

OFFICIAL NAME: Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

CAPITAL: Colombo

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Unitary Multiparty Republic

AREA: 65,610 Sq Km (25,382 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION: 19,281,300



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Sri Lanka is an island located in the Indian Ocean and separated from India by the Palk Strait. The country has two geographical regions. (1.) A rolling plain which comprises 80% of the land area as well as the entire northern half of the island and continues around the coast to the southern half. (2.) The south central region which is hilly and mountainous with two plateaux, the Hatton and Kandy, that rise abruptly from the Ura Basin. The country has sixteen rivers of which the Mahaweli Ganga and the Aruvi Aru are the longest. Major Cities (pop. est.); Colombo 615,000, Dehiwala 196,000, Moratuwa 170,000, Jaffna 129,000 (1990). Land Use; forested 33%, pastures 7%, agricultural-cultivated 29%, other 31% (1993).

CLIMATE: Sri Lanka has a tropical climate with little seasonal variation in conditions and humidity, which is frequently around 90%. The island experiences the SW Monsoon in May and the NE Monsoon in November. Average annual precipitation varies between 1,270 mm and 1,900 mm (50 and 75 inches) on the southeast plains to between 2,540 mm and 5,080 mm (100 and 200 inches) on the southwest plains. Average temperature ranges in Colombo are from 23 to 31 degrees Celsius (73 to 88 degrees Fahrenheit) and from 14 to 24 degrees Celsius (57 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit) in the highlands.

PEOPLE: The principal ethnic majority are the Sinhalese who account for 74% of the population. Other ethnic minorities include the Tamils, who are of Indian origin and account for 18% of the population while the Moors account for 7% and the Burghers, Malays, Euro-Asians as well as others account for the remainder.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 262 persons per sq km (680 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 22.0% urban, 78.0% rural (1993). Sex Distribution; 51.0% male, 49.0% female (1991). Life Expectancy at Birth; 70.0 years male, 74.0 years female (1993). Age Breakdown; 35% under 15, 21% 15 to 24, 26% 25 to 44, 11% 45 to 59, 4% 60 to 69, 3% 70 and over (1991). Birth Rate; 21.2 per 1,000 (1991). Death Rate; 5.8 per 1,000 (1991). Increase Rate; 15.4 per 1,000 (1991). Infant Mortality Rate; 24.0 per 1,000 live births (1993).

RELIGIONS: The national religion is Theravada Buddhism which accounts for 69% of the population, mostly the Sinhalese. Other religious minorities include Hindus which account for around 16%, Christians for 7.5% and Muslims for 7.6% of the population.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Sinhala and Tamil, while English is also widely spoken.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 15.5%, incomplete primary 12.1%, primary 52.3%, lower secondary 14.7%, upper secondary 3.0%, higher 1.1% (1981). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 86.1% (1981).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: On Feb. 4, 1948 Sri Lanka became the independent nation of Ceylon within the Commonwealth with D.S. Senanayake as the country's first Prime Minister. The government immediately removed the Tamils' suffrage rights and revoked their citizenships. In 1956 Solomon Bandaranaike was elected Prime Minister and his government passed a law that made Sinhala the country's only official language which escalated the resentment between the Tamils and Sinhalese, and conflicts ensued. In Sept. 1959 Bandaranaike was assassinated by a Sinhalese Buddhist monk and Bandaranaike's widow, Sirimavo became Prime Minister. In 1965 the United National Party (NUP) won elections and formed a coalition government with Dudley Senanayake, son of D.S. Senanayake. In 1970 the newly elected United Front coalition government ordered the arrest of the Sinhalese Maoist Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and in Apr. 1970 the JVP launched a revolt. In 1972 the country changed its name from Ceylon to Sri Lanka. In Oct. 1977 the National Assembly approved the adoption of a presidential system of government and in 1978 J.R. Jayawardene became President. In Oct. 1982 Pres. Jayawardene was re-appointed as President. In May 1983 a State of Emergency was declared as Tamil guerrilla rebels fought for a separate state called Ealem in the north and east of the island, and by 1987 the Tamil Tigers or Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealem had brought the Sri Lankan armed forces to a standstill. In July 1987 the Sri Lankan and Indian governments agreed to a plan for Indian troops to enter the northern regions of the island and disarm the Tamil Tigers, which resulted in the deaths of some 1,200 Indian soldiers. In Dec. 1988 Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa was elected President and in Sept. 1989 the Indian and Sri Lankan governments agreed to a withdrawal of the Indian troops from the northern and eastern provinces, which was complete by Mar. 1990. During late 1989 the JVP insurgency in the south escalated resulting in the deaths of hundreds of government officials and ultimately in the arrest or death of most of the JVP leaders. In Aug. 1990 after the withdrawal of Indian troops, the Tamil Tigers began killing Muslim minorities who in turn established the Jihad and retaliated by killing the Tamils. In 1991 the Indian government imposed direct rule on a southern Indian Tamil state that was believed to be supporting the Sri Lankan based Tigers who controlled large parts of northeastern Sri Lanka. On May 21, 1991 a Tamil Tiger assassinated the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in a suicide bomb attack. In Aug. 1991 Pres. Ranasinghe Premadasa narrowly survived calls for his impeach over alleged corruption. Also

