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THE ORGANISATION OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF SRI LANKA

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OPA NEWS

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CONTENT

PAGE

Editors' Note	02
President's Message	03
Secretary's Message	04
Brainstorming Session on Food Exoprt for Economic Growth	05
Seminar on Railway Systems	06
Post Budget Seminar on Taxation	07
Brainstorming Session on Construction Industry	08
Seminar on Innovate Sri Lanka: Empowering Entrepreneurs	09
Brainstorming Session on Rail Freight Stations	10
Seminar on The Rule of Law and the Protection of Individual Human Rights	11
50 th Anniversary Celebration Activities	
All Night Pirith Pinkama & Dana at OPA Premises	12
Hindu Religious Programme at Mānika Vinayāgar Kovil	16
Chtholic Service at All Saints Church in Borella	17
Muslim Religious Program at Davatagaha Jummah Masjid	18
Launch of 50 th Anniversary Logo & Lapel Pin	19
Issuing of First News Letter of the OPAfor the Year 2024-2025	19
Special Achievement of the President of the OPA	20
Sinhala & Hindu New Year Celebrations of the OPA	21
50 th Anniversary Celebrations at the OPA Secretariat	22
50 th Anniversary Celebrations of the OPA at BMICH	23
Memorial Oration of Dr. Nath Amarakone by Justice Sobhitha Rajakaruna, Judge of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka	30
Activites at National Level - OPA Presents Budget Proposals to Treasury Secretary	34
Network and Engagement Activities with Member Associations of the OPA	
SLIM Kantar People's Awards	35
CMA Budget Highlights 2025	35
World Oral Health Day Event	36
Annual Symposium of the Institute of Town Planners Sri Lanka	36
Stakeholder Gathering for the National Engineering Conference 2025 of IESL	36

EDITOR'S NOTE



As Chairman of the OPA Publications Committee, it is with immense pride and heartfelt joy that I extend my warmest congratulations to the Organization of Professionals Association of Sri Lanka (OPA) on the momentous occasion of its fiftieth anniversary in 2025. This golden jubilee is not merely a celebration of five decades; it is a testament to the enduring vision, unwavering dedication, and collective strength of Sri Lanka's professional community.

Fifty years ago, the OPA was founded on the noble premise of unifying professionals from diverse fields, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and advocating for the highest standards of professional ethics and practice. Looking back, it is clear that this foundation was laid with foresight and conviction. Over the past half-century, the OPA has grown from strength to strength, evolving into a respected and influential voice in national development.

Our journey has been marked by countless achievements. The OPA has consistently championed critical issues, contributing significantly to policy discussions, promoting continuous professional development, and upholding the integrity of various professions. We have provided a vital platform for knowledge sharing, mentorship, and networking, empowering generations of professionals to excel in their respective domains and contribute meaningfully to society.

This anniversary provides an opportune moment to reflect on the challenges we have overcome and the successes we have celebrated together. It is a time to acknowledge the tireless efforts of all past presidents, executive committees, and members who have dedicated their time and expertise to building the OPA into the vibrant organization it is today. Their commitment has been instrumental in shaping the professional landscape of Sri Lanka.

As we look to the future, the OPA remains more relevant than ever. In an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world, the need for ethical, competent, and socially responsible professionals is paramount. The OPA is uniquely positioned to continue leading the way, adapting to new challenges, embracing innovation, and fostering a culture of excellence.

On behalf of the OPA Publications Committee, I reiterate our profound gratitude to all who have been part of this remarkable journey. May the next fifty years be even more fruitful, as the OPA continues to inspire, connect, and elevate the professional community of Sri Lanka.

Dr. R.D. Ananda Tissa
Editor - OPA

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



The past few months have been truly momentous as we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the OPA with a series of special events, culminating in our main commemoration ceremony on the 29th of May, 2025.

During the month of March, a variety of religious programmes were organized to give thanks for our remarkable journey over the past five decades and to invoke blessings for continued protection, success, and prosperity in the years to come. Our religious activities began with an all-night pirith ceremony by Rev. Buddhist priests of Vajirarama Temple of Bambalapitiya on 14th March. After the Pirith Pinkama, the Heel Dana (Alms-giving) Pinkama was held at the OPA in the morning on 15th March for 50 Buddhist monks with the participation of Office Bearers, Past Presidents, members of the Executive Council and General Forum and the OPA Staff.

The key officer bearers and I, along with members and staff of the OPA also took part in a special Muslim religious program at the Davatagaha Jummah Masjid on the 18th of March, a Catholic service at All Saints Church in Borella on the 21st of March, and a Hindu religious programme at the Sri Mānika Vinayāgar Temple on the 25th of March.

The main commemoration celebrations marking the 50th anniversary were held at a formal ceremony at the BMICH, attended by Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya,

Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The inaugural Dr. Nath Amarakone Memorial Oration was delivered by Hon. Justice Sobitha Rajakaruna, Justice of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, while the keynote speech was given by Hon. Karu Jayasuriya, former Speaker of Parliament and a respected member of the OPA.

In a special tribute, all surviving Past Presidents of the OPA were honoured during the ceremony for their invaluable service and lasting impact on the organisation's development.

A commemorative postage stamp and first day cover were officially issued and presented to the Prime Minister. The occasion also featured the release of a Commemorative Volume chronicling the OPA's history, special milestones and vision for the future.

