

In Search

aat
SRI LANKA

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Better Economic Governance





Vision

To be the Most Recognized Mid-Level Accounting and Business Qualification



Mission

To equip our students and members with the knowledge, skills, attitude and mindset to become best-in-class mid-level accounting and business professionals who add value to the corporate world while succeeding in their career and personal lives, via a robust curriculum, empowered and passionate staff who work in a digitally enabled working environment and a network of well equipped accredited education centers, while adhering to environmentally friendly and socially responsible practices.



Values

INTEGRITY

To be Straight forward and honest

PROFESSIONALISM

Maintain high professional standards at all times

ADAPTABILITY

Ready to change to suit the context

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC

We make every decision based on how well it serves our Students and Members

PASSION

Devoted and enthusiastic for excellence

TEAMWORK

One team who trust each other

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Better Economic Governance



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Message from the President of AAT Sri Lanka

It is indeed a great pleasure to send this message for the first issue of the InSearch 2023 themed “Better Economic Governance”. Having surpassed many unprecedented hurdles in the recent past, I believe that we all who represent one of the powerful professional fraternities in the society who not only better understand but also vigorously feel the impact of the ongoing economic turmoil would find this volume of InSearch on better economic governance rather relevant and interesting.

I wish to emphasize the importance of continuously improving yourself in maintaining and elevating your professional competence. Expanding the level of knowledge in technical and other contemporary areas is always required by a professional accountant and thus I believe InSearch facilitates serving that purpose to a satisfactory level. We are humbly proud of the milestones we have reached during the first half of the year 2023 and on top of that the opportunities we were able to provide by organizing CPD as well as recreational events targeting the development and wellbeing of our member fraternity which are richly presented through this magazine.

While believing that our competent professional members have been spectacular in driving their organizations in the right direction under the prevailing challenges, I sincerely wish them all the very best in continuing their good efforts in bringing great results, ultimately helping in realizing the dreams of the present Sri Lanka for a better tomorrow.

To conclude, I wish to thank the Chairman and the Members of the Membership Committee of AAT Sri Lanka for their continuous efforts, passion and focus in envisaging on great ideas and bringing together amazing resources to compile something worth reading and following. I also wish to thank the CEO and the Staff for their commendable contribution.

Naleen de Silva



Message from the Chief Executive Officer of AAT Sri Lanka

AAT Sri Lanka is pleased to present yet another volume of its flagship magazine “InSearch” with a timely theme on “Better Economic Governance” as the first issue of its bi-annual publication series. I’m indeed pleased to pen my thoughts addressing the prestigious members of the association through this edition of InSearch. I wish to invite our members to embrace InSearch as one of the most resourceful offerings we have for you to update and upgrade you in your professional journey and relationship with your association.

With unending passion and purposeful actions to grow, we are humbly proud of the progress AAT has been making specially despite the pandemic and economic uncertainties. As we believe, our success is attributed to many great contributors among whom our members are second to none. As always, we will continue to explore new and innovative opportunities, take a good care of our valued stake holders, meet the expectations of the profession and maintain highest standards in all our undertakings amongst others since we believe that these help elevating the value and recognition of our students and members.

On a different note, CPD will continue to be regarded as the most influential contributor in the development of our members and actions towards facilitating ample CPD opportunities will always remain a priority for us. While we do our part, I wish to invite all our members to strengthen their focus and engagement in Continuous Professional Development.

The pages of this edition are a showcase of the achievements, developments and other news of your association. Let me invite you to enjoy it and continue your passion to learn and grow. Let me also make this opportunity to thank the Chairman and the members of the Membership Committee, Head of Student Registration and Membership / Secretary to the Membership Committee for their great efforts in presenting this resourceful publication.

Tishanga Kumarasinghe



Message from the Chairman of the Membership Committee

Greetings to our valued readers,
It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I extend my warmest welcome to you through the pages of this first edition of our InSearch Magazine. As the Chairman of the Membership Committee, I am honored to address you, the members of AAT Sri Lanka, forward-thinkers, innovators, and curious minds.

In today's rapidly evolving world, where ideas transcend borders and information knows no boundaries, our commitment to knowledge sharing and insightful discourse has never been more vital. This magazine stands as a testament to our dedication to fostering a space where ideas, discoveries, and stories converge to inspire, educate, and provoke meaningful conversations.

Within these pages, you will find a tapestry of perspectives, expert opinions, and thought-provoking content that reflects the diverse tapestry of our membership. From the latest breakthroughs in science and technology to the arts that touch our souls, from the challenges that shape our societies to the triumphs that give us hope – our magazine encapsulates the essence of human progress in the modern world.

I encourage you to explore, engage, and embrace the content within these pages. Let this magazine be a catalyst for your own journeys of discovery and growth. Share these insights with colleagues, friends, and family, for the exchange of knowledge amplifies its impact manifold.

As we embark on this collective voyage of exploration and enlightenment, I extend my gratitude to the brilliant minds and dedicated individuals whose contributions make this magazine a beacon of wisdom. Together, we shape the narratives of tomorrow and contribute to a brighter, more informed world.

Thank you for being a part of this vibrant community. Here's to a future filled with innovation, understanding, and the relentless pursuit of knowledge.

Warm regards,
Indraka Liyanage

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An interview with the Commissioner General of Inland Revenue

You assumed duties as the 35th Commissioner General of the Inland Revenue during the year 2022. Could you please briefly share your journey from being an Assessor to CGIR as it could be inspirational to the readers?

Yes, it happened in 2022 as the last step of my career. I joined the IRD in 1987 and worked in several units and branches of the IRD that covered working on different functions of a tax administration, whether it is the identification and registration of taxpayers, assessing at different scenarios or circumstances and collection of taxes with different actions. I always firmly believe on encouraging and facilitating tax compliance, which is the key to the success of any tax system, tax policy and tax administration. Achieving the taxpayer compliance in all standards in filing, reporting and payment, in other words total compliance to the maximum possible level, is the very-reason for the existence of a tax administration anywhere in the world. A significant perception connected to compliance is that compliance should come voluntarily. I have my doubts as to whether when filing, reporting and payment were fulfilled after enforcement by the tax administration, it could be rated as taxpayer compliance. Facilitating and monitoring tax compliance should be the objective and the strategy of the tax administration, as the total compliance process covers even tax audits and investigations for arriving at the correct tax liability. Taxpayers and tax consultants should honestly help this process to happen smoothly as the honorable citizens of a country. Auditing, investigations and other corrective actions should be implemented only when they are necessary within the process. Throughout my career, I've been working in this manner and trying to convince the taxpayers, officers and consultants including all relevant stakeholders to give their 100% for this process. True that it's not always happening as expected, even with filing; the initial compliance. The return compliance rate as at the return deadline has been very low in our country. Not only that, under-reporting and under-payment are also connected to such cases. There are reasons for that, which we can talk about extensively on another occasion.

Coming back to the talk on my journey within the IRD, my longest stay within the organization was on tax policy matters, international taxation and training. Efforts that I engaged in the IRD covered work related to all aspects of double taxation avoidance agreements, including negotiation of tax treaties and follow-up work, implementation and clarifications on taxpayer issues connected to tax treaties, interpretations, clarifications and rulings on all taxes administered by the IRD, training of IRD officers, public awareness, knowledge sharing with professional bodies like yours, cooperation and settlement of issues with a



Mr. D R S Hapuarachchi

number of institutions and authorities, whether Government or private, chambers, associations, embassies etcetera. I didn't have much time in my career to engage in other functions of tax administration for longer tenures.

From Assessor to the CGIR whatever the positions were, I've been following the footsteps and lessons from my seniors here, I mean all good things that are understood accordingly. I always take or try to take collective decisions within the IRD after discussions with relevant parties. When assuming duties as the CGIR, I was having a network with almost all the related parties of the taxation process, as I had been entrusted by commissioner generals and my senior officers to engage in a great deal of work outside the IRD, attending to their tax issues.

IRD is celebrating 91 years in 2023. How do you feel about this long journey as the Chief of the Department and what are the core functions of IRD at the moment?

IRD's journey of life is a long one as you mentioned. After 91 years, if IRD could have been in a better position like some convincingly successful tax administrations in the world stand, we could be in a position to voice our journey and its milestones proudly and loudly. Of course, IRD has been successful to a greater extent collecting the most necessary funds for the government coffers throughout the history. This is proved by the fact that as a country, Sri Lanka has been providing a number of public goods and services since the independence or even before that. Tax revenue has been the major source of funding for such expenditure. However, debt financing has also played a major role in the Government budget when it was necessary. Not only that, tax revenue had been around 20 percent of the GDP in some years a long time ago, but has been in a deeply declining trend in the recent past. If not for numerous uncontrolled issues that affect tax administration, tax morale in the country and public understanding of taxes, the story could have been a different one. Some issues are man-made and for some issues honest efforts to find solutions have never been tried. Inconsistencies of many determinants affecting the success of a tax administration, lack of understanding and commitment of different parties in and out of the tax administration plus many different circumstances have contributed to this situation. Certainly, there have been reasons for the tax gap from the both sides, i.e., administration and policies.

Achieving the tax compliance to the potential level with core functions of identification, assessment and collection, like in any tax administration in the world, has been the objective of the IRD too. In the long journey of the IRD, she has contributed with most needed resources to the government with ups and downs as explained above. Amongst these all sorts of inconsistencies and weaknesses, some of those could have been managed within the IRD, whereas some that IRD couldn't do anything also existed. Correcting these beyond-the-control circumstances by the tax administration should be done at higher levels. Fulfilling taxation responsibilities is with a great influence of social interactions and imitating. One person can think about paying the least amount of tax if he cannot stay without paying – avoiding – and the other person in the other side of the game could think about taking a personal benefit instead of collecting the correct amount of tax, whereas paying the correct amount honestly is what is expected from the potential taxpayers in the civilized world. Similarly, what is expected from a tax official is assessing and collecting the correct amount of tax. Where most taxpayers do not pay their taxes correctly, the tendency is towards reducing the total compliance by those who have been paying their taxes correctly. I had to take over as the CG at a very crucial juncture, as collection of the maximum possible tax revenue was decisive and most needed for the existence or finding solutions as the huge economic crisis affected to and reflected in all other fronts. Also, the journey of the IRD has never been crucial like in the present days as this period marks the need to raise the revenue for the government which is around 1.7 trillion, the highest target so far expected from IRD compared to the last 90 years of her life. IRD is trying to achieve this target and we are confident that if we can continue to work as planned and minimize our weaknesses with true dedication, achieving the targeted revenue will not be shattered.

The year 2022 was a dark period in our history and we were in a very crucial position. Any officer would be reluctant to assume duties in this kind of a situation. Sir, how did you embrace this challenge and what was your thought process to overcome it?

I think I have partially answered this question already. Yes, true, but once you have reached the last step of your career, you have to decide whether you resign or step down or try your best against the odds. I never had a dream and an ambitious plan to become the CGIR. In 2022 the crisis situation in many aspects of the country was clearly visible and any odds inspiring from such a situation were also possible. As the tax administration, the dilemma is the collection of revenue in a high volume, within an economic crisis leading to a contraction of the economy. However, on the other hand, challenges are tipped to be the opportunities, something that we should never forget and plan on them if we like to contribute to our organizations and countries.

We in the IRD always work as a team. May be, there are some guys who probably do not work for the common cause like it happens in any organization. Masses of any country have experiences in how the strengths and weaknesses of their country and how the things happen, also the way that they have to handle the issues to overcome those problems and live their lives safely, usefully and peacefully. Similarly, the personnel in an organization too know the best way to work under crisis situations and take it to success in achieving its objectives, if they are true to their organization and their self- consciences.

Being the most senior and experienced person within the IRD at that time, taking over and trying hard together with all in the IRD in a contributing effort for government revenue was about to be entrusted upon me. As the IRD, we knew the inherent issues in and out of us, how tax policy had been changed and what would be the next step by the policymakers. Also, having built the trust in the past, most within and out of the IRD expected my taking over the leadership and dealing with the issues in an effective manner. Not only that, most of them including a large number of our officers, professionals and professional bodies like yours expected initiatives to address issues of misconduct practices and other deficiencies of the tax administration.

