

News



The higher ordination ceremony of the Amarapura Chapter was held at the Kaalanadi Udupukkhepa Seemamalakaya near the Kalutara Bodhi premises on Thursday in the presence of the Mahanayake Thera of the chapter and members of the Maha Sangha, including Senior Professor Rajakeeya Panditha Ven. Kahapola Sugatharathana Thera, Anunayake Ven. Dodanduwe Sirikara Thera, and Acting Chief Lekhakadhikari of the Amarapura Chapter and Chief Incumbent of the Nawala Vimala Viharaya, Ven. Beragama Wimaladhamma Thera. Pic by Thushara Athapattu

Green Through Football



The Deputy Mayor Mr Hemantha Kumara plants a ceremonial tree in tribute to Pelé.



Mr. Nalin Attygalle plants a commemorative tree in dedication to Diego Maradona.

BY RALPH GUNAWARDENA
ADEZ FOUNDATION SRI LANKA

Football stands as the world's most popular sport, second only to the Olympic Games. Its governing body, FIFA, comprises 211 member nations, with over 250 million people of all ages actively participating in the sport. The reach of the game is staggering; the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar engaged nearly 5.2 billion people across television, streaming, and social media platforms. The tournament's opening match drew over 550 million global viewers, while the final between Argentina and France reached a peak of 1.5 billion.

While official statistics for the 2026 FIFA World Cup have not yet been released, the sport continues to command unprecedented global attention. Climate change and global warming have reached our doorstep, and this crisis will persist until we take decisive action to reduce atmospheric CO2 and protect the ozone layer. While there are various strategies to address carbon emissions, one of the most accessible and effective methods is the consistent planting of trees. While no single individual or organization can solve this global issue alone, collective efforts can significantly mitigate the impact of CO2 and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Currently, the 2026 FIFA World Cup is being hosted across the United States, Canada, and Mexico, uniting the world as anticipation builds toward the final matches. Given its immense popularity, we believe football—a sport that speaks a truly universal language—is the ideal platform to raise awareness about climate change and global warming. Because awareness is the critical first step toward effective action, the "Green Through Football" initiative was conceived.

This program is designed to plant 1,248 trees, representing one tree for every player participating in the 2026 World Cup (48 participating countries

CAA introduces mandatory labelling rules for soap products

The Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) has issued a special gazette notification introducing mandatory labelling requirements for a wide range of soap products sold in Sri Lanka.

The regulations, issued under Section 10(1)(a) of the Consumer Affairs Authority Act No. 9 of 2003, will apply to manufacturers, importers, distributors, warehouse operators and

traders of soap products.

According to the new rules, the name of the product must be displayed prominently in bold letters in Sinhala, Tamil and English, or in at least two of the three languages on the main panel of the packaging. The remaining language should be displayed on another panel.

The notification also requires manu-

facturers to clearly indicate the total fat content of the product as a percentage, using bold lettering of not less than two millimetres in size.

The regulations cover a range of products, including baby soap, toilet soap, shaving soap, carbollic soap, laundry soap, bathing bars and soft soap.

The gazette notification will come into effect from July 9, 2027.

Lanka draws crowds at Los Angeles Lotus Festival

Sri Lanka attracted strong public interest at the 2026 Lotus Festival in Los Angeles, with more than 5,000 people attending the two-day event and the country's pavilion emerging as one of the festival's main attractions.

As the host country, Sri Lanka showcased its tourism, cultural heritage and investment potential to thousands of visitors. The Sri Lankan pavilion received significant attention throughout the festival, highlighting the country's UNESCO World Heritage Sites, scenic landscapes, popular tourist destinations and diverse travel experiences.

One of the highlights of the event was the visit by Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass to the Sri Lankan pavilion.

Consul General of Sri Lanka in Los Angeles Achini Perera introduced visitors to Sri Lanka's recently launched 30-day free Electronic Travel



Authorisation (ETA) scheme, available to travellers from 40 countries, includ-

ing the United States, as part of efforts to promote tourism.

The festival also featured a Sri Lankan cultural performance that was warmly received by the audience. Traditional Kandyan, Low Country and Sabaragamuwa dances were performed, showcasing the country's rich cultural heritage.

The event was attended by Consul General Achini Perera, Deputy Consul General Rekha Mallikarachchi, officials of the Consulate General and a large gathering of members of the Sri Lankan community in Southern California.

Among the distinguished guests were Sri Lankan academics and professionals, including Dr. Sarath Gunapala, Professor Dr. Bandula Wijay and Dr. Walter Jayasinghe, whose participation added prominence to the event.

