

most  
admired  
leaders  
of Sri Lanka 2018



# MOST ADMIRLED LEADERS OF SRI LANKA 2018

## Introduction

The Most Admired Leaders of Sri Lanka awards are for outstanding Sri Lankans. The three people selected are outstanding people who are driven by a powerful sense of purpose both in their individual lives and in relation to the world at large. This year the awards will be made under three categories - National Contribution, Business Accomplishments and Social Responsibility. The awards are meant to recognize leaders who have excelled in their respective fields but have also brought recognition and honour not only for themselves, but also to our nation. They are people who have demonstrated courage, tenacity and outstanding results over many years. Also, despite being tested right to the edge they have followed their purpose with an unrelenting energy and passion. They are TRUE SRI LANKANS who have put our country first.

## Categories

### 1. National Contribution

Here we recognize a Sri Lankan national leader with outstanding leadership qualities and contribution over many decades in public service. The contribution made has been achieved during his lifetime. He has served the people of this country with dignity and with great humility. Economic prosperity, personal freedom and justice have been the hallmark of his tenure. They have dedicated their lives to the betterment of their countries and the people living in the country. This is a person who has implemented strategies and policies without fear or favour meant to better serve the interests of the country they govern.

### 2. Business Accomplishments

Here we pay tribute to a Business leader in Sri Lanka who has had unmatched success over many years, by building a business empire that has withstood decades of challenges. He has been courageous and authentic by being true to his value systems. He has been decisive in his actions and been a true entrepreneur. He has uplifted the lives of many by venturing into uncharted territory and thereby providing a livelihood to many young people. He has been generous to the less fortunate and has led others by his own actions and by example. A business leader who wields strong influence on the business world we live in today. He has been most influential in terms of innovative thinking, focus on customers, and their desire to serve the less-fortunate.

### 3. Social Responsibility

In this category we pay tribute to a leader who has spent a lifetime working for the benefit of the underprivileged and the community at large. He has demonstrated his desire to promote the welfare of others with his generous contributions to many humanitarian causes benefitting society at large. He is a leader who opens his or her heart and mind to others, turns what is undoubtedly prodigious intelligence and focus outward to understand the challenges of others, and a business leader to whom social responsibility has been an integral part of commercial success; making his company a global success in a socially responsible manner.

# ICCSL Awards Leader's Citations

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Ranil Wickremesinghe - Prime Minister of Sri Lanka  
- National Contribution

Hon Ranil Wickremesinghe is a four times Prime Minister. He is the longest serving leader of the United National Party - the largest and oldest political party in Sri Lanka. He has led the party for 24 years. He was first appointed as the Prime Minister on the 7 th of May 1993 and last elected as Prime Minister on 21st August 2015. Wickremesinghe has been a member of Parliament and a Minister since 1977. He has the distinction of becoming the youngest Cabinet Minister in Sri Lanka.

Wickremesinghe was educated at Royal College, Colombo, and then entered the Faculty of Law at the University of Peradeniya. After graduation, he completed the law exams at the Sri Lanka Law College and took oaths as an advocate in 1972. Wickremesinghe received an honorary doctorate from Deakin University in Australia on February 14th 2017, for his significant contributions in reforms to economy, education and human rights.

“Ranil” as we know him, has the foresight and knowledge far superior to most of his colleagues. His knowledge is so vast that he is able to hold his own at any International Forum, and speak knowledgeably on almost any subject. He has distinguished himself with a level of thinking and action for his country which has been unmatched by any of his peers. There may have been more political leaders who fared better at elections, but the fact is that Ranil Wickremesinghe’s intelligence and thorough knowledge of world affairs has held him in good stead, and created in him an individual who has the ability to raise Sri Lanka to greater heights.