Before the main proceedings, I had the privilege of garlanding of the bust of the Founder President of the OPA, Dr. Nath Amarakone. This act of remembrance was followed by a ceremonial tree planting and the laying of a foundation stone for the Golden Jubilee monument.

However, these events are by no means the only activities planned for our Jubilee year, as we will be conducting many more programmes in the coming months.

This is an opportunity for us to look back on our journey with gratitude, and look ahead with a renewed sense of purpose and determination. As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, let this milestone be a springboard to greater things. Together, as the Organization of Professional Associations, let us continue to play our part in advancing our professions and building a better Sri Lanka.

Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake
Attorney - at - Law
President - OPA

SECRETARY'S MESSAGE



I am happy to report that many activities were successfully conducted during the course of this year to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of the OPA. The Sector Committees conducted several Seminars, Workshops and Programmes supported by the Key Office Bearers, Ex Co and Forum members. In January, the Environment and Agriculture Committee conducted a Brainstorming Session on "Food Exports for Economic growth" which was held at OPA. A Policy Paper was prepared to be presented to the Government. The OPA 50th Anniversary Logo and the Lapel Pin for members was launched at the January meeting of the General Forum.

In February, the Supply Chain Committee organized a Seminar on "Driving Industrial Transportation of Sri Lanka through Improved Railway Systems". The Seminars Committee conducted a Seminar on "Tax Compliance and Enforcement: Strengthening Revenue Generation". A brainstorming session was organized by the Construction Industry Committee on "Ethics, Rules and Regulations of the Construction Industry and Way Forward".

In March, a Joint Seminar was organized by the Social Events Committee and the Seminars Committee on the topic of "Innovate Sri Lanka: Empowering Entrepreneurs" supported by the JIY/UIY Committee of IESL. Another Brainstorming session was conducted by the Supply Chain Committee on "Establishment of Rail Freight Stations in Free Trade

Zone and the Port of Colombo". This was followed by a Seminar on "The Rule of Law and the Protection of Individual Human Rights" jointly organized by the Seminars Committee and the Bar Association of Sri Lanka.

An all-night Pirith ceremony was conducted on 14th March along with heel dana the next day at the OPA to invoke blessings for the 50th Anniversary of OPA. Other special religious programmes included a special Muslim religious programme at Davatagaha Jumma Masjid Mosque, a Catholic service at All Saints Church Borella, and a Hindu Religious event at Manika Vinayagar Kovil.

The OPA Annual Avurudu Celebrations held on 27th April organized by the Social Events, Committee with the participation of all those associated with the OPA.

The Golden Jubilee Anniversary celebrations were held at the BMICH, where the chief guest was Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The Guest of Honor was the former Speaker of the Parliament Hon. Karu Jayasuriya. The memorial oration of Dr. Nath Amarokone was delivered by Hon. Justice Sobitha Rajakaruna. The Commemorative Volume and the Commemorative stamp were launched while all living OPA past Presidents were felicitated during this event.

The budget proposals of the OPA prepared by the National Issues Committee were presented to the Treasury Secretary.

The OPA Key office bearers participated in many events of the Member associations during the last few months. These included SLIM Kantar People's awards, CMA budget Highlights, CMA Pirith ceremony, World Oral Health Day event of SLDA, Annual Symposium of the Institute of Town Planners, and SLIM Effie awards and a stakeholder meeting of the IESL.

Let me conclude by congratulating the Editor and the Publications Committee for successfully publishing this Newsletter overcoming all obstacles.

Tisara De Silva
General Secretary - OPA

Brainstorming Session - "Food Exports for Economic Growth"

A brainstorming session on "Food Exports for Economic Growth" was held at the OPA on the 29th of January 2025. Leading figures from the food industry, academia and the banking sector participated at this event which was organized by the Environment & Agriculture Committee. The presentations by the experts were followed by a lively and informative discussion in which the attendees

were able to explore strategies and policies to unlock the full potential of Sri Lanka's food export sector to drive the country's economic growth. The deliberations of this brainstorming session will pave the way for a policy paper to be presented to the government and other stakeholders. It will also form the basis for ongoing dialogue with other associations as well as media discussions.



Among the discussion points raised by the panelists were the fact that coconut crops have reduced due to diseases, white fly issue and pests. The need for improved irrigation methods, better fertilizer as well as the provision of low-cost loans were required to improve the industry. The importance of food safety, through visual inspection, laboratory testing and field inspections, was also stressed in order to grow export markets.

A lack of labour posed a problem for growers of spices such as cinnamon. In addition, the participants called for more R & D and the use of

the latest technology in order to develop products for the export market such as dried foods, improved yield, pest control and diseases treatment. The panelists also observed the importance of cultivating other crops as well as modernizing the agriculture sector. However, poverty was identified as a significant challenge in improving product quality as 70% of the farmers were poor. The need for a development bank was also stressed. The panelists recommended the development of valued added products such as blended tea, cinnamon extracts, and medicine in order to increase our share of the export market.

Seminar on Railway Systems

A seminar on "Driving Industrial Transportation of Sri Lanka Through Improved Railway Systems", organized by the Supply Chain, Transport and Logistics Committee of the OPA, was held on the 6th of February at the OPA auditorium. The event featured Mr. Dhammika Jayasundara, General

Manager of the Sri Lanka Railway Department, and Eng. (Dr.) T. Sivakumar, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Engineering, University of Moratuwa as eminent guest speakers, while the moderator was the Chairman of the Supply Chain, Transport, and Logistics Committee, Mr. I. G. Perera.



