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Information on Return and Reintegration in Sri Lanka



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Health Care

General description of the Health Care Situation

Sri Lanka's network of healthcare institutions is run by the state and the private sectors. The Government provides free healthcare for the public at all state hospitals. Sri Lanka has also achieved remarkable standards in its health outcome focusing on communicable diseases, in improving maternal and child health by eliminating vaccine preventable diseases.

With a rise in the aged population consequent to the increase in life expectancy, there is a rising trend in the incidence of non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, renal diseases, and cancer.

Health resource flows have increased in recent years and have been able to sustain the health infrastructure that has been developed over time. The health authorities have identified the major health problems as

- Inequities in the provision of health services and health needs of the elderly and disabled.
- Increased incidence of non-communicable diseases, suicides, substance abuse and malnutrition.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Health with other partners initiated health education campaigns for the public in 2010/2011 with the re-emergence of certain communicable diseases such as the outbreak of Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever to highlight the spreading modes and possible preventive measures. Priority was given to organize campaigns promptly to eliminate mosquito breeding places especially in public places such as schools and working places. These measures have helped control further spread of the disease. Meanwhile, in 2009, there were several cases of AH1N1 (Swine Flu) reported in Sri Lanka and immediate steps were taken with the introduction of information campaigns and early diagnosis mechanisms. During the height of the epidemic threat, airport authorities took measures to have a detection and quarantine system identified for those who return to the country.

The Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition still faces a challenge in providing required infrastructures for health facilities in the Northern Province after the end of the war.

Information about these diseases and an update with the situation in the country has being made available on the official website of the Ministry of Health www.health.gov.lk and the Epidemiology Unit www.epid.gov.lk.

Health Facilities

State owned hospitals are located in almost every city and major towns and are equipped with modern equipment to provide a range of medical facilities. Services provided here are generally free of charge. However, the major free health facilities in the country are congested and the patients' occupancy rates in most public hospitals are over 100 %.

There are also many private hospitals within Colombo that are equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment, providing high quality but expensive medical care.

Unlike in economically richer countries where a large part of the private health expenditure is borne by health insurances, in Sri Lanka, private health expenditure is almost entirely borne by users except in situations where private companies insure their staff.

For a list of state-owned, private hospitals and clinics in Colombo city please visit:

<http://www.lankalinksystems.com/directory/newsinfo/healthinfo.htm>

Medicaments Availability

The State Pharmaceuticals Corporation (SPC) is a state-owned enterprise with its headquarters in Colombo, Sri Lanka. It is the largest supplier of drugs in the country, and is tasked with providing quality-assured health care items that are safe and effective, at an affordable price, while educating the public on the rational use of drugs. It is the sole supplier of pharmaceuticals, surgical consumable items, laboratory chemicals and equipment to all institutions administered by the Ministry of Health and is also the largest supplier to the private sector.

Some most common medicaments are available for free at Government hospitals. More specific medicaments will have to be purchased by the patient.

The retail outlets of the SPC are called Rajya Osu Salas (state drug shops), of which there are 18. In addition, there are 36 Franchise Osu Salas, 48 Distributors and 20 Authorized Retailers spread throughout the country. The original Rajya Osu Sala in Colombo 7 operates 24 hours a day and 365 days a year.

For a list of all the sales outlets please visit:

<http://www.spc.lk/outlets.html>

Housing

General description of the housing situation

The demand for housing has increased with population growth and urbanization. The supply of housing continued to increase with active involvement of the private sector and improvement in the provision of finances for housing.

There are also a number of large-scale private sector initiated housing, township and condominium development projects. An alternative option is also to rent/ lease houses though the prices vary widely depending on the location of the house.

With land becoming scarce in Colombo the popularity of high-rise apartments soared until 2006. High-rise apartments were initially concentrated mostly in the Colombo 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 regions. They tend to have higher rents than housing in the area due to all kinds of conveniences and services within the apartment complexes. However, as of recently high rise apartments are available in the greater Colombo area and in some principal towns away from the Colombo district for outright purchase and for modest rents.

With the island's 25-year-old conflict coming to an end in May 2009 the real estate market has started to pick up.

