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CENTRE FOR PROGRESSIVE POLITICS & POLICY



NPP
POLICY STANCES:
MAPPING THE
DISCOURSE

Muragala | CPPP

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ABBREVIATIONS

All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC)

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Bank of Ceylon (BOC)

Interstate association comprised of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People's Republic of China, and the Republic of South Africa (BRICS)

Campaign for Free and Fair Elections (CaFFE)

Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC)

Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB)

Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC)

Ceylon Shipping Corporation (CSC)

Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)

Criminal Investigation Department (CID)

Debt Sustainability Analyses (DSA)

Election Commission (EC)

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi (ITAK)

Information Technology (IT)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)

Kotelawala National Defence University (KNDU)

LGBTIQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, or Asexual)

Lanka Coal Company (LCC)

Medical Supplies Division (MSD)

Member of Parliament (MP)

National Medicines Regulatory Authority (NMRA)

National People's Power (NPP)

National Savings Bank (NSB)

Personal Income Tax (PIT)

Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)

Public-Private Partnership (PPP)
Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)
Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)
Sri Lanka Chamber of Pharmaceutical Industry (SLCPI)
Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey (SLOTS)
Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA)
Sri Lanka Railways (SLR)
Sri Lankan Rupee (LKR)
Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA)
Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT)
Sri Lanka Transport Board (SLTB)
State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs)
State Pharmaceuticals Corporation (SPC)
United Nations (UN)
United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)
United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA)
United States Dollar (USD)
Value Added Tax (VAT)
Withholding Tax (WHT)

NPP POLICY STANCES: MAPPING THE DISCOURSE

Introduction

The National People's Power (NPP), also known as Jathika Jana Balawegaya, is a political alliance comprising the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and some trade unions and civil groups. Founded in 2019, the NPP emerged as a coalition aiming to offer an alternative to the traditional political establishment. The party's rise to prominence was fueled by widespread dissatisfaction with the country's previous governments, especially after the 2022 mass street (*Aragalaya*) protests. The NPP, led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, achieved electoral victory in the 2024 presidential elections, securing 42% of the vote, and in parliamentary elections, securing 61% of the vote and 159 out of 225 seats. The NPP's success in areas where minority communities form numerical majorities, particularly in Jaffna, Vanni, and Trincomalee, where it outperformed regional and mainstream Tamil parties, reflects shifting political dynamics and a rejection of the establishment political elite.

The NPP has outlined several key policy developments aimed at strengthening governance, promoting unity, and driving economic growth. They emphasise the importance of national reconciliation, rejecting extremism, and fostering a strong connection between parliament and the public. This includes a commitment to improving government efficiency, restoring trust in the legal system, and taking action against corruption. In terms of economic strategy, the NPP plans to expand production beyond Colombo, ensure fair wealth distribution, and increase government involvement in key sectors such as tourism, IT, and agriculture. They also focus on poverty alleviation, with initiatives to support education, empower small entrepreneurs, and promote digital innovation. To support these efforts, the NPP presented an interim budget for the first four months of 2025, which was approved in Parliament on December 6, 2024, without a vote following a two-day debate. The government will present the full 2025 budget on February 17, aligning with the administration's mandate and development plans as outlined in their manifesto.

This briefing paper aims to provide an overview of the National People's Power's (NPP) policy positions before they came to power, and how these positions have shifted or remained consistent

after they assumed office. Moreover, it seeks to evaluate the trajectory of key developments under the NPP's leadership, particularly focusing on how these developments align with or diverge from their previously stated objectives.¹ To achieve this, the analysis draws from a range of sources, including statements made by NPP members during the campaign phase, their official manifesto, and public remarks made when previous governments were in power. It also considers recent developments and policy shifts reported in mainstream media outlets, both broadcast and print. This examination allows for an in-depth understanding of the NPP's evolving policy stances and provides insights into the directions in which the government is steering key national issues.

¹ This briefing maps the discourse on the NPP's policy stances up to January 5, 2025, focusing on their positions prior to assuming office and in the early stages of their tenure. Shifts or deviations in their discourse and policy positions may occur after this publication, and these changes may not be fully reflected in the current analysis.

1. Economic Policy

In the aftermath of the 2022 economic crisis and its associated national-level public finance mismanagement, the National People's Power (NPP) proposed a framework for economic reform centred on the principles of economic democracy to ensure equal opportunities for all. This framework is based on ten key principles: prioritising humanity, economic democracy, people's participation, fostering an equitable and inclusive society, ensuring food security, a fair distribution of economic benefits, sustainable resource utilisation, non-commodified public services and social security, international cooperation and solidarity, recognition of unpaid labour contributions within the care economy, and progressive, fair taxation.

These principles aim to achieve an “Economic Renaissance” by revisiting existing economic policies through a model of “clean politics” — politics free from corruption, nepotism, and the misuse of public resources. The reforms are designed to benefit the broader population by ensuring transparent management of public finances. Key measures include conducting detailed debt audits, restructuring external debt, and implementing Debt Sustainability Analyses (DSA), all of which demonstrate the NPP's commitment to transparency and accountability. These steps are intended to pave the way towards a sustainable and independent economy.