The General Manager of the Sri Lanka Railway Department, Mr. Dhammika Jayasundara said that currently a freight train runs daily from Seeduwa to Trincomalee. Consequently, at present the operation of freight trains is limited with freight transport accounting for 2% of total rail transport. Eng. (Dr.) T. Sivakumar, Senior Lecturer, pointed out

that improving rail freight offered many advantages, as it would enable Sri Lanka Railways to increase. For freight forwarders, it would greatly speed up their goods, minimize logistics cost, and enhance the reliability of service. Increased rail usage would also help to reduce road congestion and accidents while reducing environmental pollution in general.

Post budget seminar on Taxation

A post budget seminar on "Tax Compliance and Enforcement: Strengthening Revenue Generation" organized by the Seminars, Workshops and Programmes Committee of the OPA together with the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Sri Lanka took place on the 21st of February at the OPA auditorium. The expert guest speakers were Mr. Nihal Wijewardana, Senior Deputy Commissioner at Department of Inland Revenue, Ms. Rifka Ziyad, Principal - Tax and Regulatory - KPMG and Mr. Ranil Abeywardhane, President of the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Sri Lanka



Mr. Ranil Abeywardhane observed that at present most tax revenue comes from indirect taxes which was not good as indirect taxation leads to inflation. He noted that in order to have a healthy tax system the gap between GDP and tax has to be narrowed. Mr. Nihal Wijewardana observed that the new budget proposed granting tax exemptions from

the prevailing LKR 1,200,000 for all resident and citizen individuals to a proposed LKR 1,800,000. Permanent VAT registration would be made mandatory for individuals or businesses involved in the import or export of goods for commercial purposes. Ms. Rifka Ziyad elaborated on the effects of the tax changes proposed in Budget 2025.

Brainstorming Session on Construction Industry

A brainstorming session on "Ethics, Rules and Regulations of the Construction Industry and Way Forward" took place at the OPA on 24th February, 2025. Organised by the Construction Industry Committee, the event was attended by senior representatives from CECB, CCI, CIDA, CMA, CMC,

Fire brigade, NBRO, NCASL, SSES, UDA, SLIA, IESL, IIESL, CEA, CEB, Irrigation Dept, Water Board, BOI, and RDA who provide valuable input for the formulation of a concept paper which will be presented to the authorities



Among the issues raised by the representatives were the need to get approval from many organisations for a construction project. The necessity for a Construction Industry Development Fund was also highlighted. It was pointed out that, although the Condominium Act mandates the supervision of a regulatory body, many apartment projects have lots of design problems. Other countries require deposits for apartments to be kept in escrow accounts in order to prevent developers

from using the money for other purposes. It was observed that Sri Lanka has the highest material costs in South East Asia. This is partly due to very high import duties. Sometimes, taxes are imposed to protect a single company. The representative also stated that, due to emigration, the housing market is flooded. Even a slight change in interest rates would make a difference. However, due to lack of statistics, it is difficult to evaluate feasibility.

Seminar on "Innovate Sri Lanka: Empowering Entrepreneurs"

A seminar on "Innovate Sri Lanka: Empowering Entrepreneurs" was held on the 28th of March, 2025. The event was jointly organized by the Social Events, Outreach Programmes and Young Professionals' Committee and the Seminars, Workshops and Programmes Committee of the OPA together with the JIY/UIY Committee of the Institution of Engineers Sri Lanka.

The distinguished guests who spoke at this seminar were Prof. Rangika Halwathura, Professor of the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Moratuwa, Mr. Harsha Fernando, President's Counsel and Mr. Dhanika Perera, Founder, Bhasha Lanka (Pvt) Ltd.



Brainstorming Session on Rail Freight Stations

A brainstorming session on "Establishment of Rail Freight Stations in the Free Trade Zone and the Port of Colombo" organized by the Supply Chain, Transport and Logistics Committee took place at the OPA auditorium on 6th March, 2025. Key figures

from the Ports Authority, Railway Department, academia and the relevant sectors participated in the deliberations, based on which a concept paper will be produced for the attention of the authorities.



Seminar on "The Rule of Law and the Protection of Individual Human Rights"

A seminar on "The Rule of Law and the Protection of Individual Human Rights", organized jointly by the Seminars, Workshops and Programmes Committee of the OPA together with the Bar Association of Sri Lanka, was held at the OPA Auditorium on the 21st of March, 2025. Dr. Asanga Gunawansa, President's

Counsel and Dr. Lalanath De Silva, Attorney-at-Law were the expert speakers at this event, which concluded with an interactive Q & A session with the active participation of the audience.



50th Anniversary Celebration Activities

All-night pirith ceremony on the 14th of March



To mark the 50th Anniversary of the Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA), an all-night pirith ceremony was conducted on 14th March 2025 by Rev. Buddhist priests of Vajirarama Temple of Bambalapitiya to invoke blessings for continued protection, success, and prosperity in the years to come. The ceremony was followed by an alms-giving for 50 Buddhist monks the next morning.

The event was attended by the President of the OPA Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake, President - Elect Mr. Jayantha Gallehewa, General Secretary Mr. Tisara De Silva, Treasurer Mr. C. Kalupahana, Past Presidents, Office Bearers, Exco and General Forum members, Presidents and members of Member Associations as well as staff members of the OPA. The serene atmosphere of the chanting fostered mindfulness, tranquility, unity, and collaboration, making it a deeply meaningful commemoration of OPA's enduring legacy.