Under such circumstances, when my assuming duties as the CGIR happened, collecting potential and / or targeted revenue for the exchequer and getting the support of the whole staff was in my thoughts. Not only that, providing a friendly and courteous service addressing and solving the issues of taxpayers and all stakeholders of the IRD have always been a priority for me and that thought is also a major one among all other objectives when assuming duties.

A couple of years ago, our tax revenue to GDP was on average 15%. However, currently it's less than 8%. Further, the government is expecting Rs. 3,130 billion in the 2023 budget. As the policy drivers, is it achievable in this current context or would this be a challenge?

Yes, it seemed to be a herculean task under the present circumstances. I'll start with the second part of the question. One's life and everything connected to it has always been a challenge. Revenue target for the treasury of a country or the amount of the decided target for a revenue authority is always

a challenge. Officially, I cannot talk about the performance on the overall target of 2023, but on the relevant part for the IRD. Although it's a huge challenge, as the IRD we are now on the correct path to reach the target. The annual target for the IRD in 2023 is 1.67 Trillion as defined and we have reached the target that we got set for the first six months of the year amidst successes and failures in some months. But the target for the second half of the year is around one trillion and we have to work hard, doubling our efforts to achieve it. We have to work in a robust and consistent way for that.

Decisive policy changes for the target set and IRD's efforts are the main reasons for the success of the first half of 2023.

There are connected issues for any organization's work and if adequate resources are available, and if other weaknesses in tax administration can further be tried to solve, depending on the success of these reaching the target may be tried with confidence. But, one shouldn't forget that this is the highest target so far entrusted with the IRD and therefore it's really a difficult one. Team IRD with its units, branches and sub groups, i.e., all members of the IRD should work for this common objective, if the target, which is the most difficult challenge that we are facing right now is to be achieved. In this process, the common objective should be kept above everything and members (officials) with different understandings and objectives should keep them aside and work for this common cause. **"Let's try it as a country" is the request from me for taxpayers, consultants, officials and all other stakeholders.**

Tax to GDP was in a declining trend in the recent past and it was accelerated with reduction of taxes, a couple of years ago. Moreover, different types of tax incentives contribute to tax expenditure and tax gap of a country and tax free or incentivized such acts do not recognize in the tax revenue, but such economic activities contribute and are reflected in the GDP. That could be another reason for reducing tax to GDP ratio.

However, a tax administration cannot pass the whole buck to the policy. The administrative gap has to be well-addressed and reduced if the targets are to be achieved and to keep the tax to GDP ratio in a healthy position. Gaps in knowledge and capacity that undermine most needed vigilance and expertise for a tax authority should be reduced and dedication at all levels is to be upgraded. Added, the adequate staff and other infrastructure to such a process, a tax administration should perform well. Not only that, **a productive mechanism to reduce corruption covering all possible aspects and acts of wrongdoers in the game is a must as considerable share of revenue drains out of the revenue stream due to that.** Certainly, forgone revenue due to bribery is a reason for an underperforming tax administration, IRD not being an exception to this fact. We are trying some preventive measures for this issue too at the moment with some initiatives with the collaboration of the CIABOC.

IMF country report issued in March 2023 emphasizes on bringing new taxes such as gift, property and inheritance taxes under tax reform heading in the near future. Are we not achieving this objective through capital gain taxes?

We were having Wealth Tax, which was somewhat similar to Property Tax and Gift Tax a few decades ago in Sri Lanka. We also had Estate Duty. All these were abolished during 1990s. One widely acknowledged model in taxation is that a country

has to tax all tax bases, if a balance in the tax system is to be maintained, while there are some arguments against imposition of taxes in this nature. The main tax bases in the world are income, consumption and properties probably with some variations to them, but still directly or indirectly connected to these three bases can exist. In any country, anytime, policies can be changed if the policymakers decide so. There is a possibility to introduce taxes that you referred to in the future. Let's keep it for the future as we cannot talk about it now. However, if such taxes are implemented in Sri Lanka and the Government entrusts IRD to be the authority to collect them, IRD has to administer such taxes too. If so, IRD will make plans accordingly, when the legislation is being drafted having consultations with all relevant parties. However, this type of taxes is mostly administered in the world at state, provincial or prefectural (local) levels.

Taxation of a capital gain is a different thing. CGT is the tax on gains from realization of investment assets and it is under investment income and taxable for income tax. Understanding the difference between taxation of income or value at the realization of a property as CGT and taxation of the owner for holding a property on the value of the property, inheriting a property or gifting a property or receiving something as a gift is important and useful here.

We have been deliberating on enhancing the tax net of Sri Lanka. As per the IRD performance report issued for 2021, total registered individual taxpayers were less than 292,305 and APIT/PAYE files were less than 32,702. However, we have more than 900,000 motor cars registered as per RMV database. Where have we overlooked and how to bridge this gap?

KPIs for a tax administration undoubtedly include the number of files and the revenue collected while others include quality of the services provided and level of the compliance etcetera. Total number of individual taxpayers is always having ups and downs where the tax policy is changed. Increases and reductions of the tax-free allowance or the threshold in other words, is instrumental in changes in taxpayer numbers reflecting the said change. Thus, where the threshold is increased drastically, the number of files comes down as some taxpayers who were reporting earlier can now be in a position of not having a liability. Such files are made inactive and the number of files is automatically reduced. Under PAYE, a file is not maintained for every employee unless he has a liability from other sources or simply saying, having income more than what was taxed under PAYE. For IRD, the mostly faced issue is getting the correct information of transactions or acquisitions. This situation can be explained with reasons, but it's not expected to go to such a micro level on this discussion. Yes, when we consider the life styles of many sections of public, they should really be income taxpayers. Then why don't they come and get registrations as taxpayers? In Sri Lanka, income tax was paid for over 90 years and some taxes even before that. May be tax administration with different weaknesses fail to deliver the goods, may fail to get all potential taxpayers registered and start collecting taxes. As honorable and honest citizens of the country, isn't it the responsibility of us to go and get registered voluntarily for payment of taxes? On the other hand, mere registration without fulfilling responsibilities does not find answers, as tax compliance is the key for a performing tax administration and healthy Government revenue. Is it not the responsibility to pay



due taxes correctly without reducing it or giving bribes to reduce it? **Is it not the responsibility of tax accountants and advisors to give correct advice and get the liable persons who come for their tax advice registered and pay the correct liability?**

Most of liable people don't like to pay tax and they too can stay unregistered due to weaknesses with other players in the game. They can go unnoticed or even when noticed, still there is a way to avoid it. It is the social influence on taxation that I talked a bit about opening the discussion. Honesty is an important and precious value to be followed and maintained by ourselves in this country. IRD cannot single handedly perform this task. A true contribution by all – namely taxpayers, law and policymakers, tax officers and other officials of the ministries and all Government servants, tax consultants and accountants, institutions, chambers, law implementing bodies, corporate sector, unorganized sectors, media, whistleblowers and the sectors that I could not mention here – to the tax administration, IRD in this case is most needed at this juncture. Such a true approach, involvement and support with an understanding of the objective would certainly help increase the number of taxpayers and tax revenue minimizing all sorts of weaknesses. **Such an approach of inclusivity in every field is the key to develop a nation.**

Now that a Gazette notification has been published requesting several classes of professionals and other specified categories to get registered and also everyone over 18 years are to be

registered for Taxpayer Identification commencing from January, 2024, a voluntary approach by all of the above sectors is a must and hopefully we can expect an increase of the taxpayer population in the future. As taxpayer voluntary registration is possible by contacting any office of the IRD and including online registration, it is more efficient for them to do so. Not only that, filing tax returns and making the payments online are also possible for the public.

Another important thing connected to this is IRD's need to have adequate infrastructure and staff to cater to all these requirements, compared to the present state.

Though RAMIS was implemented four years ago, taxpayers are still unable to get the full benefit out of it. They are at least not in a position to view their tax payment records, tax assessment details etc. What is your thought on this?

RAMIS was implemented in the year of assessment 2016/ 2017. Certainly, a system like this should serve all users including the taxpayers and IRD personnel in a versatile and more effective and efficient manner. But we all know that there was a comprehensive change of the existed Inland Revenue Act with the introduction of the Act No. 24 of 2017. With that, all completed work in RAMIS, which was based on the existed laws had to be completely changed from the year of assessment 2018/ 2019. You will understand about transforming a revenue monitoring system to a rule based one from one prepared to suit then existed completely different taxation provisions. Some reasons for the delay were beyond the control of the IRD. However, at the end of this year, the system will be ready for catering to both the taxpayers and the IRD in a comprehensive manner.

With the cancellation of the lower rate of tax, tax rate for all companies is 30%. What is your opinion on this since exporters, manufacturing companies and agricultural industries will be impacted by this?

Tax policy changes are made in a country depending on the macroeconomic policy and status quo, inter alia. Where there is a need to provide concessions in taxation from the angle of a Government depending on the reasons for that, such tax concessions are decided and granted accordingly. Where a Government finds differently depending on different circumstances including increasing the tax revenue, tax concessions may be reduced. This is common in many taxation systems in the world.

In Sri Lanka, with the initiation of the Inland Revenue Act No, 24 of 2017, concessionary CIT rates existed for exporters, SMEs, Agriculture and several other categories. Manufacturing was also added later to the list. But the recent changes removed such lower rates making it all sectors taxable at a single rate for CIT. Some sectors of a country may need a special attention and treatment until they are grown up, to recognize some sectors depending on their forex earnings and some sectors considering the contribution to the economy of the country. However, we all can understand the size of the issues faced by Sri Lanka in the recent past due to the drastically reduced revenue for the Government coffers. Therefore, policymakers may have thought differently from the previous stance that they had several years ago. My opinion on this is a bit of mixed thoughts. **Tax**

concessions, here lower CIT rates, cannot be continued for a long time in any country. Once the need arises, tax burden should be equally borne by them too like other taxpayers without concessions do. Sometimes, when you think about the SME sector, encouraging them should be done as their existence in the economy is necessary considering the contribution of them to the economy, employment generation, self-dependence and on several other aspects. With the increased tax rate, instead of existed lower rate for them, some SMEs may be in difficulties. However, according to the facts that I explained above for this question, there may not be a possible alternative treatment for them as decided in the policy.

Cash transactions more than Rs. 500,000 per day are currently restricted. Could you please give some insights into this provision and the objective behind this?

There are pros and cons for this too like for any change in taxation. The intention of the provision is to restrict use of cash exceeding Rs. 500,000/- between two persons within a day. If it happens against the law breaching this provision, such expenditure is not allowable or not taken as an asset for tax purposes. This is important in several aspects. It encourages making digital and banking payments in their transactions. At the same time, it tries to address the issue of preventing money laundering. Some cash transactions possibly go unaccounted and unnoticed disturbing identifying the size of the economy correctly. Using cash even when you are in a position to use other means like cheques, bank drafts or use of other types of banking facilities etcetera for your transactions, a cash-used transaction by you could be suspicious whether it is off the records. Similarly, the intention to make a cash transaction without using the banks for that could possibly be keeping it hidden. I'm not referring to all transactions of this nature. Probably it could also be for an illegal transaction. Therefore, for taxation purpose, this would be a good move as to encourage transactions to happen in an organized manner. On the other hand, if most transactions of individuals and entities are made unrecorded, correct income of the relevant person cannot be taxed. Now with this provision, certain amount of income tax can be collected with this disallowance. But at the same time, for someone making a one-off transaction over the limit who is not having banking facilities could be in trouble with this requirement of disallowance.

General public is deliberating on transparency, and governance of taxation and they simply reject or are reluctant to pay taxes with the current structure. How do you perceive this and what is the message to the general public?

