

A New Era of Sri Lankan Cinema  
More than a  
Dream

A Strategic Idea to  
Develop Cinema Industry  
as a part of Overall  
Development Plan

Asoka  
Handagama

# A New Era of Sri Lankan Cinema, More than a Dream

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## A STRATEGIC IDEA TO DEVELOP CINEMA INDUSTRY AS A PART OF OVERALL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Some of you may be wondering why we at the Central Bank are worried about cinema. Does it have any relevance to us in the Central Bank? Isn't it a topic for filmmakers, critics, cinema journalists and artistes who are engaged in that art.? *Of course I belong to that community.*

I have discussed cinema in various forums. I have talked about artistry of cinema, the cinematic content, its form and narrative style, the philosophy behind the art of moving image etc. Today, however, my focus will be different. I will limit myself to the discussion on cinema as an industry and its future prospects.

*This is therefore totally an industry proposal. It may conflict with my views on cinema as a filmmaker. If that disturbs some of you, I beg your pardon in advance. This is for adults only.*

When we talk about development of different sectors of our economy, our focus traditionally has been on sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, small and medium scale enterprises, household industries etc. A less attention had been paid, until recent times on exploring and developing non-traditional like 'entertainment'.

In National Accounts compilation, the cinema comes under 'entertainment' in the Private Services subsector of the Services sector. This Private Services sector accounts only for less than 3% of overall GDP. The cinema, although it is one of the most lucrative industries in the world, has a very little contribution for overall economic development of the country. Due to negligence and lack of visionary policy intervention, the true potential of this industry has not been exploited.

Our education system is also designed to produce doctors, engineers, accountants etc. Everybody wants to become one of them and only a few succeeds. Others end up as teachers and clerical staff in government offices.

*These days many engineers join the central bank to work as economists! One famous tuition master told me recently, after watching Changumi, many school girls desperately want to study bio science.*

Nobody wants to become a filmmaker, a musician, cinematographer, a novelist, a dramatist or a dancer. Some school boys want to become cricketers these days because of the professional nature of that sport.

The countries like South Korea, Singapore, China, Philippine, Malaysia, UAE, have identified the importance of developing cinema, after realizing the great potential that it has in contributing to the country's economic development. So, I thought of talking today about the possibility of developing cinema as a part of an overall economic development strategy of the country.

## **1. Contents**

I will first briefly go through the historic evolution of domestic film industry; *I thought that it is important because most of the audiences today are young scholars. And they were born after the so called golden era of our cinema industry.*

Then I will discuss how it was affected by the changes occurred in the socio-economic landscape, problems identified and its current status. Then I will propose a strategic idea to re-launch it to a new era.

## 2. 1898: Here Comes the Art of Moving Images

History of cinema in Sri Lanka dates back to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to unconfirmed sources, first 'moving image' screening to a 'paid audience' in Sri Lanka had taken place in a hall named Public Hall, in Hunupitiya, Colombo.

Specifically that was on the 08<sup>th</sup> January, 1898, just after three years,

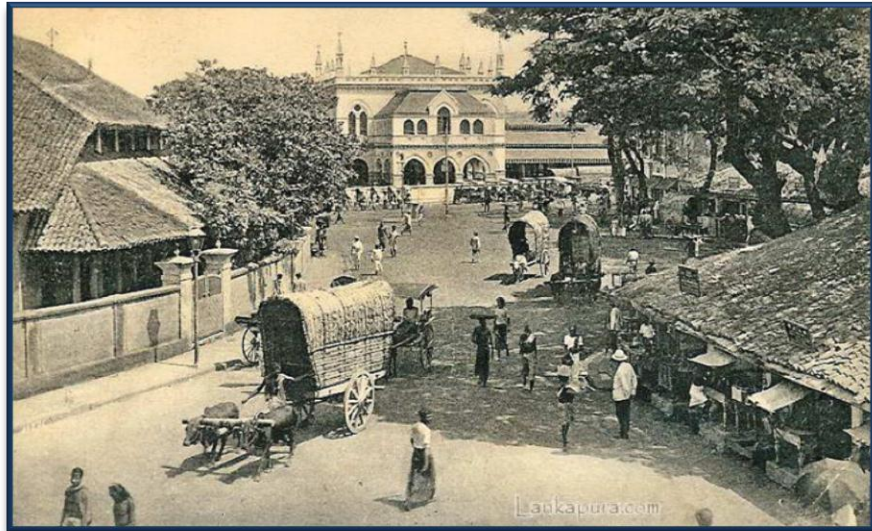
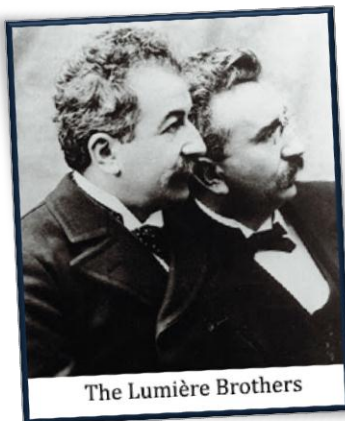


Figure 2 : First 'moving image' screening to a 'paid audience', Hunupitiya, Colombo

when Lumiere Brothers screened first ever such screening on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1895, in Paris.



Indian Madan Theatre Company had a theater chain from India to Singapore those days. They opened its first film theater in the Public Hall in 1913. This theatre was later known as Empire Theatre located at



Figure 1 Jamshedji Framji Madan,

the same place. *Today, it is the location of the Empire Residences.*

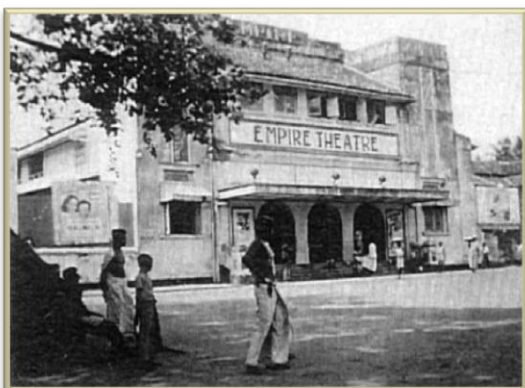


Figure 3 Empire Theatre



Figure 4 Empire Residences

### 3. 1947: Kadawunu Poronduwa by S M Nayagam – 21<sup>st</sup> Jan 1947, the beginning...



On the 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1947, the first ever Sinhala film, Kadavunu Poronduwa, was screened. It was produced by S. M Nayagam of Chithrakala Movietone. Thereafter, the cinema in Sri Lanka

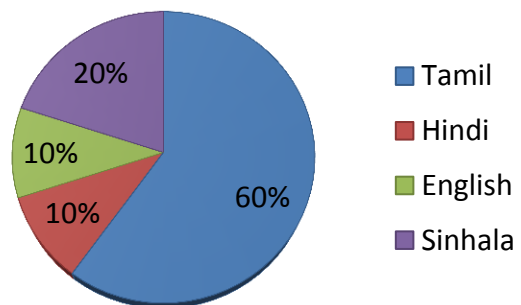
has been gradually developing as an industry and as a form of art.

