

SRILANKA – EARLIEST SETTLEMENT, FOREIGN OCCUPATION AND THE RECENT ECONOMIC CRISIS

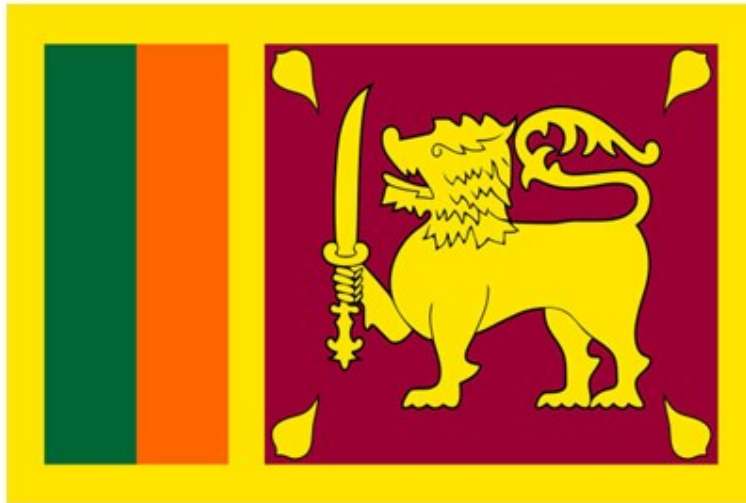
Abstract

Srilanka is the Country with Unique Geographical Location. The Country was ruled by many Dynasties and had a Diverse History. Like India it was also ruled by European Powers. Srilanka got Independence in 1948 with Dual Government Status. The Country Adopted IMF Made Economic Plans. It was one of the Strongest Economic in 1990s. But Rajapaksa Family Domination and Sinhala Domination Policy Create the Great Harm to the Country. The Recent Economic Crisis was the Outcome of all these Conditions.

Keywords: Srilanka – Earliest Settlement, Foreign Occupation, Recent Economic Crisis, and Outcomes.

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1. **Demography /Ethnic Composition:** Official **Sri Lanka** is called as the Democratic **Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka** which was earlier known as Ceylon, Island country in the Indian Ocean, off the south eastern coast of India.

- Longitudinal Extend of SriLanka is $79^{\circ} 41'$ to $81^{\circ} 53'$ E and LatitudinalExtend of SriLanka is $5^{\circ} 55'$ to $9^{\circ} 51'$ N
- Total Length from North to South is 268 miles and the total Width from west to east is 139 miles
- Total Area of the country is 25,332 sq. m. (65,610 sq. km).

2. **Population:** As on 14 September 2023 21,905,007 which contain 0.27% of the total population.

3. **Capitals:** Colombo (executive and judicial), Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte (legislative).

4. **Flag:** Prince Vijay conquered the SriLanka in 5th century BC. He introduced the **Lion Flag** to represent the Sinhala Majority of SriLanka.

After independence in **1948** the same flag was used to represent the **Majority of the Sinhalas** in SriLanka. Though the flag was little bit varied till 1951. Green and the orange strips were not there.

5. **Colours of the SriLanka Flag:**

- **The leaves** represent the love and the kindness, compassion equanimity and happiness of Buddha.
- **The lion** and the **sword** represent the bravery of the Sinhalas, the curly hair represents the wisdom, the tail is the Eightfold path of Buddha and Beard the purity of world.
- **Red colour** symbolise the Sinhala people,
- **Green colour** the Muslims faith, **Orange colour** symbolise the Tamil ethnicity and **Yellow** colour is all culture.

6. **Ethnic Groups** include about **three-fourths** of the population is Sinhalese that is 75 %, Tamils 12 %, Muslims and others 13%.
7. **Languages:** Sinhala, Tamil (both official); also English.
8. **Religions:** Buddhism; Hinduism, Islam, Christianity.
9. **Currency:** Sri Lanka Rupee.
10. **Highlands** make up Sri Lanka's south-central region and core, with narrow gorges and deep river valleys. The surrounding lowlands include hills and fertile plains.
11. **The Developing Mixed Economy** is largely based on agriculture, services, and light industries. Clothing, tea, gemstones, and rubber are exported.

The island is world-famous for its gemstones, which include sapphires, rubies, and topaz. It is also a major producer of high-grade graphite.

12. **Sri Lanka is a Republic** with one legislative house, its head of state and government is the president, assisted by the prime minister.

