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Tribute to Dr. Saman Kelegama

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Print Edition



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Dr. Saman Kelegama

Eminent economist and erudite scholar in Sri Lanka, Dr. Saman Kelegama provided the insightful advocacy and guidance in execution of the tasks of the Government on the wider economic arena of international trade under the Committee of the proposed Agency for International Trade which has been established by the Government with the prime objective of immediately synchronizing the trade and investment nexus in the economic policy agenda of the Government to benefit people of the country through new employment and increased income.

Articulation and implementation of the trade policy has been historically scattered and spread over many agencies. This mostly resulted in the development of adhoc and often conflicting rules, regulations and practices affecting adversely on the expansion of trade and making few to benefit from international trade.

Dr. Kelegama provided the required leadership in the Committee which included the heads of all trade-related agencies of the Government and representatives of the private sector in the Committee of International Trade to bring all inter-related policy as well as cross-institutional elements to a single platform.

Formulation of new trade policy, negotiation of preferential trade agreements, creation of national export promotion strategy, introducing the much awaited in-house legislative and regulatory mechanism related to international trade of Sri Lanka, strengthening trade facilitation, and introducing the required modalities to address internal and external non-tariff measures have been some of the salient initiatives undertaken in the relatively shorter period of his tenure since December 2015.

Under his strong research background, he was also instrumental in preparing a number of studies on costs and benefits of FTAs and has guided the relevant agencies to undertake several initiatives such as reforming the standards and regulations related to imports and exports in developing the trade liberalization programme for Sri Lanka under various FTAs leading to formulation of the mechanism to prepare the negative list/sensitive list on objectively driven systematic economic criteria for the first time ever.

Dr. Kelegama's professional engagement with the Ministry was in addition to his role at the Institute Policy Studies as Executive Director, the position he held until demise.

His long-term collaborations as a member of the professional networks facilitated by World Bank, ADB, UNDP, UNIDO, ILO, UN-ESCAP, Commonwealth Secretariat and his deliberations made at a wider range of international fora, his international experience as one of the top regional trade economists with reputation and recognition among academia, the research community and policy makers and his life-long grip as a full-time Sri Lankan professional living in the country has been advantageous in negotiating the country specific elements.

The enormous contribution made by Dr. Kelegama to the enhancement of international trade will benefit the country.

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