

CLAWS Newsletter



The Perimeter Watch: Sri Lanka & Maldives | Volume 1 | No 5

by Diksha Jain

WEATHER WARNINGS

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka vigilant as seismic activity increases in the region

([Adaderana](#), April 01, 2025)

On April 1, the Geological Survey & Mines Bureau advised Sri Lankans to remain alert to seismic activity in the region, despite the country not experiencing direct impacts from recent earthquakes. Officials highlighted the potential threat of tsunami-like effects if a major earthquake occurs near Sumatra and assured global seismic activity is closely monitored. Concerns have risen following a 7.7-magnitude earthquake in Myanmar, which resulted in over 2,000 casualties. Meanwhile, Japan has warned of a possible 8-9 magnitude earthquake, and New Delhi recently experienced a 4.0-magnitude tremor. Authorities continue to emphasise preparedness against potential seismic threats.

Maldives

Torrential rain hits Maldivian capital; authorities prepare for possible flooding

([English Sun](#), April 09, 2025)

On April 09, 2025, the Maldives Meteorological Service issued a Yellow alert for torrential rain and thunderstorms across central Maldives, including Male City. The alert was issued from 10:45 am (local time) to 2 pm (local time) and covers the region stretching from Kaafu Atoll (North Central Province) to Laamu Atoll (Upper South Province). Gusts of wind reaching 40 mph were expected, accompanied by torrential rains, thunderstorms, and rough sea conditions. The current weather pattern was attributed to a low-pressure system in the Bay of Bengal. Authorities urge the public to remain cautious and stay updated on further advisories.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka Prepares to Send Military and Medical Teams to Myanmar for Earthquake Relief

([News First](#), April 01, 2025)

The Sri Lanka Army has announced its readiness to send relief teams to assist those affected by the recent earthquake in Myanmar, with preparations underway based on Myanmar's request. Additionally, the Ministry of Health is assembling a medical team in response to a request from the Myanmar embassy. A preliminary discussion on coordinating humanitarian

aid and search-and-rescue operations was held at the Disaster Management Center, bringing together officials from the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka Army, Navy, Air Force, Police, other state institutions, representatives from United Nations agencies, and both local and international non-governmental organisations.

Prime Minister attends UNESCO conference in Paris on Anuradhapura's heritage conservation

([Lanka News Web](#), April 01, 2025)

On April 1, Prime Minister Dr. Harini Amarasuriya attended a high-level international conference in Paris focused on preserving the Sacred City of Anuradhapura, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Held at UNESCO Headquarters, the event brought together UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and global heritage experts to discuss sustainable conservation strategies. During her visit, Dr. Amarasuriya also engaged in bilateral discussions with French officials to strengthen cultural, economic, and diplomatic ties. She was accompanied by Dr. Hiniduma Sunil Senevi, Minister of Buddhasasana, Religious, and Cultural Affairs.

India hopes to finalise Security Cooperation Agreement with SL next month

([The Island Online](#), April 01, 2025)

On April 01, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri confirmed that New Delhi is in the final stages of negotiating a new defence cooperation agreement with Sri Lanka. The agreement is expected to be concluded during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Colombo in the first week of April. This initiative follows discussions held in December 2024 between President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and Prime Minister Modi, where both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening security ties. A statement from the Indian High Commission in Colombo quoted Modi as saying, "We have decided to quickly finalise the Security Cooperation Agreement," underscoring the strategic importance of the partnership.

Bangladeshi human smuggling racket via SL continues Three Dhaka residents bound for Greece on fake PR cards nabbed at BIA

([Daily Mirror](#), April 01, 2025)

On April 01, Sri Lankan immigration officials arrested three Bangladeshi nationals at Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) while attempting to travel to Greece with fake permanent resident (PR) cards. The arrests highlight the ongoing human smuggling racket

operating via Dhaka, Chennai, Colombo, and European destinations. The suspects had checked in for Gulf Air flight 145 to Bahrain via Malé when airline staff, suspicious of their Greek PR cards, alerted the Department of Immigration and Emigration (DIE). Upon verification, the Border Surveillance Unit (BSU) confirmed the documents were forged.

Investigations revealed that the three individuals had arrived in Sri Lanka from Dhaka via Chennai and were staying at a lodge near the airport. They claimed to have received the fake PR cards from a contact in Italy to secure employment in Athens. Following initial inquiries, the suspects were handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for further investigation. Authorities believe this case is part of a larger human smuggling network using Sri Lanka as a transit hub for illegal migration to Europe.

Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force Ships Arrive in Colombo on Goodwill Visit

([Lanka News Web](#), April 02, 2025)

On April 01, the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) vessels “BUNGO” and “ETAJIMA” arrived at the Port of Colombo on a goodwill visit. The Sri Lanka Navy welcomed the visiting ships with naval traditions. According to an official statement, JMSDF BUNGO is a 141-meter Uraga-Class Minesweeper Tender, commanded by Commander Tanaka Koji, with a crew of 125 personnel. Meanwhile, JMSDF ETAJIMA is a 65-meter Minesweeper, under the command of Commander Oda Takayuki, with a crew of 54 personnel. During their stay, the crew members will visit several tourist attractions in Colombo before the vessels depart from the port on April 04.

US President Trump imposes 44% tariff on Sri Lanka

([Tamil Guardian](#), April 02, 2025)

U.S. President Donald Trump has imposed a steep 44% tariff on all goods imported from Sri Lanka as part of a broader set of “reciprocal” tariffs targeting multiple countries. Trump said the move was in response to what he described as unfair trade practices, including currency manipulation and trade barriers imposed on the United States. The 44% tariff particularly impacts Sri Lanka, as the U.S. is its largest export destination. In 2024 alone, the U.S. imported over USD 3 billion worth of goods from the island nation — more than double the amount purchased by Sri Lanka’s second-largest trading partner, the UK.

In January 2025, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Sri Lanka exported more than USD 346 million worth of goods to the U.S. Calling it “our declaration of economic independence,” Trump described the tariff decision as one of the most significant economic moves in recent American history. The 44% levy on Sri Lankan goods is the fourth-highest tariff on an Asian country under the new policy, raising concerns over potential disruptions to Sri Lanka’s export-led economy.

Amnesty International concerned over detention of 22 yr old under PTA

([News Wire](#), April 06, 2025)

Amnesty International South Asia has expressed serious concern over the detention of 22-year-old Mohamad Rusdi, who was arrested in Colombo on March 22 and has since been held under Sri Lanka’s Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). In a statement issued by the South Asia Regional Office, the rights group condemned the 90-day detention without charge, calling it a deeply troubling use of draconian anti-terror legislation, especially under Sri Lanka’s new administration.

Amnesty said that two weeks since the arrest, the Sri Lankan authorities have failed to present any credible evidence of criminal wrongdoing to justify Rusdi’s continued detention. The group further urged the government to restore Rusdi’s due process rights, highlighting that the PTA has a long record of enabling arbitrary detention and abuse. Amnesty also voiced disappointment that Sri Lanka’s new leadership continues to use the PTA, despite repeated calls from domestic and international human rights organisations for its repeal or reform.

Maldives

India increases export quota for essential goods to the Maldives

([Avas](#), April 03, 2025)

India has raised its export quota for essential commodities exported to the Maldives under a trade arrangement established in 1981 and periodically renewed. According to the Indian High Commission in the Maldives, the newly approved quotas are the highest since the agreement’s inception. The export quota for river sand and stone aggregate, essential materials for the Maldives’ booming construction sector, has increased by 30% to 1,300,000 metric tons.

Quotas for eggs, potatoes, onions, sugar, rice, and wheat flour have each been raised by 5%, while pulses have seen a record 56% increase. India also recalled that it continued to supply

essential goods like rice, sugar, and onions to the Maldives in previous years, even when these items were restricted for export globally. The move is part of India's continued support for human-centric development in the Maldives, aligned with its Neighbourhood First policy.

President Dr. Muizzu reaffirms commitment to deepening ties with Saudi Arabia

([Maldives Voice](#), April 08, 2025)

On April 08, 2025, President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu met with the outgoing Saudi Ambassador to the Maldives, Matrek bin Abdullah Al-Ajalin Al-Dosari, at the President's Office and reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening ties with Saudi Arabia. He appreciated the Ambassador's contributions to advancing bilateral relations and highlighted the fruitful engagements between the two countries during his tenure. President Muizzu also fondly recalled the warm hospitality extended by the Saudi government during his Umrah pilgrimage in May and extended his best wishes to the Ambassador for his future endeavours.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Abdulla Khaleel meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism of the Republic of Malta

([Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), April 07, 2025)

On April 07, 2025, Maldivian Foreign Minister Dr. Abdulla Khaleel met with Dr. Ian Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Malta, to advance bilateral relations between the two island nations. The ministers emphasised the importance of strengthening Maldives–Malta ties through enhanced cooperation, expertise exchange, and joint efforts on shared priorities. As fellow small island states, they reaffirmed their commitment to environmental protection and renewable energy transition while discussing ways to boost trade, investment, tourism, fisheries, and higher education collaboration.