### 4. Until 1971, the screen time of the Sri Lankan theatres

In its early days, the film industry was totally under private ownership. Though the films were made in Sinhala, the producers *and directors* were Tamils and most of the films made were sinhalized re-production of South Indian movie stories. Until 1971, the screen time of the Sri Lankan theatres was consumed by foreign films. 60% Tamil, 10% Hindi, 10%, English and 20% Sinhala.

*There was an important book launch held last Sunday, at the NFC. The title is Early Sri Lankan cinema and its association with the South Indian film Industry. That book contains valuable information on our cinema in its early stage. One of the co-authors of the book Mr.*

*Ashely Rathnavibushana is here at the audience today together with the Chief Guest, for the occasion Dr. Mrs. Aruna Vasudev, one of the most respected female film personalities in the world, and the Guest of Honor Mr. Won Tuck Cheong, a former board member of the Film*



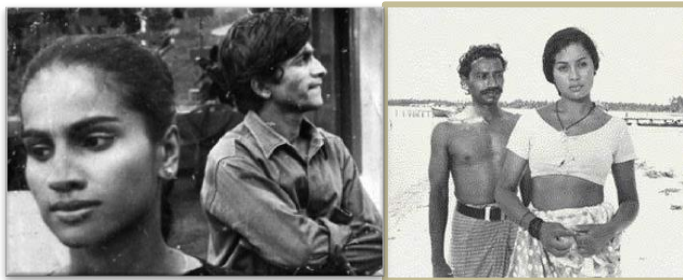


*Development Corporation of Malaysia, the present secretary of the NETPAC the network for promoting Asian cinema,. I greatly appreciate their presence here today.*

## **5. 1972: State Film Corporation was Born:**

With an objective to promote a truly Sri Lankan film industry in Sri Lanka, under the Act no 47 of 1971, the National Film Corporation (NFC) *then State Film Corporation* was established on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1972.

And with that, a new era of professional film industry dawned. Loans were given through NFC to competent film directors/producers after evaluating the quality of the script and the skill,



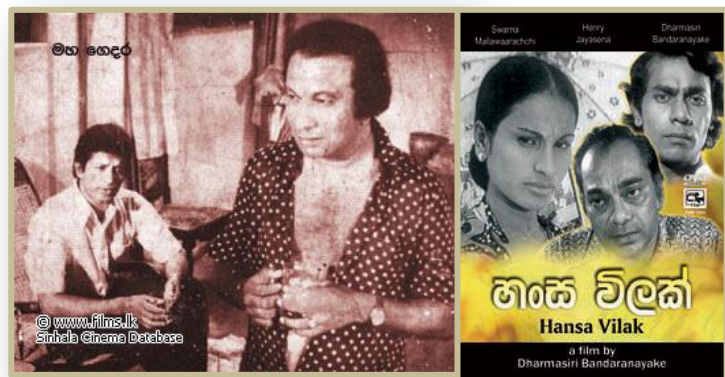
knowledge and competency of the directors, artistes and technicians.

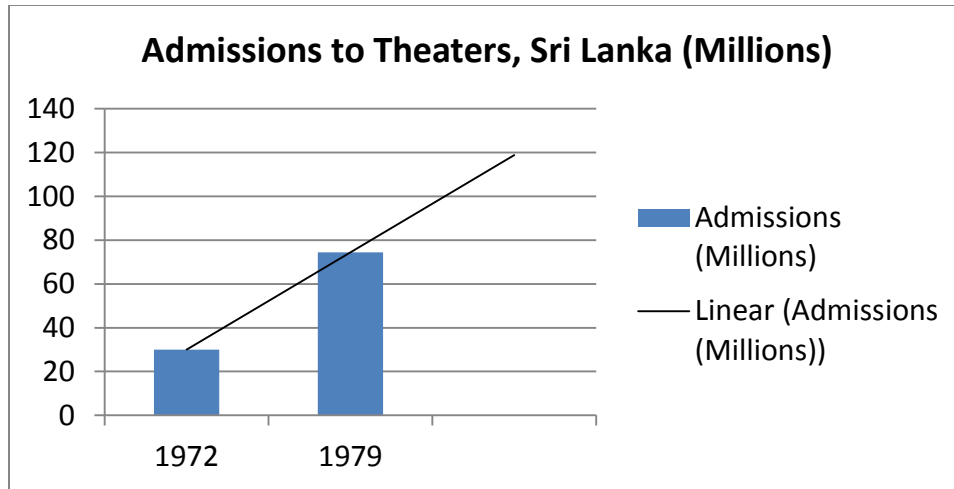
The distribution of films also was taken over by the NFC ensuring the exhibition of all the films produced in the country.

Theatres also were ranked based on the standards of the equipment and environment.

As a result, the development of the industry was unprecedented and it was measurable. The admissions grew up to 74.4 million by 1979 from 30 million in 1972.

Number of cinemas around the country grew to 359 by 1979. Two distribution circuits in 1972 ( Ceylon Theatres and Cinemas ) were increased to 5 allowing various types of movies to come, and the 5<sup>th</sup> circuit was dedicated only for artistically high-standard movies. Screen time for local films rose from 20% to 58% .





#### **6. 1978 – Economy, the Doors Open.**

The country's economy was transformed from closed to open in 1978.

Since that transformation, the economic climate in the country changed drastically. Under these liberalized conditions, many industries were made open to competition. No significant change however, recorded in cinema industry. Even under the regulation of NFC, the production and exhibition of films were under private ownership. NFC was the sole distributor of the films. This arrangement fitted fairly well with the existing conditions and cinema as an industry, remained a profitable one.

Unlike in other countries, exhibition was guaranteed for every film made in the country. When compared with that of other industries, moneys invested in producing films surely made profits. Under this situation, NFC relaxed the entry barrier by ignoring the 'qualification' requirement for potential filmmakers. Almost everybody was permitted and given loans to produce films.



Inevitable result was the over-supply of films to the market making 5- 6 year long queues for the release, by 1982. Audience too lost their confidence about the quality of the film that they opted to watch.