I'm not sure about the issues you mean in the current structure the issues in that for the dislike of the general public wasn't conveyed with this question. However, I agree with you that structural changes are to be made for developing public confidence in the tax system and institutions. Structure is "the arrangement of and relations between the parts or elements of something complex". However, I will try to address the issues

that I see within the current structure. First, there is a huge involvement and contribution of every player of taxation game for its current structure. It may be any category of persons that we identified as stakeholders at a previous question, who can make the situation better. It's a clear situation that contributions by all parties over the years have created the current structure. Structural changes from time to time are unavoidable as to keep the confidence. When a situation is settled to be last long, it cannot be changed easily. When the structure is disturbing and discouraging the public, it's the responsibility of all relevant parties to sit and find the changes that are needed for a better structure. Recommendations identified should be implemented for correcting the errors. IRD is working in this respect too within her capacity and limits.

Tax transparency is an extremely important point mentioned here by you as the taxpayers like to see what is being done with the tax they pay, with tax Government revenue in other words. If they can agree with what's being done with tax money, they will voluntarily pay correct amounts of taxes complying with all taxation requirements. In this regard, we can see existence of free education and other services in Sri Lanka which are funded by taxpayer contributions. Tax governance guides an organization for the decision making in tax issues. Then the governance is micro and more internal for an organization than looking at it in a macro view. If we talk in a macro view, things like participation, rule of law, transparency, accountability, equity, inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency etcetera can be included here. As your question was aimed at the IRD, we have to think about it under the above features. Then a question arises as to how these things can be addressed by the IRD alone in an effort for good governance. However, within the IRD we are addressing some issues connected to governance at the moment. Establishing and publishing of a taxpayer charter, issuance of guidelines for the avoidance of corruption within the IRD and some administrative guidelines protecting the rights of taxpayers are some of them. In future, we will take further steps to create enhanced relationships with stakeholders for getting understanding and willing cooperation from both sides.

My message to taxpayers and all stakeholders is that we are trying to minimize weaknesses within the IRD with true dedication. Most of the officers are adhering to that. And the request to honorable taxpayers in our country is to pay the correct amount of tax and contribute for developing our nation. As I mentioned earlier, our officers work in a friendly and transparent manner with taxpayers, also providing our services courteously. But this will not be the case always and different situations may be there as all are not thinking the same way and some, driven by their ulterior motives may not be working for the common cause. If there are incidents that you are being cold-treated, cannot agree on matters for your honest and provable reasons or your case is not being heard attentively you can fight for your rights by informing it to us, to the unit managers or higher officers or other relevant authorities out of the IRD depending on the nature and relevance of your case.

A consistently complying taxpayer, always being a honest game player is the most important contributor for the development of a country.



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Better economic governance and Singapore secret MPH formula

Sri Lanka needs to have a better formula for economic development. We have practiced many for the last six-seven decades and are already failed. Having sound economic governance with the coordination of economic policies to promote economic and social progress is a must for a country. Now the time has come for Sri Lanka to study the best practices of other countries as well. It is really interesting and fascinating to analyze the Singapore secret MPH formula of Meritocracy, Pragmatism and Honesty (MPH) and we will see how Sri Lanka can implement this in our context. We should read this MPH which is introduced by Dr. Goh Keng Swee, (architect of Singapore's economic miracle,) and Mr. S. Rajaratnam (Singapore's philosopher par excellence). As Sri Lanka is in a real crisis situation, we need to see different strategies and we should read more best practices.

Let us discuss this magical formula aligned with the Sri Lankan context.

Meritocracy

Meritocracy means that a country picks its best citizens, not the relatives of the ruling class, to run a country. In a broader perspective, there should be a mechanism for selecting people on merit rather than class, privilege, or wealth. This should be applicable to the ministers, government as well as in other sectors in Sri Lanka. If you appoint your relative as your successor just because of the relationship in the Institute, that also needs to be considered in this context. In Sri Lanka, there should be an apex body to consider the appointment of ministers and heads of institutions in the government and the duty of them is to make sure that the selection of ministers and heads of institutions are made with their competencies (not with class, privilege, or wealth). Prior to the selection the proposed ministers/administrators should be audited and all of them need to submit their asset declarations etc. That also comes under the purview of "Apex body"

Pragmatism

As per Mahbubani (2017) "Pragmatism means that a country does not try to reinvent the wheel." The following remarks of Kishore Mahbubani clearly indicate the real application of Pragmatism. "As Dr. Goh Keng Swee would say to me, "Kishore, no matter what problem Singapore encounters, somebody, somewhere, has solved it. Let us copy the solution and adapt it to Singapore." Copying best practices is something any country can do".

In Sri Lanka, we can see that the education, social and cultural systems of the country mostly align with dogmatic ideology. Anyway, there is a need to change and adjust yourself (and organizations) by looking at the environment which can be seen mainly in state-run institutions. All stakeholders (Management, employees, trade unions, and customers) should come together and make certain changes to this. It can be proposed to have “Consultative committees” in state-run institutions with a combination of stakeholders and experts from the private sector. It is worth noting that some private sector companies in Sri Lanka also have this same “Dogmatism syndrome”. We need to have transformational leaders with intellectual stimulation in which you challenge yourself as well as things around you. You should always ask from yourself how you can change the world for happiness. I think the other aspects of transformational leadership such as idealized influence (charisma, self-confidence, consistency and trust), and Inspiration motivation (inspire confidence, motivation, and a sense of purpose in followers.) are also important to have better pragmatism.

Honesty

This is always aligned with unethical activities such as corruption. I believe that religious leaders of the country should take initiative and act as the main influencing group to inculcate a country with honesty. And also it is important to note that practicing “Honesty” is not only applicable to “Politicians” but also to all citizens in the country. Even this most debated “corruption” is under SDG goals as well. As per United Nations “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests”. The 17 SDGs are: (1) No Poverty, (2) Zero Hunger, (3) Good Health and Well-being, (4) Quality Education, (5) Gender Equality, (6) Clean Water and Sanitation, (7) Affordable and Clean Energy, (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth, (9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, (10) Reducing Inequality, (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities, (12) Responsible Consumption and Production, (13) Climate Action, (14) Life Below Water, (15) Life On Land, (16) Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, (17) Partnerships for the Goals. More importantly, under SDG 16 “Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions” fighting with corruption is really important. To ensure the 2030 agenda, there should be a special consideration for this factor of “corruption” as unless this will destabilize the progress of all SDGs.

Conclusion

As Sri Lankans, the time has come for all of us to have our own reflections. And everybody in the country needs to “change” with a common vision. If one argues that we need to have a better system, it is only half of the solution as there should be “responsible citizens for economic governance” to articulate that system. The people of the country should also be changed. So this “secret” formula of MPH is one prescribed formula that is applicable to the country. And also we need to be “pragmatic” to accept the good practices with localization.





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'Environmental, social, and governance (ESG), previously considered non-financial elements, have now emerged as core values of companies, major financial institutions, and shareholders around the world. They are considered deeply in core management strategies that companies must implement for sustainable management and investment. Particularly, since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019, "eco-friendly," "social value," and "ethical behavior" have become the main policies of governments and parliaments. ESG has become a significant element that consumers, businesses, and civil societies look for in a product, and the demand for ESG management is ever-growing' – **United Nations -Sustainable Development Goals**

Role of tax incentives in promoting the ESG agenda

The corporate world has been well acquainted with the concept of 'ESG' for the past twenty years. It is widely believed that this concept was first brought into the mainstream as a result of the 2004 report from the UN titled 'Who Cares Wins'.

Whilst this concept is nothing new, there is increasing effort globally to ensure companies fall in line with this concept. Tax has taken center stage in these efforts as governments across the world are using it as a tool to ensure compliance and as a tool to encourage the adoption of ESG in corporate decision making.

Whilst there are various mechanisms in which tax drives the ESG agenda, all these tax mechanisms can broadly be split into two broad categories: firstly, the tax incentives and secondly the tax deterrents. Tax incentives are tax measures which promote investments such as tax holidays and concessions. Tax deterrents are tax measures that are punitive and impose a cost such as increased taxes on import of fuels and carbon taxes.

This article focuses on the first of these tax measures: the tax incentive, highlighting the initiatives taken by different countries to incentivize tax payers to bring ESG into the forefront of corporate planning.

Different types of incentives

Tax incentives can be characterized into three broad categories;

1. Accelerated tax depreciation and additional tax allowances
2. Concessionary tax rates and tax holidays
3. R&D super deductions and credits

Accelerated tax depreciation, additional tax deductions and tax holidays have been common tax tools of promoting the ESG agenda.

► USA

In USA, residential and commercial buildings is the largest consumer of energy in the country consuming almost 29% of the total energy. In an effort to encourage energy efficient building designs and to promote green buildings, the Energy Policy Act of 2005 provided a tax deduction of the buildings energy efficient system such as lighting, hot water system, heating, ventilation & air conditioning systems. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 included significant expansions to this tax deduction by extending it to cover a wide variety of buildings and increasing the deduction from USD 1.80 square foot to USD 5 per square foot.

The USA also grants an investment tax credit (this is referred to as the section 48 investment tax credit) that encourage investment in renewable energy projects such as solar, wind, geothermal, hydropower and fuel cell technologies. Under this deduction a business can claim up to 50% of the projects total cost provided they meet certain requirements.

► Malaysia

Malaysia in a bid to drive a green economy introduced the “Green Technology Tax Incentives” in the year 2014. Green Technology Tax Incentives includes both tax allowances and tax exemptions. A tax allowance up to 100% of the costs of capital expenditure on green technology can be deducted against 70% of the statutory income. Green technology investments include investments into minimizing the degradation of the environment and reduction of greenhouse emission and investments into conserving the use of energy, water and other forms of natural resources or promote the use of renewable energy.

Recognizing the need to promote the service sector which enables and provide the backbone for energy projects, Malaysia grants tax exemptions for entities solely engaged in green technology services such as audit, engineering, procurement, consultancy, system design, testing, commissioning, installation, maintenance, funding and certification.

► India

India offers accelerated depreciation for fixed assets associated with solar power plants. Accordingly, whilst generally depreciation is at 20% on the costs of plant and machinery, in the case of a solar power generation plant, depreciation can be claimed up to 80% of the cost in the first year.

Additional tax deductions and tax holidays have not only been used across the globe to promote green initiatives but also has been used to further the ‘social’ aspect of the concept of ESG. Accordingly, especially in the Asian region tax incentives are heavily provided for setting up operations in the suburbs and underdeveloped regions with the aim of creating opportunities and improving the quality of life of those living in these underdeveloped areas. Tax deductions are also permitted in many jurisdictions for health insurance expenses and charitable contributions furthering the ‘social’ development.

► Philippines

Philippines grants incentives based on the industry prioritization tier and location. The tiers are categorized based on the innovativeness, necessity and job generation of the activity. The higher the tier and further the location of the activity is from the metropolitan and more developed areas, the longer the incentive period of income tax holiday granted which ranges from 4 to 7 years.

► Thailand

A tax holiday of one to three years (and an additional 50% tax reduction for a further 5 years after the expiration of the tax exemption period) is provided for projects located in a in a specified list of 20 provinces with lowest per capita income.

► Laos

Tax holidays and concessionary rates are provided for new projects in promoted locations, including poor rural areas, areas with underdeveloped socio-economic infrastructure and special economic zones. It is important to note that the tax laws of Laos also heavily promote incentives in new projects with use of high technology, scientific research, green agriculture, education and human resource development, safe natural resources and energy.

R&D super deductions whilst available in many jurisdictions are very wide in scope and may not have specific energy efficiency qualifying criteria. However, R&D incentive plays a pivotal role in incentivizing energy efficacy initiatives as the development of energy efficient technology requires innovation, research and development. The fact that many countries draft the R&D super deduction section broadly enables companies to gain more through pushing an energy efficient agenda. As an example, a manufacturing company that wants to invest in analyzing data toward reducing their assembly lines’ energy consumption and a manufacturing company that wants to invest in improving the energy efficiency of the facility and developing an improved manufacturing process would both be eligible for the R&D tax deductions.

