed threats to the country's economy and challenged the daily lifestyle of its people. This tension eventually led to the 2022 mass protests, fuel shortages, and leadership crisis, further undermining investor confidence, disrupting production and trade.

The amalgamation of these events created a cascading economic crisis marked by soaring inflation, a depreciating currency, dwindling foreign reserves, and rising poverty, leaving Sri Lanka with one of the most severe recessions in its post-independence history.



### *Roaring Passage*

The tourism industry in Sri Lanka has emerged as one of the fastest-recovering sectors in the country.

In the first half of 2024, tourist arrivals rose to 1,010,249, a 61.6% increase over the same period in 2023, and by the end of the year, total arrivals reached 2,053,465, marking a 38.07% increase over 2023 (SLTDA).

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Correspondingly, tourism earnings for the first ten months surged to USD 2.5 billion, reflecting a 59% rise over the previous year.

This rebound was driven by several factors, including liberal visa policies—such as pilot free-visa programs for visitors from 35 countries starting in October 2024—and the depreciation of the local currency, which made Sri Lanka an attractive destination for foreign travelers.

The easing of COVID-19 restrictions further stimulated travel, with Sri Lanka captivating tourists through its natural beauty, diverse experiences, and the relaxed lifestyle offered by its countryside and coastal towns.



These factors have also attracted remote workers and global entrepreneurs seeking a balance between work and leisure.

The country's resilience continued into 2025. By the end of August, the tourism sector had generated over USD 2 billion in revenue, representing a 7.8% increase compared to the same period in 2024. Monthly revenues peaked at USD 400.66 million in January 2025, while August recorded USD 318.5 million, a slight 3.1% decline from the previous year.

Tourist arrivals also surged, reaching 1,604,018 by September 7, 2025, with over 37,000 visitors arriving in the first week of September.

The SLTDA forecasts more than 2.6 million visitors for the year, with potential to reach 3 million, highlighting a strong growth trajectory.

This expansion has had significant socio-economic benefits. Infrastructure investments and private sector participation in boutique resorts, eco-tourism, and heritage tourism have not

only enhanced the country's tourism capacity but also created employment opportunities.

According to the Department of Census and Statistics, the labour force participation rate increased in sectors closely linked to tourism.

Small business owners, local guides, and artisans have benefited from increased tourist spending, improving household incomes and overall standards of living.

Additionally, the government implemented a 40% increase in the minimum wage in 2024, raising it from 12,500 rupees to 17,500 rupees, which has alleviated living costs for workers.

Although this wage adjustment was implemented before 2025, continued tourism growth is expected to drive further improvements in employment standards and livelihoods, emphasizing the sector's critical role in Sri Lanka's economic recovery and social well-being.

Can the springs of recovery plant a horizon of Hope?

Sri Lanka's tourism industry has a yawning potential to be a transformative engine of national renewal, capable of not only reviving the country's economy but also reshaping it into a more diversified and resilient growth model.

The strategic combination of the country's well-established tea and agriculture industries, as well as the traditional ayurvedic health industry, could create premium experience packages that could attract high-spending individuals while promoting the nation's rich cultural heritage.



By pairing tourism with strong export industries, the country can generate multiple revenue streams, increase foreign exchange earnings, and reduce its vulnerability to external shocks, turning travel demand into a wider engine of sustainable economic recovery.

The nation's tourism industry has blossomed on the strength of its breathtaking natural beauty and the

quiet perseverance of small business owners, flourishing even without sweeping government interventions or grand promotional campaigns.

We can only imagine the heights this industry could reach if guided by thoughtful state support and partnership, where policy and enterprise work hand in hand to unveil Sri Lanka's 'symphony of wonders' to the world.

Sri Lanka's tourism revival is a promising beacon in a dark economic era, offering a rapid infusion of inflows, jobs, and investor confidence.

However, expansion of tourism alone cannot rescue a battered economy; the industry and its future can only boom with true strategic diversification, strong institutions, political stability, and sustainable management of natural and cultural assets.

"May the breathtaking wonders of Sri Lanka rise to touch the world's brightest heights and soar beyond the horizon."

*Shorts*

Fairly heavy rains of above 50mm are likely at some places in Western, Sabaragamuwa and North-western provinces and in Galle, Matara, Kandy and Nuwara-Eliya districts. (1/2).- Hirunews.lk



(2/2) Strong winds of about 40-50kmph can be expected at times over Western slopes of the central hills, in Central, Northern, North-central and North-western provinces, and in Trincomalee and Hambantota districts: Department of Meteorology.- Hirunews.lk

Level-2 Landslide Early Warnings have been extended for the Kalutara, Matara, Nuwara Eliya, and Ratnapura districts. Level-1 warnings extended in the Colombo, Galle, Kandy, Kegalle, and Kurunegala districts: NBRO.- Hirunews.lk

More than 20 people are reported dead following a crowd crush at a political rally in Karur in Tamil Nadu: Indian media.- Hirunews.lk

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## Fuel shortage manufactured to further ulterior motives

Parliamentary watchdog the Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) has found that a loss of Rs. 594 billion was incurred by the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) from 2013 to 2024.

