



EXPORTERS' ASSOCIATION OF SRI LANKA

Minutes for the 24th Annual General Meeting of the Exporters Association of Sri Lanka held on Friday, 16th July 2021 at 3.00 p.m. as a Virtual Meeting connected through Microsoft Teams.

Present : Mr. Chrisso de Mel/ Outgoing Chairman
Mr. M H Talal Shums/ Incoming Chairman
Mr. Ranil Goonetilleke / 1st Vice Chairman
Mr. Yohan Lawrence / 2nd Vice Chairman

Member Companies/ Associations

Past Chairman/ Eastern Merchants PLC
Past Chairman
Past Chairperson
Past Chairman
Akbar Brothers (Pvt) Ltd
Ceylon Biscuits Ltd

Consolidated Business Systems Ltd
Dankotuwa Porcelain PLC
Expolanka (Pvt) Limited

Exporter Association of Coconut Based Substrates
Hayleys PLC
Hatton National Bank
Hela Clothing (Pvt) Ltd
Hameed Brothers Colombo (Pvt) Ltd
KIK Lanka (Pvt) Ltd
Link Natural Products (Pvt) Ltd
Meezan & Co. (Pvt) Ltd
Nations Trust Bank
Printcare Group of Companies
Rainco (Pvt) Ltd
Ranfer Teas (Pvt) Ltd
Tea Tang (Pvt) Ltd/ Past Chairman

Tea Exporters Association
The Spices & Allied Products, Producers' & Traders' Association
Union Commodities (Pvt) Ltd
Shums & Company Pvt Ltd

Represented by

Mr. Harin de Silva
Mr. Fazal Mushin
Mrs. Dawn Austin/ Nidro Supply (Pvt) Ltd
Mr. A. S. M. Muzzammil
Mr. Udesh Witharana
Mr. Nadeeja Karunathilaka
Mr. Priyantha Bandara
Mr. Asela Wijayabandara
Ms. Sachini Bodhipaksh
Mr. Jagath Pathirane
Mr. Mafaz Munaz
Mr. M C Perera
Mr. Nalaka Ratnayake
Ms. Rozanne De Almeida
Mr. Nevil Dayananda
Mr. Afthab Salie
Mr. Lakshan Algama
Mr. Chanaka Gunathilake
Mr. S Abdul Cader
Mr. Prageetha De Zoysa
Mr. Kishore Ignatius
Mr. Ahmed Aroos
Mr. Niren Ranasinghe
Mr. Rohan P Daluwatte
Ms. Regina Gomez
Mr. Deivoo Deivanayagam
Mr. Vernon Abeyratne

Mr. Trevine Miranda
Mr. Hisham Shums

Sri Lanka Export Credit Insurance Corporation
Sri Lanka Fruits & Vegetable Producers,
Processors & Exporters' Association
Sri Lanka Association of Manufacturers &
Exporters of Rubber Products
Sri Lanka Apparel Exporters Association
SLASSCOM

Mr. S M T Silva
Ms. Charindi Ranasinghe

Mr. Justin Senevirathne

Mr Athula Jayasundara
Mr. Channa Manoharan
Mr. Ahique Ali

Sri Lanka Diamond Manufacturers Association
Sri Lanka Gem & Jewellery Association

Mr. Sanjaya Baid
Mr. Ajward Deen

1. MINUTES

Minutes of the 24th Annual General Meeting held on July 30, 2020 at 2.00 p.m. as a virtual meeting connected through Microsoft Teams were confirmed, proposed by Mr. Fazal Mushin and seconded by Mrs. Dawn Austin.

2. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

The Annual Report and Statement of Accounts of the Exporters' Association of Sri Lanka for the period ended 31st March 2021 were adopted, proposed by Mr. M H Talal Shums and seconded by Mr. Vernon Abeyratne.

3. ADDRESS BY THE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN

Chairman delivered his address at the post business session of the AGM taken place soon after the Annual General Meeting.

Quote

“Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen”.

I would like to warmly welcome the Senior past chairs, as well as the committee and members of EASL who are present with us virtually at this meeting.

As you know we are now going through unusual times and circumstances and we have completed a year of great uncertainty and to add to that we also had great concerns on the status of the economy of our country. We all know that we, the exporters are recognized as the engine of growth and the EASL as the apex body representing the exporters of this country.