► Singapore

Singapore provides an additional deduction for R&D up to 250% -300% per year for the first S\$400,000 of qualifying R&D expenditure. A qualifying R&D project must be with the objective of acquiring new knowledge, creating new products/ processes or improving existing products/processes, involves novelty or technical risks or a systematic, investigative and experimental study in the field of science or technology’

► Switzerland

Switzerland allows an additional R&D deduction of up to 50% on the business-related research and development expenses. Scientific research and science-based innovation activities across any sector may qualify for the additional R&D tax deduction. Eligible R&D activities generally need to meet certain criteria.

Sri Lanka in perspective

The Inland Revenue Act, No. 24 of 2017 up until recently provided concessionary tax rates for renewable energy projects and super deductions for R&D expenses in keeping with the international norms. The Inland Revenue Act also provided many tax incentives to promote the ‘social’ aspect in the concept of ESG. Accordingly, concessionary tax rates were also provided for small and medium enterprises and tax exemptions were provided for individuals who start a business after vocational training. These concessions and exemptions have now been discontinued unfortunately due to the economic crisis the country is facing. There are however a few key tax provisions which continue to further the ESG agenda especially in relation to the social development such as the exemption provided for medical, and insurance provided by an employer to an employee and the granting of greater enhanced capital allowances for setting up in the Northern Province.



Dr. Nalin Samarasinha is a Sri Lankan-origin US-based astrophysicist and planetary scientist. He specializes in studying Small Bodies of the Solar System with a focus on comets. He is the first Sri Lankan or Sri Lankan-origin individual to have discovery credits for an asteroid, which he named *Colombounilanka* in 2022 after his alma mater, the University of Colombo. He has also proposed the citations for asteroids Sigiriya and Anuradhapura, named after two UNESCO World Heritage sites in Sri Lanka. Asteroid Samarasinha is named by the International Astronomical Union in 2002 in recognition of his contributions to comet science including studies of comet Halley.

Better Economic Governance: An Astronomer's Perspective

At the onset, let me thank the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) of Sri Lanka for inviting me to share my thoughts in the *InSearch magazine* - on a subject that I think is timely and appropriate as Sri Lanka is trying to overcome an economic calamity, primarily brought on by poor economic governance.

As most would say, there isn't much commonality between astronomy and accounting. However, as we learn the interconnectedness of various seemingly diverse disciplines, one should be able to transfer lessons learned from different fields to one's own. A decade ago, how many of you would have thought that artificial intelligence, what many consider to be a branch of computer science, would have such an influence on almost every other field and our day-to-day life?

In that sense, I like to mention one common characteristic shared by both astronomy and accounting: calculations involving large numbers. How many of us would truly appreciate the magnitude of a million or a billion let alone a trillion? Let me give an example. If one lays ping pong balls next to each other along a line extending from the AAT office in Colombo to Kalutara via Galle Road, that requires a million ping pong balls. On the other hand, if you lay ping pong balls next to each other along Earth's equator, a billion balls are required. This example provides an opportunity to truly appreciate the magnitude of billion dollars or rupees. In both astronomy and accounting, we conceptually work with large numbers; however, many of us may not have a deeper physical appreciation of the magnitude of these large quantities. A deeper understanding, whether it is large numbers or complex problems, enables one to provide robust solutions and perspectives to the issues we try to solve.

When considering how better economic governance can be achieved, the following viewpoints reflect my thoughts as an astronomer. I've identified three essential pillars: an in-depth comprehension of the underlying principles, robust problem-solving skills, and genuine submission to the rule of law. In the following paragraphs, I will elucidate how these factors lead to positive outcomes, whether in the field of economics or for that matter in most other fields.

First, a deep understanding of the fundamental principles is vital to achieving better economic governance. Just like astronomers delve into the complex workings of different celestial bodies, whether in our solar system, within our galaxy, or beyond our galaxy in the universe, economists, accountants, and all other stakeholders of the economy must attempt to grasp the various mechanisms that drive economies and their fortunes. Thus, by thoroughly analyzing and understanding disparate interconnections, and gaining deeper insights into the market dynamics, finance, and trade, all stakeholders can make informed decisions that will benefit the economy in the long haul while avoiding potential pitfalls.

Secondly, strong problem-solving skills are an integral part of striving to have better economic governance. Analogous to how astronomers try to unravel the mysteries of the universe, stakeholders of the economy should also make use of tools such as (a) carrying out effective planning, (b) adopting critical thinking methods, (c) employing analytical problem-solving skills, and (d) making use of clever out-of-the-box thinking and solutions.

Effective planning strategies, for example, could make use of compartmentalization of a problem to creatively divide that larger problem into smaller multiple easily solvable parts. Therefore, such strategies will provide a significant and powerful tool that will enable one to skillfully solve the problem. This will also allow for prioritization of one part of a problem over the other based on the needs and resources of the nation.

Developing strong critical thinking skills among the workforce results in leaders making solid decisions. It is necessary to further develop critical-thinking focused curricula across the education system. There is a societal myth that critical thinking skills are at odds with cultural and religious norms; however, that is far from the truth as I have observed in many societies.

A strong foundation in analytical problem-solving skills, an outcome often associated with academic training in fields such as mathematics and physics, will facilitate unique and clever approaches to problem solving. Many who have developed strong analytical skills may exhibit powerful critical thinking skills too, but that is not always the case. Therefore, both critical thinking skills and analytical skills should be thought of as complementary to each other and they both are invaluable tools for effectively solving problems.

Out-of-the-box thinking to problem solving is an aspect Sri Lanka requires very much at this moment to overcome the current economic crises. Smart and practical solutions based on out-of-the-box thinking should form an integral part of the economic recovery efforts. What about environmentally friendly yet scientifically sound projects? Innovative out-of-the box thinking has to be farsighted and in some cases could be in the high-risk high-return category.

Lastly, the bona fide application of the rule of law plays a central role in assuring better economic governance. Similar to how astronomers use the laws of physics to comprehend and then explain celestial events, the stakeholders of the economic activity must abide by a resilient legal system to ensure fairness, accountability, and transparency. Following the rule of law will ensure a level playing field, reduce the occurrence of corruption, and build trust in the economic system among the stakeholders and investors alike, and finally, it will give rise to new entrepreneurs.

Sri Lanka has an educated population with individuals of many different specialized skill sets, and together Sri Lanka can overcome this economic disaster. However, to fully realize that potential, policymakers and other stakeholders must strive to create the necessary environment conducive to better economic governance as outlined in this short opinion piece.

The opinions expressed in this essay are entirely that of the author and only he is responsible for the content and they do not represent anybody else's thoughts or that of his employer.





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Happiness and Joy through Inside Out

How to be calm in stressful situations? This is the ability all of us have but not given proper attention. If practiced with purpose, this ability can be developed to a skill.

Defining mindfulness under state and trait is as follows.

Bringing one's complete attention to present experience on moment to moment basis. – Marlatt and Kristeller, 1999

Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally – Kabat-Zinn, 1994

Intentionally bringing one's attention to the internal and external experiences in the present moment – Baer (2003).

Mindfulness is choiceless awareness

Benefits of Mindfulness Practice is gaining more productive hours, happiness and joy, doing more with less resources, improving the ability to take responsible decisions, avoiding non-communicable diseases.

As per Forbes Human Resource Council, "employees who practiced Mindfulness have gained 62 minutes of productivity each week to go along with less stress, less pain and better sleep".

Further studies suggest the ROI of a Mindful program has a global savings of USD 300 annually. (26 Jan 2019.)

Some of the other benefits of Mindfulness Practice are as follows.

- » Present moment awareness
- » Occupational self-compassion
- » Quality of sleep (sleeping well and waking up afresh)
- » Improves relaxation
- » Reduces heart rate
- » Reduces blood pressure
- » Improves social relationships
- » Personal accomplishment
- » Responsible decision making
- » Confidence to speak up
- » Understanding change
- » Being happy always

Happy employees create thriving workplace culture which is always good for the business.

Outcomes of mindfulness practice are due diligence and vigilance.

What to be done in order to gain the maximum benefits of Mindfulness is to practice, practice and practice.

There are two formal practices. One is **Mindful walking** and the other one is **Mindful sitting**.



Mindful walking is done using a walking strip which is about 20 feet long and 3 feet wide. (Even this can be done in your home garden or inside the house). First thing you should do is to stand at the end of the walking strip lawn or inside the house and think that now I am not seated, lied down, walking or running, I am now standing right here. That means you are in the present moment. Then start walking on normal pace up and down the strip. After your body is warmed up and you have an understanding of the surface you are walking, start walking, thinking about your body. Some may call it Vipassana Meditation as well. One feet is raised first from your toes and then it is put down by raising the other one. Do this with utmost relaxed mood for about 2 rounds in the walking strip.

Once you are well warmed up, then stand in one end and look about 4 feet in front with eyes open and start walking up and down. Here the challenge is to think only about your walking. You will hear voices, sounds, vehicle plying and what you are supposed to do is not to get entangled with sounds and not to create stories but only to listen to the noise and keep on walking. Understand the present moment awareness. Only thing that you will think is now I am walking. If the mind goes beyond, just know it is going out of your walking mind. When the mind is wandered, do not get angry with the mind. Do this for 20 to 30 minutes as the starter. When you do this practice for a while you will realize that your one feet is moving on a radius. That is called in Buddhism as "ekaro" One radius.

This is like walking inside a Hume pipe. Once you complete the session, you will feel wonderful. You will realise that the only person who can make you happy is yourself.

After you complete the walk, come and sit on a chair or cross legged on a mat. Mindful sitting is the other formal practice. Close your eyes and sit for about 30 minutes. Now the practitioner (yogi) will not think about anything else other than the sitting posture. Your back is comfortably erect and eyes gently closed. First, you take a deep breath, keep it for a while and release it slowly. Now you tend to listen to the surrounding sounds and be in the present moment. It will be difficult for you when you first start. As you go on practicing, you will get used to be in the present moment. But try to be in the present moment. Now, take a deep breath again, keep it for a while and release it.

Now, do a body scan starting from you head. Every part of your body is relaxed only you will think now I am comfortably seated here. Still your mind will wander to what has happened in the past, future plans, to a place or to a person. Do not worry since that is the nature of the mind. Only thing that you have to do is understand it and be aware. You know that the mind had gone away from your posture. We always try to make the body and mind friendly. Now, take a deep breath again, keep it for a while and release it slowly. Now try to see mindfully the movement of your abdomen to your breath. During inhalation, the abdomen gets bloated and during exhalation, it gets contracted. You can now move your mind to your breathing which is the highlight of your body.

How does the inhalation and exhalation happens? (Anapana sathi meditation) Your duty is only to look at the breath mindfully. When we practice for some time, you can differentiate the different breaths. Some are long, some are short, some are warm some are cold. This is understanding yourself. The Western World has already proven that the brain of the person who practices to be in the present moment starts growing and tends to improve the Emotional Literacy. This will allow you to look at everything gladly. It improves your memory, focus, empathy gratitude etc. Before I start the formal Mindful sitting or walking, few Yoga exercises will be done. Next one is mindful doing.

That is whatever you do, do it with complete attention to the work that you do. This will make your work more productive and efficient and most importantly less stressful. Once you start practicing Mindfulness and continue, you tend to understand your emotions (now I am going to be angry or happy and then you can control them), then you will realise that the other person is also someone like you who wants to be happy all the time. That is when a person starts experiencing empathy. Thereafter the decisions taken by those two persons are very responsible and productive.