## **7. 1979,1982 Enter the Villain : Television.**

Dominance of cinema in the 'moving image' industry, was first challenged with the introduction of television to the country in 1979, with the inception of Independent Television Network (ITN) followed by the establishment of Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation, with island-wide coverage in 1982. Television influenced greatly to change the life style in the country. It reduced (shrank ) the giant 'heroic' image of the protagonist, into a 'smaller than life' image in a magic box, because these two channels started screening movies. Exclusivity of cinema started to vanish.



*Gamini Fonseka, was made a hero not only by the heroic nature of the characters that he played, but also by the size of the image that was projected to the audience. He was not to be seen in public places, in actual size. His image was always big.*

Story was different with the TV.

Images in the TV are smaller than life. That is why our actor friends, can't be a Gamini even though they work-out hard to build their muscles.



### **8. 1983 - Black July : a Tsunami in Cinema.**

The communal violence unleashed against Tamils, in July 1983, inflicted a severe damage to the cinema industry. As most of the film industry personals were Tamils, properties that they owned were targeted and devastated during these riots.

The largest film studio in the country, ( Vijaya Studio - Hendala ) together with the negatives of finished and unfinished films and filming equipment were burnt unto ashes. Theatres owned by Tamils were destroyed, reducing the number of theatres by nearly one third. The outbreak of civil

war followed by the political unrest in the South, created a fear culture in the country towards the end of 80's.



### **9. 1988/89 – Night Life Cut-off.**

The period 1988/89 was a reign of horror in the country. Streets became empty even before



the nightfall. With no public transport available during the night, cinemas which were used to open till midnight suspended the night show. The people, who were confined to their homes, satisfactorily replaced the silver screen experience with the TV.

### **10. 1995 - Crisis Identified**

The country's cinema was officially identified as an industry in crisis, in 1995. The government appointed a Commission titled 'The Presidential Commission on the Rehabilitation and Development of the Film Industry in Sri Lanka' headed by Prof. Senaka Bandaranayake.

*This committee was commonly known as Senaka Bandaranayake committee* and that was in August, 1995. The task assigned to the SB Committee was to study the status of the industry and give recommendations for its 'rehabilitation and development'. The SB Committee completed its mission within a year and submitted its report ( SBR 1997) in January, 1997. It was the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year of Sri Lankan cinema.

Sri Lankan cinema as reported in SBR 1997 was in 'a state of acute crisis long ago as 1982'.

Quoting Presidential Committee of Inquiry Concerning the Film Industry in Sri Lanka (1985:7), SBR 1997 reports

"In the eyes of a few, the film industry is already dead, while others see it as a terminal patient. Some argue that the film industry has been brought to its present pass by neglect and abuse and that will not recover without a massive blood transfusion. " (p 13)



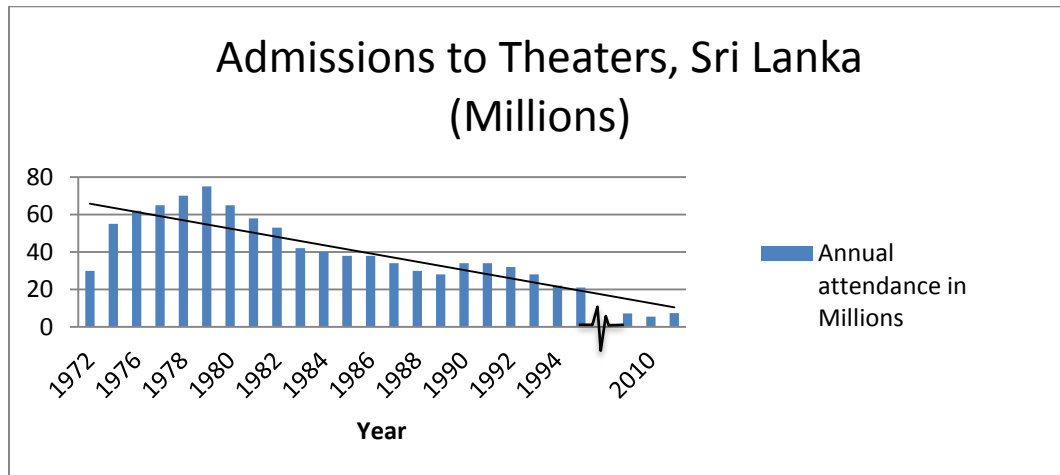
Having observed the decline in attendance the SB Committee identified multiple reasons for decline.

- Global Trend
- TV and Video
- Changing patterns of leisure and popular entertainment
- Communal violence
- Security
- Transport
- Cinema conditions
- Monopoly over distribution
- Levies and controls. (pp 16-18)

The Committee recommendations were directly related to the above issues. The SB Committee details its recommendations, in Chapter 6.0, along the same lines.

### 11. 2001: NFC gives up monopoly of distribution:

In 2001, based on these recommendations, the NFC gave up its monopoly of film distribution to 5 distributing companies as a solution to the struggling industry. To the best of my knowledge, I can confidently say that other than giving up of NFC's monopoly of film distribution none of the other recommendations was effectively implemented.



The expected resurgence did not take place.

By 2009 the number of annual attendance had fallen down to 7.2 million. It fell further down to 5.5 million by end 2010, one year after the end of 30 year long war. The number of cinemas which was 359 in 1979 had fallen to a mere 167.

What we can see now, 16 years after the submission of SB Report, is a further downfall.

### 12. Crisis Analysis

Whatever said and done, it will be unfair if we are to underestimate the effort made by the Committee to diagnose the patient.

Among other things, the SB Committee correctly identified the declining trend of cinema attendance as a 'global trend' reflected in our cinema as well. It realized that the changing pattern of social life, leisure activities and popular and family entertainment could divert audience away from cinemas.

Unfortunately the committee paid little attention to these ‘non-critical issues’ as they say. But, the Committee admitted that these issues should be addressed in terms of a ‘general revitalization of the film industry’. The Committee lists US, UK and AUS as most obvious examples where cinema was undergoing a revival as a major popular entertainment medium. That was as long ago as 1995. The SB Committee predicted the potential threat coming from various alternative sources of presenting moving images. I quote the Report,

*“ Countrywide spread of television, gradual expansion of domestic video facilities and video libraries, future development of satellite TV, innovations in the presentation of moving images in multi-media computers and on the internet and other new audio-visual technologies will have a profound effect on film and cinema over the next decade or two in Sri Lanka.”*

We are now in that ‘next decade or two’ and this is exactly what we are experiencing today.

|                                    |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| TV Channels available in Sri Lanka | - 24              |
| Channels in Dialog TV              | - 84 (Local - 12) |
| Peo TV                             | - 75 (Local - 17) |
| Internet                           | - Unlimited       |



Although the committee had a vision to foresee the factors which would intensify the then existing crisis, it downplayed the importance of formulating and implementing a rescue plan. For some reason, their recommendations targeted the ‘symptoms’ not the ‘patient’ and hence these recommendations were issue based. The much needed ‘general revitalization’ did not take place.