The office bearers together with the committee has tirelessly worked during the last year and we have comprehensively managed to overcome the various challenges during the past year. As you know it was mostly firefighting, problem solving and resolving matters. This is very unfortunate because previously we have tried to shape the economy of the country by the proposals we have given to the government in office, during the last five to six years, where we have spent a lot of money as an association in advisory capacity to shape our economy.

But unfortunately, with the setbacks we all had to face, which were not faced by anyone during the past several decades or even ever before. It was even more difficult for us to carry out business as usual and the challengers have been enormous.

Most affected would be the SMEs and the smaller companies and In this scenario it was very critical that we did not simply criticize the government but took a role where we could spell out the important things that needed to be done. As you know now social media has taken it into another level. What is important is to ensure what benefits the country.

In my opinion, Sri Lanka is so capable to turn things around but the most important thing is to work to a plan. Policy makers need to listen to professionals, experts on whatever trade related matters. So that the feedback will be taken in when deciding on policy matters. But unfortunately, we see too many errors, too many reversals or bad decisions taking place over and over, during a long period of time now. Those decisions have become very costly for the state. I think the challenge is enormous for the new committee headed by the Chairman who will be elected in a short while. As you know I have completed my tenure of two years but that does not mean that we are going to wash our hands off and stay away. We are going to be supporting the incoming office bearers as well as the committee and serve in that committee. My wish is that Sri Lanka will change its thinking, that the trade will change its thinking and instead of laughing at the many memes or jokes going around about the failure of an institution or a head of state or the government, that we all unite to make things work for us. It really is not funny because in my opinion when the government fails, the country fails. So, we need to be very serious and try our level best to make sure our voice is heard and also use all possible influence for the greater good of the nation and the economy and the people of this country.

If you read through the report, you would understand the amount of time that we, the office bearers had to invest while being in office simply to get a point across, simply to trouble shoot. And there are many instances where we have got up in the morning and found out that there is a new policy that has been implemented and not even know as to who proposed it. And then we look for options to to see how best we can advise. We have managed to turn around a few things but all that is costing precious time and extra effort. So, my point is that we are in a time where we need to plan our businesses and we need to be alert because in my opinion Sri Lanka has still not lost the game. It is like our Cricket team. We are doing pretty badly. But that does not mean that we do not have the talent, that does not mean we do not have the skills, that does not mean we do not have the right people, and I hope that we make this change sooner rather than later.

We must not work to get credit for ourselves; rather work for the Association and for the benefit for our members. because if our members are successful the country will benefit. In the present-day scenario, it appears that if I manufacture my goods I cannot find a booking, and if I find a booking I cannot find a container, if I find a container I cannot find a truck, If I find a truck, I do not find space in the ship, and If I find space in the ship, I cannot find a connection and if I find a connection, I cannot find a way of clearing it. When I find a way to clearing it, I do not have space in a warehouse. This scenario more or less tells you the way in which things are happening right now. If we look back, last year, all our efforts have been streamlined to sorting issues out and getting the ball rolling. I would like to take my company, Hayleys as an example; where through clear leadership and direction given to its staff, during this pandemic we have produced extraordinary results. I can personally testify that it has been a commitment of all in difficult times, in unusual circumstances to be willing to go that extra mile to make it happen. Sri Lanka can do that, the trade can to that, the export fraternity can do that. We need to receive that support and leadership because if not we will all fail.

I am not happy to state that a Minister would fail or a Prime minister would fail or a President would fail. I am only conscious of the fact that if any of the custodians fails we are all going to fail.

I want to congratulate the new team that is going to take up office and my support continues and I want to thank everyone for your patience during the last couple of years; as you know I took up office soon after the Easter Sunday attack. we have not had a celebration for the last two years the way we used to at AGMs, but the work continued. I also want to thank you for all the support you have given and I wish EASL all the success and Sri Lanka the success that we are dreaming of.

May God Bless you all and thank you!

Unquote

4. ANNOUNCEMENT OF OFFICE BEARERS AND THE MANAGING COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR 2021/2022

Secretariat announced that at the first meeting of the Managing Committee for 2021/2022, the following were elected as office Bearers for the year 2021/2022.

Chairman	- Mr. M H Talal Shums
1 st Vice Chairman	- Mr. Ranil Goonetilleke
2 nd Vice Chairman	- Mr. Yohan Lawrence

MEMBERS ELECTED BY THE MEMBERSHIP

The following 22 members were elected to serve on the committee for 2021/2022.