Requirements to obtain a place to live from the social services or emergency shelter

These facilities are mainly available for the elderly, disabled and children.

There are homes for the elderly across the country but the vacancies are limited. Most elders' homes

operate under the guidance of the Social Service Department and are open to elderly persons who have no immediate relations to look after them. Services provided are free-of-charge and hence admittance is very difficult with long waiting lists. There are also a significant number of private homes that provide better facilities and services that are charged for. These mainly cater to people with retirement pensions and those who can afford the costs. Fees start at approximately Rs. 22,000 (ca. CHF 180) per month but vary depending on the facilities provided and the location of the home.

For more information please visit:

The Social Services Department at <http://www.socialservices.gov.lk/>

General requirements to buy/rent real estate

No specific requirements other than being a Sri Lankan citizen.

Availability of social grants for housing

Landless populations can request Government lands through the Ministry of Land and Land Development by handing over an application to the District Secretary or Divisional Secretary office. These are crown lands provided to them upon the verification of the request and availability of lands in a particular Division/District for building of dwellings and farming activities. To benefit from these land sales at very low costs, one has to prove to have an income lower than average and that one owns no land.

In addition, the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) provides assistance to families by means of allocation of land, providing finances etc. NHDA is responsible for the implementation of key state sector housing programmes. The Government housing finance institutions were strengthened to deliver housing credit facilities to low-income families using their EPF (Employment Provident Fund) balance as security. Concessionary loan schemes were further expanded for the benefit of Sri Lankan workers returning from overseas.

Families who fall into the below categories are eligible:

- Those who do not have permanent houses
- Families not in a position to save money to construct a house against their everyday expenditure
- Underprivileged poor families which have talented children for study
- A family in which parents or children are suffering from a permanent illness or disability

Each application will be assessed and verified by the District offices and the NHDA and will be assisted on a priority basis.

For more information please visit:

The Ministry of Land and Land Development at <http://www.landmin.gov.lk>

The National Housing Development Authority at www.nhda.lk

For information on available houses for rent or sale please visit

http://www.lanka.info/Sri_Lanka/realestate/index.jsp

The approximate monthly rent for a one bedroom annex in **Colombo** would be approximately Rs. 10,000 (ca. CHF 80) while a two bedroom annex would be approximately Rs. 25,000 (ca CHF 200). These costs vary depending on the location within Colombo. Apartments outside Colombo are cheaper.

As for **Jaffna**, the monthly rent for a one bedroom annex would be approximately Rs, 6,000 (ca CHF 50) while a two bedroom annex would be approximately Rs. 9,000 (ca CHF 75). These costs too can vary depending on the specific locations.

Education

General description of the education system

Sri Lanka's population has a literacy rate of 92% which is the highest literacy rate in South Asia and overall, one of the highest literacy rates in Asia. The present education system of Sri Lanka derives from the British education system, which was introduced by the British colonial masters in the 19th century. The British colonial Government established colleges for boys and girls separately. These colleges consisted of Primary Schools, Lower Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools.

In 1938, the education in Government schools was made free-of-charge as a consequence of the Universal Franchise granted in 1931. Subsequently many Government schools called Maha Vidyalayas were established in all parts of the country. The language of education of Maha Vidyalaya's is generally either Sinhala or Tamil and education to this day is free-of-charge. According to the Ministry of Statistics, today there are approximately 9,830 public schools serving close to 4,030,000 students, all around the island.

It is also common to make donations to the school. In addition, fees for books need to be covered by the parents. These costs amount on average to 10,000 LKR/75 CHF per year until grade 10. After grade 10, costs might increase as students need to pay for private tuition to prepare for final or entry exams.