### 13. Imagine a New Era of Cinema...

Cinema is all about imagination; imagination beyond existing realities. It has a power of defining and establishing a country’s cultural identity in a globalised environment.

*Less than a decade after the first Sinhala movie was made, our cinema was known to the world when Maestro, Dr Lester James Pieris broke the ice with his movie 'Rekhava' which he presented at the Cannes Film Festival, in 1956.*

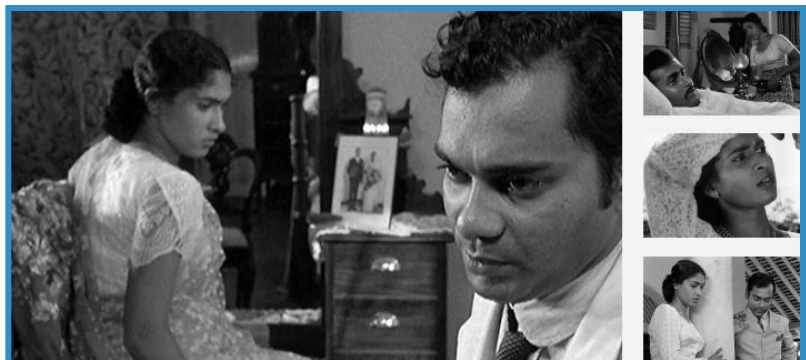


This was the era when the French New Wave of cinema was emerging. That was when Satyajit Ray was bringing Indian cinema to new artistic heights.



That means we were in line with global trend. ). As early as end 50's and early 60's ( Gamperaliya -1962) our cinema had marked our existence in a global map. Given the rigidities prevailed in the film production and marketing, our cinema was not flexible enough to evolve in response to the technological changes occurred. Those changes altered the ways in which films are produced, marketed and consumed.

The gradual transition to the current 'digital age' of world cinema did not happen in Sri Lanka. As a result, except for few individual cases, our National cinema has not been positioned in an international marketplace.





If we are to follow the trend line now, we will always be far behind. We need therefore a big leap forward. The conventional idea of 'reforming' the existing cinema is not valid anymore, because the celluloid era of cinema is already gone.

If you have read the book, the opening line of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* is

'To be born again', sang Gibreel Farishta tumbling from the heavens "first you have to die"

Since it is already dead, this is the ideal time for our cinema to be re-born.

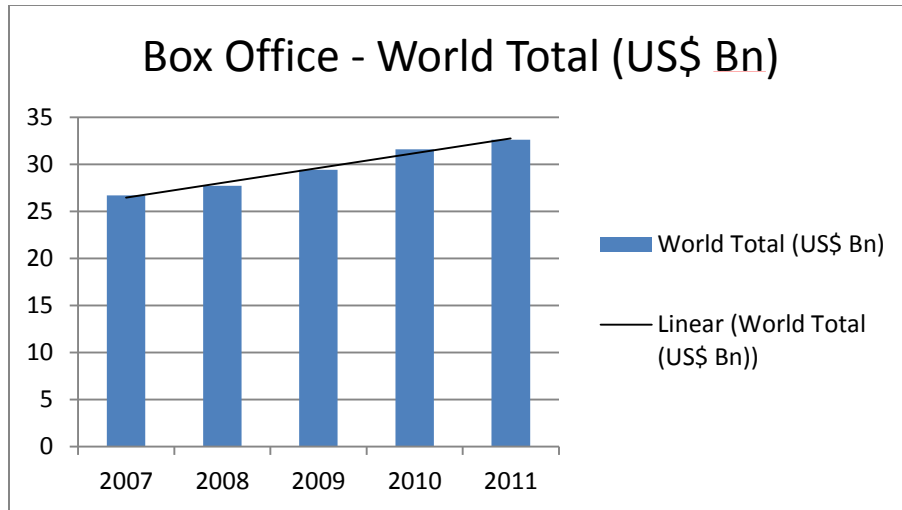
Whether we like it or not, we have come to the 'digital age'. The digital technology has made 'the art of moving image', more democratic.

At the same time since it is accessible for everyone, the elitism associated with cinema may be diluted. Anybody can make movies of their choice and upload them to the Internet. ! Digital moving image technology

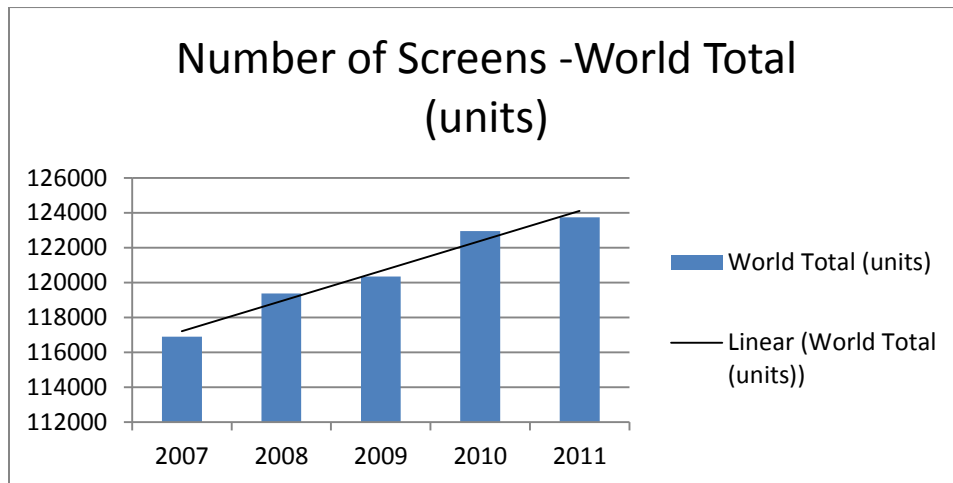


therefore, while offering more opportunities, makes cinema more challenging.