The Model is as follows (Shown in the picture)

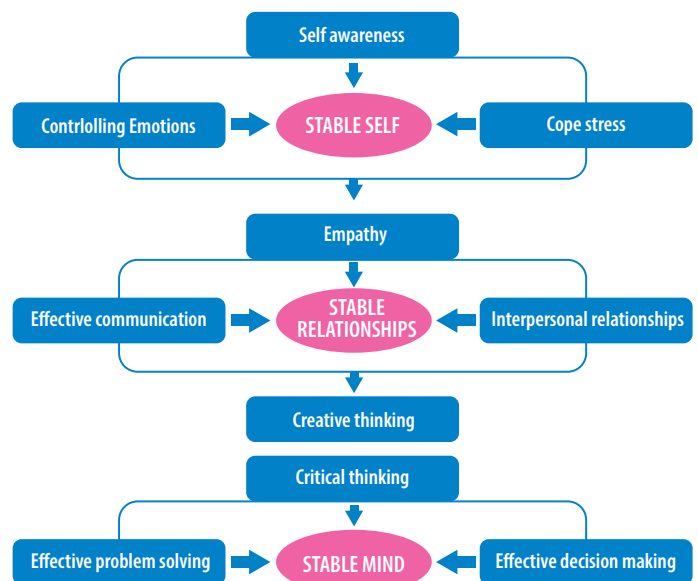
It is called Social and Emotional learning where you tend to work with the other person with Empathy. This model will be used for the new school syllabus as well. Once you start doing the practice, you will develop new life skills and improve the existing skills. You will not get angry or stressed and always be happy. Mindfulness is inherent to any one and the practice will develop the inherent ability to a skill.

Following skills required for an office are also improved through Mindful practice. Resilience, responsible decision making, adopting for change, facing challenges, team work, leadership, efficiency and effectiveness, work life balance, negotiation, working under pressure. Most importantly, you can be happy all the time which makes you stronger, and immune to any situation. So many other benefits are also there. Following evaluation plan can be used after the practice.

Evaluation Plan

- Comparison of loss dates employees wise
- The cost of Medical care (Insurance)
- The productivity comparison
- Customer complaints etc.
- Student pass rate and % of drop outs.

Following is the model used by Dr Rasitha to explain the Social Emotional Learning. Mindfulness is first introduced by Lord Buddha through one of the sutta out of 84,000 suttas called Maha satipattana sutta. **Mindfulness is not a religion and it is a formal practice only.**



Happiness lies within but we always try to get happiness from outside world. Let's try to look towards your insight to be happy all the time. Even though we cannot change what is happening externally, we can look at it and do the changes within ourselves.

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Liberalization of the plantation industry and putting Sri Lanka on a sustainable path to overcome the current economic crisis

Economic reforms in agriculture are important to address the low productivity as the resultant food security threats lead to inflation. Our country is blessed with abandoned resources, and we were self-sufficient in rice production at the time the organic farming decision came into operation overnight, forcing millions of farmers to do away with synthetic fertilizers and pesticides despite the scientists and the agriculture experts warning on repercussions of the decision.

It is no doubt agriculture is the backbone of our country and is the primary economic activity of the people. It is one of the most important steps in the development of human beings from primitive civilization to modern civilization. The type of farming varies from place to place and there are various types of agricultural methods.

Food crisis in Sri Lanka is attributed mainly due to tax cuts, money printing, exchange rates, climate change and high food prices in the world market. Whilst the organic drama resulted in low domestic production which in turn resulted in high cost of production, low farm income led to lower purchasing power and resultant hunger and malnutrition. Malnutrition will not only have an impact on present human productivity but also on future human productivity as well. In this sense, agriculture is playing a major role to be self-sufficient in our food and nation-building by producing import substitutes.

Plantation agriculture is one of the most widely used agricultural methods based on natural and economic conditions. Tree crops, especially tea, rubber and coconut are an important component of Sri Lanka's economy and a major source of employment and export earnings. It is a fact that the net foreign income from the plantations is much higher than the industrial sector as the plantation sector uses much of the inputs from our own resources.

However, the contribution to the GDP from the plantation sector has continually come down in the recent past due to a lack of consistency in policies relevant to agriculture. In 2021, the agricultural sector of Sri Lanka contributed for about 7.4% to the national GDP.

Sri Lankan government imposed a ban on the import and use of conventional agricultural chemicals (fertilizers and pesticides) in April 2021. The ban was followed by the active promotion of using organic inputs in farmlands throughout the country.



This decision has resulted negatively not only on the total tea production, but on the quality of the product as well. In the year 2022, Sri Lanka recorded one of the lowest production levels of 285,877 million MT. When there is a lack of nutrients in the tea leaves, there is a direct correlation to the quality of the final product. Reduction of quality has yet another effect on the competitive advantage as Sri Lanka tea is world recon for its product quality. The industry is yet to recover from the doldrums of the irrational policy decision and as a county, Sri Lanka lost a colossal sum of foreign exchange at a very crucial time. Apart from plantation crops, the abrupt switch to organic fertilizer had an adverse effect on other crops including rice, vegetables, and export agriculture, causing hardships not only to the farmers but also to the people of Sri Lanka.

At the same time, the Sri Lankan government imposed a ban on the cultivation and importation of palm oil in 2020, reversing the government decision in 2014 to plant 20,000 hectares of land with the oil palm crop to achieve self-sufficiency in their vegetable oil requirement and thereby curtailing the drain of valuable foreign exchange earnings from the country.

In 2021, Sri Lanka's annual edible oil requirement was around 275,000 Metric Tons (MT) and the total edible oil production was 72,769Mt. Coconut oil production was 43,038 Mt which depends on annual coconut production. Crude palm oil and palm kernel oil production was 29,731. The balance 74% is sourced from the global palm oil giants Indonesia and Malaysia, which produce 80% of the world's palm oil.

As a country, Sri Lanka should not only request for donor assistance to feed its people but to learn how to be self-sufficient in food requirements. A classic example is the decision taken by the Indian government led by Mr. Narendra Modi. India being the highest populated country in the world, having produced many varieties of vegetable oil, has taken a decision to plant two million hectares of oil palm considering that palm oil is the most productive and efficient oil in the world. Sri Lanka, only with a little extent of around 11,000 hectares took an unscientific and destructive decision to not only ban cultivation but to remove the existing cultivation of 10% per year.

As a result of import restriction on Palm Oil, to substitute the requirement of edible oils, Sri Lanka imported coconut oil at a higher price than of the Palm Oil. On the other hand, if there had been sufficient production of Palm Oil, county would have exported coconut as a value-added product as there is a very good demand for coconut-based products. Sri Lanka serves only 8% of the of demand of desiccated coconut to the EU.

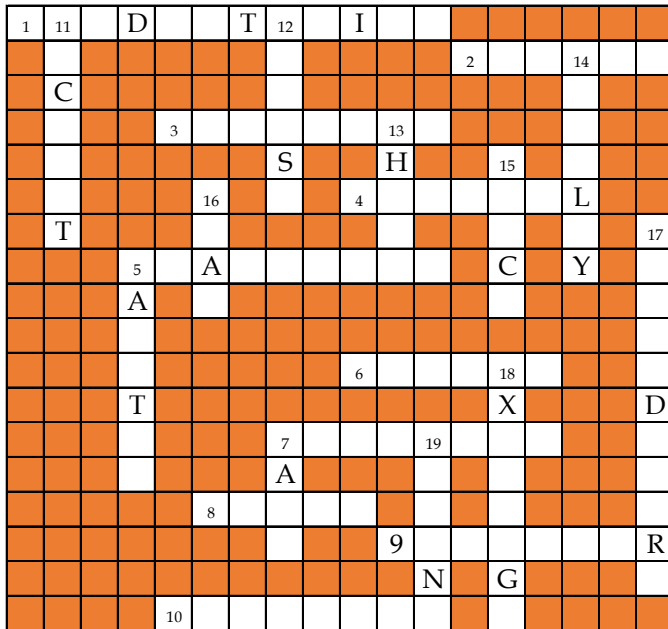
Imagine the significant savings from foreign exchange. If not for the above ban, the country would reap the benefits from the extent cultivated under Oil Palm and the concurrent creation and addition of value to the local economy, and economic emancipation in rural areas, that could be there by simply adopting more liberal and constructive policies towards Oil Palm.

Yet another concern is that the inconsistent policy framework on plantation agriculture that affects investor confidence and discourages investors and investing in the agriculture sector and impact on the donors who have already supported and continue to support the agriculture sector.

The country is in dire economic straits due to non-scientific, illogical decisions taken by successive governments, and that, henceforth, policy must be based on facts, logic, and scientific evidence.

It is not too late to liberalize the industry and put Sri Lanka on a sustainable path towards self-sufficiency of food requirement, and return to our solid roots of sustainable agriculture and prosperity through ingenuity and embrace of progress and policies driven by logical, rational, and scientific arguments, and not whims, fancies, and political grandstanding!

COMPLETE THE PUZZLE AND WIN!



Email the completed puzzle to membership@aatsl.lk on or before **31st August 2023**.

3 Members stand a chance to win a valuable prize.

Horizontal

01. The effectiveness of productive effort, especially in industry, as measured in terms of the rate of output per unit of input.
02. Take and use something belonging to someone else with the intention of returning it.
03. Payments (in decided intervals) regularly at a particular rate (as a return) for the use of money lent, or borrow for delaying the repayment of a debt.
04. Wealth in the form of money or other assets owned by a person or organization or available for a purpose such as starting a company or investing.
05. Provide a formal assurance, especially that certain conditions will be fulfilled relating to a product, service, or transaction.
06. A combination of two things, especially companies
07. A written or spoken agreement, especially one concerning employment, sales, or tenancy, that is intended to be enforceable by law.
08. An item of property owned by a person or company, regarded as having value and available to meet debts, commitments, or legacies.
09. The amount of money earned taken by a business in a particular period.
10. A sum of money paid regularly (remove or put periodically) by an entity to its shareholders out of its profits or reserves.

Vertical

05. An official publication containing lists of government appointments and promotions and other public notices.
07. Money in coins or notes, as distinct from cheques, money orders, or credit.
11. The action of receiving something or the fact of its being received.
12. Put (money) into financial schemes, shares, property, or a commercial venture with the expectation of achieving a profit /return.
13. A part or portion of a larger amount which is divided among a number of people, or to which a number of people contribute.
14. A sum paid to a patentee for the use of a patent or to an author or composer for each copy of a book sold or for each public performance of a work.
15. The goods or merchandise kept on the premises of a shop or warehouse and available for sale or distribution.
16. A thing that is borrowed, especially a sum of money that is expected to be paid back with interest.
17. Money or financial resources expended by a person, group, or government.
18. An act of giving one thing and receiving another (especially of the same kind) in return.
19. Pay back (money), typically to a customer who is not satisfied with goods or services bought.

Views of AAT members on “Better Economic Governance”

Transparency & accountability foster trust, while the rule of law ensures fairness. Combating corruption and investing in independent judiciaries are essential for a healthy economy. These will improve economic governance together with education

Chaminda Dheerawansa, LM3319

Increase transparency in economic policies, decision-making processes, and government financial management. Improve accountability systems to stop corruption and guarantee that public monies are spent properly and effectively.

Pathirana Hemage Roshan Prabuddha, LM7260

More focus should be placed on measures to increase GDP growth in order to reduce high debt /GDP ratios than on budgetary measures to reduce the annual deficit.

Ms. Anoshi Poornima Wanniarachchi, LM5937

Experienced and qualified people should be appointed as per the job roll. All unnecessary procedures should be cancelled. There want to be an independent organization to conduct all government development projects with Annual Audit.

Ms. W.A.K. Madushika, LM10655

Financial discipline both at the state level and individual level are crucial in achieving better economic governance in any country.

Ms. Sakalarachchige Dhanushka Pushpakumari Piyananda, LM5674

It should be with better public monetary and fiscal policy as well as people's attitude towards economic development. Getting experience from global developed countries and emerging economies towards development is vital.

Herath Mudiyansele Amila Madusanka Gunarathna, M1061

It is essential to have good human resources. Practical conditions of education should be expanded. The government should bring suitable investments to the country. Through that, it is possible to increase foreign exchange and reduce brain drain.

