



THE IMPORT SECTION
of THE CEYLON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**Import Section
of
the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce**

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

**Import Section
of
the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce**

Annual Report & Audited Accounts

2024-2025

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Introduction

Office Bearers & Executive Committee 2024/2025

Chairman

Thulitha Mendis - Singer (Sri Lanka) PLC

Vice Chairman

Ushan De Silva - Unilever Sri Lanka (*August 2024 - December 2024*)

Sankha Gammanpila - Hemas Pharmaceutical (Pvt) Ltd (*January 2024 onwards*)

Deputy Vice Chairman

Sankha Gammanpila - Hemas Pharmaceutical (Pvt) Ltd (*August 2024 - December 2024*)

Immediate Past Chairman

Niranjana Dissanayake

Company Name

Represented by

Abans PLC	Wazeem Navavi
A. Baur & Co. (Pvt.) Ltd.	Daniel Hess and Anushane Anandharaj
Astron Ltd	Sherley Kodithuwakku
Bank of Ceylon	K K Susantha
Ceylon Biscuits Ltd	Shalinda Kariyawasam
Cargills Ceylon Ltd	Jerald Suvendra
Douglas & Sons (Pvt) Ltd	Haritha Nanayakkara
E B Creasy & Co Plc	Kevin Edwards
Fonterra Brands Lanka (Pvt) Ltd	Irosha Kaluratna and Malshan Dissanayake
Gnanam Imports (Pvt) Ltd	Ramraj Maniraj
Hayleys PLC	C. Rajasooriyar
Millers Ltd	Chandana Kelegama
Maliban Biscuit Manufactories Ltd	Sarath Pathegama
Nestle PLC	Harshana Rajasinghe
Pyramid Wilmar (Pvt) Ltd	Sudesh Gomes
Richard Peiris & Co PLC	Adrian Oswald
Haleon Lanka (Pvt) Ltd	Manjula Devasinghe

Past Chairmen

1935 – 1939	Sir J A Tarbat
1940 – 1942	Mr. R P L Ross
1943 – 1944	Mr. A M Thalmann
1945 – 1946	Mr. R P L Ross
1947	Mr. R F Edge
1948	Mr. R P L Ross
1949	Mr. L Matthews
1950 – 1951	Mr. C F H Edwards
1951	Mr. R P L Ross
1951	Mr. L E Heal
1952	Mr. C F H Edwards
1953 – 1954	Major J H Hoare
1954	Mr. J O Clazey
1954 – 1956	Major J H Hoare
1957	Mr. G D Gordon
1957	Mr. B G Thornley
1957 – 1959	Mr. G D Gordon
1959	Mr. M M Fielding
1959 – 1961	Mr. G D Gordon
1961	Mr. R G J Baynoton
1961 – 1962	Mr. G D Gordon
1963 – 1964	Mr. B D Collins
1964	Mr. J Fosbrook
1964 – 1965	Mr. B D Collins
1966	Mr. C H White
1966	Mr. N W G Brown
1967 – 1968	Mr. C H White
1969 – 1971	Mr. S Witane
1972 – 1973	Mr. M Kunaratnam
1974 – 1978	Mr. V L Wirasingha
1979 – 1980	Mr. M Kunaratnam
1981 – 1987	Mr. A C Marker
1987 – 1994	Mr. S Nagendra
1994 – 2002	Mr. D J A Abeyesekera
2002– 2006	Mr. Suraj Fernando
2006– 2009	Mr. Ranjan De Silva
2009– 2012	Mr. Mahesh Wijewardene
2012– 2014	Mr. Kevin Edwards
2014– 2017	Mr. Dinesh De Silva
2017– 2019	Mr. Nishan Nanayakkara
2019– 2021	Mr. Delano Dias
2021– 2023	Mr. Niranjana Dissanayake

Sub Committees of the Import Section

Import Section Functions

Thulitha Mendis, Ushan de Silva, Sankha Gammanpila, Niranjan Dissanayake, Sudesh Gomez
Haritha Nanayakkara, C. Rajasooriyar, Harshana Rajasinghe

Shipping & Logistic

Ushan de Silva, Sankha Gammanpila, Adrian Oswald, Kevin Edwards

Regulatory Authority

Thulitha Mendis, Sankha Gammanpila, Adrian Oswald, Wazeem Navavi, Jerald Suvendra

Representation on the Chamber Committee & Business Councils

Thulitha Mendis, Ushan de Silva, Sankha Gammanpila, Kevin Edwards

Economic Outlook and Sector Performance Reviews

Finance / CBSL/ Banking - Bank of Ceylon, Singer Sri Lanka PLC

Wholesale /Essential food commodity sector - Gnanam Imports (Pvt) Ltd, Pyramid Wilmar (Pvt) Ltd

Modern Trade / Imported brands- Douglas & Sons (Pvt) Ltd, Richard Pieris & Co. PLC, Cargills Ceylon PLC, Abans PLC, Millers Ltd

General Trade/ FMCG - Fonterra Brands Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, Maliban Biscuit Manufactories Ltd, Nestle PLC, Ceylon Biscuit Ltd

Pharmaceuticals (Imported and Locally manufactured) - Hemas Pharmaceuticals (Pvt) Ltd, Astron Ltd, Smithkline Beecham (Pvt) Ltd, A. Baur & Co.