in 1991 the government banned all gambling houses claiming they assisted organize crime. During 1992 the Tamil Tigers continued their campaign of terrorist attacks and bombings that had resulted in the deaths of nearly 20,000 people. On Mar. 16, 1992 some 10,000 demonstrators began an 18 day protest march for peace and on Mar. 19, 1992 the government narrowly survived a vote of no confidence following allegations of government corruption. On June 10, 1992 ten people died following 50 cm (21 inches) of rainfall while a further 150,000 were temporarily displaced. On Aug. 8, 1992 nine high-level Sri Lankan military officials were killed in a land mine explosion. In Sept. 1992 the Supreme Court dismissed an application to invalidate Pres. Premadasa's 1988 election. In Oct. 1992 some 140 mostly Muslim people were killed in Tiger raids on three northern villages. On Nov. 16, 1992 a Tamil Tiger suicide bomber assassinated Sri Lanka's naval commander and three aides in Colombo. On May 1, 1993 Pres. Premadasa was assassinated by a suspected Tamil Tiger suicide bomber as he watched the May Day parade in Colombo. On May 7, 1993 the Parliament elected Prime Minister Dingiri Banda Wijetunga as the new President, following which Pres. Wijetunga appointed Ranil Wickremasinghe Prime Minister. The Parliament appointed a 45-member committee to derive a solution to the conflict and recommended two separate councils for the north and east in a quasi-federal system, although the proposal was rejected by the Tigers. In Aug. 1993 the government began a campaign to recruit a further 10,000 soldiers to fight the Tamils Tigers and on Aug. 17, 1993 the Speaker of the Parliament named an 18-member committee to investigate constitutional reforms involving the powers of the President and Parliament. In Sept. 1993 the government launched a major offensive involving 9,000 troops and on Oct. 1, 1993 had captured the Tiger sea base at Kilali, destroying some 120 vessels. In Nov. 1993 the Tamil Tigers reinitiated attacks on government military bases.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Rupee (SLRs) divided into 100 Cents.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$10,573,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$5,936,000,000 (1993). Imports; SLRs 181,484,000,000 (1993). Exports; SLRs 137,286,000,000 (1993). Tourism Receipts; USD \$208,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; SLRs -53,894,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 5,948,221 or 40.9% of total population (1992). Unemployed; 13.3% (1992).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are the USA, the UK, Egypt and Japan.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Cassava, Coconuts, Fish, Fruit, Graphite, Iron Ore, Rice, Rubber, Semi Precious Gemstones, Spices, Tea, Timber.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry, Mining, Oil Refining, Textiles.

MAIN EXPORTS: Coconut Products, Gemstones, Petroleum Products, Rubber, Tea, Textiles.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 1,453 km (903 mi) (1990), passenger-km 2,484,700,000 (1,543,921,000 passenger-mi) (1990), cargo ton-km 167,000,000 (114,378,000 short ton-mi) (1990). Roads; length 25,684 km (15,959 mi) (1988). Vehicles; cars 155,194 (1988), trucks and buses 139,206 (1988). Merchant Marine; vessels 78 (1990), deadweight tonnage 528,102 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 3,424,000,000 (2,128,000,000 passenger-mi) (1990), cargo ton-km 91,198,000 (62,462,000 short ton-mi) (1990).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 10 with a total circulation of 480,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 3,300,000 (1994). Television; receivers 700,000 (1994). Telephones; units 157,800 (1993).

MILITARY: 126,000 (1994) total active duty personnel with 83.3% army, 8.2% navy and 8.5% air force while military expenditure accounts for 4.8% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).