Sri Lanka's education structure is divided into five parts: primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, collegiate and tertiary. Primary education lasts five to six years (Grades 1-5) and at the end of this period, the students may elect to write a national exam called the Scholarship exam. This exam allows students with exceptional skills to move on to better schools. After primary education, the junior secondary level (referred to as middle school in some schools) lasts for 4 years (Grades 6-9) followed by 2 years (Grades 10-11) of the senior secondary level which is the preparation for the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Ordinary Level (O/Ls). According to the Sri Lankan law, it is compulsory that all children go to school till grade 9 (age 14) at which point they can choose to continue their education or drop out and engage in apprenticeship for a job or farming. However, the Ministry of Education strongly advises all students to continue with their studies at least till the G.C.E Ordinary Level. Students who are pursuing tertiary education must pass the G.C.E O/Ls in order to enter the collegiate level to study for another 2 years (grades 12-13) to sit for the G.C.E Advanced Level. On successful completion of this exam, students can move on to tertiary education, therefore the GCE A/Ls is the university entrance exam in Sri Lanka.

Due to the variety of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, many schools teach only in either Sinhala or in Tamil and not in English. The elite colleges in major cities such as Colombo and Kandy teach in all three languages.

Primary and Secondary Education

The Ministry of Education administers all Government primary and secondary schools where education is free. The medium of instruction is mainly Sinhala and/or Tamil along with a few schools, located mainly in Colombo and Kandy that teach in English.

There are also a number of private schools in Sri Lanka, due to the emergence of the upper-middle class. Many of the private schools have access to better facilities than state run schools. The students in

these schools have to pay a monthly fee and the amount varies according to the popularity of the school. Tuition fees vary between Rs. 1,000-7,000 (CHF 8-60) depending on the school and the students' grade.

There has been a considerable increase in the number of international schools in the principal cities in and out of the Colombo district that are not only restricted to the expatriate community, but to anyone with the ability and willingness to incur the costs. In addition to costs, international schools are different in terms of:

Student population: Co-ed schools;

Curriculum: Edexcel General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary, Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced (A2) Level examinations. Preparation for Cambridge Examinations is also offered by a few schools on request.

These schools are not regulated by the Ministry of Education as they follow the British curriculum.

A student who wishes to join schools in Sri Lanka after schooling abroad can enter the appropriate grade in either government, private or international schools provided they have a copy of their 'leaving certificate' (*indicating the last grade passed*) from the school attended last and the birth certificate along with the application. Exceptions are possible if documents are not present depending on the case. However, getting admitted to a popular state or private school in populated districts like Colombo or Kandy during mid-term can be a difficult task.

The Overseas School of Colombo is the leading international schools for expatriates, the curriculum followed leads to an IB Diploma. This, together with The British School in Colombo is the sole IB World Schools in the country.

Tertiary Education (University)

University education in Sri Lanka is also free of charge. The state university system is highly competitive, hence, only the top students from each district are guaranteed the chances of having tertiary education. As a result, most students who are not granted admission go abroad to pursue their studies at foreign universities or enrol themselves in degree awarding, state-funded or private institutes in Sri Lanka. Students who fail to qualify for university entrance can also engage in higher education as external students of state universities or at the Open University of Sri Lanka. There are also vocational technical colleges which specialize in mechanical and electronic subjects. There are currently 15 major state funded universities in Sri Lanka. In recent years with changes to the University Act institutes have been given permission to grant their own degrees, the most prominent is the government owned Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology.

Sri Lankan students who graduated through any international curriculum are generally required to complete their local A/L examination to enter local universities although exceptions are often made. Admission to the universities is very competitive and is based on the aggregate (Z score) obtained by each student. These basic degree programmes are also covered by the government free education system and some students are entitled for a grant under "Mahapola Scholarship Programme" (on a merit basis).

The universities conduct a number of postgraduate diploma and certificate programmes, but are not covered by the government free education system. These programmes are open to all students. If a student who has studied abroad wishes to follow a postgraduate/diploma or certificate programme

he/she should furnish relevant documents such as certified copies of detailed educational certificates. There are external degrees, diplomas and post-graduate courses conducted by several other institutions. Admission criteria for these institutions vary and programmes are usually advertised in the newspapers. The Open University of Sri Lanka conducts distant education programmes (also not covered under the government free education system) including basic degree programmes that are also open for students who studied abroad. There is no age barrier to follow the courses in the Open University of Sri Lanka.