Manufacturing Industry - Ceylon Biscuit Ltd, Maliban Biscuit Manufactories Ltd, E B Creasy & Co. PLC, Richard Pieris & Co. PLC, Hayleys PLC

Exports - Nestle Lanka PLC, Ceylon Biscuits Ltd, Hayleys PLC, Maliban Biscuit Manufactories Ltd

List of Members

A.Baur & Co. (Pvt) Ltd
Abans PLC
Adamexpo
Akbar Brothers (Pvt) Ltd
Akzo Nobel Paints Lanka (Pvt) Ltd
Associated Motorways (Pvt) Ltd
Astron Ltd
Atlas Axillia Co. (Pvt) Ltd
Bank of Ceylon
Brandix Apparel (Pvt) Ltd
Brown & Co. PLC
Built Element Ltd
W. Mackie Plc
Cargills (Ceylon) PLC
Ceylon Biscuits Ltd
Ceylon Business Appliances (Pvt) Ltd
Ceylon Cold Stores PLC
Ceylon Oxygen Ltd
CIC Holdings PLC
Citihealth Imports (Pvt) Ltd
CL Synergy (Pvt) Ltd
Coca-Cola Beverages Sri Lanka Ltd
Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC
Darley Butler & Co. Ltd
David Pieris Holdings (Pvt) Ltd
Delmege Forsyth & Co. Ltd
Deutsche Bank
Devi Trading Co.
Diesel & Motor Engineering PLC
Douglas & Sons (Pvt) Ltd
E. B. Creasy & Co Ltd
Eagle Logistics Colombo (Pvt) Ltd
Jay Kay Marketing Services (Pvt) Ltd
KIK Lanka (Pvt) Ltd
Lanka Ceramic PLC
Lankem Ceylon PLC
Laugfs Holdings Ltd
Laxapana Batteries PLC
Maliban Biscuit Manufactories (Pvt) Ltd
Mansel (Ceylon) (Pvt) Ltd
Mascons (Pvt) Ltd
Mediquipment Ltd
Metropolitan Technologies (Pvt) Ltd
Microcells (Pvt) Ltd
Millers Ltd
Morison Ltd
Multiform Chemicals (Pvt) Ltd
Neochem International (Pvt) Ltd
Nestle Lanka PLC
Pan Asia Ltd
Perfetti Van Melle Lanka (Pvt)Ltd
PGP Glass Ceylon Ltd
Printcare Universal (Pvt) Ltd
Pulses Splitting & Processing Industry (Pvt) Ltd
Pyramid Lanka (Pvt) Ltd
Pyramid Wilmar (Pvt) Ltd
Reckitt Benckiser (Lanka) Ltd
Rhino Roofing Products Ltd
Richard Pieris & Co. Ltd
Senok Trade Combine (Pvt) Ltd
Siam City Cement (Lanka) Ltd
Singer Sri Lanka
Softlogic Retail (Pvt) Ltd
South Asia Gateway Terminals (Pvt) Ltd

Elastomeric Engineering Co. Ltd
Eswaran Brothers Exports (Pvt) Ltd
Ferrero Lanka (Pvt) Ltd
Finlays Colombo Ltd
Fonterra Brands Lanka (Pvt) Ltd
Free Lanka Trading Co.(Pvt) Ltd
Freight Links International (Pte) Ltd
George Steuart & Co. Ltd
Gnanam Imports (Pvt) Ltd
Haleon Lanka (Pvt) Ltd

Hatton National Bank PLC
Hayleys Fentons Ltd
Hayleys PLC
Hemas Manufacturing (Pvt) Ltd
Hemas Pharmaceuticals (Pvt) Ltd
Hunter & Co. PLC
IBM World Trade Corporation
Jafferjee Brothers

South Sea Impex (Pte) Ltd
St Anthony's Industries Group (Pvt) Ltd
Stafford Motor Co (Pvt) Ltd
Standard Chartered Bank
Star Packaging (Pvt) Ltd
Stassen Exports (Pvt) Ltd
Sunshine Healthcare Lanka Ltd
The Autodrome PLC
The Capital Maharaja Organisation Ltd
The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd
The Lion Brewery (Ceylon) PLC
The Swadeshi Industrial Works PLC
Tokyo Cement Company (Lanka) Ltd
Toyota Lanka (Pvt) Ltd
Unilever Sri Lanka (Pvt) Ltd
United Motors Lanka PLC
United Tractor & Equipment (Pvt) Ltd
Whittal Boustead (Pvt) Ltd

Chairman's Review

The year under review has been marked by profound volatility and complexity in global trade dynamics. Heightened geopolitical unrest, most notably in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and escalating disruptions to global maritime corridors—particularly in the Red Sea and the Suez Canal—have significantly impacted international logistics and freight operations. Compounding these issues, the imposition of additional tariffs by the United States on selected Sri Lankan exports would further intensify the pressure on our trade ecosystem. These developments have not only extended shipping lead times and increased freight surcharges but have also had adverse ripple effects on cost structures, working capital cycles, and profit margins for a wide segment of Sri Lanka's importer base.