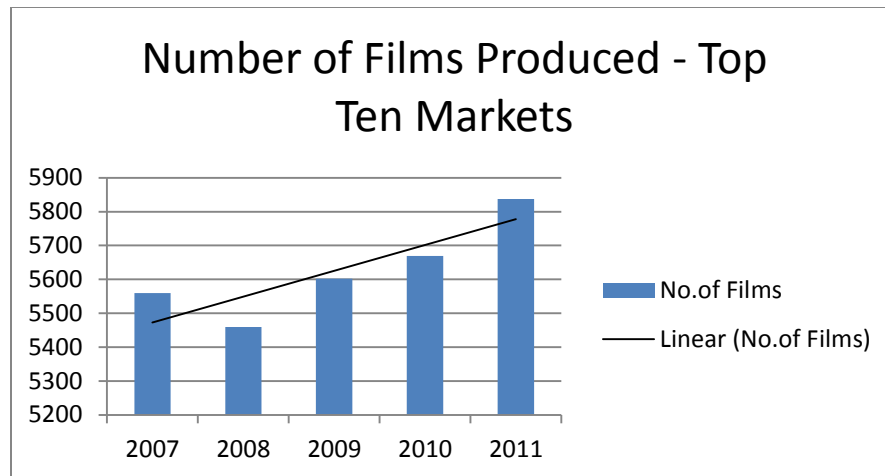
However, the film industry is known as one of the 'most resilient' of the world's cultural industries. World cinema survived successfully the threat of television. When most of the industries suffered by the global financial crisis the film industry performed well. As per the statistical report compiled and published by the Dubai Film Market - 2012 ( under Dubai International Film Festival-2012 ) , Let me show some global trend results.



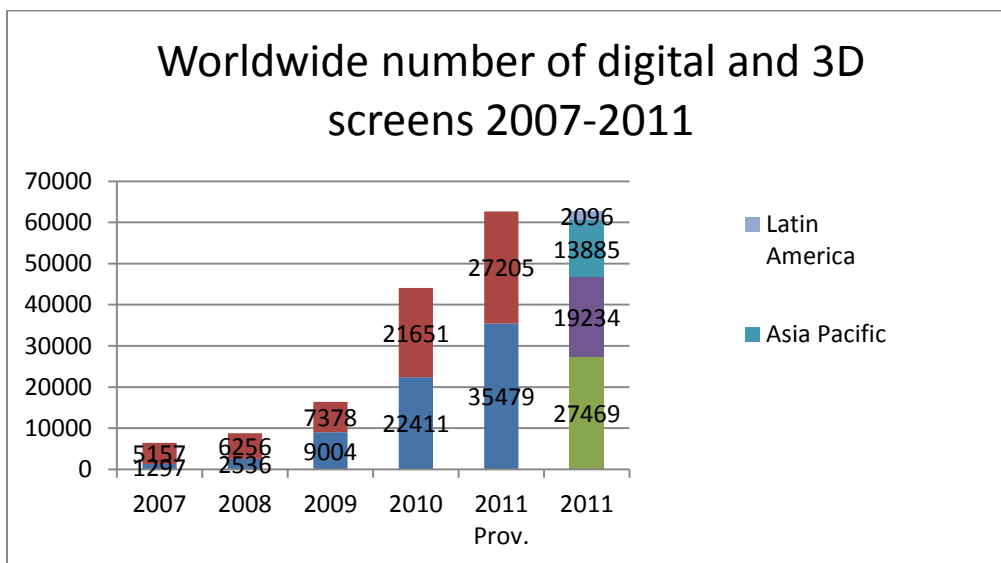
The world total of Box Office is in an upward trend even during the crisis. Total turnover is USD 32+ bn



More new cinema screens were added, amidst the widespread of alternative modes.



Number of films produced in top-ten markets is also on the rise.



Worldwide number of digital and 3D screens is also increasing

#### **14. When the world cinema is in good shape, we are in a crisis situation. How can we transform the 'Crisis' situation to an 'Opportunity?'**

We in the Central Bank are trained to imagine and strive to achieve seemingly impossible targets. We do 'strategic planning' with goals set and work according to a Road Map to achieve them. The country's economy is chasing a target of achieving USD 4000 per capita income or 100 billion dollar economy by 2016 and it is well on track.

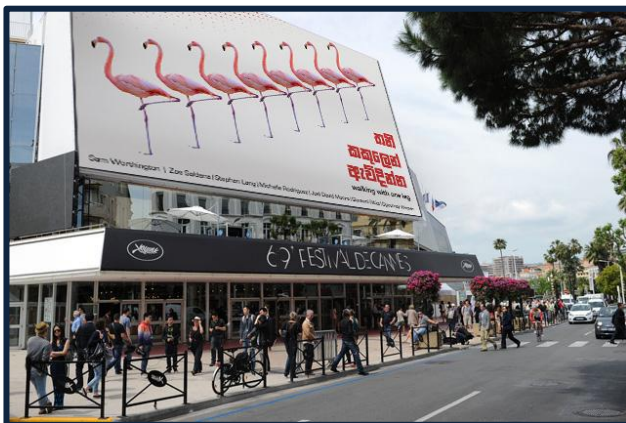
As a filmmaker and as a fan, what would I like to see in three years' time when our economy reaches USD 100 billion mark? Undoubtedly I would like to see the National cinema to become something that is characterized by 'a cross-border flow of talent and a global circuit of festivals and awards'.

I would like to see...

- Colombo to be the mostly talked about cine-city in Asia.



- Films produced in Sri Lanka are showcased in major international film festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, Venice, winning awards.





- Locally made movies are commercially released worldwide; in theatres, TV and VOD channels.



- Multi-Screen and Multiplex theatres in every town in the country



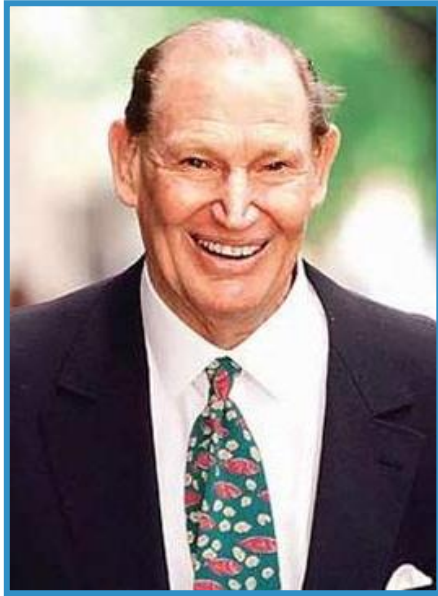
- Our technicians, artistes to work in major international co-productions.





- Universities to offer globally recognized degrees, diplomas for subjects related to cinema.

One would see these as 'day dreaming' but I strongly believe that dreamers are the drivers of the world.



Kerry Packer Jr

*These days we enjoy watching cricket matches played under lights. Night time cricket wouldn't have been a reality, if Kerry Packer, the Australian media tycoon, the owner of Channel 9 TV, did not dream it. The cricketers, who earn millions of dollars today, owe him a lot.*

I heard that Kerry Packer Jr, was in Colombo last week...looking for investing in gaming business.