Mulle Gedara Dhanushka Aruna Bandara, M11030

In my view, Economic governance involves of the processes that support economic activity and economic transactions by protecting property rights & enforcing contracts

Mohamed Siraj Junaideen, LM13458

- “
1. Activate the internal control systems
 2. Explain the audit reports for public
 3. Implementation of the laws and regulations and to update the existing laws and regulation
 4. Improve the procurement system to reduce frauds
 5. Upgrade the political system”

A R M Udayanga Mihira Bandara Rathnayake, LM7706

“Strengthen Transparency and Accountability, Enhance Fiscal Discipline, Promote Good Governance in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), Strengthen Regulatory Frameworks, Invest in Education and Skill Development, Promote Trade and Investment, Strengthen Financial Sector Regulations, Foster Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Improve Infrastructure, Enhance Regional Collaboration.”

Ms. T.C.Wanigasundara, LM5944

- “
- * Making the most important institutions responsible for economic governance such as Central Bank and regulatory bodies, more strong and making sure that those institutions function with transparency, accountability & independence and empowering them.

- * Developing and implementing policies should prioritize evidence based strategies which leads to growth in the long run, social development & decrease the poverty.

- * Efficient public financial management system.

- * Create attractive investment opportunities.

- * Developing the human capital

- * Fair and unbiased political culture of Sri Lanka “

Selvaraj Paul Anton, LM8030

AAT Awards

NBEA 2022

AAT Sri Lanka secured the prestigious Gold Award in the Associations and Societies Sector at the National Business Excellence Awards 2022 conducted by the National Chamber of Commerce, for the 9th consecutive year.





CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT [CPD] FOR MEMBERS OF AAT

WHAT IS CPD?

CPD is the process by which members of various professions engage in their own development, maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skills and the development of personal qualities to enable professionals to execute their duties competently throughout the working life.

THE NEED FOR CPD

Professional accountants are continuously faced with the expectation of maintaining up-to-date knowledge and skills required to cope with the changes in technological advancements, management practices and adaptation to a worldwide economy.



APPLICABILITY

The CPD scheme is mandatory for all members of AAT Sri Lanka at any membership level. Life members are also required to comply with the CPD requirement.



MINIMUM CPD REQUIREMENT

Members are required to comply with both the annual and the three year rolling requirement.

	ANNUAL MINIMUM REQUIREMENT	3 - YEAR ROLLING REQUIREMENT
Verifiable	10	60
Non-Verifiable	10	60
Total	20	120

Find more details

www.aatsl.lk > Member > Member Development

<https://www.aatsl.lk/Images/pdf/cpd-booklet.pdf>



FOR MORE INFO
0112 559 669



E-MAIL
cpd@aatsl.lk
registration@aatsl.lk



ADDRESS
AAT Centre, No.540,
Ven. Muruththettuwa
Ananda Nahimi Mw,
Narahenpita, Colombo 05.



Code of Ethics is mandatory for all Members of AAT Sri Lanka to observe in respect of the performance of professional services in Sri Lanka. Members of AAT Sri Lanka are expected to comply with the ethical requirements issued by AAT Sri Lanka and a member who fails to do so may be subject to an investigation in to the members' conduct by the Audit, Compliance, Professional Ethics & Risk Management Committee and the Governing Council of the AAT Sri Lanka. The revised Code of Ethics in accordance with IFAC Code of Ethics 2021 will be accessible by the members soon.

Monthly webinars / seminars



Objective of the Public Seminars & Professional Development Committee is to organize seminars/webinars facilitating members to earn CPDs as well as for the betterment of members and even any other interested parties to gain more sensibility about the society and for the self-wellbeing. Initial webinars of the year were held under the topics of Accountants' Role in a Digital World, Tax Amendments, Current Economic Status, Healthier Life with Ayurvedic Medicine and also about the Social Governance. We invite our members to join the future seminars/webinars and upgrade their membership to next level.

LIVE VIRTUAL SEMINAR

PRODUCTION OF NATURE: SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES TO THE ENVIRONMENT

PRESENTER: Janaka Jayasinghe, PhD
Professor of Social Accounting, Institute of Open Learning, University of Kelaniya

MODERATOR: Roshni Pathiraja
Assistant Director, Department of Environmental Protection

10TH MAY 2023
3.30PM - 4.30PM

ZOOM INVESTMENT MENTOR FREE ENGLISH

ORGANISED BY PUBLIC SEMINARS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
FOR MORE INFO: harshani@aat.lk

LIVE VIRTUAL SEMINAR

AN OVERVIEW OF CURRENT ECONOMIC STATUS & STOCK MARKET

CONTENT:

- Current economic condition
- Exchange rate behaviour
- Interest rate expectation in next 12 months
- Stock Market Updates

PRESENTER: Mr. Anushan Sriwansa
Managing Director - CIB, Director Head Exchange and CIB

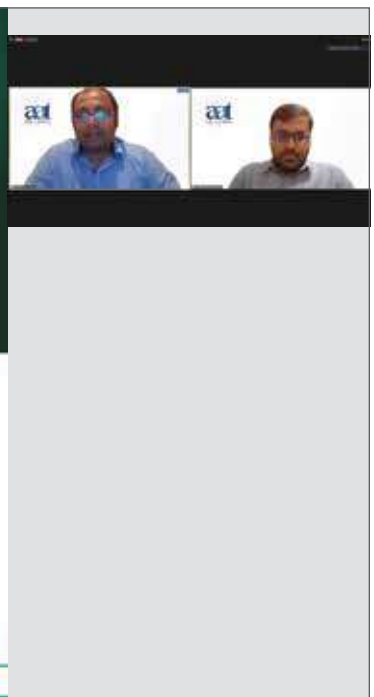
MODERATOR: Mr. Milan Chandra
Member of Council, Director, Public Sector, Securities and Exchange Commission

CPD - 1 Credit

18TH MARCH 2023
3.30PM - 5.30PM

ZOOM INVESTMENT MENTOR FREE ENGLISH

ORGANISED BY PUBLIC SEMINARS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
FOR MORE INFO: harshani@aat.lk



LIVE VIRTUAL SEMINAR

LATEST TAX AMENDMENTS

PRESENTER: Ms. Priyanka Dissanayake
Senior Deputy Commissioner - Tax Policy & Legislation, Department of Inland Revenue

MODERATOR: Mr. Prasad Hewanandagalle
Head of Tax, Compliance & Treasury, Auditor General of Companies

05TH JUNE 2023
3.00PM - 4.30PM

ZOOM INVESTMENT MENTOR BILINGUAL

ORGANISED BY PUBLIC SEMINARS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
FOR MORE INFO: harshani@aat.lk



InSearch Monthly Bulletins



AAT Members' Cricket Tournament 2023



AAT Members' annual cricket tournament which was organized by AAT Members' Welfare Committee took place on Saturday the 10th June 2023 at Chandra Silva Ground, Obeysekarapura, Rajagiriya.

11 member teams have registered to compete in the competition and Team **Online Accounting.lk** led by Mohamed Farhan was able to win the competition and secure the **Championship for 2023**. Team AAT Legends became the Runners Up. In addition to the 11 AAT member teams competed, a friendly match between the members of the AAT Sri Lanka and CA Sri Lanka Governing Councils added glamour to the event.

Members of AAT Sri Lanka secured the individual titles as shown below.

- **Best Batsman** : Dhanushka Sanjeewa – AAT Legends
- **Best Bowler** : Harsha Indika – Online Accounting.lk
- **Woman of the series** : Dilki Saumya - Online Accounting.lk
- **Man of the Series** : Mohamed Farhan - Online Accounting.lk



AAT New Year Celebrations 2023

AAT New Year Celebrations 2023 organized by the Members' Welfare Committee was held on 29th April 2023 at APE GAMA, Battaramulla. AAT active members along with their immediate family members joined and had a wonderful time spent together while taking part in many games organized. President and members of the AAT Governing Council also joined the event.



AAT Sri Lanka Members' Poson Bathi Gee Competition 2023



On May 31, 2023, the AAT Members' Welfare Committee organized the AAT Members' Poson Bathi Gee Competition 2023 at the AAT Auditorium.

The competition was held under both Individual and Group categories. 14 individuals and 3 groups contested in this competition, all of whom showed excellent singing skills. Scoring the highest marks, Ms. Pooja Gunasekara took home the cash prize in the individual category as the winner. Group category was won by Pooja's Group which sang "Buddhanubhawena". The winner in the group category also won a cash prize.



Initiations to go forward



Public Sector Co-ordination Committee

We are pleased to inform you that the Public Sector Coordination Committee of AAT Sri Lanka has been working closely with the Public Sector Organizations at various dimensions in awarding recognition for AAT members and Passed Finalists. In an attempt of getting recognition, the Public Sector Coordination Committee had a discussion with the Commissioner General of Co-operative Development, Mr. Keerthi Gamage on 24th July 2022 at 9.30 pm at the Office of the Commissioner of Co-operative Societies at Department of Co-operative Development. The President of AAT Sri Lanka, Mr. Naleen De Silva, the Chief Executive Officer of AAT Sri Lanka, Mr. Tishanga Kumarasinghe, The Chairman of the Public Sector Coordination Committee and a member of the Governing Council of AAT Sri Lanka, Mr. P. D. Wasantha Kumara, a member of the Public Sector Co-ordination Committee, Mr. J.R.K. Prabhath and the Secretary of the Public Sector Co-ordination Committee have participated at this discussion. The Deputy Commissioner Mr. G.G. Dayasumana and other representatives from Department of Cooperative Development were also engaged in this occasion.


The main objective of this discussion was to request the Commissioner General to consider and prioritize AAT members and Passed Finalists in their recruitments while including AAT qualification in their Scheme of Recruitment (SOR). The mutual benefits that both the institutes can obtain were also discussed and as the pioneering middle level accountancy qualification in Sri Lanka, how AAT Sri Lanka can contribute to develop the accounting and financial operations of Public Sector Organizations in Sri Lanka through its members were also discussed in detail.

AAT Business School

AAT Business School is a Strategic Business Unit (SBU) operating under the Association of Accounting Technicians of Sri Lanka, committed towards enhancing competencies, recognition and broadening the career pathway of AAT Students, Passed Finalists, Members and other professionals for those seeking individual development. Resultantly a

number of unique programs aimed at developing skills have been initiated and successfully carried out over the years. All the courses are designed and conducted by experts in the respective fields with continuous evaluation and modification of the curriculum in regular intervals.

Taxation

Course in Taxation	03 Months	June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone interested to improve knowledge on Taxation. • Provides in-depth knowledge of the SL Tax system. • Sessions include VAT, SVAT, Income Tax, RAMIS, Investment income etc. • AAT Members can claim 10 CPD upon successful completion. <p style="text-align: center;">Course in Taxation  Diploma in Applied Taxation</p>
Diploma in Applied Taxation (D-Tax)	06 Months	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAT PF, Members, Accounting professionals are eligible. • Enables to deal with routine taxation issues encountered when running any business including filing tax returns and understanding liabilities and reliefs. • Gain practical understanding of tax administration system, Ecommerce, Digital taxation, Compliance management, corporate governance & Ethics. • AAT Members can claim 15 CPD upon successful completion.


IT Courses

Microsoft Office Applications	4 Months (16 Weeks)	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone interested to get foundation in MS Office. • Topics covered are Introduction to Windows, MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint, MS Access, Internet and Email. • AAT Members can claim 10 CPD upon successful completion.
Computerized Accounting	03 Months (12 Weeks)	Consecutively each month.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide "hands-on-training" of Accounting Applications in SMEs (Tally ERP, QuickBooks & MYOB). • AAT Members can claim 10 CPD upon successful completion.
Advanced MS Excel for Data Analysis.	08 Hours	Consecutively each month.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers 40 topics within MS Excel demonstrating intrinsic features, shortcuts the package offers for the analyzing data. • AAT Members can claim 03 CPD upon successful completion.