There are a number of government technical colleges in different districts. They conduct vocational training programmes, diploma programmes and certificate courses. The Tertiary & Vocational Education Commission administers a number of public sector institutions such as the Department of Education and Training, Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Council and National Institute of Technical Education. A large number of private sector institutions are also providing vocational training facilities. The target group is generally diverse and consists of unemployed youth, rural men and women and school leavers.

The private sector has in the recent past become very popular in the country with off-shore campuses and distance learning facilities. There are a number of institutes in principal towns affiliated to foreign academies and professional institutes offering a wide range of courses from diplomas to degrees and postgraduate programmes from food and beverages, hospitality to hair dressing mainly engaged in the provision of professional education, particularly in areas of accountancy, management and information technology.

For more details please visit:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_universities_and_colleges_in_Sri_Lanka

<http://www.moe.gov.lk/>

Recognition of Foreign Diplomas

The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka recognizes foreign universities/Higher Institutes based on international acceptance.

Please visit the below links which are international publications on Universities and Higher Educational Institutes in different countries currently recognized by the UGC.

Commonwealth Universities Yearbook: <http://www.acu.ac.uk/>

International Handbook of Universities: <http://www.iau-aiu.net/content/list-heis>

Vocational Education and Training

Vocational education and training in Sri Lanka is managed by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission of the Ministry of Vocational & Technical Training. Training includes course based curriculum at vocational technical training centres and apprenticeship at private or public organizations. Higher education in vocational fields could be achieved through several universities. The National Vocational Qualifications Systems in Sri Lanka (NVQSL) provides a structured seven levels of qualifications from Level 1 to Level 7. Vocational education and training is carried out for degree level at the Open University, Sri Lanka and the University of Vocational Technology, as well as at diploma level at 37 technical colleges, Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Education and the Sri Lanka School of Agriculture.

Apart from these, the Ministry of Education has launched a non-formal vocational education programme which allows school drop-outs and adults who did not complete their school education to earn a living through self-employment. Most of these courses are held at community centres and they cover a wide range of fields such as dressmaking, beauty culture, hairdressing, stitching, carpentry, plumbing, painting and so on.

There are certain courses which are free while tuition needs to be paid for others.

For more information please visit:

<http://www.moe.gov.lk/web/index.php?lang=en>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Sri_Lanka

Disabilities and orphanages

People with disabilities are looked after by the Department of Social Services and provided with appropriate education and vocational trainings to sharpen their abilities. The Social Service Department has established necessary schools with dormitory facilities for this purpose in all main cities. In addition, there are several schools and centres which are run by non-state partners usually at a higher cost.

Furthermore, there are special laws enacted to protect children and the National Child Protection Authority ensures the rights of the children. Government run orphanages are managed by the Department for Probation and Child Care Service with Government and private funding. The children are well looked after and are provided free education to suit their abilities and skills. In addition, there are also orphanages run by several charities and through private contributions and donations.

The Department for Probation and Child Care Services at <http://www.probation.gov.lk/>

Economic Situation and Employment

General description on the economic situation and employment possibilities in different areas of the country

Sri Lanka has mostly had strong growth rates in the recent years with an economy worth \$50 billion (est. for 2010) and a per capita GDP (PPP) of about \$5000 (est. for 2010).

A sharp rise in the world petroleum prices combined with economic fallout from the civil war led to inflation that peaked 20%. However, the economy started to grow at a rate of 8.0% in 2010.

The improved performance in all key sectors of the economy contributed towards the high economic growth in 2010. The Agriculture sector which contributed around 11.9 per cent to the GDP in 2010 grew by 7.0 per cent compared to 2009. This was mainly due to the increased production of paddy, tea, rubber and minor export crops along with significant improvements in the fisheries sector output.

The shares of the industry sector in total GDP increased marginally to 28.7 per cent in 2010 mainly due to improved performance in industries such as food and beverage, rubber based products, textiles and garments coupled with increased performance in the construction sector and increased hydropower generation. The service sector also grew by 8.0 per cent in 2010. The wholesale and retail subsector which accounts for the largest share in the service sector grew by 7.5 per cent with enhanced performance in both domestic and external trading activity.

Furthermore, the hotel and restaurants sub sector grew sharply by about 39.8 per cent underpinned by

the strong performance in tourism.