Sri Lanka geographically the land which is the extension of the south India the Indian peninsula which was separated from the mainland of India around 25 to 5 million years ago.

I. PRE HISTORY

Archaeologist found that human settlement found around 75000 years to 125000 years back. The earliest people were the hunters and the gatherers in the area of Balangoda in the south and they made the rough stone tools.

Even the fine stone tools of quartz and Chert were also found dating 28000 years back. The earliest inhabitant of Sri Lanka was the Vedda community. They were the forest dwellers for centuries. They lived in the thick forest and the caves. They were moving from one place to other if someone died. The Veddas are now form less than 1 percent of the total population of Sri Lanka.

The evidence of **urban settlement was found near Anuradhapura in the north central Sri Lanka dating 10th century BC.**

Sinhalese the current majority population of Sri Lanka migrated to Sri Lanka from north **India from the west Bengal area around 5th century BC.** They were **probably Aryans** as they were speaking Indo Aryan languages.

The first Indian settlement in Sri Lanka was by **Prince Vijaya** from Sinhapura kingdom of northern India. He was expelled by his father king Sinhabahu along with his 700 followers. They landed on the west coast of Puttalam in 5th century BC. He defeated

Yakshasand married to Yaksha princess but he expelled his wife and two children and send them to Madurai in the court of Pandya king. Later he settled at Puttalamand became the king. He further married to the daughter of Pandayan king but don't had any offspring from her. He founded the kingdom of Tambapanni and Vijay dynasty. After his death in bother Sumitt's son Uppatissa rules the kingdom.

After Vijaya, lanbakanna, Moriya, Lijayabahu, Kalinga, Siri Sanga Bo, Dinajara and Nayaks ruled Srilanka. The last king from Vijaya dynasty was Subharaja.

II. MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The medieval period of SriLanka started when Chola king Rajaraja I invaded SriLanka in 993 CE. He defeated the Mahanda V of Lambakanna dynasty and established his control over the area of Anuradhapura. In 1017 his son Rajendra I launched another invasion and captivated Mahinda V and shifted the capital from Anuradhura to Polonnaruwa.

In 1070 Vijayabahu I defeated the chola king Kassapa VII and reunited the Srilanka. He founded the kingdom at polonnaruwa which rule the country till 1232 CE. Sri Sanga Bo became the ruler in 1220 CE. He ruled till 1597 CE. Present Sinhalese were the descendants of the Arayans who migrated to Island in 5th century BCE. Other sect of Tamil were the Dravidians from south India who came the country between 3 BCE to 1200 BCE.

Buddhism was introduced in the country in 3rd BCE. Sinhala ruled most of the south west area of SriLanka between 1200 to 1500 CE, while Tamil/ Dravidian ruled over the North and established their power in 14th century. Between 13th to 15th century CE China, India and Malaya frequently invaded the Island.

III. TAMIL ORIGIN IN SRILANKA

Tamils were probably migrated from central or eastern or the south India and may be Dravidian descendants. They were speaking Dravidian languages. They came to Sri Lanka between 3 BC to 13 CE.



IV. TAMIL INVASION IN SRILANKA

By 9th century AD Pandya became powerful in south India and invaded the northern part of Sri Lanka at present the area of Jaffna and Anuradhapura

According to the report published by *Dr. Daya Hewapathirane*, Sri Lanka was invaded seventeen times by the Dravidians since 230BC. They plundered the villages and established their control. They enslaved Sinhalese and ruled the different parts of the country in different phases for over 170 years. Pandya Chola and Pallava were firm to rule and control Sinhalese.

According to Nellur Swami during the ancient times Sri Lanka was divided into four provinces

- Nagadipa in North
- Kalyani in South West
- Ruhana in South East
- Malaya in the Centre

But in the medieval period the Sri Lanka was divided into Three Ratas –

- Pihiti or Raja Rata which was king's country, almost the same area which earlier called as Nagadipa roughly above Dedura Oya
- May or Mahaya Rata which was in the South of Dedura Oya
- Ruhuna which was extended over East and South

The descendant of Nagadipa had not fully accepted the new Sinhalese power. When Surutassa regain the power the two Tamil Trader dealing in horse trading raised the huge army and together ruled 22 years. The Tamils who were connected to the Veddas through their lineage, were living the Mahaya area of south and central Sri Lanka. Evidences proof that Tamils and Sinhalese were living peacefully for many years.