### **15. How would I formulate a strategy to achieve this target?**

In an island where there is a tiny market for films, a policy proposal to develop cinema alone will not be a convincingly appealing idea. Disbursing loans to produce films and to build new cinemas given the current market condition will be a sheer waste of funds. Therefore the 'goal of artistically rich and commercially viable cinema in Sri Lanka' needs to be placed in a commercially attractive broader perspective.

Sri Lanka, is one of the most beautiful tropical holiday destination in this part of the world. But the contribution from the tourism for total forex earnings is very little. The country still depends heavily on selling 'unskilled labour' to earn foreign exchange. Tourism is still under exploited. Entertainment Tourism is one of the emerging areas in tourism in developing economies.

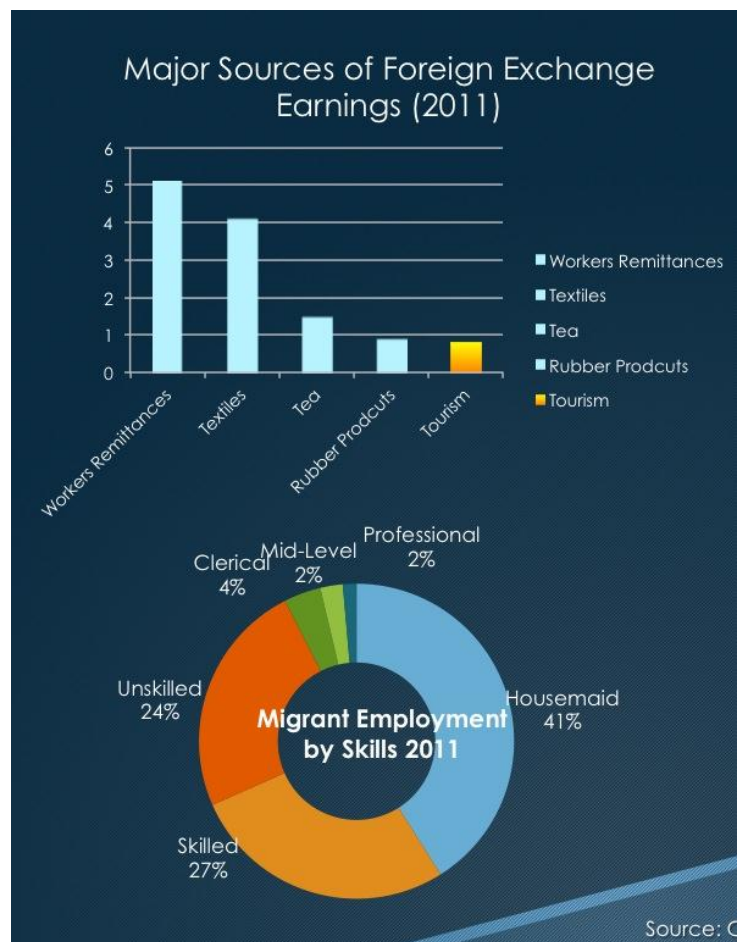
Sri Lanka- especially Colombo, has a great potential to be developed as a destination for 'Entertainment Tourism' through strategic entertainment projects. Cities like Singapore, Mumbai, Hanoi, Dubai, Abu-Dhabi and Bangkok are currently investing heavily on this line.

So, I set two goals :

**Goal 1 : Artistically rich and commercially viable cinema industry**

**Goal 2 : Enhance Tourism through Entertainment tourism.**

'Entertainment Tourism' is event based. Cities attract tourists for 'events' organized in these cities. An event based strategic project to achieve this dual objectives of promoting *Entertainment Tourism* and *Film Industry* in the country, would be 'an annual gala event of cinema'.



‘Colombo International Film Festival’.



One would argue that Sri Lanka has been hosting number of international film festivals annually by different organizations such as embassies, film societies etc, and nothing has happened. But these festivals are very small in scale and just for showcasing films made in other countries to local audience. The festival audience is totally local.

Such festivals would not cultivate a passion for cinema to ignite an explosion in the film industry or tourism industry. What I propose is not a festival in that scale but a mega one. It

should be launched at a scale par with major international film festivals in Asia, such as Busan – in S. Korea, Singapore IFF, Dubai IFF, Tokyo IFF etc.

Whatever the themes addressed in the films shown, the film festivals are glamorous and entertaining events. The proposed Colombo International Film Festival, should be an annual national event with an international attraction.

#### **16. How does it benefit the local film industry?**

An International Film Festival is an annual meeting place for an internationally renowned film community, comprised of filmmakers, producers, investors, artistes, distributors, exhibitors and writers. They are the opinion makers of their own countries as well as in international forums on cinema. Bringing them here and exposing local film talents to them will have an important impact on local film production and distribution.

An International Film Festival brings here the newest films produced around the world, specially the independent films so that our cinema audience can experience the latest trends in world independent cinema. It can inspire local filmmakers to explore new themes and forms raising the standards of filmmaking to be competitive in international festivals and markets.

The festival should be strategically planned so that at least 5 - 6 good local films are made targeting the festival. This festival can be used to expose such films to international festival directors and distributors and can be used as a marketplace for domestic films. They can later be selected to represent Sri Lanka in major international film festivals.

#### **17. *'SHOOT IN SRI LANKA!'***

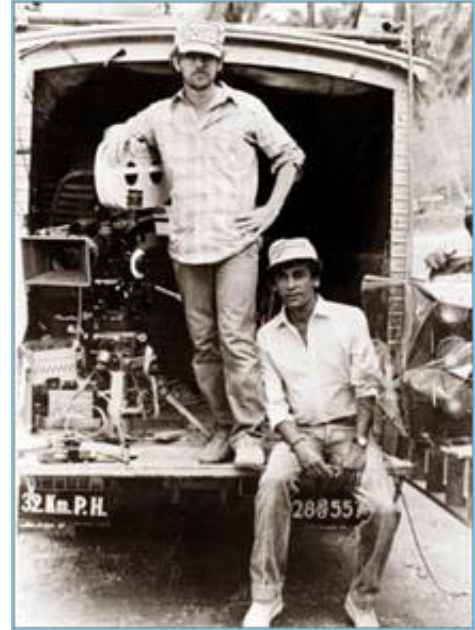
With an international film festival in the annual agenda, local filmmakers will be inspired to make movies of high standard for them to be competitive at international level. Our films will have a greater probability to be selected in major international film festivals. CIFF should have a 'stall' in these festivals

1. To promote the festival itself

2. To promote films produced in SL
3. To promote SL as an attractive location for shooting films.

David Lean shot his *film classic* Bridge on the River Kwai in Sri Lanka way back in 1957. ( That location today is a tourist attraction) Major parts of Steven Spielberg's Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom were shot here in 1984. Sri Lanka has been used as the main location in many international films like Water, Mother Teresa, Mid Night's Children in recent years. With that past record,

and its picturesque landscapes, Sri Lanka can be a unique tropical location for films with international, cross cultural themes.