Heel Dana (Alms-giving) Pinkama on the 15th of March



After the Pirith Pinkama, the Heel Dana (Alms-giving) Pinkama organized by the 50th Anniversary Committee of the OPA was held at the OPA in the morning on 15th March, 2025 for 50 Buddhist monks to invoke blessings for continued protection,

success and prosperity in the years to come, with the participation of the President, Office Bearers, Past Presidents, members of the Executive Council and General Forum and the OPA Staff.



Hindu Religious Programme at Mānika Vinayāgar Kovil on the 25th of March



The President, key officer bearers and several members of the OPA took part in a Hindu Religious Programme at the Sri Mānika Vinayāgar Temple on the 25th of March, 2025, as part of the religious activities undertaken to commemorate the OPA's 50th anniversary. After blessings were invoked by the Chief Priest, the participants were given giftpacks of sweetmeats and other food items.



Catholic Religious Programme at All Saints Church in Borella on the 21st of March

As part of the religious programme to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the OPA, the President, key office bearers along with several OPA members took part in a Catholic service at All Saints Church in Borella on the 21st of March, 2025. During the course of the mass, blessings were invoked and Offertory gifts presented to the Church



Islam Religious Programme at Davatagaha Jummah Masjid on the 18th of March, 2025.



A special Islam religious program was conducted at the Davatagaha Jummah Masjid on the 18th of March, 2025. After blessings were invoked, the attendees joined the worshippers in breaking fast at the Mosque.



Launch of 50th Anniversary Logo and Lapel Pin

The 50th Anniversary logo and lapel pin issued to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka were unveiled at the meeting of the OPA General Forum on the 31st of January 2025. In addition to the lapel pin, other special memorabilia will be made available during the course of the year, along with special programmes, to mark the Golden Jubilee of the OPA. The January 2025 edition of the OPA newsletter was also presented to the Forum members.



Issuing of the First Newsletter for the year 2024 - 2025

President of the OPA received the first copy of the "OPA NEWSLETTER" which was published by the Publication Committee, from the Editor of the OPA Dr. R. D. Ananda Tissa at the General Forum of the OPA, held on 31st of January 2025.



Special Achievement of the President of the OPA



Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake, President of the OPA has been appointed as one of the Ambassadors for Sri Lanka Conference Ambassador Programme, held at Cinnamon Life hotel on 5th Feb. 2025.

Sri Lanka launched the "Sri Lanka Conference Ambassador Programme" (SLCAP), an initiative aimed at positioning the country as a leading destination for international conferences. The SLCAP is the first initiative of its kind in Sri Lanka, affirming efforts to revitalise the country's Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) sector, as it looks to boost tourism and economic growth.

The programme is designed to empower and engage local association leaders and professionals to act as Ambassadors, advocating for Sri Lanka on the global stage.

The programme essentially aims to transform the country's MICE landscape, driving economic growth, promoting sustainability and knowledge exchange.

By combining the expertise of its partners, the SLCAP is expected to drive Sri Lanka's commitment to business tourism, economic growth and innovation, while showcasing the country's unique offerings to the global stage.



Sinhala & Hindu New Year Celebrations of the OPA



The Annual Avurudu Celebrations of the OPA were held on the 27th of April at the OPA premises organised by the Social Events, Outreach Programmes and Young Professionals' Committee. The event provided a wonderful opportunity for OPA members as well as the staff, together with their families, to participate in a variety of traditional games and activities while enjoying live music and delicious food.

Some of the games that those present – especially the children – joined in enthusiastically included musical chairs, bun eating, breaking pots, threading the needle and placing the dot on the elephant. The event concluded with the Avurudu Kumaraya and Avurudu Kumari contest and the winners of the various competitions receiving valuable prizes.



GOLDEN JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPA.

50th Anniversary Activities held at the OPA Secretariat on 29th May 2025



Prior to the main event, the garlanding of the bust of the Founder President, Dr. Nath Amarakone, took place by OPA President Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake. This symbolic tribute was followed by a ceremonial tree planting and the laying of the foundation stone for a Golden Jubilee monument, signifying the enduring legacy of the OPA and its commitment to future generations.

The commemoration brought together the President and office bearers of the OPA, Past Presidents, members of the Executive Council and General Forum, life members, Presidents and Secretaries of member associations, as well as distinguished professionals, special invitees and well-wishers



GOLDEN JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPA.

50th Anniversary Celebrations at the BMICH on 29th May 2025



The Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA), the apex body representing the country's professional community, celebrated its 50th anniversary with a grand commemorative event at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) on the 29th of May 2025. The ceremony was graced by Chief Guest Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The inaugural Dr. Nath Amarakone Memorial Oration, in remembrance of the OPA's founder, was delivered by Hon. Justice Sobitha Rajakaruna,

Justice of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka. The keynote address was presented by Hon. Karu Jayasuriya, former Speaker of the Parliament and a distinguished member of the OPA. In a special gesture of appreciation, all living Past Presidents of the OPA were felicitated during the event for their significant contributions to the growth and evolution of the organisation. Their leadership has been instrumental in shaping the OPA into the respected institution it is today.



GOLDEN JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPA.



Launching of Commemorative Volume



Issuing of Commemorative Stamp



GOLDEN JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPA.