Maldives secures USD 17 million from SFD for VIA expansion

([MMTV](#), April 14, 2025)

The Maldives has signed a USD 17 million loan agreement with the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) to support the expansion of Velana International Airport (VIA). The deal, signed at a special ceremony at the President's Office, was formalized by Finance Minister Moosa Zameer on behalf of the Maldivian government. The funding, equivalent to 63 million Saudi Riyals, is expected to accelerate VIA's ongoing development, enabling the airport to handle more airlines and passengers while enhancing tourism, business, and transport services.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Sri Lanka

Cargills Bank of Sri Lanka suffers what may be the largest data breach in the country's history

([Numberslka](#), April 01, 2025)

On April 1, reports surfaced of a massive data breach at Cargills Bank, marking one of the most significant cyber incidents in Sri Lanka's history. A hacker group has allegedly leaked highly sensitive customer data, including NIC numbers, passport details, and specimen signatures of bank staff, on the dark web. Despite the severity of the breach, the bank has yet to communicate transparently with its customers. The lack of mainstream media coverage has raised further concerns about how the situation is being handled.

Parliament workers on warpath over allowance reductions

([The Island Online](#), April 02, 2025)

On April 01, parliamentary staff members in Sri Lanka expressed strong dissatisfaction over a salary revision that has significantly reduced their allowances. The staff are now contemplating trade union action in response to what they describe as a drastic cut in their benefits. The salary adjustments outlined in Management Services Circular 04/2025 (DMS/Salary Revision/2025-1), dated March 25, 2025, have reduced allowances by 70% to 39%, depending on staff grades.

Former Sri Lankan minister calls for president to be hanged

([Tamil Guardian](#), April 04, 2025)

Former minister and long-time Rajapaksa loyalist Lohan Ratwatte has launched a scathing verbal attack against President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, controversially declaring that the president and his associates "should be hanged" for their alleged involvement in the JVP-led uprisings of the 1980s. Ratwatte vented frustration over the recent string of arrests targeting opposition politicians and their family members—including himself and his wife. Ratwatte, no stranger to controversy, has faced serious allegations and convictions. Ratwatte's past includes:

- In 2021, he was accused of entering Anuradhapura Prison while intoxicated and threatening Tamil political prisoners at gunpoint—allegedly asking them whether they had killed any soldiers and accusing them of complaining to the United Nations.
- In 2022, his security detail sparked public outrage after shooting and killing a pet dog in Jaffna, claiming it posed a threat.

- A conviction for massacring 10 unarmed Muslim civilians during the 2001 general elections.
- Reported to have fired gunshots in the air at a hotel in Kandy in 2020 in a fit of rage.

Navy and Police seize largest-ever narcotics haul in Sri Lanka

([The Island Online](#), April 07, 2025)

On April 06, 2025, in a breakthrough in Sri Lanka's fight against narcotics, the Navy and Police Narcotics Bureau intercepted what is being described as the country's largest drug seizure to date during a maritime operation in southern waters. The operation led to the confiscation of 863 kilograms of narcotics, estimated to be worth Rs 1.6 billion on the street. The haul included 671 kg of crystal methamphetamine (Ice) and 192 kg of heroin.

Authorities believe the massive consignment is linked to a well-organised trafficking ring involving three high-profile drug lords, one of whom is Kosgoda Sujee, reportedly based in Dubai. 7 individuals, aged between 20 and 58, were taken into custody. They are believed to be couriers from various coastal towns, including Hikkaduwa, Ahungalla, Beruwala, Gonapinuwa, and Aluwala.

Maldives

Immigration detains 8 undocumented foreigners in Hulhumalé raid

([MMTV](#), April 08, 2025)

Maldives Immigration has detained eight undocumented foreign nationals during a special operation in Hulhumalé, as part of a nationwide crackdown on illegal immigration. The arrests were made following a task force's search of four accommodation blocks, according to a statement issued on April 08. The operation is part of a broader government-led effort to address the increasing presence of undocumented foreigners working without valid permits.

Those found violating immigration laws are being deported, with officials also flagging concerns over businesses run by undocumented workers that do not meet food safety and hygiene standards. To enhance enforcement, the government has introduced the Immigration Watch platform, allowing the public to report suspected violations. Additionally, an ongoing biometric data collection initiative aims to improve monitoring and oversight of foreign workers in the Maldives.