1. Ceylon Biscuit Limited
2. Dankotuwa Porcelain PLC
3. Eastern Merchants PLC
4. Expolanka (Pvt) Limited
5. Hayleys PLC
6. Hela Clothing (Pvt) Ltd
7. Hatton National Bank PLC
8. Hameed Brothers Colombo (Pvt) Ltd
9. KIK Lanka (Pvt) Ltd
10. Link Natural Products (Pvt) Ltd
11. Lion Brewery (Ceylon PLC)
12. Meezan & Company (Pvt) Ltd
13. Microcells (Pvt) Ltd
14. Nidro Supply (Pvt) Ltd
15. Nations Trust Bank PLC
16. Printcare Group of Companies
17. Rainco (Pvt) Ltd
18. Ranfer Teas (Pvt) Ltd
19. Sri Lanka Export Credit Insurance Corporation
20. Shums & Company (Pvt) Ltd

21. Tea Tang (Pvt) Ltd
22. Union Commodities (Pvt) Ltd

REPRESENTATIVES NOMINATED FROM PRODUCT ASSOCIATIONS

In addition, 12 representatives from the following export Product Associations were also nominated to serve on the Committee.

Represented by

1. Sri Lanka Fruit & Vegetable Producers, Processors & Exporters Association
Ms. Charindi Ranasinghe
2. Sri Lanka Apparel Exporters Association
Mr. Yohan Lawrence, Mr Athula Jayasundara
3. Colombo Rubber Traders' Association
Mr. Harin de Silva
4. Spices & Allied Products Producers and Traders Association
Mr. Vernon Abeyratne
5. Colombo Tea Traders' Association
Mr. H D Hemaratne
6. Exporter Association of Coconut Based Substrates
Mr. M C Perera & Mr. M C C Udayanga
7. Sri Lanka Association of Manufacturers and Exporters of Rubber Products
Mr. Justin Seneviratne
8. Sri Lanka Gem & Jewellery Association
Mr. Ajward Deen
9. Seafood Exporters' Association of Sri Lanka
Mr. Sampath Padmawansa & Mr. Dilan Fernando
10. Sri Lanka Association of Software Services Companies
Mr. Channa Manoharan & Mr. Ashique Ali
11. Sri Lanka Diamond Manufacturers Association
Mr. Sanjaya Bid

12. Tea Exporters Association

Mr. Deivoo Deivanayagam & Mr. Ranjith Abeykoon

Secretariat announced the following past chairpersons were nominated to serve on the Managing Committee

1. Mr. Chrisso de Mel – Immediate Past Chairman
2. Mr. Harin de Silva
3. Mr. Fazal Mushin
4. Mrs. Dawn Austin
5. Mr. A. S. M. Muzzammil

This comprises the Managing Committee for the year 2021/2022

5. ELECTION OF AUDITORS

Chairman proposed from the Chair that Baker Tilly Edirisinghe & Co. to be appointed as Auditors for the year 2021/2022.

6. ADDRESS BY THE INCOMING CHAIRMAN

With the permission of Members, the Chairman delivered his address at the AGM.

Quote

“Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen”.

Firstly, let me Thank you all for the Confidence placed in me to take the seat of the Chairman of the Exporters Association of Sri Lanka at its 24th Annual general Meeting. The Annual Report and the outgoing Chairman’s speech has covered the affairs of the Exporters Association over the past year. The need of the hour is increased Exports; hence we believe that the EASL as well as our members have a very large role to play in the recovery of our economy. As an industry, what we need is stable policy decisions - AD Hoc policy decisions such as banning the importation of Chemical Fertilizer could have a detrimental impact on our Agricultural Crops, which in turn would result in decreased volumes available for export of such crops. We believe that going organic is important, but this should be achieved with a long term plan and should be phased in and we urge the government to not implement such decisions overnight. The Daily news of the 3rd of July stated that a ministerial committee has been setup to make amendments to the current Export CESS Act. We have made representation with the EDB to intervene and stop any amendments to the act which could kill the goose that laying the golden eggs. Along with a general increase in the global freight rates, the current import ban (as required to conserve our Foreign Exchange) has resulted in less containers being available for exporters to ship out with which has worsened the situation for exporters. Exporters have had to bare the cost of increased freight rates, vessel’s by passing Sri Lankan ports due to low cargo volumes etc... Whilst these are natural market forces at play - the exporters have had to bare the brunt of these with late shipment penalties, being reputed as an unreliable sourcing destination, sky high freight rates, claims etc... Further, whilst understanding the need for our very tight exchange control policy’s , we believe the government should look at mechanisms of giving the Export sector an extra benefit in terms of a higher value for every USD that brought into the country through exports (similar to foreign worker remittances) - We believe this would make