Thulitha Mendis
Chairman – Import Section of CCC

In this environment, the Import Section has remained steadfast in its commitment to advancing the interests of the country's import community while advocating for a pragmatic and resilient trade facilitation framework. Our strategic priority throughout the year has been to strengthen border agency collaboration, advocate for meaningful regulatory reforms, and ensure that border controls—while necessary for revenue assurance and national security—are implemented in a manner that does not hinder the flow of legitimate commerce.

Our engagement at the highest levels of government has been pivotal. In January 2025, we had the honor of participating in a high-level meeting with His Excellency President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, alongside representatives from Sri Lanka Customs, border agencies, and the private sector. The discussions focused on a range of pressing challenges, including excessive delays at Customs, the high incidence of container examinations, inefficiencies arising from limited service hours, and the misuse of container yards by certain importers. These concerns were conveyed candidly, and the forum served as a catalyst for deeper, follow-up consultations.

Subsequently, the Import Section engaged with the honorable Minister of Trade, in discussions that resulted in two major commitments. First was the expansion of the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) program to a wider pool of eligible importers, with an emphasis on Customs supporting near-qualified entities through the certification process. Second was the endorsement of a strategic proposal to implement holistic value chain mapping across priority sectors, enabling regulatory agencies to identify and address structural inefficiencies in a targeted manner. These two initiatives have the potential to greatly improve both operational predictability and trade facilitation efficiency.

Another milestone was our contribution to the National Steering Committee on Logistics (NSCOEILS), held in March 2025, where we participated in drafting a 43-point reform agenda to improve container clearance and logistics performance. Our input was instrumental in ensuring that recommendations such as the phased removal of the bank guarantee requirement imposed by the Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI) received due consideration. While SLSI indicated that the removal of the requirement would necessitate Cabinet approval and legal enactment, the Import Section is optimistic that these long-standing impediments to trade will be resolved in the near future.

In parallel, we engaged the Import and Export Control Department (IECD) to address procedural inefficiencies affecting licensing and permit issuance. This dialogue yielded concrete outcomes, including the introduction of real-time two-way portal messaging, expanded officer accessibility through published contact numbers, and the full deployment of an online payment facility.

Beyond stakeholder engagements, the Section remained highly active in submitting formal representations to key government entities. A detailed submission was made to His Excellency the President, recommending the re-evaluation of import restrictions on canned fish, which disproportionately affect low-income populations and overlook the seasonal limitations of the local fisheries sector. We also addressed a formal letter to the Hon. Minister of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development, seeking approval for the importation of PVD salt by local food manufacturers, an essential input currently constrained by quality and availability challenges in the domestic market. In addition, a comprehensive letter was submitted to the Controller General of Imports & Exports requesting the reinstatement of corporate guarantees under the SLSI scheme, in view of the significant financial and operational burdens imposed by the new bank guarantee mandate.

Another key engagement was our comprehensive representation to Sri Lanka Customs regarding chronic delays at the RCT Terminal and the broader systemic challenges impeding cargo clearance. Our recommendations included the establishment of additional examination yards, modernization of the ASYCUDA system toward full digitization, prioritization of pharmaceutical and reefer cargo through dedicated processing lanes, and the optimization of the AEO program to deliver meaningful benefits to certified traders. This representation also highlighted the urgent need for enhanced inter-agency data sharing and better integration between Customs, the Ports Authority, and other regulatory bodies.

The Section continued a balanced approach to border enforcement. We have consistently maintained that while Customs and other regulatory agencies must ensure robust revenue collection and protect against illicit trade practices, these objectives must be pursued through risk-based and data-driven compliance models. A blanket enforcement approach that delays the movement of compliant, trusted traders is counterproductive and undermines investor confidence. Instead, trusted operators should benefit from expedited treatment, enabling authorities to concentrate their resources on high-risk consignments where intervention is most warranted.

Our awareness and capacity-building efforts were also a highlight of the year. The Import Section organized a well-attended awareness session on the Import Inspection Scheme, in collaboration with senior officials from the SLSI. The session provided our members with valuable insights into regulatory

standards, licensing procedures, product classification, and the use of the online portal. The interactive nature of the session enabled members to clarify long-standing queries and reaffirmed the Import Section's commitment to member education and regulatory compliance.