People & Leadership Skills Workshop

People Leadership & Skills	2 Day Program.	Consecutively each month.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAT Passed finalists are eligible. • Compulsory workshop in order to apply AAT Membership. • Build crucial work floor competencies of learners. • Social skills, Service skills, Presentation skills, Team working skills and Leadership skills are covered.
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Accounting & Finance

PROGRAMME	DURATION	INTAKES	HIGHLIGHTS
Diploma in Accounting & Finance (DAF)	01 Year (2 Semesters)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with 3 simple passes at AL are eligible. Provides an in-depth knowledge about accounting theories and practices underlying major accounting issues. AAT Members can claim 15 CPD upon successful completion. <p>Diploma  Higher Diploma in Accounting and Finance</p>

Higher Diploma in Accounting & Finance (HDAF)

Only Higher Diploma in Accounting & Finance that is equivalent to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 06 which is bound to provide a sound theoretical knowledge in Accounting, Finance and Management with requisite skills.

Higher Diploma  **Final Stage of Degree**

Objectives of HDAF

- This equips learners to combine practical and theoretical knowledge while developing awareness of emerging trends in financial accounting.
- Improve the critical thinking ability, communication, negotiation, analytical and problem-solving skills in professional and business contexts.
- Provides opportunities for progression in the career and higher education qualifications.
- Focus on executive development and upliftment of our members to become aspiring leaders.
- Provides maximum flexibility to those wishing to pursue career in accounting & finance.

Eligibility Criteria

- Students who have completed the AAT Final level/ AAT Members
- Students who have completed Diploma in Accounting & Finance (1st year)
- Any other qualification acceptable to the Study Board of Business School

Course Duration; 01 Year (02 Semesters)	Investment; LKR 62,500 (Per semester) * Flexibility Payment Methods Available.
Commencement; October 2023	Lecture Mode; Hybrid Mode (Online lectures & physical lectures)
Lecture Schedule; Sundays (8.30 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.)	Claim 15 CPD upon successful completion

Contact AAT Business School -0112559670 / 0768241162 | infobs@aatsl.lk

AATSL Toastmasters Club Excels with Multiple Awards in the Toastmasters year 2022/2023.

Toastmasters International is a global organization that empowers individuals to develop their communication and leadership skills. Amidst many successful clubs around the world, the AATSL Toastmasters Club has taken the spotlight during the 2022/2023 season, securing several prestigious awards. These accolades showcase the Club's commitment to excellence, and its dedication to providing its members with an enriching and supportive environment for growth. Let's explore the achievements that have propelled the AATSL Toastmasters Club to the forefront of success.

Smedley Award:

One of the most notable awards received by the AATSL Toastmasters Club is the coveted Smedley Award. This recognition demonstrates the club's exceptional efforts in fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members. Club added 5 new, dual or reinstated members with a join date between 1st August and 30th September. The AATSL Toastmasters Club has worked diligently to create a safe space where individuals from diverse backgrounds can improve their public speaking and leadership skills, breaking barriers and fostering understanding among its members.

President Distinguished Club:

Securing the President Distinguished Club award is a testament to the club's leadership team's commitment to success and growth. Led by a dedicated president, the AATSL Toastmasters Club has demonstrated exemplary performance across various areas, including education, membership, and meeting quality. This accolade reflects the Club's ability to consistently provide its members with valuable experiences that aid in their personal and professional development.

8-80 Publication Award:

Another remarkable achievement for the AATSL Toastmasters Club is the 8-80 Award. This award is presented to the clubs that attract at least 8 new members and retain 80% of their existing club members during the renewal cycle, before the 31st of March.

Golden Club Award:

The Golden Club Award is a significant accomplishment that distinguishes the AATSL Toastmasters Club as an exceptional organization. This accolade recognizes the club's substantial growth in membership, indicating its appeal to individuals seeking personal and professional development opportunities. The AATSL Toastmasters Club's focus on creating a positive,



Sunil Wanigabadu
Immediate Past President, AAT Toastmasters Club

supportive, and empowering environment has undoubtedly contributed to its ability to attract and retain members.

Toastmasters Ambassador Award

Mr. Sunil Wanigabadu was awarded the prestigious Toastmasters Ambassador title during the year 2022-2023. This accolade serves as a testament to his commitment to the goals and values of Toastmasters International. Under his guidance, the club has organized numerous educational workshops, seminars, and events that focus on honing public speaking skills, refining leadership abilities, and fostering personal growth.

Dear Newcomers,

We extend a warm welcome to you as you consider joining the award-winning AATSL Toastmasters Club. As a recipient of several prestigious awards during the 2022-2023 season, we are excited to share our enriching and supportive environment with you. Here, you will find a community dedicated to helping you develop your communication and leadership skills and supporting your personal and professional growth.

When you join the AATSL Toastmasters Club, you will be welcomed with open arms by a diverse group of individuals who share a common goal, to improve their speaking abilities, enhance their leadership skills, and gain the confidence to excel in various aspects of life. Our club offers a wealth of resources, educational workshops, and mentoring opportunities to support you on your journey.

Here, you will find guidance from experienced members like DTM Gunasekara Rathnayaka, Charter President DTM Lester Aponso, District Finance Manager (2022-2023) DTM Jeewana Pradeep, District Finance Manager (2023-2024) DTM Babukumar, Area director and former President TM S. Elangoven, and other six distinguished Toastmasters and TM Sunil Wanigabadu and Executive Committee members, who lead the club with enthusiasm and expertise.

As a member of the AATSL Toastmasters Club, you will have the opportunity to participate in engaging meetings, where you can deliver prepared speeches, practice impromptu

speaking, and receive constructive feedback from experienced evaluators. Through regular participation, you will become a more confident and effective communicator, honing your skills in public speaking, active listening, and effective leadership.

Furthermore, the award-winning publications and educational materials that our club produces will serve as valuable resources for your growth. These publications aim to inspire, educate, and motivate individuals, providing practical tips, strategies, and insights on communication skills, leadership development, and personal growth.

Joining the AATSL Toastmasters Club means becoming part of a supportive community that is invested in your success. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced public speaker, we believe that everyone has the potential to improve and succeed. We are eager to welcome you, support you, and witness your growth as you embark on this transformative journey with us.

Don't miss the opportunity to be part of an award-winning club that offers a conducive environment for growth, learning, and personal development. Join the AATSL Toastmasters Club and unleash your potential!



ARE YOU LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES IN TRAINING / EMPLOYMENT / CAREER ADVANCEMENT?

**DISCOVER
YOUR DREAM**

job

JOB STATUS

Accounts/Finance Intern

Accounts/Audit Trainees

Accounts / Finance
Associates

Accounts/Finance
Executives

Accounts Assistants

Assistant Accountants

Accountants

“Register with AAT Job Bank”

AAT Job Bank is a fully fledged platform administered and operated by AAT Sri Lanka to fulfill the training / employment needs of AAT registered Students, Passed Finalists and Members. If you are currently looking for employment opportunities, Register with AAT Job Bank and it is **COMPLETELY FREE!!!**

Click below link to get yourself registered now with AAT Job Bank.

<https://www.aatsl.lk/index.php/en/training/aat-job-bank>

For further details,
Feel free to contact us via jobbank@aatsl.lk or
on 0112 559 669 (Ext: 211)



AAT SRI LANKA NENA WARUNA SCHOLARSHIPS WERE AWARDED TO 150 STUDENTS ACROSS THE ISLAND

AAT Sri Lanka has introduced this Scholarship Program (AAT Nena Waruna Scholarship Program) for the needy yet high performing students in the country in collaboration with the Ministry of Education as one of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative of the association under two schemes namely Financial Scholarship and Non-Financial Scholarship.

The objectives of the scholarship program were to

- Provide financial support to high performing students sitting for A/Ls in Commerce stream with financial difficulties in order to help them to meet their essential expenses and thereby enable them to achieve better results.
- Contribute to uplift the social and economic status of high performing students who are coming from low-income earning families.
- Encourage and facilitate high performing students sitting for A/Ls in Commerce stream to obtain professional Accounting qualification at an early age while pursuing their secondary education.

The selection of Scholarship recipients was done independently by Ministry of Education with the involvement of provincial education directors. High performing students at 2020 GCE OL examination were selected based on a comprehensive marking criteria.

The 50 Financial scholarships each worth 40,000/- (Two students per district) selected by the Education Ministry were awarded with the aim of offering financial assistance to the students who sit for G.C.E Advanced Level in Commerce stream.

The 100 Non-Financial scholarships (4 students from each district) enable students to complete AAT qualification at an early age and become middle level Accountants. This scholarship consists of the waiver of all relevant fees payable to AAT Sri Lanka mentioned below subject to maximum of two (2) years.

The Scholarship awarding ceremony was conducted on 02.03.2023 at AAT Auditorium in a grand manner. Ms. Neelamani Malawiaarachchi, Director National Schools and Business & Commerce Division, Ministry of Education graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and Mr. A.A.D Bhatthiya Attauda, Chairman / Managing Director of Janaka Printers (Private) Limited joined as the guest of honor. In addition, Mr Naleen De Silva, President of AAT Sri Lanka, Mr Tishanga Kumarasinghe, CEO of AAT Sri Lanka and members of the Governing Council of AAT and parents and well-wishers of the Scholarship recipients attended the function.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2023

RESERVE THE DATE



On 19th & 20th September 2023 at Hotel Galadari.

Phone 0112559669 Fax:0112559299 Email : conference@aatsl.lk Web : www.aatsl.lk

Get ready to enjoy...



Members Get Together 2023



ON **SUNDAY 15TH OCT. 2023**

SAVE THE DATE

CONTACT FOR FURTHER DETAILS:
Niranjan - 0112 559 669 (Ext : 322)
E-mail - registration@aatsl.lk

ORGANIZED BY THE MEMBERS' WELFARE COMMITTEE OF AAT SRI LANKA

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A MEMBERSHIP UPGRADE?

Elevate your recognition
WITH A HIGHER LEVEL OF MEMBERSHIP BY
upgrading from the
current membership level

MAAT → SAT

OPTION - I [REGULAR METHOD]

05 years' Executive Level Accounting Experience after obtaining MAAT + **120 CPDs** in every 3 rolling years

OR

OPTION - II [DIRECT METHOD]

Passed Finalists (with case study) of **CA Sri Lanka / CIMA (UK) / ACCA (UK)** with **03 years'** relevant Practical Training / Experience.

SAT → FMAAT

OPTION - I [REGULAR METHOD]

05 years' Managerial Level Experience after obtaining SAT + **120 CPDs** in every 3 rolling years

OR

OPTION - II [DIRECT METHOD]

Membership of **CA Sri Lanka / CIMA (UK) / ACCA (UK)** with **03 years'** **post-qualifying** managerial experience.

OR

Passed Finalists of AAT having a **Professorship / Doctorate** and a finance background



www.aatsl.lk

Please visit www.aatsl.lk **Member** **How-to-register**

Clarifications **Call** : 0762 559 669 | 0112 559 669

E-mail : registration@aatsl.lk | membership@aatsl.lk

ASSOCIATION OF ACCOUNTING TECHNICIANS OF SRI LANKA

AAT Centre, No.540, Ven. Muruththettuwe Ananda Nahimi Mw.,
Narahenpita, Colombo 05.

A SPECIAL SCHEME

TO UPGRADE FROM MAAT TO SAT AND SAT TO FMAAT

This scheme facilitates the members who have been in one and the same membership category for a long period of time whose CPD compliance has been little below than the prescribed credits as per existing CPD criteria (Ex: 120 CPDs under any membership category). However, complete waiver of CPD is not accommodated under this special scheme.



SPECIAL UPGRADING CRITERIA

1. Eligibility criteria -From MAAT to SAT

The member should possess 10 years of continued active membership after obtaining MAAT till now. Also, he/she should have completed a continuous 10-year work period while having a minimum of 5 years in the executive level / similar capacity or higher after admission to MAAT.