Outside of politics, he has held office in several historic Buddhist temples, he has written and spoken widely on Sri Lankan history, Buddhism and world politics, but what interests him most is cutting edge developments in all fields of knowledge globally and locally. In addition, Wickremesinghe is a member of International Democrat Union and is a Robert E. Wilhelm Fellow of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology .

Wickremesinghe is married to Maitree Wickremesinghe, a Sri Lankan academic and Professor of English .



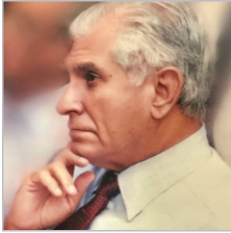
Merrill J. Fernando- Social Responsibility

Merrill J. Fernando is a giant in the Ceylon Tea industry, into which he made a ground breaking entry with his “Dilmah” tea. At the same time, he indulges in works of charity throughout the country which are unmatched by any other commercial organisation. To describe what Merrill does as social responsibility would probably be wrong. Merrill does not do his works of charity as a duty. He truly believes in what he does which is that he should share his good fortune with those who are less fortunate, and it is that which sets him apart as a true human being.

The MJF Charitable Foundation which he has set up, uses a minimum of 10% of the pre-tax income of Dilmah and ancillary businesses, to provide nutrition, education, care and support to differently abled children and children of marginalized communities through over 100 projects, touching the lives of over 10,000 children and adults. Merrill has said many times publicly “I want to prevent the hardship of young entrepreneurs of today when I compare myself with the hardship that I went through in launching Dilmah Tea.”

Merrill clearly believes in the philosophy of seeing business as a matter of human service. 10% of all Dilmah profits are channeled to the MJF Charitable Foundation which is working towards the dignified empowerment of underprivileged people around Sri Lanka. Each year, the Foundation cares for over 5,000 children in its Child Development Centres, nurtures over 1000 children through the MJF Kids, empowers women, and has created over 600 entrepreneurs through the Small Entrepreneur Programme – SEP– and uplifted the lives of countless plantation workers. These are only a few of over 100 projects the MJF Foundation implements each year.

In 2007, Merrill extended his commitment to human service by establishing Dilmah Conservation which focuses on working towards a more sustainable use of the environment in partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The Dilmah Conservation initiative aims to foster respect for the environment and ensure its protection by encouraging a harmonious co-existence of man and nature. In 2010, Merrill made a Declaration of a Core Commitment to Sustainability which expanded the Dilmah Conservation scope and scale to include initiatives in the areas of Habitat & Species Conservation – both terrestrial and marine, Ecosystems Restoration, Environmental Education and Culture & Indigenous Communities. In 2016, The Merrill J. Fernando Eco Innovation Awards was initiated calling for breakthrough, purposeful proposals of well-developed concepts and working prototypes that seek to solve current national and global environmental issues in the areas of Waste, Water, Energy, Blue Economy and Biodiversity .



### Mr. Sohli Captain - Business Accomplishments

On leaving St. Thomas College at a very young age, he could not embark on his intended flying career due to the untimely death of his elder brother in an air crash. He then joined his father who was the Managing Director of the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills, in handling sales of their entire production working from the Pettah, and later took over the management of the Mills for a short period when his father took ill.

While there, he began to venture into other manufacturing businesses and was one of the first to manufacture toothbrushes in the Country for Johnson & Johnson, and now continues to do so for Unilevers. Among his other businesses was to manufacture the well known ICI branded paints ( Dulux etc., ) for CIC, as well as garments and Industrial gloves for export and all types of plastic products. Subsequently Sohli also ventured into several other manufacturing businesses, some of them with his long time friend Nigel Austin.

He, his son and daughter as well as their companies are the largest share holders of John Keells Holdings and many other listed companies.

Sohli is now 85 years old, and having played golf for nearly 67 years, continues to play daily at 5.30 a.m, and thereafter works a full day.

Sohli a gentleman in every sense, a rare commodity in our business world, is known for his major works of charity, especially Sri Lanka's first Cancer hospice at Maharagama.

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