our exports more competitive, further Exporters should have the ability to negotiate 100% of their term USD Bills through local banks and to be able to remit money out for raw material purchases without any restrictions. We believe that we will have to live with the COVID 19 Pandemic for the foreseeable future, however I believe that we will have to find methods to live with this pandemic. A key to doing so is to have most of our population vaccinated, in that light whilst appreciating the Government for having carried out a very good vaccination program to date we would like to request that all SLEDB registered Export Companies are put on a priority list in order to be able to vaccinate their staff and work at full capacity and efficiency and in turn increase exports from Sri Lanka. we would like to commend the EDB on the work done on the National Brands Development Program 2021-2024 which is a program setup to give financial assistance to 100% Sri Lankan owned brands to be taken to the world market. This is a great initiative for both current exporters as well as Export Ready companies in Sri Lanka. Moving forward The Constitution of the EASL states that the objectives of the association are to promote and protect the common interests of the members of the association who export products and services to engage in any activity as may be necessary or conducive to the interest or benefit of such exporters. We would like to work with the authorities by engagement and not confrontation and we would like more inclusiveness and greater engagement with policy makers. I would like to place on record that we had a very productive meeting with Mr. Suresh De Mel - Chairman Export Development board who wanted the EASL's input on increasing exports in the short to medium term. We are grateful to our membership who have come back to us with their feedback on the same. This was the first of many engagements we hope to have with the EDB. We believe this is one of the mechanisms of the private sector working very closely with the public sector for the betterment of our mother land. We would like to continue to be apart of the discussions with regard to all areas of trade such as FTA's, Bilateral trade agreements and as such. Sri Lanka's current Ease of doing business ranking is at 99, whilst our closest neighbor India is at 63 and other countries who are close competitors in the Asian region such as Vietnam ranks 70. We have a lot of work to do to increase our rankings in the Ease of doing business index and the EASL is happy to play its part to help the government increase our rankings. We will continue with our Recommendation for a National Export Strategy document NEDEV's and would like to play an active role in formulating future strategy to increase exports from Sri Lanka. In order to be current in a global context and also not to rely solely on our existing basket of export goods, we believe high value Technology Exports as well as Technology in Exports needs to be looked at this is an area that I would like our committee to look at very seriously. I believe that we could engage more with our member associations such as SLASSCOM and their member companies to see how best we could use technology and cross sell technological products to enhance our product portfolio and become a relevant destination in the global supply chain. Acknowledgements I would like to Thank Mr. Harin De Silva who got me involved in the EASL, Mr. Fazal Mushin, Mr. Chirso De Mel, Mrs. Dawn Austin and Mr. Muzammil for all the advice given and for always being open to help. Thank you to Ushani Dassanayake and Sajani Kannangara who runs the EASL secretariat and the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce for helping us conduct our affairs in a smooth manner Would also like to thank my vice Chairs Ranil Goonethilake and Yohan Lawrence for the support and for helping me take the EASL forward. The year ahead is definitely going to be a challenging one. We look forward to engaging with the authorities to ensure that the exporters expectations are met and look at how we could play our part in bringing in much needed export earnings into the country.

Unquote

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF WHICH DUE NOTICE SHALL HAVE BEEN GIVEN

There was no other business of which due notice has been given.

8. VOTE OF THANKS BY 1st VICE CHAIRMAN, MR. RANIL GOONETILLEKE

Quote

“Good evening distinguished invitees, past chairpersons, fellow members and ladies and gentleman.

It is my privilege that I have been asked to propose the vote of thanks of the occasion of the 24th of Annual General Meeting of the Exporters Association of Sri Lanka. On behalf of our EASL, I would like to thank our members of the EASL for extending their support and cooperation at all times. On behalf of the association I also thank the chamber of commerce for providing the secretarial work and for the numerous services rendered to us during the last year.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Manjula de Silva, CEO and Secretary General of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, and Mrs. Alikie Perera, Deputy Secretary General and Financial Controller of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. I must place on record the excellent services rendered by Ms. Manori Dissanayake, Ms. Ushani Dassanayake and Ms. Sajani Kannangara.

Last but not least, on behalf of the management and the committee I thank all members and guests for being here with us this evening.”

Unquote

9. ADJOURNMENT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Chairman declared the meeting closed.

Ushani Dassanayake
For Secretary