Archd. Deshamanya Dr. Surath
Wickramasinghe
1987 - 1988



Prof. Lakshman R. Watawala
1996 - 1997



Mr. U.H. Palihakkara
2010 -2011



Dr. Hilary W.M. Cooray
2007 - 2008



Eng. Benedict Ulluwishewa
2012 -2013

**Felicitation of
Past Presidents of the OPA**

Felicitation of the following Past Presidents of the OPA by Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, The Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka with the presence of Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake, President - OPA.

GOLDEN JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPA.

**Speech by Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya Prime Minister of Sri Lanka,
On the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the OPA**

***Young Professionals Must Play A Lead Role on Matters of
National Importance***

It is a great honour to be here today to mark a truly significant occasion — the 50th Anniversary of the Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka. Let me begin by offering my heartfelt congratulations to the OPA on reaching this important milestone.

Fifty years is a noteworthy achievement for any institution. For the OPA, this golden jubilee reflects five decades of sustained effort to bring together the professional community of Sri Lanka and provide a collective voice for their expertise, concerns, and contributions.

What makes the OPA particularly unique is its scale and breadth. As the apex body of 52 member associations, representing 34 distinct professions and a membership base of approximately 60,000 professionals, the OPA occupies a central position in the professional landscape of our country. This is not simply an organisation — it is a forum that connects diverse disciplines under a shared commitment to professional standards and national development.

As Prime Minister, I deeply value the contributions that professionals make to the development of Sri Lanka. Whether in engineering, medicine, law, hospitality, or town planning professionals provide the technical knowledge, ethical grounding, and long-term thinking that are vital for progress. Over the past five decades, the OPA has provided a space for these professionals to collaborate, discuss issues of mutual interest, and contribute to broader conversations on national priorities. During the unprecedented challenges posed by the economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, the OPA played a crucial role in leveraging the expertise of its members to help the country navigate through those difficult times



The OPA has played a consistent and constructive role in creating opportunities for professional engagement in public life. By participating in various consultative processes — including Parliamentary Sectoral Oversight Committees and national forums — the OPA has shared its members' knowledge and insights on issues ranging from economic policy to public health, from constitutional reform to urban planning.

Among the OPA's most valued contributions are the platforms it has established for dialogue, learning, and collaboration. The Annual Conference, in particular, has become a hallmark event that brings together professionals, academics, policymakers, and members of the public to deliberate on current challenges and explore forward-looking solutions.

What makes these gatherings valuable is not just the exchange of knowledge, but the diversity of perspectives represented. In today's complex world, where problems are rarely confined to one sector or field, such multidisciplinary engagement is essential. The OPA has been a consistent advocate for this kind of collaboration.

GOLDEN JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPA.
**Speech by Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya Prime Minister of Sri Lanka,
On the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the OPA**

This milestone comes at a time of rapid change and transition — not just in Sri Lanka, but globally. The demands on professionals are shifting. Technology is reshaping industries, the economy is becoming more interconnected, and societies are grappling with new forms of inequality and environmental risk.

In this context, the OPA's role is likely to evolve further. It is well positioned to facilitate dialogue not only within professions but across them — helping to bridge the gap between technical knowledge and public understanding, between policy frameworks and practical realities.



There is also an important role for the OPA to play in nurturing the next generation of professionals. By creating mentoring opportunities, promoting ethical standards, and encouraging inclusive leadership, the OPA can help ensure that the values it has championed for fifty years continue to guide Sri Lanka's professional community well into the future.

This occasion is also an opportunity for us to remember the contributions of the people who have made the OPA what it is. The leaders, committee members, volunteers, and countless professionals who have dedicated their time and energy to sustaining this organisation over five decades — Your commitment

to collaboration and professional excellence is what gives the OPA its strength.

And to all 52 member associations - thank you for your continued engagement and for upholding the standards that underpin the credibility of this organisation.

I am sure that the OPA will continue to adapt, evolve, and stay relevant to the needs of its members and the country at large. I encourage you to maintain your commitment to ethical practice, independent thinking, and inclusive leadership.

Let me once again extend my warmest congratulations to the Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka on its 50th Anniversary. This is not just a celebration of your past achievements, but an invitation to step confidently into the future.

May the OPA continue to serve as a trusted space for professional dialogue, knowledge exchange, and ethical leadership for many years to come.

Thank you, and I wish you all continued success.

**Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya
Prime Minister of Sri Lanka**

GOLDEN JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPA.

Memorial Oration of Dr. Nath Amarakone

The First ever Memorial Oration of the Late. Dr. Nath Amarakoon, Founder President of the OPA delivered by the Keynote Speaker Hon. Justice Sobitha Rajakaruna, Judge of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka on "Artificial Intelligence, Fundamental Rights and Upholding Integrity in the Digital age"



Felicitation of Past Presidents of the OPA

Felicitation of the Past Presidents of the OPA by Hon. Karu Jayasuriya, Former Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka.



Mr. V. Ganesh
1996 - 1997



Mr. Athauda Jayawardena
2014-2015



Prof. Rohana U. Kuruppu
2015-2016

GOLDEN JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPA.