241 committee approves Israeli passport ban until Palestine genocide ends

([The Edition](#), April 14, 2025)

The Security Services Committee (241 Committee) of the Maldivian Parliament has approved a key amendment to the Immigration Act that would ban entry to Israeli passport holders until Israel ends what the bill describes as its genocide in Palestine. Initially proposed by South Galolhu MP Meekail Ahmed Naseem on May 29, 2024, the bill had been stalled at the committee stage for months. Work on the bill resumed recently, and it underwent significant revisions before approval. The clause banning dual-Israeli passport holders was removed. Now, only those with Israeli passports are affected, allowing dual nationals to enter using non-Israeli passports due to enforcement limits.

Bank of Maldives Apologizes After ATMs Apparently Decide to Double-Dip Customer Accounts

([E Truth](#), April 12, 2025)

The Bank of Maldives (BML) faced a wave of customer outrage after a technical glitch led to duplicate deductions from accounts. Customers reported being charged twice for the same transaction. Others discovered their balances trapped in mysterious “pending” transactions, prompting memes and sarcastic commentary across the internet. Adding fuel to the fire, BML’s newly deployed ATMs in remote islands began displaying bizarre error messages. One machine reportedly told a user to “take a shower and come back,” sparking confusion and mockery. Islanders, who trekked through midday heat to access services, encountered machines that refused to cooperate and insulted them for good measure.

Government to expand air ambulance service

([MMTV](#), April 10, 2025)

Following its successful launch in March 2024, the Maldives’ national air ambulance service is set to expand. The service has already completed 899 missions and transported 1,072 patients across the country. It has played a vital role in delivering emergency care, especially to remote islands with limited access to specialist medical treatment. To overcome this, the government has partnered with the Maldives National University (MNU) to launch specialised training programmes later this year. Approved by the Cabinet’s Social Council, these programmes aim to equip a new generation of professionals with the medical and technical expertise needed to support the growing service while also enhancing the sustainability and quality of emergency healthcare delivery in the long term.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Sri Lanka

Tourism earnings exceed USD 1 Billion in 1st quarter of 2025

(News Wire, April 14, 2025)

Sri Lanka's tourism sector posted a strong performance in the first quarter of 2025, with earnings surpassing USD 1.1 billion, according to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. Between January and March 2025, the country welcomed 722,276 tourists, marking a 13.6% increase compared to 635,784 arrivals during the same period last year. Tourism earnings rose 9.4% year-on-year, reaching USD 1,122.3 million, up from USD 1,025.9 million in Q1 2024, underscoring the sector's continued recovery and growing economic contribution.

Maldives

Maldives economy grows 5.1% in 2024, driven by tourism and services

(MMTV, April 09, 2025)

According to the Quarterly National Accounts released by the Maldives Bureau of Statistics, the Maldives recorded a real GDP of MVR 101.8 billion in 2024, marking a 5.1% growth compared to 2023. This growth was supported by a strong performance in the first quarter, a contraction in the second, and modest recoveries in the third and fourth quarters.