In 237 BC Two brothers Sena and Guttika invaded the Anuradhapura kingdom, killed the king Suratissa and ruled together till 22 years. They established the first Tamil kingdom in Sri Lanka from 237 BC – 215 BCE.

According to Mahavamsa the “The Great Chronicle” these two brothers would have brought their army from India, Tamil would have conquered the North of Sri Lanka and set strong kingdom then itself.

In 215BCE Sinhalese king Asela, brother of Suratissa recapture the power and ruled till 205 BCE. Elara the noble descent from the Chola kingdom landed at Mahavatuota near Trincomalee with huge army defeated Asela, the successor of Sena and Guttika and ruled the entire Nagadipa for forty four years. He forced the headmen of Ruhana and Mahaya to accept his supremacy. He was famous for his justice and kindness.

According to **Sri Lankan Historian, Sinnappah Arasaratnam**, the war between Prince Dutthagamani and king Elara in which Dutthagamani defeated Elara, was purely

political and afterwards Anuradhapura became the centre of king's power. This victory established the Sinhala and Buddhist supremacy over the Tamils

During the Pandya, Pallava and the Chola rule in south India between 5th and 6th CE Tamil often waged war against Sinhala. Tamil culture and language also flourished during this period. Tamil symbolised themselves as Dravidian Hindus.

The Tamil invasion in Sri Lanka continued till 15th century. Sinhala were connected to Tamil through the marital ties. King Vijaya's second wife was the daughter of the Pandya King. He was often send expensive gift and pearls to his father in law every year.

In 7th century Sinhala prince Manavamma Ascend the power with the help of Pallava. He had to pay huge amount to Pallava as war expenses as a result the influence of Pallava extended during this period.

By 9th century Pandya became powerful and invaded north Sri Lanka and ruled over Anuradhapura.

In 10th Century Cholas defeated the Pandyan king and the Pandyan flee to Sri Lanka with royal insignia. Chola king Rajaraja the great attacked on Anuradhapura in 993 CE to get royal insignia back. He captures Anuradhapura and annexed Raja Rate also which was the heartland of the Sinhala kingdom.

Sinhala king Mahinda V, the last Sinhala king captivated from Ruhana by Cholas, he was send to India as prisoner and died in 1029 CE. For 75 years Sri Lanka was ruled by the Chola kings.

Chola shift their capital to Polonnaruwa, the South East of Sri Lanka near river Mahaweli Ganga to protect against the Sinhala invasion from Southern Sinhala kingdom of Ruhunu. After 13th century when the Sinhala kingdom totally collapses, Tamil established their rule at Jaffna Peninsula, the north of Sri Lanka.

The Tamil in Sri Lanka was divided into two groups. First the Sri Lanka Tamil those who are the descendants of Dravidian and Cholas from ancient and medieval period. Second those who were send as labour during colonial rule. During the colonial rule from 1819. Many Tamil Labours were forcefully send to Sri Lanka to work in the tea plantation.

In 1839 the British government in India banned the emigration of labour from India but again in 1847 this ban was lifted with the condition that these labour were treated equal to the local population of Sri Lanka.

Source - Text Sources: New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Lonely Planet Guides, Library of Congress, Sri Lanka Tourism (srilanka.travel), Government of Sri Lanka (www.gov.lk), The Guardian, National Geographic, Smithsonian magazine, The New Yorker, Time, Reuters, Associated Press, AFP, Wikipedia and various books, websites and other publications.

<i>DRAVIDIAN INVANSION</i>
<i>Sena and Guttika 237 BC - 215 BC</i> <i>Pulahatta, Bahiya, Panya, Mara,</i>
<i>Pilaya Mara, Dathiya 89 BC - 77</i> <i>BC</i>
<i>PANDYAN INVANSION</i>
<i>Pandu - 428-433 CE</i>
<i>Parinda - 433 CE</i>
<i>Khuda Parinda - 433-449 CE</i>
<i>Tiritara - 449 CE</i>
<i>Dathiya - 449-452 CE</i>
<i>CHOLA INVASION</i>
<i>Elara 205 BC - 161 BC</i>
<i>Rajaraja Chola 993 - 1018 CE</i>
<i>Rajendra Chola 1018 - 1035 CE</i>

European Powers in SriLanka

V. PORTUGUESE RULE

- In 1505 CE Portuguese General Lourenco de Almeida landed into Colombo because of unfavourable climate. He was impressed by the friendly gesture of King ViraParakrama of Kotte
- In 1518 Portuguese got the trade and concessions and the permission to build fort in Colombo.
- Slowly and gradually the conditions intensified among the successor of Vera Parakrama. BhuvanaikaBahu took Portuguese assistance to defeat his brothers.
- BhuvanaikaBahu and his grandson Dharmapala further granted concessions to the Portuguese.
- In 1556/7 Dharmapala converted to Christianity his made BhuvanaikaBahu's brother Mayadunne furious. He and after his death his son try to reduce the Portuguese influence but failed.
- In 1580 Dharmapala was forced to handover his kingdom to Portuguese.
- In 1560 Portuguese tried to control Jaffana but failed they later with the help of Christian Missionaries succeeded in 1619.