As we look ahead to 2026, the Import Section will intensify its collaboration with the Chamber's Bilateral Trade Division to assess the implications of the revised U.S. tariff regime on essential intermediate imports. We plan to engage the Ministry of Finance in proposing appropriate relief mechanisms, including duty drawbacks or temporary remission schemes, to shield domestic industries from unintended cost escalations. Furthermore, we will continue to advocate for the establishment of genuine 24/7 border operations at Colombo Port and work toward the realization of a National Digital Single Window that integrates all relevant border control agencies into a unified digital framework. Concurrently, we intend to partner with the Central Environment Authority to fast-track import approvals for energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable technologies, aligning trade policy with Sri Lanka's broader climate commitments.

In conclusion, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Vice Chairman, Deputy Vice Chairman, the Executive Committee, and the Secretariat of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce for their unwavering support throughout the year. I also extend my gratitude to the leadership of Sri Lanka Customs, the IECD, the SLSI, the Ports Authority, and all other government stakeholders who have constructively engaged with the Import Section in pursuit of mutual objectives. We remain resolute in our commitment to building a secure, efficient, and future-ready border management system—one that not only safeguards national revenue and eliminates systemic leakages but also empowers Sri Lanka to compete with confidence in a rapidly evolving global trade landscape.

89th Annual General Meeting

The Import Section of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce held its 89th Annual General Meeting on 27th June 2024 at the Shangri-La Hotel, Colombo.

Mr. Thulitha Mendis of Singer Sri Lanka PLC, Mr. Ushan de Silva of Unilever Sri Lanka Ltd & Mr. Sankha Gammanpila from Hemas Pharmaceuticals (Pvt) Ltd were elected as the Chairman, Vice Chairman & Deputy Vice Chairman respectively. Mr. Niranjana Dissanayake of Ferrero Lanka (Pvt) Ltd will serve the committee as the Immediate Past chairman and ex officio of the committee.



Seated from Left to Right

Mr. Sudesh Gomez (Pyramid Wilmar (Pvt) Ltd), Mr. Adrian Oswald (Richard Pieris & Co. PLC), Mr. Kevin Edwards (E. B Creasy & Co. PLC), Mr. Sankha Gammanpila- Deputy Vice Chairman (Hemas Pharmaceutical (Pte) Ltd), Mr. Thulitha Mendis – Chairman (Singer Sri Lanka PLC), Hon. Minister Shehan Semasinghe- State Minister of Finance, Mr. Ushan de Silva - Vice Chairman (Unilever Sri Lanka Ltd), Mr. Niranjana Dissanayake-Immediate Past Chairman, Mr. Shalinda Kariyawasam (Ceylon Biscuits Ltd), Mr. Jerald Suvendra (Cargills Ceylon PLC), Mr. Harshana Rajasinghe (Nestle PLC), Ms. Yashodha Fernando (The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce).

Standing from Left to right

Ms. Chenali Withanage (Astron Ltd), Mr. Suhail Rahman (Nestle PLC), Mr. Sarath Pathegama (Maliban Biscuit Manufactories Ltd), Mr. Daniel Hess (A. Baur & Co. (Pvt) Ltd), Mr. Canagasooriyar Rajasooriyar (Hayleys PLC), Mr. Wazeem Navevi (Abans PLC), Mr. Ramraj Maniraj (Gnanam Imports (Pvt) Ltd), Mr. K K Susantha (Bank of Ceylon), Mr. Manjula Devasinghe (Smithkline Beecham (Pvt) Ltd), Ms. Irosha Kularatne (Fonterra Brands Lanka (Pvt) Ltd), Mr. Haritha Nanayakkara (Douglas & Sons (Pvt) Ltd).

Import Section Representations

The Import Section continues to maintain its close association with the Main Chamber, government, private sector organizations, and trade associations, aiming to enhance service levels for our members. As the Voice of Importers, we empower success in import trade by connecting, informing, and standing strong in the country's import sector.

The Import Section serves on the following committees:

1. Committee of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce
2. National Agenda Committee on Logistics & Transport of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce
3. Steering Committee for the Formulation of a National Policy for Maritime and Logistics Sectors, Ministry of Ports & Shipping
4. Transport & Logistics Working Group of CCC to develop the working draft of the Ceylon Chamber's 2020-2025 Economic Acceleration report
5. Parliamentary Committee on Ways and Means

Import Section Website - www.importsection.lk

The official website of the Import Section of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC) continues to serve as a central communication and engagement platform, connecting both members and non-members with the activities, updates, and initiatives of the Section. The platform provides convenient access to circulars, industry updates, event information, and key announcements, fostering greater transparency and accessibility for all stakeholders.

The website is developed and maintained by E-Arrow (Pvt) Ltd, the technology partner for the Import Section.