In addition to these economic sectors, overseas employment contributes highly in foreign exchange. 90% of expatriate Sri Lankans reside in the Middle East.

General information on most available jobs and salary levels

The number of employed persons increased marginally by 1.4 per cent to 7.71 million in 2010 as compared to 7.60 million in 2009. This could be attributed to the growing demand for employment consequent to the improved performance in all three major sectors of the economy; agriculture, services (trade, hotel, transport, storage, communication, finance, insurance, real estate and personal services etc.) and industry (manufacturing and construction) sector.

The shares of the Agriculture and Services sector in total employment recorded increases in 2010 while that of the Industry sector recorded contraction. The Service sector which made the largest contribution to the overall economic growth during the last few years continued to dominate in generating more employment opportunities in 2010 as well.

The minimum wage rates in Sri Lanka is as follows (100 Sri Lanka Rupees = 0.84 CHF)

Industry	Worker Category	Minimum wages (LKR)
Plantation Sector		380 per day
	plus Attendance Bonus	105 per day
	plus productivity incentive	30 per day
Industrial Sector	Unskilled	6500-7500 per month
	Semi-Skilled	7000-8000 per month
	Skilled	7500-9500 per month
Service Sector	Unskilled	6500-7500 per month
	Semi-Skilled	7500-8000 per month
	Skilled	8400-9500 per month

For more information please visit:

<http://www.salary.lk/home/minimum-wage>

Unemployment assistance provided by the State

No such assistance is available in Sri Lanka

Pension system and opportunity to access it by returnees (including the recognition of foreign pensions)

There is no universal state pension available to the elderly in Sri Lanka and 72% of the working age population (predominantly informal sector workers and those outside the labour force) are not covered by formal retirement savings schemes (ODI Apr. 2004, 17). Formal sector coverage consists of civil servant pensions and provident funds (EPF/ETTF/APPF) and pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) schemes covering both formal and informal sector workers. Sri Lanka's retirement system included the following pension schemes:

- 1 - Employees' Provident Fund;
- 2 - Public Service Pension Scheme;
- 3 - Farmers', Fishermen and Self-Employed Scheme;
- 4 - Approved Private Provident Fund (ibid. 47-48).

A returnee can apply for pension only if s/he has been under a pension scheme while working in Sri Lanka. The prospective applicant should have been an employee of the public sector such as a Government Department, bank, Armed Forces, etc. Additionally, the applicant must have been an employee for a minimum period of 10 years at a stretch. In case of Armed Forces personnel the period of employment is 20 years for officers and 22 for soldiers.

Furthermore, s/he should have retired from the employment at the age of 55 or left employment early on medical reasons. The application forms should be forwarded through the department s/he worked at retirement.

The application forms that are termed 'General 55' or 'B' can be collected from the respective Divisional Secretariat (formerly known as AGA Office) or from the Dept. of Pensions (which is located in New Secretariat Building, Maligawatte, Colombo 10). The pension is 75-90 % of the last salary drawn.

It usually takes six months to one year to process the application if all documents are in order. If the documents are not in order it will take a much longer, sometimes years, to receive the pension.

Banking system and business set-up opportunities

General information on the banking system

The financial system in Sri Lanka comprises the major financial institutions, namely the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, licensed commercial banks (LCBs), licensed specialised banks (LSBs), registered finance companies (RFCs), specialised leasing companies (SLCs), primary dealers (PDs), pension and provident funds, insurance companies, rural banks, merchant banks, unit trusts and thrift and credit co-operative societies; the major financial markets, such as the foreign exchange market, money market, capital market and the informal financial market; and the financial infrastructure which is the legal framework related to the financial system and the payment and settlement.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka is the monetary authority of Sri Lanka and was established in 1950. The Central Bank is responsible for the conduct of monetary policy in the country and also has supervisory powers over the financial system.

Possibilities of transactions (cash and goods) from abroad

Current international transactions are the foreign exchange transactions relating to goods and services in trade, interest on loans, net income from other investments and remittances for family living expenses. Authorized Dealers (commercial banks) are permitted to call for relevant documentary evidence and release foreign exchange without restrictions, for all current international transactions, exercising their judgement and discretion and satisfying themselves of the bona fides of such transactions.

