

## 'South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship' programme

# Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and Central Bank organises Policy Dialogues

Aiming to facilitate a change in the entrepreneurial ecosystem and encourage youth transition into the entrepreneurial world, the first in a series of Policy Dialogues was organized by the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, under the aegis of the International Labour Organization's 'South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship' (SALE) programme.

Prevalent negative perceptions and

attitudes among the youth as well as broader society regarding entrepreneurship, pose a challenge to youth pursuing entrepreneurship as a viable career goal. Held under the theme of "Innovative approaches to reach youth entrepreneurship excellence", with participation from heads of state institutions, ecosystem players, academia, and leading donor agencies, the primary aim of these dialogues is to identify key issues and recommend best practices to the

Government of Sri Lanka and other stakeholders, to assist in policy development and initiatives relating to the entrepreneurship environment.

The importance of ensuring a regulatory rather than restrictive environment, addressing barriers youth entrepreneurs face in accessing finance - with calls for both the government and the banking sector to implement more updated, coherent and supportive policies, incorporating entrepreneurial

studies into school curricula, equitable access to knowledge and resource, and proactive and gender-responsive programmes that target the particular challenges faced by female entrepreneurs were among the main recommendations.

Central Bank of Sri Lanka Assistant Governor Janaka Karunaratne delivered the first keynote address, highlighted the inclusion of pillars vital to promoting entrepreneurship in the Nation-

al Financial Inclusion Strategy and the potential for youth entrepreneurship to develop entrepreneurial mindsets and change the current attitudes. Simrin Singh, Director, International Labour Organization Country Office for Sri Lanka and the Maldives and Daniel Moon, Economic Officer of the U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka also addressed audience.

The second Policy Dialogue in this series, focusing on The Digital Path to

Business Resilience as part of youth entrepreneurship excellence was held on September 27th at the Cinnamon Grand Hotel in Colombo.

Through strategic interventions such as these, ILO's SALE programme, funded by the U.S Department of State is endeavouring to create a shift in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and enhance capacity among the youth to enable them to launch and grow their own business ventures.



Vignettes of the event.

# Cargills Foundation implements Early Childhood Education Programme in Central Province

Cargills Foundation will be expanding their Early Childhood Education (ECE) programme to the Central Province with the on-boarding of fifty preschools including 1500 children, from the districts of Kandy, Matale and Nuwara-Eliya.

The ECE programme aims to provide children aged 3-5 an opportuni-

ty to develop and enhance their knowledge of the English language, through exposure to basic concepts of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM).

The programme was launched in Kandy at an event attended by the Central Province Governor Lalith Gamage, Gamini Rajarathna Chief

Secretary, Central Province, Premasinghe Education Secretary, Central Province, Gunathilaka Director of Early Childhood Development, Central Province and teachers of the 50 preschools.

Teachers received a starter pack comprising books, teacher guides with day-wise lesson plans and guid-

ance on introducing a new language in an entertaining way that makes learning fun.

Cargills Foundation has already implemented the ECE programme in the Western and Uva Provinces. Plans are underway to implement the programme in all Provinces island-wide.

# HNB conducts QR activation, onboards merchants to digital wallet 'HNB SOLO'

HNB PLC, conducted a QR activation programme to onboard merchants in Majestic City to its digital platform SOLO in support of the 'LANKAQR Rollout' campaign.

HNB together with other financial institutions and telecommunication partners participated in a day-long event at the local mall to raise awareness and interact with merchants, including small businesses regarding the advantages of LANKAQR-integrated payments.

The bank onboarded a number of merchants to its digital wallet HNB SOLO during the event and presented them with their unique QR codes.

"While the onset of the pandemic spurred the shift to contactless and cashless payment solutions, we have seen an increasing number of merchants and customers convert to LANKAQR for its sheer convenience. Given our accelerated digital transformation over the past few years, it is crucial we capitalize on the substantial interest shown by customers and vendors alike to drastically enhance much needed economic activity," HNB Head of Digital Services Shankar Dharmaratne said.

CBSL Assistant Governor Dharmasri Kumaratunge presented HNB SOLO merchants with the LANKAQR code during the event.

"The effort to drive for less cash society is slowly but surely transforming us into a digitally driven economy. We need to keep the momentum of the accelerated digital transformation that we experienced to ensure we establish a less cash economy. As such, I am grateful for the support provided by HNB since the inception of our nationwide LANKAQR campaign," CBSL Assistant Governor Dharmasri Kumaratunge said.

The bank was among the first financial institutions and telecommunication partners to join the CBSL in promoting digital payments as the standard day-to-day transactions island-wide.

Launched in 2019 as HNB's flagship digital payment solution, SOLO provides the convenience of digital transactions via affordable, easy and widely-adaptable QR code, a cost-effective option compared to alternative payment solutions available in the market.



CBSL Assistant Governor Dharmasri Kumaratunge presents the LANKAQR to the HNB SOLO Merchant Mlesna Tea with HNB Lead Product Management SOLO Harold Elanco, HNB Head of Digital Services Shankar Dharmaratne and HNB Executive mPOS M-commerce Solutions Ishan Karannagoda.

# BCIS launches Youth Leadership Academy 'Leaders for the 21st Century'

The Inauguration Ceremony of the BCIS Youth Leadership Academy was held on January 22, at the Olympus Auditorium of the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies (BCIS).

The "Leaders for the 21st Century" is a pioneering leadership training program launched by the BCIS. The focus of this programme is to create awareness and help foster integral pre-requisites for credible leadership such as honesty, commitment, efficiency among the participants. The BCIS Youth Leadership Academy was established as a CSR Project of the BMICH with the prime objective of training young people to become responsible and effective leaders.