2. Eligibility criteria -From SAT to FMAAT

The member should possess 10 years of continued active membership after obtaining SAT till currently. Also, he should have completed a continuous 10-year work period in the managerial level or a similar capacity based on the type of organization at the time of applying for FMAAT.

CONDITIONS

- The scheme is not an automatic entitlement but is based on application with documentary proof and the payment by the eligible members. General membership application has to be completed. <https://www.aatsl.lk/images/pdf/membership-information/aat-membership-application-2019.pdf>
- Members who wish to avail of this special scheme should apply for life membership upgrading (unless they are life members currently).
- Application has to be accompanied by a CV/Resume demonstrating the relevant experience at each level of work capacity.
- A VIVA (a presentation) will be required.
- The member is required to produce a service letter/s for the applicable number of years of service as specified under the scheme as proof of his experience.
- The Member is supposed to adhere to the CPD requirement applicable for all the members of AAT. However, there will be some concessions / relaxations on the number of CPDs required or the way their CPD is evaluated for their upgrade under this special scheme. A self-declaration of the CPDs earned along with the contribution made towards the institute and the fraternity should also be produced.

The decision to upgrade will be based on the recommendation of the Membership Committee and the approval of the Council.

Please contact the Membership Division for clarifications
if any via harshani@aatsl.lk / membership@aatsl.lk or on 0112 559 669 / 0762 559 669.

Achievers' Meet 2023

Achievers' Meet 2023 organized by the Membership Committee of AAT Sri Lanka was held on 1st of April 2023 from 2.00pm to 7.00pm at the Excel World, Colombo 10. The event was exclusively for the Achievers Club members and held free of charge.

Achievers Club has been formed with the purpose of building a closer rapport with the Passed Finalists of AAT Sri Lanka until they become professional members of AAT.



The event was illuminated by the participation of **actress Sheril Dekker** and the singer **Ruwan Hettiarachchi** who spent many hours with the audience entertaining and interacting with them making it really enjoyable. Award Winning and well-known **Motivational Speaker, Bathiya Arthanayaka** also joined in lifting the morale of the audience and adding an enormous value to the programme.

It was an exciting moment for the Achievers who have completed a professional accounting qualification to showcase their singing talents at the event through the Talent show.

A talent show, opportunity to win Mr and Ms Achiever titles, Bowling game, free gaming tokens as well as valuable gifts were among the benefits offered for the participants at the Achievers' Meet.



Passed Finalists' Certificate Awarding Ceremony - July 2022 Examination



AAT Sri Lanka, the pioneer in producing middle level accounting professionals to the country, held its Passed Finalists' certificate awarding ceremony on 10th January 2023 at the Main Conference and Concert Hall of the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), Colombo for the students who have successfully completed the final level of the AAT Examinations of July 2022.

1,610 students spread across all districts in the island who have completed the Final Examinations in July 2022 were invited to receive their Passed Finalist certificate at this graceful ceremony with a guest each to witness their achievement and share the joy of this memorable moment. Prof. Gunapala Nanayakkara, **Advisor on Education to Hon. Minister of Education**, Ministry of Education graced the occasion as the Chief Guest for the morning session while Mr Sanjaya Bandara, President of CA Sri Lanka added value to the occasion as the Guest of Honour. **Mr. Rohitha Bandara, Director Finance, Hayleys Fabric PLC also joined as a special guest.**

Chief Guest for the evening session of the ceremony was Mr Sanjaya Bandara, President of CA Sri Lanka while **Mr. Dinusha Dassanayake, General Manager, State Pharmaceuticals Corporation joined as the Guest of Honour.** President of AAT Sri Lanka Mr. Naleen De Silva, members of the Governing Council, CEO of AAT, parents and well-wishers of the Passed Finalists also attended the function.

In addition to the valued insights shared by the Chief Guests and the Guests of Honour, Passed Finalists were provided with comprehensive guidance on their way forward with AAT specially in completing the training requirements, being prepared for a job, obtaining membership and widening their academic journey with the AAT Business School through the presentations and addresses delivered by the other speakers.



AAT Sri Lanka Students' Meet 2023

AAT Sri Lanka was proud to host AAT Students' Meet 2023 for the active students of AAT. The most looked forward to fun and excitement filled students' get-together took place on 24th June 2023 from 10.00am to 4.00pm at the Excel World Entertainment Park, Colombo 10.

The event offered unmatched opportunities for the young students of AAT to explore, most of which were given free of charge.

Students' Meet was illuminated by the participation of the world-famous personality Mr. Farveez Mahroof, the former cricketer and the cricket broadcaster. Also, Mr. Sugeeshwara Sirimanna, a CEO, Management Consultant, a Corporate Trainer joined as a motivational speaker. Mr. Tishanga Kumarasinghe, CEO of AAT and staff of AAT also joined and made the event extremely fruitful for the participants.

Grabbing a lot of attraction, many students presented themselves to win the **Mr and Ms AAT titles**. Winners walked away with valuable gift vouchers as well.

Few of the salient features highlighted at the event were the team spirit, fun filled moments and happy faces throughout the event which are in testament to how much the students valued this opportunity to network with their peers, learn, have fun, win multiple gifts and gather a memorable day to cherish throughout their AAT journey and beyond.

The most looked forward to **BOWLING GAME** was held at the latter part of the event joining all AAT students most of whom were exposed to their first ever bowling experience at this event. The winning teams were delighted with the prizes offered for them in addition to the great Bowling experience they had. The students were also given **free gaming tokens** to enjoy the gaming experience too. Adding to an array of prizes given away were the valuable gift vouchers offered for **5 winners of the raffle draw**. Additionally, every participant walked away with a **goodie pack** offered by the CBL group.



AAT Digital Awrudu Kumara & Kumariya for active students



AAT Sri Lanka successfully conducted the Digital Awrudu Kumara and Kumariya competition for the third time for the active students of AAT. There were more than 200 active students who showed great interest in contesting in this digital competition representing different areas in the country. As per the set guidelines, the winners were selected based on the highest number of likes received for their photographs. Among many contestants, Mr Nipun Waththuhewa was

selected as the AAT Digital Awrudu Kumara while Ms Sineli Priyasha was crowned as the AAT Digital Awrudu Kumariya. Both of them have received many numbers of likes for their beautiful photos.



Participation in Island wide Educational Exhibitions

AAT Sri Lanka successfully participated in large scale exhibitions during last few months which have been very productive. Among the exhibitions participated were Future Minds at Kandy City Centre, EduFirst Educational Fair at Kandy City Centre, Wayamba EXPO Education Exhibition in Kurunegala, Education Srilanka Exhibition at Gampaha, Future Minds Exhibition at BMICH, Galle Education Fair and Jaffna Education Fair simultaneously.

Participating at such exhibitions is mandatory to maintain our presence at the education industry as well as to attract new students and to serve existing students directly. Despite the challenging situation in the country, there were many participants at all exhibitions proving that there is a great demand for the local and foreign education.



Enhancing the level of knowledge of school students through seminars



AAT Sri Lanka conducts seminars for O/L and A/L students to increase their level of knowledge. Seminars were conducted physically at many schools by the AAT Marketing Team while educating the students on the importance of a professional qualification and their future path.

Given the challenging situation affected by Covid-19 pandemic in the country, we were unable to conduct physical seminars

in the past few years. However, with the country getting back to normalcy, we have been able to conduct over 57 school seminars in Sinhala, English and Tamil medium covering many districts in the island.



Teacher Training Programs

AAT Sri Lanka was able to conduct 10 teacher training programs for the teachers who are teaching A/L subjects in schools. The programs have trained over 700 teachers who enthusiastically participated in these sessions. All the teacher training programs are conducted under the theme

“ගුරු නැණ සවිඳ” and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. These teacher training programs were held covering Colombo, Gampaha, Kaluthara, Galle, Matara, Rathnapura, Dehiattakandiya and Jaffna areas.



AAT Social Media Strength



AAT Sri Lanka is active in many social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok and WhatsApp. We were able to increase our follower base by 3,000 in Instagram page and currently there are over 11,100 followers on Instagram. Also, we were able to reach 21,700 subscribers in our YouTube channel and hit over 1,156,980 total views up to now. Further, we have nearly 11,600 followers in LinkedIn and 7,060 followers in TikTok too.

As a result of having our presence in multiple social media accounts, we were able to gain a large follower base of students and other stakeholders. AAT Sri Lanka official pages are active in all platforms and offers 24 hour help desk by replying to messages and comments. Also, we communicate

via three official WhatsApp numbers so that students can get information anytime in any preferred language. Further, we use WhatsApp business for Facebook to send messages and we have received over 25,000 inquiries via WhatsApp during the year.

Apart from the above achievements, we were able to hit 116k Followers on our official Facebook page in June 2023. It is a remarkable achievement as the pioneer professional education institute in the digital market in Sri Lanka. We always target the potential students and as per the result of our Facebook insights, it is proven that AAT Sri Lanka page has a massive reach and an engagement with the audience.

A Virtual Day for newly registering AAT students

As a recognized educational institute which is extremely popular among O/L students, we always take innovative steps to address students and their needs. "Virtual day 2023" was yet another initiative taken to connect with our students for new registrations. This was promoted through social media and grabbed a lot of attention.

We invited new students to talk to us directly and get all their matters regarding new registration of AAT resolved. It was remarkable that we received over 200 direct inquiries in a single day and we were able to cater them via Zoom/WhatsApp video and YouTube live.

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AAT Top Achievers awarded as Prize Winners



The students who performed exceptionally well at January 2023 AAT examination were awarded by AAT Sri Lanka at a special prize winners' award ceremony held at AAT Auditorium on 01st June 2023. 13 subject prizes and 9 merit prizes were awarded to top achievers Island wide and most of them were able to complete the AAT qualification sitting for their G.C.E A/L examination.

Ms. Neelamani Malawiarachchi, Additional Secretary to the Ministry of Education graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. In addition, Mr Naleen De Silva, President of AAT Sri Lanka, Mr Tishanga Kumarasinghe, CEO of AAT Sri Lanka and members of the Governing Council of AAT, Donors and parents and well-wishers of the prize winners attended the function.

These students were the highest marks achievers of the examination held in January 2023, and there were few students who got awarded for several prizes. All the students were awarded by a certificate and a special appreciation gift offered by the sponsors. The AAT professional qualification

consists of a comprehensive curriculum aimed at employment. The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission has recognized that the AAT qualification is equivalent to NVQ (5) level (diploma level). Furthermore, AAT qualifications are embraced by top performing students across the country, with 50% of the top 100 rankers in the G.C.E Advanced Level examination being AAT students.





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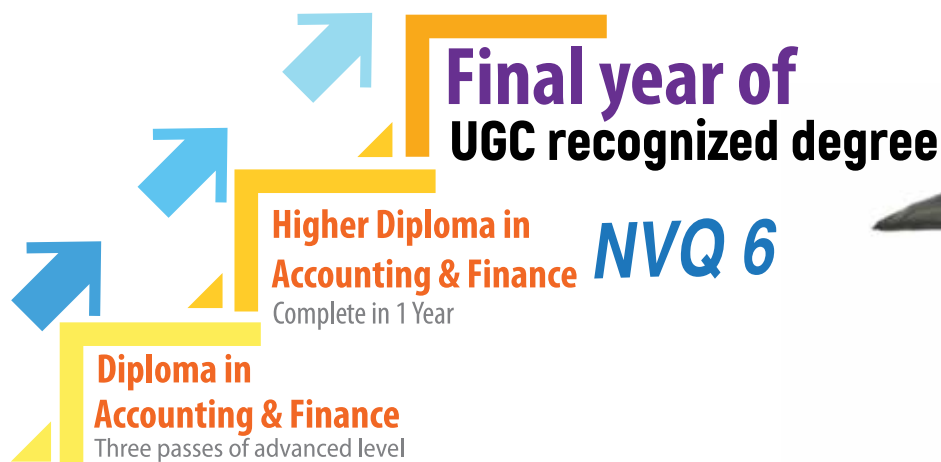
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