More information can be found under

http://www.cbsl.gov.lk/pics_n_docs/10_pub/docs/pa/booklet/bl_3.pdf

Opportunities to access credit to start a business or buy a real estate

There are special credit schemes for micro enterprises. Lanka Microfinance Practitioner's Association (LMPA) is a network formed by several Microfinance Practitioners in Sri Lanka. Their main function is to enhance the ability of their members to provide quality financial services to grass-root communities.

LMPA is the pioneer in microfinance networking among microfinance practitioners in Sri Lanka and was initiated in 2006.

For more information please visit:

<http://www.microfinance.lk/>

Many banks also offer loan scheme for starting a business or buying a real estate. However, many clients prefer state banks as the interest rate is lower. There are many different options in accessing loans and therefore people can choose which loan best suits them.

Please visit the below link for information on one such loan scheme provided by a state bank:

http://www.nsb.lk/Personal_loans.php

Transportation

General description of the transportation and road system

Sri Lankan transportation is based mainly on the road network which is centered on Sri Lanka's capital, Colombo. There is also an extensive railway network as well as navigable waterways, harbours and airports which includes an international airport located in Katunayake, 22 miles North of Colombo. The highways and roadways around the capital are in very good condition and are being upgraded for the future.

The transportation sector saw a noticeable improvement in the last five years. Particularly roads and passenger transportation were improved.

Highways

Road transport accounts for about 93 per cent of the land transport in Sri Lanka. The country has 96,695 km (60,083 mi) of roads. The road density is highest in the Southwest, especially in the area around Colombo.

Many "A" Class roads are being upgraded to a smoother bitumen surface, as well as being widened with road markings. The Government also continues with major road development projects such as the Southern Expressway which aims to boost the economy of the Southern Province through the construction of a 126 km long expressway from Colombo (Kottawa) to Matara which was opened on the 27th of November 2011. There are also plans for other expressways; the Colombo-Katunayake Expressway, Colombo-Kandy (Kadugannawa) Expressway, Colombo-Peradeniya Expressway and the Outer Circular Highway (Colombo bypass road).

The main roads around Colombo and its suburbs are in good condition and roads that are widely used around Colombo are being upgraded and repaved.

Construction of highways and flyovers, repair of existing roads with special focus on roads in the Northern and Eastern Provinces and construction of rural roads under the *Maga Naguma* programme continues. The A9 road which connects the North and South was also opened for civilian traffic after the decade's long conflict.

The Government continues with the construction of planned flyovers at selected locations (Dehiwala, Orugodawatta, Flyovers at Gampaha and Pannipitiya were also completed with more flyovers underway) to reduce traffic congestion.

Repair of national roads in the Northern and Eastern provinces has already commenced under the Northern Spring and Eastern Revival programmes. As of March 2012, about 25% of the repair work was completed. In general, travelling by road has become more convenient than in the past.

Railways

Rail Transport in Sri Lanka consists of a heavy-rail intercity network connecting major population centers and commuter rail serving Colombo commuter traffic. Sri Lanka Railways operates the country's railway network, which includes about 1,450 km (901 mi) of track. Colombo is the main node of the network. Train routes connect the main cities of all nine provinces in the country.

The Railway is currently modernizing and extending the coast line to facilitate faster trains and improved efficiency. Electrification of the busiest sections of the network was proposed in 2010, to improve energy efficiency and sustainability but no work was carried out. The Railway is currently extending the Coastal line from Matara to Kataragama, via Hambantota.

The rail lines across Sri Lanka are a legacy of British rule. There are four main rail lines, across this island, and this network covers all the major towns and important tourist spots across the country. The first line extends from Colombo to Matara along the west coast. The main line runs from Colombo to Badulla, which covers route to Nuwara Eliya as well. The Railway system in Sri Lanka is very picturesque when entering the hill country because of the winding tracks along the mountains especially on the Badullu-Nanu Oya line.