A dedicated Subcommittee, led by Mr. Sankha Gammanpila, Deputy Vice Chairman, along with members Mr. Thulitha Mendis, Mr. Ushan de Silva, Mr. Niranjan Dissanayake, Mr. C. Rajasooriya, Mr. Sudesh Gomes, Mr. Haritha Nanayakkara, and Mr. Harshana Rajasinghe, continues to play a vital role in the development and promotion of the website. Their collective focus has been to strengthen the website's relevance and user engagement by improving its content, usability, and digital reach.

The website features several portals that provide up-to-date information for members and the general public, including:

- About the Import Section of CCC, including Executive Committee details, the Chairman's message and the history of the section.
- Member details and an application portal to join the membership.
- News related to trade.
- A gallery showcasing Import Section activities.
- Annual reports and the constitution available for download and reference.
- Access to the websites of key institutions.

Advocacy and Stakeholder Engagement

The Import Section of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce remains steadfast in its proactive advocacy for the interests of the importer community. Through continuous dialogue with key government stakeholders, policy makers, and regulatory bodies, the Section ensures the concerns and needs of importers are effectively represented in national policy discussions.

Collaboration with the Government

In January, the Chairman of the Import Section participated in a high-level meeting with H.E. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, alongside private sector and Customs representatives. Although attendance by some key government bodies was limited, the meeting provided a platform for candid discussions on critical challenges affecting importers.

Key areas of focus included:

- The need for 24/7 operations by service providers, including weekends, to mitigate delays.
- The high rate of scanning and examination at Customs, with 40% of daily containers flagged and 65% of those found with discrepancies.
- Challenges in identifying repeat offenders due to unverifiable company or contact details.
- The misuse of storage yards by some importers to delay clearances for financial advantage.
- Operational inefficiencies attributed to both Customs and Customs House Agents (CHAs), with both parties expressing concerns over delays in morning operations.

Stakeholders such as the Ports Authority and Ship Brokers Association highlighted the downstream impact of inefficiencies, including vessels bypassing Colombo due to port congestion.

The Chairman and Deputy Vice Chairman (DVC) attended a follow-up meeting with Hon. Minister Bimal Rathnayake, with participation from NMRA and SLSI. During discussions, two key proposals were presented by the Import Section:

1. Holistic Value Chain Mapping

A recommendation to conduct comprehensive value chain mapping across various industry sectors to identify regulatory bottlenecks and inefficiencies. This strategic approach aims to support a long-term reduction in port congestion and enable targeted interventions.

2. Expansion of AEO Status

The Chairman advocated for the extension of the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) program to additional qualifying importers. It was proposed that Customs guide near-qualified companies through required improvements to widen AEO adoption. Furthermore, it was

recommended that AEO-certified entities be recognized by other border control agencies (e.g., SLSI, Food Authority), facilitating expedited approvals and improving trade facilitation.

Customs confirmed that 20 new companies would receive AEO status within the coming month. The importance of inter-agency coordination in recognizing the compliance status of trusted importers was also emphasized.

Through continuous stakeholder engagement, strategic advocacy, and evidence-based proposals, the Import Section has maintained its commitment to safeguarding the interests of its members and contributing to a more efficient and balanced import ecosystem. The Section remains focused on collaborative policy development and building a constructive dialogue with the government to address both short-term challenges and long-term trade facilitation goals.

Written Submissions

Letter to Hon. Minister Bimal Rathnayake: Short-Term Measures to Alleviate Customs Congestion

The Import Section formally submitted a proposal outlining short-term actions to mitigate port congestion and clearance delays. The proposals reiterated the importance of:

- Expanding the AEO program to include more trusted importers.
- Ensuring that AEO status is recognized by all relevant regulatory authorities.
- Implementing holistic value chain analysis to streamline operations.

These proposals were simultaneously shared with the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce for broader institutional support.

Letter to H.E. the President: Re-evaluation of Import Restrictions on Canned Fish

A formal letter was addressed to the President based on the concerns raised by members and Essential Food Commodities Importers and Traders Association (EFCITA), highlighting concerns over import restrictions imposed on canned fish. The letter underscored:

- Seasonal limitations of the local fisheries sector, which necessitate reliance on imported fish.
- The role of canned fish in providing affordable protein to low-income populations.
- The lack of regulatory oversight on frozen fish imports, compared to strict quality controls on imported canned fish.
- The need to adopt a balanced approach that promotes both local industry and secure food supply chains.

The association urged a comprehensive review of the current policy to ensure sustainable food security while supporting domestic production through responsible import practices.

Letter to the Hon. Sunil Handunnetti, Minister of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development: Request for Approval to Import PVD Salt

The Import Section of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce formally requested the Ministry of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development to approve the importation of PVD salt by individual food manufacturers. This request addresses the shortage of high-quality salt and the limited import permissions currently restricting access. Local salt quality and cost challenges have adversely impacted manufacturers' competitiveness both locally and internationally. Allowing regulated importation will support the food manufacturing industry's sustainability, enhance employment, and strengthen Sri Lanka's position in global markets. The Section remains committed to collaborating with the Ministry to ensure compliance and successful implementation.

