



## Sri Lanka Federation of University Women launches its website

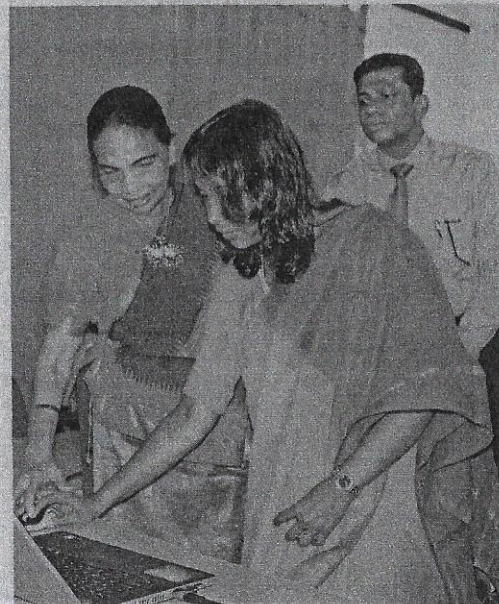
The Sri Lanka Federation of University Women launched its website on Thursday, 10th July 2023, at its Headquarters in Colombo.

In her welcome address, the SLFUW President, Colonel Dr. Udula Krishnaratne extended a warm welcome to the Chief Guest, Dr. Ramya Chamali Jirasinghe, and thanked her for gracing the occasion. She also thanked and expressed her appreciation to all others present for their participation in this momentous event.

Dr. Jirasinghe is the Country Coordinator for Kindemthilfe Lanka and a former Deputy Director of the Fulbright

Commission Sri Lanka and also an award winning poet. Dr. Krishnaratne mentioned that it is interesting to note that, while the Fulbright Commission helped develop education by providing Sri Lankans with opportunities for postgraduate studies in America, it was an American lady, Mrs. Clara Motwani, with a Masters Degree in Education, who helped to develop school education in Sri Lanka, and also set up the SLFUW in 1941.

Thus the SLFUW is 82 years old, but the years have only made it stronger, with a large and influential membership, both here/ in Sri Lanka and abroad.



# LIGHTING THE PATH TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

**Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa who is on a two-day visit to Sri Lanka at present (July 28/29), recalls the close historical relationship between Sri Lanka and Japan, multilateral cooperation between the two countries and Japan's role to support Sri Lanka's recovery from the ongoing economic crisis.**

## 1. MY VISIT

As many merchants, adventurers and tourists came to Serendib\* to seek fortune since the ancient times, I am very excited about the potential for serendipitous encounters during my time in Sri Lanka. All the more so because this is the first time in four years for Japan's Foreign Minister, and the first time ever for me personally to visit this beautiful land.

Although I am tempted to explore all eight World Heritage sites in this country, the purpose of my visit this time is to show my support for Sri Lanka on behalf of the Japanese government amid its current economic hardship. I also look forward to further advancing our longstanding bilateral cooperation.

## 2. OUR STORY

Relations between our two countries can be traced back to the 19th century. Located at the hub of the Indian Ocean, Colombo attracted many prominent Japanese figures who built modern Japan. Among them are FUKUZAWA Yukichi, an educator, philosopher, writer, and entrepreneur, and MORI Ogai, a writer.

**Besides economic development, Japan also sincerely cares about national reconciliation in Sri Lanka. I am sure Mr. AKASHI Yasushi is a well-known Japanese figure second only to "Oshin" in Sri Lanka. Mr. Akashi has long supported Sri Lanka's peace-building, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts and has been instrumental in the country's progress toward national reconciliation.**



Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa

Fast forward to the modern era. The people of Japan can never forget about the touching speech delivered by former President Jayawardena at the San Francisco Peace Treaty Conference in 1951 after World War II. President Jayawardena urged nations to treat Japan with generosity by quoting Buddha's words, "Hatred ceases not by hatred but by love." This served as a stepping stone for Japan's return to the international community.

Since then, Japan has been working side by side with Sri Lanka. In 1983, Japan built the Sri Jayawardenapura General Hospital in Colombo as a sign of friendship between the two countries. More recent cases of cooperation are the construction of the Southern Highway and the Kelani new bridge. The Ramboda Tunnel, Manampitiya Bridge and Colombo Port Jaya Container Terminal, all built by Japan, are depicted on the banknotes that are now in use.

I would like to note here that the yen loans for the construction of these infrastructures have been provided on very favorable terms, taking into account the resulting debt burden on Sri Lanka. In addition to the yen loans, Japan has also supported Sri Lanka through technical cooperation such as dispatching experts in public financial management, grant aid including medicine, food, fertilizer, nutrition, water and sanitation, and others totaling approximately \$100 million to help Sri Lanka cope with last year's humanitarian crisis.

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Our bilateral relations have further deepened through various events last year, which marked the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Sri Lanka. Notably, President Wickremesinghe visited Japan twice to meet Prime Minister Kishida during his first year in office.

The government and people of Japan intend to continue to work closely with Sri Lanka both bilaterally and multilaterally.

## 3. BILATERAL COOPERATION

I was deeply shocked by the recent economic crisis in Sri Lanka.

Japan is working with France and India as Co-Chairs on debt restructuring to help Sri Lanka emerge stronger from its economic crisis. We value the efforts made under President Wickremesinghe to implement the economic and fiscal reforms agreed upon with the IMF.

As demanding as debt restructuring is for the debtor countries, it can also be a burden for the creditor countries. Taxpayers in creditor countries will not be satisfied if certain countries are given preferential treatment. For this reason, it is important for all the major creditor countries to carry out the debt restructuring process in a transparent manner with fair burden sharing. Once the debt restructuring process is completed through the efforts of the Sri Lankan government and people, the resumption of suspended projects will be considered.

## 4. MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, the leaders of the G7 and invited countries, many of which are emerging and developing countries, confirmed that it is important for a wide range of partners beyond the G7 to work together to tackle the issues the international community is facing. On the development front, in particular, they confirmed the importance of transparent and fair development finance and the necessity of accelerating efforts to address debt issues.

In addition, the leaders of the G7, invited countries and Ukraine shared the view that any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force is unacceptable anywhere in the world. They also shared the importance of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rule of law.

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As Sri Lanka has been playing a prominent role in various fields, we believe there is much untapped potential for our countries to work together. We hope to continue to work closely with Sri Lanka in ensuring peace and stability of the international community. In this regard, we commend the recent ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the Sri Lankan government.

## 5. LIGHTING THE PATH TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

In my hometown, Yamaguchi, there are two Sri Lankan elephants, Milinda and Namalee, which are popular among the locals. They have been the symbol of our friendship, strengthening relations between Japan and Sri Lanka every day in their own way.

I will also continue my efforts to further enhance the bilateral relations between our two countries. It is the hope of Japan and myself that Sri Lanka will quickly recover from its economic crisis and fully unleash its potential by tapping into its rich natural environment and its vibrant young population. We look forward to seeing the "shining island" shine brighter than ever, and Japan is very eager to support Sri Lanka along the way.