1.1. Economic Growth

A key component of Dissanayake's vision is maintaining the independence of the central bank, while ensuring its alignment with broader economic goals set by the government. He has also pointed to corruption as a major barrier to economic growth, pledging to eliminate practices that force businesses to rely on corrupt methods. The NPP will introduce a national plan with sector-specific targets, offering guidance and stability to investors, alongside predictable tax policies and legal frameworks that foster transparency and long-term growth.

Special attention will be given to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly those trapped in debt, with measures to revitalise their operations while minimising repossession. Overall, the President's vision suggests a balance between state intervention and market-driven growth, with an emphasis on transparency, accountability, and long-term economic stability.

The government's industrialisation plans, trade policies, and focus on cooperatives are integral to Sri Lanka's economic growth targets, aiming to modernise the economy, boost industrial output,

and ensure sustainable development. A key aspect is agricultural modernisation, supported by technology and an increased fertiliser subsidy from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 25,000 per hectare to enhance productivity. Science and technology play a central role, with the President's Advisor on Science and Technology leading initiatives expected to significantly impact industries. Additionally, the government aims to build a digital economy worth USD 15 billion, increasing IT professionals from 85,000 to 200,000 and boosting IT exports from \$1.2 billion to \$5 billion. The government is also strengthening its involvement in sectors like energy and finance, with initiatives such as promoting cooperatives like *Samupakara* to support local communities. Furthermore, digital transformation in the public sector, including projects like digital IDs, land taxation reforms, and improvements to transportation, is a priority, aiming to create a more efficient, transparent, and growth-oriented economy.

1.2. SOE Privatisation

The NPP advocates for the continued government control of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in strategic sectors such as energy, transportation, banking, and telecommunications, recognising their critical role in industrialisation and economic growth. During the presidential campaign, NPP leader and now President Anura Kumara Dissanayake emphasised that these strategic SOEs, under an NPP-led government, would not operate for profit-making purposes.² Instead, the focus would be on establishing robust regulatory frameworks to ensure fair pricing, quality of services, and the reduction of inefficiencies within SOEs. This approach highlights the importance of these enterprises in serving the public good while contributing to sustainable economic development.³

Some of the major strategic SOEs within the energy, transport, telecommunications, and banking sectors include the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC), the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), Lanka Coal Company (LCC), Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA), Sri Lanka Railways (SLR), Sri Lanka Transport Board (SLTB), SriLankan Airlines, Ceylon Shipping Corporation (CSC), Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA), Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT), Bank of Ceylon (BOC), National Savings Bank (NSB), and People's Bank.

² *Economy Next* (2024) 'Sri Lanka's economy will not collapse under NPP, all changes will be carefully made: AKD,' 4 September. <https://economynext.com/sri-lankas-economy-will-not-collapse-under-npp-all-changes-will-be-carefully-made-akd-178789/>.

³ Jathika Jana Balavegaya (NPP) (2021) *A thriving economy instead of a dependent economy*. <https://www.npp.lk/up/policies/en/booklet.pdf>.

The National People’s Power (NPP) party asserts that private capital does not always guarantee the lowest costs for consumers, aligning with its ethos of “democratising the economy” and fostering a social market economy that ensures basic economic security and “economic justice” for all citizens.⁴ The party’s Chief Economic Advisor, Prof. Anil Jayantha, has emphasised the need for a critical perspective on the privatisation of crucial public institutions, particularly when it affects national security and economic sovereignty. He highlighted the experiences of several countries that privatised essential utilities like electricity and water, where such actions led to adverse consequences.⁵

The NPP also opposes the divestment of revenue-generating SOEs, advocating instead for governance reforms to address the financial challenges faced by these entities. The party has expressed concerns about the implementation of International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions related to SOEs, such as automatic pricing mechanisms for public goods like fuel and electricity and the introduction of electricity tariffs aimed at attracting private sector investment in SOEs. Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath has called for a comprehensive approach to resolving the issues faced by entities such as the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), including identifying the root causes of their financial losses and developing effective mitigation strategies.⁶

This approach underscores the NPP’s commitment to safeguarding public goods while enhancing the accountability and efficiency of state enterprises.

Beyond the strategic sectors and revenue-generating State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), the National People’s Power (NPP) previously expressed interest in exploring Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models for managing non-strategic SOEs in sectors such as hospitality and tourism, agriculture and plantations, manufacturing, retail and trading, media, construction, and insurance. Chathuranga Abeysinghe, now serving as the Deputy Minister of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development in the Dissanayake administration, had earlier highlighted the potential of PPP

⁴ *Daily Mirror* (2023) ‘NPP unveils economic plan to build resilient social market economy,’ 26 January. https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/NPP-unveils-economic-plan-to-build-resilient-social-market-economy/108-252945.

⁵ Tennekoon, S. (2024) ‘Anti-corruption-privatisation nexus: NPP slams Oppo. groups,’ *The Morning*, 3 April. <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/w7zJeoFOTugd1q9rewH>.