When the Sinhala noble Vimala Dharma Surya re-established his control, Portuguese try to control the entire Island. They expand the power towards Trincomalee and Batticaloa.

During the Portuguese rule Sri Lanka was divided into four provinces or Dissavannis. Each province had the headman called Dissava. Portuguese main trade in Cinnamon and Elephant and maintain their monopoly

VI. DUTCH OCCUPATION

- Vimal Dharma Surya wanted to drag Portuguese out from Sri Lanka, he joined hand with Dutch official Sebald de Weert, both attack on Portuguese but failed to achieve victory.
- Between 1604 to 1639 many Sinhala Kings with the support of Dutch try to over the Portuguese. Rajasinha II later realised that Dutch were not interested to help him rather they wanted to replace the Portuguese and enjoy the same privileges.
- In 1645 Dutch and Portuguese divided their areas. During the Dutch rule the country was divided into three Principal, Colombo, Galle and Jaffna. Colombo was headed by Governor whereas Galle and Jaffna was headed by the commander. Principals further divided in provinces, and Districts. Dutch trade in Cinnamon and betel, Cowries coconut oil, spices, coconut fibre, Elephant
- From 1658 to 1796 Dutch occupied the southern, south-western, and the western part of Sri Lanka. In 1665 they expand to the east coast and control the main cinnamon growing area and the main ports of Sri Lanka.
- British entered into Sri Lanka in 1796 when Netherlands was occupied by the French between 1792 to 1801. In 1802 Ceylon was made a crown colony by the treaty of Amiens.
- Later on both the Dutch and British they jointly occupied the maximum agriculture and ports in Sri Lanka from 1796 to 1948.

VII. BRITISH OCCUPATION IN SRILANKA

- British were the first to use the word Ceylon for Sri Lanka. The name used till 1972.
- Kandyan king approach British to over throw the Dutch from Sri Lanka around 1700 AD. British helped Kandy king but later on took the advantage of the situation in 1815 with the help of Sinhalas they took control over Kandy.
- British used the aggressive expansion policy. Conflict between Sinhalas and Tamils created the easy way for the territorial expansion and political control.
- British introduced many property laws by which they got control over Coffee, Cinnamon, Rubber, Tea and Coconut plantation. More than 2000 British were having the land holding in Sri Lanka.
- British introduced Railways, introduced the English language for the commercial purpose.
- By 1829 Royal Commission of Eastern Inquiry which was also called as Colebrooke Cameron commission was introduced. This commission opposed the Mercantilism, monopolies by the state, administrative regulation and any outside interference in the economic expansion.

- The commission also introduced the uniform system in Judiciary, educational development, economic expansion and administration.
- In 1833 British divided the country into five provinces – Central Province central KandyanProvice
- Eastern Province, Kandyan province of Bintennaand Tamankaduwa
- Northern Province included the district of Jaffana, Mannar,Vanni, Kandyan province of NuwaraLalawiya
- Southern Province included district of Galle, Hambantota, Matara and Tangalle and the Kandyan province of Lower Uva, Saffragam and Wellassa.
- Western Province included the district of Colombo, Chilaw and Puttalam and the kandyan province of ThreeKorales, fourKorales, seven Korales and lower Bulathgama

VIII. FREEDOM STRUGGLE OF SRILANKA

- The freedom struggle of SriLanka was peaceful other than India and Burma.
- The Freedom struggle of SriLanka was initiated mainly by the educated middle class.
- The Sinhala and the Tamils started modernising their institutions and imparting western education in their schools and colleges. They oppose Christianity. This educated class started bringing social and the political change which influenced the mind-set of many people.
- During the First World War the nationalist got an opportunity to unite all the communities and fight against the British government.
 - **1919Ceylon National congress** was established.
 - **1920 new constitution was design** under the guidance of Governor Sir William Manning.
 - **1924 changes in the constitution** according to the demands of nationalist.
 - **1931 The first rift occurred between the nationalist and the Tamil and the Sinhala** separated. This tension further intensified in 1936 when the board of ministers was formed which consist of Sinhala and not given a single position to Tamils.
 - **1947 Ceylon independence act** was passes by which SriLanka got the domain status under British rule.
 - **4 February 1948 Independence of dominion to SriLanka.**

In the parliamentary election the United National Party, the coalition of nationalist and communist party won the major seats.