Engagement with the National Steering Committee on Logistics (NSCOEILS)

The Import Section was represented at the National Steering Committee on Logistics (NSCOEILS) meeting held on 14 March 2025 at Maga Naguma. The forum brought together representatives from government departments, trade associations, and key industry stakeholders to address challenges in the logistics and container release processes at the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA).

During the meeting, the committee tabled a comprehensive 43-point bulletin of recommendations aimed at improving logistics operations and port clearance efficiencies. Among the key developments highlighted was the expansion of the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) program, with the number of certified companies increasing to 48, following the recent inclusion of 18 new entities. Customs authorities indicated that the process of further expanding AEO eligibility is being fast-tracked, supported by stricter identification and assessment measures. This progress presents a valuable opportunity for stakeholders to provide additional feedback to strengthen the system.

Additionally, the matter of bank guarantee requirements imposed by the Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI) was discussed. While the SLSI expressed their support for removing the requirement, they clarified that they lack the legal mandate to do so independently. The removal would require Cabinet approval, subsequent Parliamentary presentation, and enactment via Gazette amendment. The SLSI reiterated their willingness to collaborate on this matter and confirmed their stance in the presence of the Minister.

This engagement reflects the Import Section's continued commitment to collaborative problem-solving, contributing toward a more efficient and transparent logistics environment in Sri Lanka.

Engagement with the Import and Export Control Department (IECD)

The Import Section held a focused and result-oriented meeting with the Controller General and senior officers of the Import and Export Control Department (IECD). The objective was to address key challenges importers face during debit processing and licensing procedures, and to propose practical solutions for improved efficiency and transparency.

Key Issues Highlighted and Discussions Held:

- **Limited customer access and communication gaps:**
Importers reported difficulty in reaching officers by phone and being restricted to the ground floor inquiry counter. IECD has since published five mobile numbers per unit on their website and clarified that their system now supports two-way communication. Customers can track progress and raise queries directly through the portal.
- **Processing delays due to staff unavailability:**
The Section requested alternate officer assignments in the absence of the primary officer. IECD acknowledged staffing limitations and assured best efforts to manage continuity despite resource constraints.
- **Redundant submission of hard copies:**
Despite uploading documents online, customers were still required to submit physical files. IECD justified this due to past incidents of fraudulent uploads. Interfaces have been developed for recommendation authorities to validate documents online, but these are not yet in use. The Import Section was asked to encourage those authorities to adopt the system.
- **Lack of clarity on application status and officer details:**
Members requested that the system display the responsible officer's name and contact. IECD responded that status tracking is already available online, and users are encouraged to utilize it rather than follow up via calls or visits.
- **Early cashier cut-off time (3:00 PM):**
Members proposed extending cashier hours. IECD has introduced and now encourages the use of its online payment portal, which overcomes this limitation.
- **Classification discrepancies between IECD and Sri Lanka Customs:**
IECD clarified that its classifications are based on end-use and regulatory authority recommendations, not strictly aligned with Customs classifications. Importers were advised to clearly specify end-user details and HS codes to avoid delays.

- **Request for fast-tracking AEO-certified companies:**

Although proposed by the Import Section, IECD expressed reservations due to prior instances of misuse by AEO-certified companies. They are not currently integrating AEO recognition into their process.

Next Steps:

1. The Import Section will encourage all recommendation authorities (e.g., NMRA, SLSI, DAPH) to adopt and use the IECD's integrated system interface.
2. Members will be educated to maximize use of the IECD's online system and minimize in-person visits.
3. An awareness session for CCC members will be organized in collaboration with IECD, which was positively received by the Controller General.

This engagement reflects the Import Section's ongoing commitment to bridging policy gaps, streamlining regulatory processes, and facilitating a smoother trade environment for its members.

Written Submission

Request to Reconsider Bank Guarantee Requirement under SLSI Scheme

The Import Section of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce submitted a formal letter to the Controller General of Imports & Exports, expressing concern over the newly imposed requirement for importers to place a bank guarantee for the release of goods under the Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI) scheme, as per *Gazette Extraordinary No. 2384/15 dated 17 May 2024*.

Previously, importers were permitted to provide a corporate guarantee, which was widely recognized as a faster, more cost-effective, and operationally efficient alternative. The introduction of the bank guarantee requirement has raised several critical challenges for the business community, including:

- Delays in cargo clearance due to time-consuming bank processes, especially for importers without a valid Certificate of Conformity.
- Increased risk of demurrage and storage charges, stemming from longer lead times in obtaining financial documentation.
- Additional financial strain due to bank fees and the capital outlay needed to secure such guarantees, adversely impacting cash flow and operational agility.

In the letter, the Import Section strongly urged the Department to reconsider and reinstate the acceptance of corporate guarantees for the warehouse release of goods under the SLSI scheme. Doing so would streamline the clearance process, reduce unnecessary financial burdens on importers, and support the continuity and resilience of the supply chain.