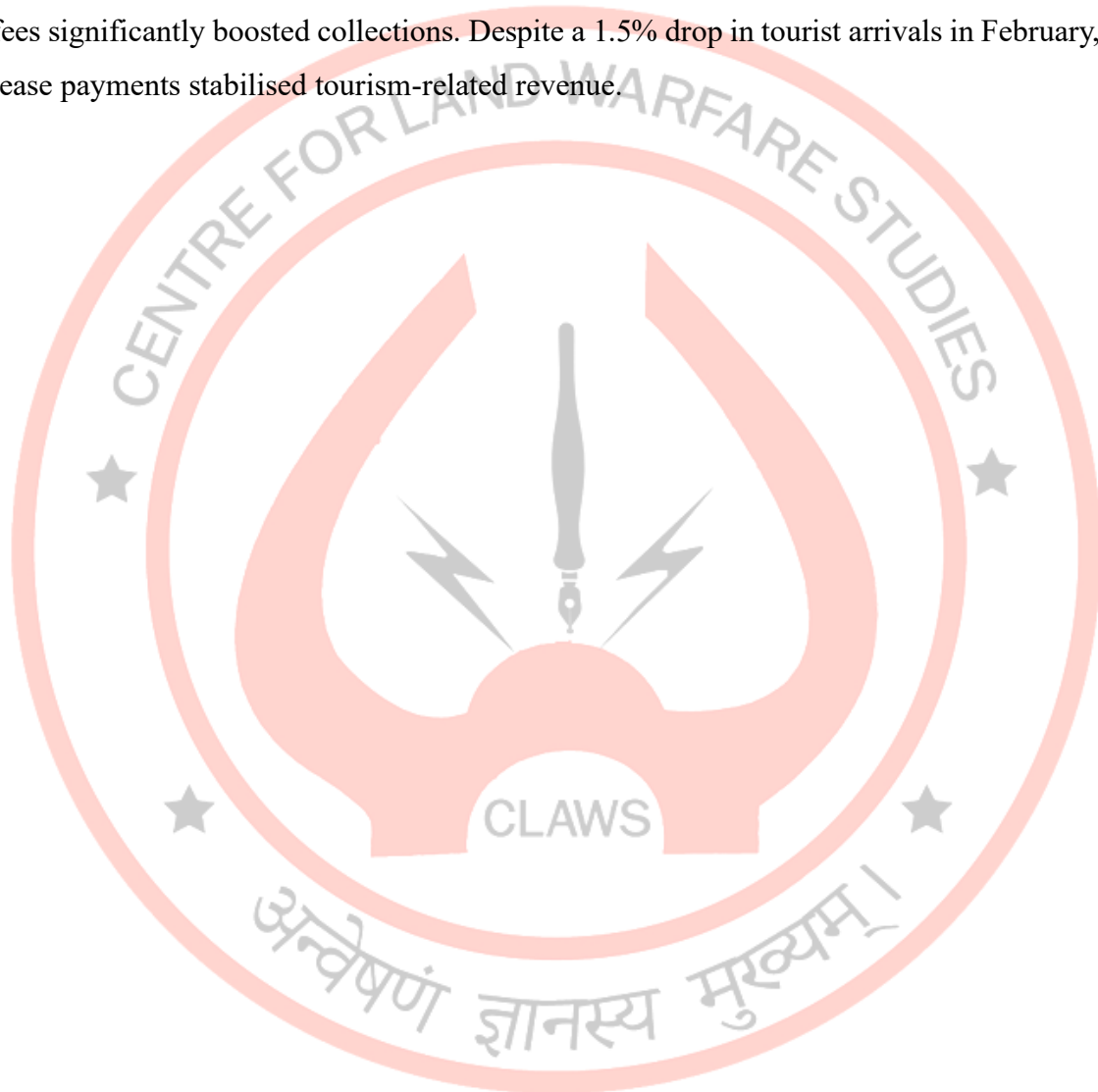
Tourism remained the main economic driver, contributing 22.2% of real GDP in Q4, with a gross value added (GVA) of MVR 5.84 billion, bolstered by a sharp rise in tourist bed-nights. The transportation and communication sector followed, contributing 13.2% to GDP with a year-on-year growth of 7.1%, while wholesale and retail trade accounted for 9.3%, reflecting improved imports.

Other key contributors included public administration, real estate, and financial services, while agriculture had the smallest share, accounting for just 0.9% of the GDP. The electricity and water supply sector grew 6.8% year-on-year but dipped slightly from Q3. Financial services posted 2.9% annual growth but declined marginally from the previous quarter due to shifts in financial intermediation. In contrast, the construction sector contracted, with GVA falling to MVR 1.15 billion, showing a 0.2% year-on-year and 3.6% quarter-on-quarter decline, largely due to lower building materials imports.

MIRA reports 15% rise in March tax revenue as collections improve

([MMTV](#), April 12, 2025)

The Maldives Inland Revenue Authority (MIRA) reported MVR 3.38 billion in government revenue for March 2025, reflecting a 15.1% increase compared to March 2024. The rise was primarily attributed to higher tax revenue comprising 75.1% of the total. A key driver of the growth was the extension of February's tax deadline to March 3, which resulted in a portion of February's payments being included in March's figures. Additionally, lease period extension fees significantly boosted collections. Despite a 1.5% drop in tourist arrivals in February, these lease payments stabilised tourism-related revenue.



About the Author

Diksha Jain is a dedicated scholar in Defence and Strategic Studies, with a strong academic foundation in International Relations. She completed her master's degree in Defence and Strategic Studies, focusing on areas such as maritime security and the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Region. Prior to this, she earned her bachelor's degree in International Relations, where she developed a comprehensive understanding of global politics and regional dynamics.

As a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), Diksha explores critical issues related to defence strategy and maritime security. Her work focuses on the Indian Ocean Region, examining its geopolitical challenges and their implications for regional stability.



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