The third and northern line runs to Anuradhapura, the ancient city capital. Fourth rail line runs from Colombo to Batticaloa, the East coast. Travelling by train is more comfortable and picturesque and even less expensive than buses. The trains normally have three classes, with first class being the best and most expensive. These trains also offer air-conditioned coaches, observation saloons and sleeping

berths. These are typically more comfortable than the other coaches. Advance reservations can only be made for first class travel. There is an Intercity Express Train running from Colombo to Kandy.

Currently, the railway sector contributes 5% to the total passenger transportation in the country. The Sri Lanka Railways initiated several projects to improve the railway sector such as construction of new railroads, reconstruction of railway lines in the conflict affected areas, repair and improvement on existing railway lines and stations, double tracking of railway lines, electrification of suburban railway services and introducing a Light Rapid Transit System in the Colombo metropolitan area. After 30 years, the 'Yal Devi' train commenced operations up to Thandikulam station in June 2009.

Public Transport

Buses are the principal mode of public transport. Bus services are provided by the state-run Sri Lanka Transportation Board, better known as the CTB. There are also private buses.

Private sector bus operators account for about two thirds, while the balance is provided by public sector bus services consisting of 11 Regional Transport Companies (also called cluster bus companies), the Northern Region Transportation Board and Vavuniya Passenger Transportation Services Ltd. monitored by the Sri Lanka Central Transportation Board (SLCTB).

The lowest bus fare at present is Rs.6.00 (ca. CHF 0,07). In addition to the normal buses the private sector operates luxury bus services between cities and it is called "Intercity Bus Service". These buses are air-conditioned, less crowded and faster but the fare is double that of other buses.

Several measures have been taken to improve the efficiency of the state owned bus service.

Several programmes were also launched by the SLTB to recommence the transport services in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Under the Northern Spring programme, bus services have commenced to Jaffna from various places including Colombo, Vavuniya and Trincomalee, on a daily basis.

In addition to these programmes in the Northern and Eastern provinces, the SLTB continued with several other services such as a reliable transport service to the rural masses, school bus service and night time bus service. Furthermore, bus-rail connecting services were continued covering several railway stations. Several other services such as, 'Colombo City Liner Coach Service' and 'park and ride service' have been introduced to reduce the number of private vehicles entering Colombo city limits.

Civil Aviation

Sri Lanka has one international airport and three domestic airports. The international airport, Bandaranayake International Airport (BIA), is located 30 kilometers from Colombo city, in Katunayake and one of the domestic airports is in Rathmalana, seven kilometers from Colombo. Sri Lanka's second international airport is under construction on the Southern coast of Sri Lanka.

The two domestic airports are in Jaffna peninsula, Palali airport, and in Galle, Koggala airport. The national carrier, Sri Lankan Airlines, flies to most of the main cities in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Sri Lanka also started a budget airline called Mihin Lanka. Internal as well as external flights (to neighboring countries) are available.

There are also three domestic private airlines that operate from Rathmalana (Colombo) to Palali airport in Jaffna with three flights a week. A return air ticket from Rathmalana to Palali costs Rs.19,100 (ca. CHF 150).

Telecommunication

General description of the telecommunication system

At present, the telecommunication sector is the most dynamic service industry in Sri Lanka. There is one fixed line operator, Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT), two wireless local loop operators (Suntel and Lankabell) and several mobile phone operators including Dialog GSM, Mobitel, Hutch, Airtel and Etisalat.

Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT) is the primary telecommunications provider in the country and covers all districts while private operators cover most major cities and secondary switching areas in Sri Lanka.

The introduction of low cost CDMA (Code Division Multiple Access) technology allows many Sri Lankans who live in rural areas to communicate with each other faster and easier than before.

Broadband internet access was introduced to Sri Lanka in 2003 by provider Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT). The average speed is 512/128 kbit/s (64 kB/s/16 kB/s), costing Rs. 1600+VAT(US\$ 16 approx.) per month for an unmetered flat rate. This is the standard for SLT and resellers. Faster connections up to 2 Mbit/s are also available, but the price is considerably higher.

Several private operators also provide radio paging, data communication, internet service and satellite link-ups.

For more information on return and reintegration possibilities in Sri Lanka
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