Mr. Ruwan Gallage
2016 - 2017



Dr. Lalith Wijetunge
2017 - 2018



Mr. Saman Warusavithana
2019-2020



Eng. Shantha Senarath
2020 - 2021



Ms. Ruchira Gunasekera
2022-2023



Mr. Sarath Gamage
2023 - 2024



Memorial Oration of Dr. Nath Amarakone by His Lordship Justice Sobhitha Rajakaruna, Judge of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka

"Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights and Upholding Integrity in the Digital Age"

Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka; The distinguished Guest of Honour Mr. Karu Jayasooriya, Former Speaker of the Parliament; The President and the General Secretary of the OPA; The President Elect and the esteemed Past Presidents; The members of the Executive Council; Distinguished members of the General Forum; Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am deeply honoured to have been invited to deliver the Dr. Nath Amarakoon Memorial Oration before this august assembly, where the OPA celebrates its 50th Anniversary. The OPA holds a special place in my heart for many reasons, particularly because I had the unique opportunity to engage with it during my period of apprenticeship, 33 years ago, even before becoming an Attorney-at-Law. I have had the pleasure of working there in several capacities under several Presidents at the OPA, including those elected from BASL, such as the legal luminary Mr. Parakrama Karunaratna, who was a higher-ranking officer and my supervising officer at the Attorney General's Department. Likewise, I must acknowledge the Attorneys-at-Law, late Mr. Gamini Jayasinghe, Mr. Sena Lianasuriya and Mr. Serasinghe who aligned me with the activities and mission of the OPA.

Dr Amarakoon Mudiyansele Nath Amarakoon, the founder President of the Organization of Professional Associations (OPA) of Sri Lanka was a former Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Housing, former Chairman of the State Engineering Corporation, General Secretary of the Eksath Sinhala Maha Sabhawa, Head of the Sanathana Foundation, Nawinna, and a committed Philanthropist. I have found, among many, that his commitment to the construction and commissioning of the

Steel Factory at Oruwela and the Tyre project

at Kelaniya was tremendous. He was the beloved husband of the distinguished Dental Surgeon, Dr. Indrani Wijesinghe Amarakoon. Dr. Nath Amarakoon was instrumental in founding and shaping the early growth of the OPA in Sri Lanka, making a significant contribution that laid its groundwork. In 1972, together with other prominent professionals like Dr. H.W. Jayawardena, Queens's Counsel and Dr. S.A. Cabraal, he engaged with Mr. John Chadwick, the Commonwealth Foundation's first Director, to discuss forming a professional alliance to complement the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). This effort sought to bring together Sri Lankan professionals from various fields to amplify their collective influence on National and Commonwealth goals.

On April 29, 1975, the OPA was officially founded during a meeting at the ASTW headquarters, where its Constitution was adopted, and the first office bearers and executive committee were elected. Dr. Amarakoon and other key members identified the need for a shared facility, as many member associations lacked permanent offices. I have gathered through extensive research that Dr. Amarakoon's efforts have become fruitful with OPA obtaining a substantial GBP 45,000 grant from the Commonwealth Foundation to build the present Professional Centre. An additional GBP 10,000 has reportedly been provided to complete the original structure. The Professional Centre, that was inaugurated in September 1982 by then President J.R. Jayawardena, now hosts numerous member Associations and serves as a focal point for professional activities, including seminars, workshops,

Memorial Oration of Dr. Nath Amarakone

and research addressing National concerns. Dr. Amarakoon passed away on the 22nd November, 2017, at the age of 81 and his vision and organizational efforts fostered inter-sectoral collaboration, aligning with the OPA's mission to address National challenges through professional expertise. With that note, I must now advert to my topic. I have selected to speak on—Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights and Upholding Integrity in the Digital Age. It would be relevant to first consider what Artificial Intelligence refers to. "Artificial intelligence is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems." Alternatively, it could be defined as "the development of computer systems that can perform tasks requiring human-like intelligence."

As judges, we are entrusted with safeguarding the Constitution and the fundamental rights it enshrines. In this rapidly evolving digital era, artificial intelligence (AI) presents both unprecedented opportunities and profound challenges to our mandate. I have witnessed the judiciary's evolving role in balancing technological advancements with the hallowed principles of justice and human dignity. I invite you to reflect with me on this duality: how artificial intelligence (AI) can both fortify and threaten the structure of human rights, amidst the eroding element called integrity. Our legal heritage, rooted in Constitutionalism and the Rule of Law, demands a proactive response to this duality.

AI has emerged as a transformative force, reshaping industries, governance, and daily life with incredible speed and scale. Its capability to analyze extensive data, forecast results, and streamline decision-making offers significant potential to advance fundamental rights, while concurrently presenting serious dangers that jeopardize those same Rights. Bridging privacy, equality, freedom of speech, and access to justice, AI's twofold character—as both an enabler of progress and a possible source of suppression—demands a delicate examination. Artificial Intelligence (AI) isn't a physical item you stumble upon in a box, basket, or container, nor is it a consumable like food or a drink. Instead, AI resides within electronic devices, such as laptops, phones,

or tablets, existing outside our bodies as a digital construct. Yet, through these devices, AI can metaphorically be "absorbed" into our minds and lives, as we interact with its outputs, learn from its insights, or adapt to its influence at our choice. Far from being a tangible substance, AI is an external technological entity that we engage with, shaping our thoughts and actions through the tools we choose to wield. That's how the component of integrity also comes into play. On the other hand, your friend, neighbour or political opponent may wield AI in a way that infringes upon your rights using AI-generated deepfakes to defame you, breaching dignity. In such an event, the affected individual would need to seek a remedy through a court of law, either to obtain compensation or to have penalties imposed on the perpetrator.

In my opinion, AI poses a threat not merely by its simple existence, but by how we apply it to our Rights and thoughts. Its capacity to configure privacy, equality, and justice—whether through surveillance, biased algorithms, or unclear evidence—transforms its relevance into a pathway for harm if not properly regulated. However, through strict supervision and principled or ethical development, we can steer AI's impact towards empowerment, guaranteeing it strengths rather than its weaknesses as the foundation of Fundamental Rights. The decision rests with us: 'shape AI into a protector of fairness or allow it to evolve into a danger we regret'.