Steven Spielberg and Chandran Rutnam on a location in Sri Lanka during the filming of Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom

*Some* may think that this is an unrealistic fantasy of an over enthusiastic filmmaker, but it is not.

‘South Korean cinema is a remarkable example for a success story.

Busan International Film Festival – South Korea is, ( if not the largest ) one of the largest film festivals in Asia. Started in 1996, it was the first International Film Festival in Korea. ( remember it was 1995, when President Chandrika Bandaranayake appointed the SB Commission to investigate the issues in the industry and make recommendations. )

When Busan International Film Festival was launched, nobody knew about Korean cinema. Korean audience did not know about independent films produced in other countries. The Festival brought international films to Korea. It exposed Korean films to the world.



## 18. Busan International Film Festival.



Focus of the festival is introducing new films and first-time directors especially from Asian countries. Screening more than 300 films from around 75-100 countries the festival attracts youthful audience of around 1.8 million annually. It inspires and promotes young talents.

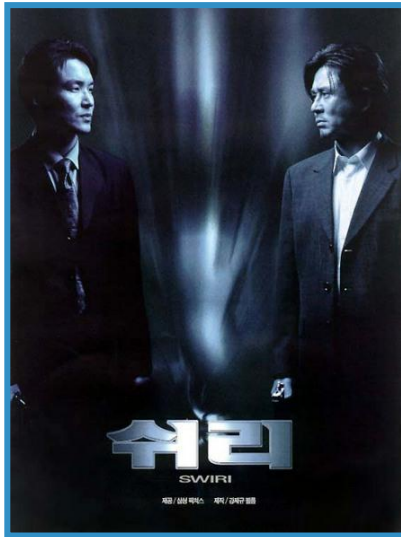
The festival currently runs Asian Project Market, which is a market place for project proposals for films, Asian Film Market, a market place for already made movies, Asian Film Academy a film school for upcoming filmmakers, cinematographers and other technicians and artistes and Asian Cinema Fund, which is a funding source for Asian Independent Films.

South Korean film industry entered into a Golden Era, in 1997, just one year after the introduction of BIFF. The government protection for local films was abolished and films were made open to compete with international films in the domestic market.

In 1999, the Korean film *Swiri* outperformed Hollywood box office hits such as *Titanic*, *The Matrix* and *Star Wars* in South Korean theatres. Written and directed by Kang Je-gyu, *Swiri*, was the first Hollywood-style big-budget blockbuster to be produced in the "new" Korean film industry.

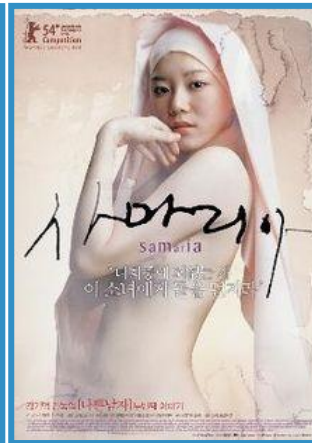
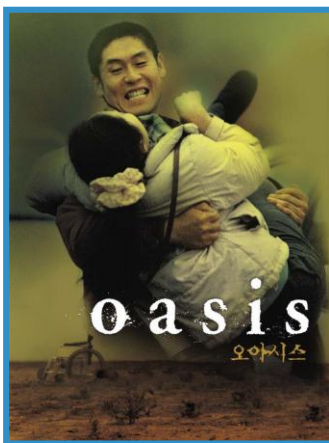
The success of this film initiated a wave of new commercial films with large budgets.

## 19. Korean films started to dominate International Festivals.



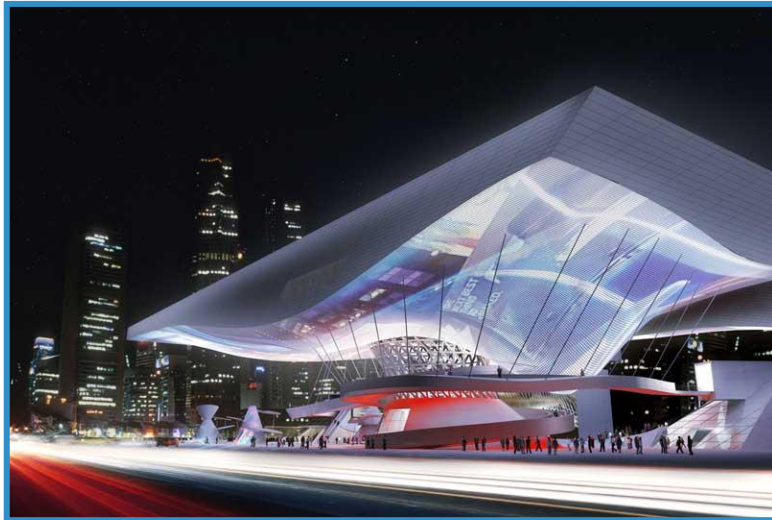
BIFF inspired Korean directors to make artistically rich, thematically challenging films to compete in major international festivals. Seven years after the inception of BIFF, the

Korean film *Oasis* ( Lee Chang Don ) won the second prize in Venice Film festival in 2002. This success was followed by many international achievements. The film, *Oldboy* ( Park Chan - Wook ) won second Grand Prix in Cannes 2004. In that same year Korean director Kim Ki- duk won the Best Director award at the Berlin International Film Festival for his film *Samaritan Girl*. In 2010, Korean writer Lee Chang Don, won the Best script award at Cannes for the film *Poetry*. In 2012 *Pieta* ( Kim Ki-duk ) won the Golden Lion award at Venice Film Festival.



In 2011, the festival opened Busan Cinema Centre ( USD 140 million investment- 30,000 sqm floor area, four indoor screens under an LED covered roof, an outdoor theatre with 4000 seating capacity, conference rooms, media centers and many features. )

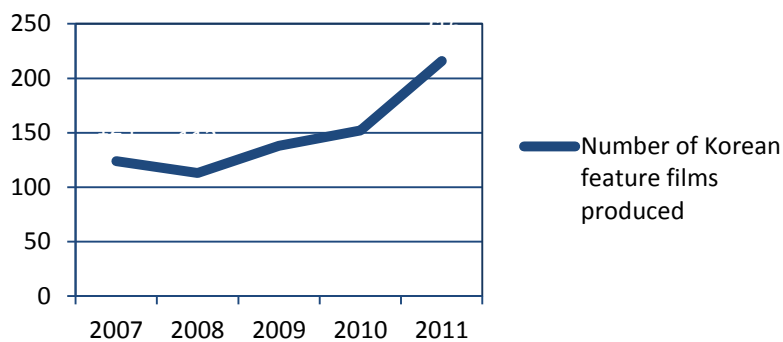
Now South Korea is considered an Asian film powerhouse, producing movies from various genres, not just for Korean market but also widely for the rest of the Asia. It now belongs to the



group of top 10 film markets in the world by number of films produced. Other big markets are India, US, China, Japan, France, UK, Germany, Spain and Italy.