This representation reflects the Import Section’s commitment to advocating for fair, pragmatic regulatory measures that facilitate trade efficiency while maintaining compliance with national standards.



Engagement with Sri Lanka Customs

In 2025, the Import Section of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce maintained active engagement with Sri Lanka Customs to address critical operational challenges adversely affecting importers and the broader trade ecosystem. The Section submitted formal communications to senior authorities, urging urgent reforms to improve clearance efficiency, reduce delays, and strengthen trade facilitation.

Written Submissions

Urgent Appeal to the Director General of Sri Lanka Customs: Addressing Delays at RCT Terminal

The Import Section conveyed serious concerns raised by its membership regarding prolonged cargo clearance times at the RCT Terminal, which had escalated to over four days in many instances. These delays have resulted in substantial additional costs including demurrage, disrupted supply chains, and increased operational burdens—factors that particularly impact small and medium enterprises as well as large-scale importers.

In light of these challenges, the Section requested immediate intervention by Customs leadership to implement streamlined processes and collaborative measures that would accelerate cargo release and minimize operational inefficiencies at the terminal.

Comprehensive Representation to H.E. the President: Customs-Related Challenges and Recommendations

Recognizing the systemic nature of customs-related bottlenecks affecting legitimate trade, the Import Section's Chairman addressed a detailed submission to H.E. the President of Sri Lanka. The representation articulated a balanced view, supporting government efforts to safeguard revenue and prevent illegitimate imports while emphasizing the imperative to expedite clearance of compliant goods.

Key issues and strategic recommendations included:

1. Customs Congestion and Examination Yard Inefficiencies

- Severe congestion due to examination delays was identified as a root cause of port wide bottlenecks.
- Recommended allocation of additional on-port examination facilities and dedicated off-site locations for high-risk cargo to streamline operations.

2. Modernization of Customs Processes

- Highlighted the inefficiencies arising from partial digitization and continued manual intervention within the ASYCUDA system.
- Advocated for a transition to a fully digital, paperless customs entry and clearance process to enhance efficiency, reduce processing times, and improve transparency.

3. Capacity Constraints and Infrastructure Enhancement

- Cited staff shortages and limited yard capacity as significant contributors to clearance delays.
- Urged increased manpower deployment, extension of operational hours (especially after-hours for temperature-sensitive goods), and infrastructure upgrades at key examination yards.

4. Prioritization of Pharmaceutical and Reefer Cargo

- Noted ongoing delays impacting pharmaceutical imports due to mandatory red-channel referrals and insufficient dedicated facilities.
- Proposed creation of priority lanes for reefer containers, adoption of pre-arrival processing, and tighter integration with the National Medicines Regulatory Authority (NMRA) to avoid unnecessary referrals.

5. Expansion and Optimization of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Programs

- Observed that current AEO-certified companies continue to face physical inspections, limiting benefits.
- Recommended increasing the scan-release ratio for AEO shipments, permitting off-site inspections for compliant traders, and expediting AEO certification to broaden the pool of fast-tracked importers.

6. Mitigation of Trailer Shortages and Logistical Bottlenecks

- Addressed trailer shortages caused by cargo clearance backlogs.
- Suggested increasing trailer fleet availability and implementing scheduling systems to optimize movement of specialized cargo.

7. Strengthening Collaboration and Transparency

- Emphasized the necessity of sustained dialogue between Customs, the Sri Lanka Ports Authority, and industry stakeholders.
- Recommended establishment of regular joint forums and enhancement of real-time digital tracking platforms to improve communication and operational transparency.

Highlights of Activities

Awareness Session on Import Inspection Scheme by SLSI

The Import Section organized an informative awareness session for its members on the Import Inspection Scheme, featuring presentations by Ms. Y.D.N. Silva, Acting Director, and Ms. Ayesha Salwathura, Senior Deputy Director from the Quality Assurance Division of the Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI).

The session provided members with comprehensive insights into:

- The role of SLSI in the preparation, adoption, and application of standards
- Detailed import inspection procedures
- The approval process for imported goods
- Identification of products requiring special licenses
- Navigation and use of the SLSI online portal

The session concluded successfully with an engaging Q&A segment, enabling members to clarify their queries and gain practical understanding. This initiative reflects the Import Section's commitment to keeping its members well-informed on regulatory requirements and facilitating compliance for smoother import operations.



Accounts

KPMG Ford Rhodes, Thornton & Co continued to audit the Accounts of the Import Section during the period under review.

The Audited Statement of Accounts on the Section for the period 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 is annexed to the report.

By order of the Committee
Yashodha Fernando

**THE IMPORT SECTION
OF THE CEYLON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 MARCH 2025**



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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

TO THE GENERAL COMMITTEE OF THE IMPORT SECTION OF THE CEYLON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Opinion

We have audited the statement of receipts and payments ("the Statement") of the Import Section of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce ("the Council"), for the year ended 31 March 2025 and notes to the statement of receipts and payments.