NCGI marks expansion with 2,000th credit guarantee for MSMEs

The National Credit Guarantee Institution Limited (NCGI) yesterday inaugurated its new office on the seventh floor of HNB Towers, Colombo, marking a major expansion of its operations while celebrating the issuance of its 2,000th credit guarantee within just 15 months of commencing operations.

The milestone guarantee underscores the institution's rapid growth since launch operations in January 2025 with its first credit guarantee for an agricultural project in Uva Province.

NCGI said its credit guarantee programme has facilitated more than Rs. 13 billion in loans for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) across the country. The initiative, implemented with the support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Ministry of Finance, is aimed at improving access to finance for businesses that lack the collateral required to obtain bank loans.

The institution expects to double the number of beneficiaries to 4,000 by the end of this year, further strengthening its contribution to economic growth and entrepreneurship.

The highest number of beneficiaries has been recorded in the Western, Southern and Northern Provinces. NCGI said 20 per cent of the guarantees issued have supported women-owned enterprises, while 24 per cent have been extended to priority sectors including agriculture, information technology (IT), tourism and exports.

The opening ceremony was attended by Deputy Minister Chathuranga Abeyasinghe, Central Bank Governor Dr. Nandalal Weerasinghe, NCGI Chairman and Deputy Secretary to the Treasury Sanjaya Mudalige, Chief Executive Officer Jude Fernando, representatives of the Asian Development Bank, shareholder financial institutions, government agencies, trade chambers and other distinguished guests.



Governor of the Central Bank Dr. Nandalal Weerasinghe, NCGI Chairman and Deputy Secretary to the Treasury Sanjaya Mudalige, NCGI Chief Executive Officer Jude Fernando and Deputy Minister of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development, Chathuranga Abeyasinghe at the opening

Kalawana school honours Sunday Island journalist for supporting needy students

The staff and students of R/Kalawana Gamin Central College have honoured Sunday Island journalist Upendra Priyankara Jathungama in recognition of his media initiatives and efforts to provide school equipment to more than 1,000 children with the support of generous donors.

The appreciation was extended to Jathungama for his years of service to the community and the country through journalism, particularly his efforts to identify low-income students in the Ratnapura District who faced difficulties in continuing their education due to



poverty.

The school commended his work in reaching out to children who had dropped out of school because of financial hardships and facilitating assistance to help them resume their education.

The felicitation ceremony was attended by the Principal of R/Kalawana Gamin Central College, Kapila Bandara Watta, Deputy Principal Attorney-at-Law Suminda Jayasiri, teacher Gayan Tharindu, members of the academic staff and students, who presented the tribute to Jathungama.

Commercial Bank makes history with biggest FinanceAsia awards haul by a Sri Lankan bank

Reaffirming its unmatched leadership and excellence in Sri Lanka's banking sector, the Commercial Bank of Ceylon has been named Best Bank in Sri Lanka for the 15th consecutive year at the FinanceAsia Awards 2026, while also winning six other prestigious accolades across key areas of banking, the most by Sri Lankan bank.

In addition to being named the country's Best Bank, Commercial Bank was also honoured as Best Bank for SMEs, Best Bank for Use of Technology, Best Islamic Finance House, Best Sustainable Bank, Best Private Bank and Best Retail Bank in Sri Lanka. Collectively, these accolades underscore the Bank's leadership across key areas of the financial services spectrum.

Widely regarded as one of the most respected benchmarks in the Asia-Pacific financial services industry, the FinanceAsia Awards recognise institutions that demonstrate excellence in performance, innovation, leadership, customer service and resilience. The 2026 edition marks the 30th edition of these flagship awards, which evaluate banks on



Krishan Gamage, Deputy General Manager – Information Technology (Operations) and Chinthaka Dharmasena, Assistant General Manager – Services at Commercial Bank accept the FinanceAsia awards on behalf of the Bank.

financial strength, strategic growth, digital transformation, sustainability initiatives and overall contribution to their respective economies.

*Recognition at globally respected

award programmes such as the FinanceAsia Awards further strengthens our standing among leading regional and international peers, while affirming our performance in financial strength, innovation, customer service and sustainability," said Mr Sanath Manatunge, Managing Director/CEO of Commercial Bank.

"This success also enhances stakeholder confidence and reinforces customer trust in the Bank's ability to deliver consistent value across multiple areas of banking."

The awards were accepted on behalf of Commercial Bank by Chinthaka Dharmasena, Assistant General Manager – Services, and Krishan Gamage, Deputy General Manager – Information Technology (Operations), at the gala ceremony held on 24th June 2026 in Hong Kong.

Explaining the basis for its selections, FinanceAsia noted that the 2026 awards celebrate institutions that demonstrated determination to deliver desirable outcomes during 2025 through strong commercial and technical acumen, despite operating in complex and evolving market conditions.