*So my dream and strategy are not that unrealistic....*

Number of Korean feature films produced 2007-2011

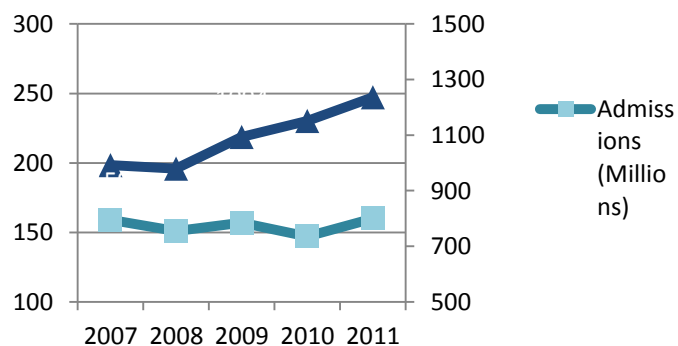


This Korean example clearly shows how Sri Lanka can formulate a strategy around a large scale International Film Festival, to develop a

commercially viable, artistically rich, internationally recognized cinema industry in Sri Lanka.

Such a development will clearly have positive side-effects on other

Korean Admission and gross box office 2007-2011



sectors like 'entertainment' and tourism industry.

## **20. How can it be kick-started? Who will fund?**

Although the proposed CIFF will surely revolutionize the cinema in Sri Lanka, the tangible benefits on cinema will be medium and long-term. It will take, at least two to three years to create an impact on the film industry.

Surely the Treasury will not bother to add another burden to its budget.

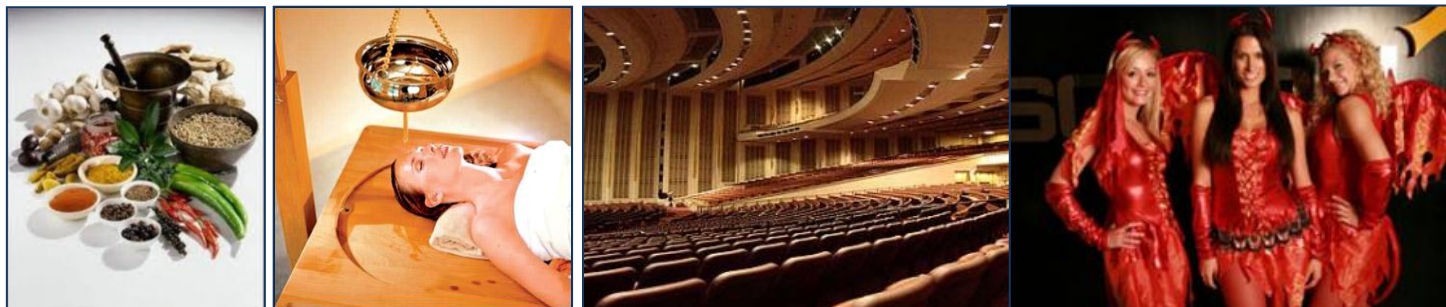
For the CIFF to be launched and sustained, it should render instant benefits for the potential funders to have it in the 'annual events calendar' in Colombo.

*This is where the role of 'Entertainment Tourism' comes on stage.*

## **21. How can the CIFF promote Entertainment Tourism?**

*Sri Lanka has been trying to promote tourist attraction through 'eco-tourism', health tourism etc. The MICE ( Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Education ) tourism is also being tried out. Sri Lanka is now ranked 67<sup>th</sup> globally and 13<sup>th</sup> in the Asia Pacific in Country Brand Index.*

Still the tourism contributes a very little for country's forex earnings.





## 22. How can the CIFF promote Entertainment Tourism?



Entertainment Tourism is an event based strategy to attract tourists for entertainment events. This annual gala event of cinema is specifically to attract 'international guests' from the cinema industry.

The festival exposes the country to the world.

The coastal town Cannes was known to the world through the film festival. Nobody was interested before that. Now it is a live and active city through out the year. Telluride, a small town in Colorado, USA, a former gold mining place, was re-born with the Telluride Film Festival in 1974. It is a city of 'all seasons' now.

The Colombo Film Festival, when coupled with some other live events of 'Entertainment' such as Live performances of internationally renowned performers can be an attraction of 'gold collar' tourists also to Colombo.



This annual event can be used to publicize other forms of live cultural events that can be planned out in an annual event calendar. Other forms of cultural products such as music, paintings, dance, literature etc can also be promoted to an international gathering with this festival.

## 23. How governing body of the CIFF can be constituted.

The proposed film festival should not be an event that depends on regular fund allocations from the government budget. It should be managed as a commercially viable business entity



formed as a Limited Liability Company. At the outset, it must be a concerted effort of different ministries, corporations, boards and private and public companies which require international exposure for their business. They will be the initial contributors to form the capital and hence the founder owners of the CIFF.

If I list a few as initial funding sources,

- Ministries of ; Tourism, Culture and National Heritage, Media, Telecommunications, Urban Development, Economic Development etc.
- Sri Lanka Tourist Board, Hotel Corporation, BOI, Sri Lankan Airlines, Sri Lanka Telecom, Hotels,
- Private and Public Banks
- Public and Private media institutions such as newspapers, radio and TV channels.

As the festival grows, it can later be listed in the Colombo Stock Exchange. Or else a body like BOI alone can consider launching this project.

There are examples; Dubai International Film Festival is run by Investment Corporation of Dubai. Goa city council spends millions of rupees to Goa Film Festival. They know that the moneys invested in the festival generate profits in somewhere else in the economy.

The CIFF, other than organizing the annual film festival, can later engage in film production and international co-productions, marketing and distributions, exhibition and coordinating film location services, a regional film school etc, so that it can generate its own funds.

#### **24. Can Colombo ?**

Still for some of you, this may be an over optimistic idea, and may ask 'How can a small town like Colombo, be fit to hold a festival in that scale?'

I would like to answer that question, asking you a question in return

**"Why not Colombo?" watch this...**

If future Colombo is going to be like that, why cannot it host the film festival I propose?

A New Era of Sri Lankan Cinema, for me is therefore, More than a Dream.

We need to believe it, and work for it.

Thank you.