AI may offer the Supreme Court a powerful tool to strengthen Fundamental Rights applications by refining evidence relevancy under the Evidence Ordinance, enabling faster, data-driven justice. Yet, this strength harbours danger: if AI's analysis is flawed, due to biased training data, violation of patent or privacy laws or vague algorithms, it risks presenting distorted facts, skewing judicial outcomes. Judicial training in AI literacy, coupled with laws mandating accountability, can safeguard the rights of citizens. International norms, such as the UN Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary, reinforce that technology must serve justice, not subvert it. By reining in AI's relevance with accountability, we can harness its potential while averting its peril.

AI's danger, tied to its relevance, is not inevitable, but I believe that it can be tamed through good conscience and good governance. The challenge lies not in AI itself, but in our choice or discretion to wield it justly, safeguarding the dignity and rights of all living in a world where desirous and daily requirements are rapidly increasing on a 'per second' basis. I need to highlight another interesting aspect here today. In crafting my speech and for the purpose of making it with practical experience, I turned to an AI app and fed it with the topic for today's address. Certainly, it was only to find whether its output was attractively akin to my own thoughts—a revelation that sparked a dilemma. Had I delivered my original speech without looking at AI, some professionals familiar with similar AI-generated content might accuse me of plagiarism; yet, relying wholly on AI's text would invite the same charge. One may query why AI-assisted learning or linguistic borrowing should be deemed wrong. But, currently the learning is always leaned mostly on external sources such as books, Google,

apps, or devices, and lectures. Where do you get a law which prevents you from learning lawful subject content from reading or watching prima facie lawful substance through a legal app or an electronic device? Are we confined to outdated textbook methods, or can't we embrace AI as a legitimate tool to sharpen our intellect? This question challenges us to reconsider the boundaries of creativity, influence, patent and privacy rights and ethics in an AI-driven world. When AI engages with Fundamental Rights or judicial processes, its impact on these vital domains can heighten its potential for harm, transforming a tool of advancement into a threat that undermines privacy, equality, due process, and justice. AI does not inherently pose a threat through its influence on our rights and fact-finding processes unless we choose to exploit it for personal gain, thereby breaching the principles of good conscience or sound governance. So, is AI a new era of protection or peril? The answer lies in our hands, as jurists, lawmakers, future leaders and other professionals like yourselves. We must craft legal frameworks that embed accountability into AI systems, mandating transparency and human oversight, much like the constitutional checks we uphold. I have shared many of these thoughts when I was delivering a speech at a Law School in Pune, India

during the month of March this year. There also I spoke about a "vaccine" and an "antibiotic". The members of the legal fraternity together with policy makers - your task is to innovate legal "vaccines" to shield the rights of individuals who integrate AI's productivity into their personal experiences, while scientists and computer experts must develop advanced software-"antibiotics"- to evaluate and verify authenticity, protect patent rights, and uphold human dignity within AI's domain. Together, with these efforts, we can steer AI towards empowerment, balancing its promise with the preservation of justice and humanity. At the same time, I must stress that the integrity and good conscience are the cornerstones of ethical living, serving as an internal compass that guides our actions, decisions, and interactions, even in the rapidly evolving digital era dominated by artificial intelligence (AI). Integrity embodies honesty, moral uprightness, and adherence to principles, while good conscience reflects an inner awareness of right and wrong, acting as a vigilant monitor of our choices. Together, they empower individuals to maintain their moral sovereignty, ensuring

that no external force, be it AI or any third party, can compromise their values without their explicit or implicit consent and knowledge. In this digital age, AI systems, with their vast capabilities in data processing, surveillance, and decision-making, may attempt to influence the behaviour of individuals. However, no AI or external force can dominate your mind or compromise your integrity without your permission, whether given directly or indirectly. Your integrity remains within your control, rooted in your ability to exercise free will and judgment. For instance, while AI-driven platforms may nudge you toward certain choices, it is your conscious decision to accept or reject those influences that defines your moral stance. Good conscience operates like an internal CCTV camera, constantly observing and recording your thoughts and actions. It alerts you when you stray from ethical boundaries, ensuring that no act, whether in private or public, escapes its scrutiny. You cannot act without the knowledge of your conscience; it is an ever-present witness, urging you to align with what is just and true. However much you meticulously plan to engage in wrongdoing under tight security, using AI or

any other advanced methods, you cannot execute anything without the awareness and knowledge of your own conscience. The cleanliness of your conscience is eternally recorded, whether you like it or not, at the visa counter to heaven or hell. So don't bring even a paper clip home from your workplace and don't abuse your right to operate your official photo copy machine to copy your child's school notes. Such an act can be considered as 'robbery' or 'corruption' respectively although it appears in its miniature version. Public Servants, politicians, including Judges, should not expect rewards for their good service here other than in heaven. This inner vigilance empowers you to uphold integrity, even amidst the pervasive presence of AI systems that may challenge ethical norms. Upholding integrity is, therefore, entirely within your hands and conscience. It requires active resistance to external pressures and a commitment to self-reflection.