In our opinion, the accompanying statement presents fairly, in all material respects, the receipts and payments of the Council for the year ended 31 March 2025 in accordance with the receipts and payments basis of accounting described in Note 2.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Sri Lanka Auditing Standards (SLAuSs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the council in accordance with the Code of Ethics for professional Accountants (including Sri Lanka Independence Standards) issued by CA Sri Lanka (Code of Ethics) and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matters – Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution

We draw attention to Note 2 to the Statement, which describes the basis of accounting. The Statement is prepared to provide information to the General Committee of the Import Section of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. As a result, the Statement may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of General Committee and Those Charged with Governance for the Statement

The General Committee is responsible for the preparation and fair representation of the Statement in accordance with the receipts and the payments basis of accounting described in note 2; this includes determining that such receipts and payments basis of accounting in an acceptable basis for the preparation of the statement in necessary to enable the preparation of the Statement that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the statement, The General Committee responsible for assessing the Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the General Committee either intends to liquidate the Council or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

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C.P. Jayatilake FCA
Ms. S. Joseph FCA
R.M.D.B. Rajapakse FCA
M.N.M. Shameel FCA
Ms. P.M.K. Sumanasekara FCA

T.J.S. Rajakarier FCA
W.K.D.C. Abayaratne FCA
Ms. B.K.D.T.N. Rodrigo FCA
Ms. C.T.K.N. Perera ACA
R.W.M.O.W.D.B. Rathnadiwakara FCA

W.W.J.C. Perera FCA
G.A.U. Karunaratne FCA
R.H. Rajan FCA
A.M.R.P. Alahakoon ACA

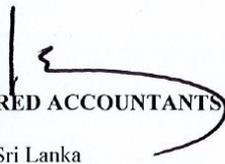
Principals: S.R.I. Perera FCMA (UK), LL.B. Attorney-at-Law, H.S. Goonewardene ACA, Ms. F.R. Ziyad FCMA (UK), FCIT, K. Somasundaram ACMA (UK), R. G. H. Raddjole ACA, Ms. D.Cora Dhammaratne



Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Statement

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the Statement as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with SLAuSs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the statement.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located at Sri Lanka Accounting and Auditing Standard web site at: <http://slaasc.com/auditing/auditorsresponsibility.php>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a vertical line followed by a large, stylized loop that extends to the right and then curves back down to the left, crossing the vertical line.
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Colombo, Sri Lanka
03 June 2025

**THE IMPORT SECTION OF THE CEYLON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS**

<i>For the year ended 31 March,</i>	2025	2024
	<u>Rs.</u>	<u>Rs.</u>
Receipts		
Membership subscription	906,000	1,042,000
Investment income	380,864	649,338
Panel discussion event income	-	54,000
Annual general meeting	3,320,000	2,780,000
Total receipts	<u>4,606,864</u>	<u>4,525,338</u>
Payments		
Printing and stationery	7,108	22,083
Secretarial fee	969,611	747,004
Postage, telephone and fax	34,878	38,497
Income tax	262,799	10,978
Tax advisory services	18,800	-
Awareness programme	28,940	-
Panel discussion event	31,519	200,365
Subscription to Sri Lanka Shippers Council	12,500	20,000
Audit fee	127,131	106,553
Entertainment and refreshments	262,160	129,465
Use of multi media projectors at meetings	6,000	5,894
Annual general meeting expenses	2,099,048	1,789,685
Sundry expenses	31,562	14,202
Web site expenses	47,100	126,470
Communication cost	66,000	42,000
VAT on secretarial fee	-	117,653
Panel discussion event expenses	-	125,400
Total payments	<u>4,005,156</u>	<u>3,496,249</u>
Net receipts during the year	<u>601,708</u>	<u>1,029,089</u>

Note 1

All the receipts and payments of the council are done through the current accounts of The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. Therefore, the balance reflects the Council's cash and cash equivalents.

Current account with The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce	542,409	821,565
Unit Trusts in NDB Wealth Management held on behalf the Council by The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce	4,751,730	3,870,866
	<u>5,294,139</u>	<u>4,692,431</u>

THE IMPORT SECTION OF THE CEYLON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2025,

Note 2 - Basis of preparation

The Import Section of The Ceylon Chamber Commerce's policy is to prepare the accompanying statement on the receipts and payments basis. On this basis income is recognised when received rather than when earned, and expenses are recognised when paid rather than when incurred.

The General Committee of The Import Section of Ceylon Chamber of Commerce is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the Statement of receipts and payments.

For and on behalf of the General Committee of The Import Section of Ceylon Chamber of Commerce:



.....
Thulitha Mendis
Chairman
The Import Section of the Ceylon
Chamber of Commerce



.....
Sankha Gammanpila
01st Vice Chairman
The Import Section of the Ceylon
Chamber of Commerce

03 June 2025
Colombo

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