COPE Chairman MP Dr Nishantha Samaraweera said that a majority of the CEB's assets and funds had been distributed among private entities.

This was disclosed during a recent meeting between the COPE and CEB authorities.



"The Department does not make the necessary estimations and does not stick to the generation plan. The revenue has also been distributed through various means. The CEB is a burden for the nation now. Do you not agree that this state entity needs to be restructured?" he questioned.

Dr. Samaraweera said that a forensic audit will be conducted into the CEB, as it has become a serious issue.

The Committee has also found that Lanka's recent energy crisis—marked by shortages of electricity, fuel, and gas—was deliberately manufactured under the pretext of the economic collapse, with the intention of fulfilling undisclosed objectives.

Dr. Samaraweera announced that a formal investigation would be launched into the matter. The session focused on the CEB and its affiliated entities, including Lanka Transformers Ltd (LTL). Dr. Samaraweera accused certain officials and institutions of misusing public funds, stating that Rs. 5,943,680,000 had been mishandled. "This is not a trivial loss. Funds that should have remained within the institution were diverted for personal use," he said.

He criticised the sudden increase in electricity tariffs, noting that power cuts lasting up to 18.5 hours were imposed during critical periods, such as school examinations, only to be lifted immediately after tariff hikes were approved in Parliament.

"This was a calculated move to justify price increases," he added.

The COPE Chairman also pointed to artificial shortages of gas, stating, "We are not saying there was a shortage. We are saying it was created." He alleged that the crisis was used to manipulate consumer behaviour and justify price surges, with gas prices rising from Rs. 1,500 to Rs. 7,500. "Since then, there have been no (LP Gas Cylinder) explosions. That's the real story," he said.

## THE QUINTESSENTIAL DIPLOMAT

BY DR ROGER SRIVASAN

An ambassador is not merely a messenger of state, but the living embodiment of a nation's conscience, culture, and aspirations. In their bearing one discerns both the weight of history and the promise of the future. To listen to such a figure is to hear both reason and resonance, for their words carry the authority of intellect, the elegance of rhetoric, and the subtle power of diplomacy.

Yet beneath the eloquence lies the careful architecture of competence. An ambassador is measured not merely by title, but by the sum of qualities that make them a custodian of their nation's honour. At the heart of their calling is a mastery of diplomacy itself: the ability to negotiate wisely, to mediate with patience, and to safeguard national interest while sustaining international goodwill. Political acumen enables them to read shifting tides of power, anticipate consequences, and navigate the complex interplay of domestic and international priorities.



No less vital is the gift of communication. The ambassador must command English with the fluency of a scholar and the poise of an orator. Language becomes their foremost instrument: not merely to convey information, but to persuade, inspire, and charm. Their voice moves seamlessly from the deliberations of cabinets to the salons of the press, capable of commanding attention while remaining relatable and human.

Cultural literacy amplifies their influence. Raised or educated in the West, exposed to its ideals, institutions, and social codes, the ambassador gains instinctive familiarity with democratic values and international norms. This Western polish never eclipses loyalty to their homeland; rather, it equips them to interpret their nation to foreign audiences with subtlety, credibility, and grace. They understand that diplomacy is as much about listening and learning as it is about asserting national interest.

Character is their unshakable foundation. Integrity is essential, for an envoy who lacks incorruptibility cannot inspire trust. Composure under pressure, emotional intelligence in delicate encounters, and quiet charisma that wins respect without demanding it—all are indispensable. Courtesy and discretion are their constant companions, for the smallest word or gesture can ripple through the corridors of power.



Beyond the negotiating table, the ambassador is a consummate bridge-builder. They weave networks among governments, scholars, merchants, and artists. In banquets, boardrooms, and cultural forums alike, they embody hospitality and tact, ensuring their nation is represented with dignity and warmth.

Diplomacy, in its highest form, is not only the negotiation of treaties; it is the cultivation of goodwill, the forging of trust, and the quiet strengthening of bonds between peoples.

An ambassador of this calibre combines intellect, eloquence, loyalty, and grace. They speak, act, and live as the voice of their nation, translating its values into action, its principles into presence, and its vision into enduring relationships across the globe.

They do not simply represent a country—they personify its voice, its vision, and its values.

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