Even in a robust AI-driven system, your conscience remains sovereign. By staying informed, questioning AI outputs, and prioritizing ethical principles, you can safeguard your integrity. Ultimately, integrity and good conscience are your unassailable defences, ensuring that you remain the master of your moral destiny, no matter how advanced the digital landscape becomes. So, I take the view that the AI's peril is not inherent but crafted by human choices—its design, training, and application dictate its impact on rights and facts. As human beings, we have many desires. There is a kind of 'monkey trap' that is used in Asia. "The monkey smells the sweets, reaches in with his hand to grasp the food and is then unable to withdraw from it. The clenched fist won't pass through the opening. When the hunters come, the monkey becomes frantic but cannot get away. There is no one keeping that monkey captive, except the force of its own attachment. All that it has to do is open the hand. But so strong is the force of greed in the mind that it is a rare monkey which can let go. It is the desires and clinging in our minds which keep us trapped. All we need to do is open our hands, let go of ourselves

and our attachments, and be free. This greed suppresses the genuine conscience of any average human being. So, we should open our hands and let go of ourselves towards the genuine direction to overcome the bad and dangerous effects and shadows, if any, of AI. One of the legal Interns who served in my Chambers—Ms. Theruni Hettithanthrige, when she was 12 years has authored a poem titled A World Without Red? In her book "A Chocolate Box of Poetry":

A World Without Red?

Red is the color of the lips of a sophisticated lady
 Red is the color of soil when it is shady
 Red is the color of a cheerleader's skirt Red is the
 color of a bullfighter's shirt

Red is the color of the traffic light

Red is the color of a person who just threw a fight
 Red is the color of a shy girl's cheeks
 Red is the color of birds' beaks Red is claimed to be
 the color of danger
 As well as love

Imagine a world without This amazingly bright color.

I urge all of you not to paint AI with the vibrant shade of red a choice that could trap you in self-imposed limits, binding your life so tightly to its presence that living without it becomes unimaginable. Finally, I need to thank the Executive Council of the OPA including the current President of the OPA who represents BASL and the Past President, Mrs. Ruchira Gunasekara, another representative of BASL for granting me this opportunity.

Activities at National Level

OPA Presents Budget Proposals to Treasury Secretary



The Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA) submitted a special report containing recommendations and proposals for the National Budget to the Secretary to the Treasury Mr. Mahinda Siriwardana. The document was presented by OPA President Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake in the presence of General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva and Vice President and Chairman of the National Issues Committee Mr. Bhanu Wijayaratne.

Compiled by the National Issues Committee of the OPA, the budget proposals are based on the submissions and views of the OPA's member associations and is further enriched by the recommendations of OPA members who are leaders in their respective fields. The report covers a wide range of critical issues captured under several key segments, namely agriculture, fisheries and forestry, improving revenue generation at local government level, regularizing and minimizing government expenditure, promotion of industries, simplification, regularization of tax procedures and expanding the

tax net, digitization, human capital development, revitalization of failed urban development projects, enhanced inter-agency coordination mechanism and banking and finance etc.

Promotion of technology adoption in agriculture, supporting research and development, mitigating human-wildlife conflict, sustainable forest-management, ensuring cost-effectiveness of public expenditure, recognition of medium and large tax payers, creating sustainable economic growth and enhancing public welfare through digitalization, revitalizing failed urban development projects, are among the key proposals submitted which merited the attention of the authorities.

Networking and Engagement Activities with Member Associations

SLIM Kantar People's Awards

The SLIM Kantar People's Awards were held on 18th March 2025 at Monarch Imperial Hotel. Presented by the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing, the winners of the award categories are selected based on the results of survey conducted by Kantar. The event took place with the participation of President Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake and General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva who presented the Award for Best Tamil Newspaper to Veerakesari.



CMA Budget Highlights 2025

The Institute of Certified Management Accountants of Sri Lanka (CMA) organized a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) seminar on 'CMA Sri Lanka Budget Highlights 2025 - Impact on Business, Economy, and Society' on Wednesday, 19th February 2025 at the Ballroom, Taj Samudra, Colombo. The event, which featured presentations, expert views and a panel discussion on the impact of Budget Proposals on the Economy, Business and Society, was attended by President Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake and General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva and several other members of the OPA





World Oral Health Day Event

World Oral Health Day Inauguration Ceremony, which was organized by the Sri Lanka Dental Association took place on 20th March 2025 at Galle Face Green, Colombo. President of the OPA Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake and General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva took part in the event which kickstarted a series of activities in the following months to promote oral health awareness

Annual Symposium of the Institute of Town Planners Sri Lanka



The Annual Symposium and Annual General Meeting of Institute of Town Planners Sri Lanka (ITPSL) focused on the theme "Reimagining Urban Planning". The symposium provided a comprehensive platform to explore how urban planning can be reimagined to address pressing social, environmental, and economic challenges, thereby fostering inclusive and transformative national development. with the aim of driving inclusive and transparent national development. The event, which was held on 29th March, 2025 at Ape Gama Janakala Kendraya, Battaramulla, took place with the participation of President Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake and General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva

Stakeholder Gathering for the National Engineering Conference 2025 of IESL



The Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka held a Stakeholder gathering for the National Engineering Conference 2025 was held at Galadari Hotel on 20th May with the participation of General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva.

SLIM Effie Awards 2024



The Grand Finale of the Effie Awards Sri Lanka 2024 conducted by the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing (SLIM) took place on the 13th of February, 2025 at the Monarch Imperial Hotel. OPA President Mr. Sujeewa Lal Dahanayake and General Secretary Mr. Tisara de Silva attended as special invitees and presented several awards to the winners.



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