The duration of the course is six months. Participants are selected through a public call for applications and subject-



Participants at the inauguration ceremony of the BCIS Youth Leadership Academy 'Leaders for the 21st Century' programme.

ed to a selection process. This is a non-residential training program.

Dr. Sunil Wijesiriwardena serves as the principal Academic Leader of the newly launched BCIS Youth Leadership Academy. Dhammika Kalapuge, Dr. Ursula Peiris, Lakshman Perera, Ruwan

Basnayake and Samitha Ethullooraarachchi function as the other academia.

The BCIS which was established in 1974, is a non-profit, tertiary level educational and research institution under the BMICH umbrella which is dedicated to research and advanced

studies in international relations, linguistic and cultural studies. In addition to the language and International Relations courses offered, the BCIS decided to launch the "Leaders for the 21st Century" program as the first management training course.

# Plastics and Rubber Institute of Sri Lanka holds AGM

The Plastics and Rubber Institute of Sri Lanka (PRISL) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the year 2021/22 on October 7, at the PRISL Auditorium at Rajagiriya.

The newly appointed President Kalyana Dhirasekera, address highlighted the challenges that the country and the polymer industry are facing and stressed on the need to forge forward with mutual respect, trust and confidence, in order to strengthen the position of the PRISL as the "Trusted Knowledge Partner of



the Polymer Industry in Sri Lanka.

The following Office Bearers and Members of the Executive Council were elected at the AGM.

President Kalyana Dhirasekera, Hon. Secretary Prabath

Jayasinghe, Vice President P.P. Perera, Vice President Dr. Upul Rathnayake, Treasurer Lalith Jayawardena, Assistant Secretary Pio Perera. Committee Members: Ananda Caldera, Dr. Susantha Siriwardena, B.M.H.I.B. Wattedegara, Janadara Jayawarna,

Dr. Sisira Ranathunga, Anura Herath, Sumudu Bowatta, Parakrama Jayatissa, Dinesh Gunasekara, Manoj Udugampola, Nilup Munasinghe, Thilak Warakawala, Lasith Abeyagunawardana, Devaki Rodrigo, Dilan Gunapala.



The newly elected President Kalyana Dhirasekera addressing the AGM

# College of Chemical Sciences inaugurates DLT programme

The Inauguration of the DLT programme 2022 of the College of Chemical Sciences was held on October 7, at the P.P.G. L. Siriwardene Auditorium, Institute of Chemistry Ceylon. Prof. M. Dayal P. De Costa, Senior Professor at the Department of Chemistry, University of Colombo graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

The occasion was honored by N.M.S. Hettigedara, President of the Institute of Chemistry Ceylon, Prof. R.D. Wijesekera,

Dean of the College of Chemical Sciences, E.G. Somapala, Director of DLT Programme, N.I.N.S. Nadarasa, Registrar of Examination (CCS) and W.M.G. Karunaratne, Registrar of Institute of Chemistry Ceylon.

DLT is a renowned programmes in Sri Lanka that produces professionally qualified Laboratory Technicians annually. This programme will be enrolling its 49th batch for the year 2022 with 54 students.



Officials at the Head Table N.I.N.S. Nadarasa, E.G. Somapala, Prof. M.D.P. De Costa, N.M.S. Hettigedara, Prof. R.D. Wijesekera and W.M.G. Karunaratne.

# 'Daraz Connect' launched, enables potential sellers use e-Commerce

'Daraz Connect' is a national outreach initiative launched recently to enable potential sellers to use e-commerce in Sri Lanka. Through this initiative, Daraz aims to improve digital knowledge and skills around e-commerce, encourage more local production and help consumers connect with new micro, small and medium businesses, especially from rural areas.

Each 'Daraz Connect' is a physical location that sellers can visit to learn how to sell online and successfully carry out all their e-commerce operations.

Through these locations, sellers access exclusive workshops on product development, marketing and branding. Each 'Daraz Connect' is equipped with all the technology needed to run an e-commerce business (such as computers, printers and packaging), and a Daraz Ambassador manages every 'Daraz Connect'. Daraz Ambassadors will guide the sellers in using e-commerce to reach a much broader customer base. In addition, 'Daraz Connect' strives to facilitate a peer-to-peer learning environment for the sellers. Sellers are

encouraged to visit the 'Daraz Connect' location daily or weekly to check their online orders, fulfil their orders, and work on their business strategy with the help of Daraz and other sellers in similar circumstances.

The first 'Daraz Connect' was established in Eheliyagoda, Ratnapura and developed in partnership with the Saubhagya Development Bureau and Eheliyagoda Divisional Secretariat.

Daraz Head of Corporate Affairs and Public Policy Anishka De Zylva said; "E-commerce is a resilient industry and one that will

be vital to Sri Lanka's economic recovery because of its vast export potential. E-commerce is an opportunity for Sri Lanka. It can contribute to solving challenges like low female labour force participation, dependency on the public sector for jobs and high youth unemployment. Through initiatives like Connect, Daraz will continue to do its part in building a more inclusive and diverse e-commerce sector in Sri Lanka."

Daraz Sri Lanka Managing Director Rakhil Fernando, said; "Daraz Connect will enable rural

entrepreneurs to take advantage of the platform's unique strengths and educate them on topics like product quality and consumer rights. Sellers need to know how to leverage the e-commerce ecosystem to reach a wider consumer base. Saubhagya Development Bureau Director General Wasantha Gunarathna, stated; "The Saubhagya Production Village Programme was launched to promote home-based products, raise the income level of the rural community and uplift the rural economy."



The soft opening of the first Daraz Connect in Eheliyagoda