

Information Technology vital for Economic Growth

Deputy Minister of Finance & Planning Dr. Sarath Amunugama

With the end of the thirty year cancerous war, Sri Lanka is emerging towards a rapid growth in all sectors and the contribution to stimulate the strategies, adopted by the government to achieve her targets, the information technology could accomplish a massive service said Senior Advisor and the Hon. Deputy Minister of Finance and Planning Dr. Sarath Amunugama.

Few decades ago the prospective investors who were anxious to invest in Sri Lanka were hesitated to do so since they had a reasonable doubt as to whether they could proceed with their business profitably and uninterruptedly due to the conflict experiencing at that time. However the war is over and Sri Lanka has been converted to a safe haven. Today Colombo city is safe than any other time, he said.

Dr. Amunugama also said addressing the IBM Forum 2010 themed 'Smarter Business for a Smarter Planet' that he is delighted to see a large number of foreign stakeholders in the forum and requested them to talk about the peaceful atmosphere and the hospitality they experienced in Sri Lanka when they go to their countries. Since Sri Lanka is spearheading to achieve tourism targets, awareness on the true ground situation prevailing in Sri Lanka is vitally important world over.

The old-fashioned or outdated fashion of life fabric in Sri Lanka is fading away with the end of the war and we are forging ahead towards a new era embracing new trends adopted by various other countries which are on speedy development tracks using information technology. Today the information technology could be attributed as a necessity and not a luxury, he said.

Dr. Amunugama also said that Sri Lanka is rich with the human resources, potential and talents which were all hidden during the past and the modern information technology can give them a wake-up call to join the development exercise which is streamlined by the government. This potential could be defined into three categories namely, co-operate potential, personal potential and the national potential. All these potential could be grasped into one clutch and could be conditioned with modern technology in order to chime with the other developing countries.

Sri Lanka is accelerating her growth rate from 6% to 8% in the medium term and we are heading towards a double digit growth rate in the near future. With all the potential and resources we have no doubt we can increase the revenue. Increasing taxes does not mean that we increase revenue. As an example we can reduce the tax rates without damaging the income flow. We have brought down the tax levies for vehicle imports but that did not affect the government revenue.

We all know that the main revenue-spinners in Sri Lanka are namely Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise Department. It is unfortunate to see that there are loopholes in these departments which hamper the flow of revenue to the government coffers. We are taking every step to plug the loopholes bringing legitimate revenue to the government which could be utilised for the development projects in the country enabling the community to lead good lives, he said.

Dr. Amunugama said that the IBM has a long standing link with Sri Lanka and this institute which is fast emerging with modern information technology could join hands to take this country towards development.

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