IX. PROMINENT LEADERS AND THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF SRILANKA

The important leaders who participated in the freedom struggle of SriLanka were: Don Stephen Senanayake was the first Prime Minister of Ceylon and also called as the father of Nation.

Other prominent leaders of the SriLanka freedom struggle were;

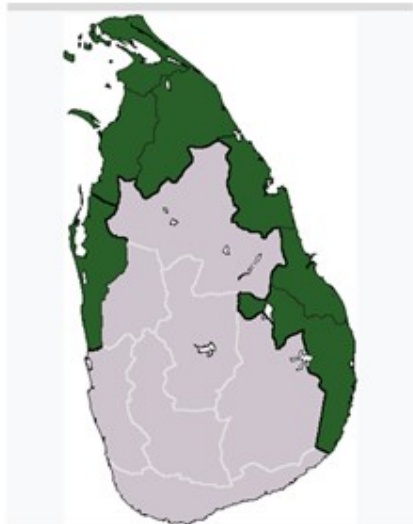
- **F. R. Senanayake** (1882 – 1926) elder brother of Don Stephen Senanayake.
- **Sir James Peiris JP** (1856 – 1930) – president of Legislative council
- **Don. Richard. Wijewardena** (1886 – 1950) was a Press Baron, successful businessman, he started the newspaper called Lake House
- **Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan** – A solicitor General and Tamil political leader
- **KCMG, KC** (1851 – 1930)
- **Edward Walter Perera (1875 – 1953)** was a Sri Lankan barrister, politician and freedom fighter. He was known as the ‘**Lion of Kotte**’.
- **Anagarika Dharmapala** (1864 – 1933) was a leading figure of Buddhism in the 20th century.
- **C.W.W. Kannangara** (1884 – 1969) was a Sri Lankan lawyer and politician.
- **Dr. Tuan Burhanuddin Jayah** (1890 – 1960)
- **Captain Henry Pedris CTG** (1888 – 1915) was a militia officer and a prominent socialite in colonial Ceylon who was executed by British officials for alleged incitement of racial riots in 1915, which were proven false.
- **Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam CCS** (1853 – 1924) was a Tamil political leader in Ceylon.
- Sri Lanka got the domain status from the British on 4 February 1948. It was called as domain status for Ceylon. This domain status continues till 1972.
- On 22 May 1972 Ceylon from the republican government and renamed itself as Sri Lanka.

X. TAMIL AFTER INDEPENDENCE

- In 1948 Ceylon citizen ship act was passed. This act didn't give citizenship rights to the Indian Tamil.
 - The Sri Lankan Tamils were also not happy with this act as it has not given the appropriate representation in the civil services and judiciary.
 - Discontent among Tamil after independence
 - Pre independence in Sri Lanka created the feeling of alienation among the Tamil minority. Both Sri Lankan Tamil and Indian Tamil were not happy with the majoritarian attitude of Sinhalas. Tamil in Sri Lanka lost their livelihood, the discrimination in university, civil services, even in markets. Most of the political rights were given to only the Sinhalas.
- In 1936 the Sri Lanka Sama Samaja Party proposed to replace the English with the vernacular languages for the official use.
- In 1944 Mr. J R Jayawardhane convinced the British government to make Sinhala as the official language.
- In 1956 the government pass the language act and declare Sinhala Language as the official language. The conflict over the language creates a separatist movement in Sri Lanka and they started demanding the territorial rights within the country.
- In 1972 Prabhakar formed Tamil New Tigers and in 1976 Tamil United Liberation Front was formed for the self-governance in the Tamil area.
- In 1976 Liberation Tamil Tiger Eelam (LTTE) was founded by Velupillai Prabhakar for the freedom movement of Tamil minority. Through the gorilla war tactics, they attack on

government officials and ministers. Kilinochchi town was the administrative centre of LTTE.

- In 1983 LTTE killed 13 soldiers through gorilla war tactic.
- In 1985 LTTE control Jaffna. But by October 1987 they lost Jaffna by Indian Peace keeping force.
- In 1987 the LTTE attack on former Indian Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi when Mr. Gandhi signed the peace treaty with the Sri Lanka President Mr. Jayewardene and send the Indian peace keeping force to Sri Lanka.
- 1990 Indian peace keeping force withdraw from Jaffna.
- On May 21, 1991, LTTE Assassinated Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as a part of revenge against IPKF.
- August 1992 land mine bomb explosion by LTTE in Jaffna in which 10 senior military officers were killed.
- May 1993 than President of Sri Lanka Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa was assassinated.
- In January, 1996 LTTE attack on the central bank of Colombo in which 100 civilians were killed.



Area control by LTTE

- In 2001 LTTE attack on Colombo international airport.
- In 2002 government of Sri Lanka signed ceasefire with LTTE but it was for a short period.
- In 2006 European Union included the LTTE in the list of terrorist organisation and then LTTE again started suicide bombing in Colombo and other cities.
- In 2008 Sri Lankan government, Breach the peace treaty in control the administrative centre of LTTE that is Kilinochchi.
- On May 18, 2009 the then leader of LTTE Velupillai Prabhakar was killed with the joint efforts of Sri Lankan government and UN peace keeping force.
- On May 20, 2009, Prabhakaran's son Balachandran Prabhakaran just 12 years old, was killed. With this LTTE officially surrendered in that year.

XI. A FTERMATH

After the surrender of Tamil Eelam more than 3 Lacs of Tamils were detained in military guard camps in the districts of Vavuniya, Mannar, Jaffna, and Trincomalee.

After the assassination of Prabhakaran the SriLankan president Rajapaksa appointed the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission LLRC to provide the suggestions for peace making with the Tamils in SriLanka

The commission found that both Sinhala and the Tamil Politicians were responsible for civil war between the two groups. The commission was criticised by the UN Secretary General's Panel of Expert for lack proper investigation and decision making and failure to meet the international standards.

XII. SRILANKA ECONOMIC CRISIS

The main problem is the problem of balance of payment and Foreign exchange reserves. The root of the SriLanka was from the beginning as the Sinhala majority started taking all advantages and alienated the Tamil minority.

Rajapaksa wanted to establish the family domination. More than 30 members of his family were appointed on different government post. If we look in the past, we found that even though area wise SriLanka is a small country but its GDP was more than many other countries like India in terms of its per capita income. SriLanka was earning by exporting crops like tea, rubber.

When the country got independence SriLanka adopted the IMF made economic plans because the country having taken money from IMF so it was mandatory for them to implement IMF's economic plans and secondly they were under the western influence.

SriLanka was the victim of China's debt trap but for these conditions Rajapaksa government and its economic policies were mainly responsible. Between 1983 to 2009 the SriLankan economic faced problems and instability. Even after the civil war the proper measures were not taken to create the balance among the people.

After civil war in 2009, Mahindra Rajapaksa took 2.6 billion loans from IMF to pay the war expenses, to promote tourism and to build the infrastructure. Also to reward the close friends. Instead of economic reforms the government implemented many tax relax policies.

Even though the GDP was 8 % to 9% during 2012 but in 2013 it remains half due to the global commodity price fell which effect its exports. Again it took 1.5 billion in 2015 from IMF.

Easter bomb blast of 2019 in Colombo church effected the tourism in SriLanka which was the main source of revenue in the country. But many expert's opinions that it was Rajapaksa's wrong economic policies and the family domination which is responsible for the economic crisis in SriLanka.

In 2021 Gotabaya Rajapaksa ban the import of chemical fertilizer to move towards the Organic. This overnight shift effected the production of food grains and the food crisis started. To come out of this crisis the SriLankan president declared the economic emergency and depreciated the currency and depleted the foreign reserves.

By 2022 the inflation in Sri Lanka rose up to 50%. The main problem was the shortage of fuel in further the shot up the price of the fuel. This disturbed the transportation system in the country.

By June 2022 the government banned the sale of petrol and diesel for non-essential vehicles. [Government of Sri Lanka banned the sale of Petrol and diesel for any vehicle other than public utility to reduce the consumption and deal with the crisis]

- School and other educational institutes were closed and people had to work from home.
- The work of many sectors especially the unorganised sectors badly.
- Sri Lanka had to pay £ 5.7 billion to China and £ 1 billion to India.
- Public was on the road widespread protest started against the government.

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