⁶ Siriwardana, A. and Perera, Y. (2022) ‘Move to privatise CEB on IMF conditions: Vijitha Herath,’ *Daily Mirror*, 30 August. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/print/front-page/Move-to-privatize-CEB-on-IMF-conditions-Vijitha-Herath/238-243957>.

models to enhance efficiency in these areas.⁷ However, this stance has not been prominently reiterated by other key party leaders, and recent policy directions have shifted towards fostering industrial growth and entrepreneurship under his portfolio.

President Anura Kumara Disanayake continues to critique the IMF's economic reform agenda, arguing that its focus on financial metrics and privatisation undermines socio-economic stability and long-term production capacity. His administration advocates a balanced approach, which includes strategic government intervention in key sectors, infrastructure investment, and skills development to rebuild and modernise Sri Lanka's economy. This strategy prioritises inclusive growth, sustainable reforms, and the retention of state control over critical industries.⁸

1.2.1. NPP's Stance towards SOE Reforms in Government

Since coming to power, the National People's Power (NPP) has signalled its stance on State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) through a series of policy decisions and statements. Furthermore, the NPP has appointed new heads for SOEs to follow through on governance reforms. Senior Presidential Consultant on Economic Affairs, Prof. Anil Jayantha Fernando, had announced that consultations with new directors will take place after the general election to develop tailored solutions for these entities.

Sri Lanka currently has 527 SOEs, with 55 considered strategically important. These entities employ a significant portion of the public sector workforce but have often been criticised for inefficiency and financial losses. Globally, many countries are reducing their stakes in SOEs, but the NPP seeks to modernise these institutions, focusing on greater accountability and restructuring rather than privatisation.

One of the most significant moves since coming to power has been the reversal of the previous government's plan to privatise 51% of SriLankan Airlines. Recognising the importance of tourism,

⁷ Abeyasinghe, C. (2024) 'Low cost manufacturing base was and is the key for fast growth economies in the world and that has always...' https://www.linkedin.com/posts/chathuranga-abeyasinghe-acma-cgma-b99b6832_npp-economicgrowth-activity-719704583336681473-Qqqb/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop.

⁸ Weerasuriya, N. (2023) *Is selling off national resources a remedy or a trap? – Anura*. <https://www.jvpsrilanka.com/english/is-selling-off-national-resources-a-remedy-or-a-trap-anura/#:~:text=There%0are%20three,Employees%20Provident%20Fund>.

NPP's Chairman of the Economic Council, Prof. Anil Jayantha, confirmed that the airline will remain state-owned, with a new management model being developed.⁹

Similarly, the NPP has scrapped the Ceylon Electricity Board's (CEB) privatisation programme, amidst mounting financial losses. With the CEB's debt at a staggering Rs. 246 billion and significant additional losses in 2022, the NPP's strategy focuses on operational reforms, particularly in power plants and distribution systems. The proposed CEB Reforms Act of 2024 will reflect this shift, further solidifying the NPP's stance against privatisation of strategic assets in the energy sector.

Under the NPP government, significant shifts in the approach to State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) are being implemented. For instance, the previously planned open tender procedure for the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) to purchase oil through the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) has been reversed. This follows the CEB's alarming financial situation, with losses of over Rs. 246 billion. The government has also decided to scrap the CEB's privatisation programme and amend the CEB Reforms Act of 2024, ensuring no privatisation of key power sector entities, including transmission and distribution.

In a recent move reflecting the government's handling of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), Sri Lanka's supplementary budget for 2024 includes Rs 130 billion allocated to cover interest subsidies on the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation's (CPC) debt.¹⁰ This will be paid to the banks after the CPC debt was transferred to the state's balance sheet. This decision further underscores the heavy burden SOEs place on the national budget, illustrating the fiscal challenges of managing such entities. Despite previous signals of reform, this substantial financial commitment highlights the ongoing struggle to make SOEs financially sustainable.

This payment represents one facet of the broader economic challenges facing Sri Lanka's SOEs. While the NPP has made clear its commitment to avoiding privatisation, the financial impact of these companies—particularly energy and transport sectors—remains significant. For instance,

⁹ Bandara, K. (2024) 'NPP Govt. abandons plan to privatize Sri Lankan Airlines,' *Daily Mirror*, 30 September. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/NPP-Govt-abandons-plan-to-privatize-SriLankan-Airlines/108-292708>.

¹⁰ *Economy Next* (2024) 'Sri Lanka to pay Rs130bn to banks for CPC debt in Rs219bn supplementary estimate,' 27 November. <https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-to-pay-rs130bn-to-banks-for-cpc-debt-in-rs219bn-supplementary-estimate-19015/>.

the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), the largest loss-making SOE, continues to grapple with heavy debts, exacerbated by rising fuel costs and inefficiencies. The reversal of certain privatisation proposals, such as those for Sri Lanka Airlines, and the scrapping of the CEB privatisation programme, reflect an ongoing commitment to state control, despite the burden these SOEs impose on public finances.

The NPP has demonstrated some agility on the issue, outlining plans to attract foreign expertise to manage Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT), aiming to transform the company into a leading player in the domestic telecommunications sector. President Dissanayake emphasised that the party opposes privatisation, but recognises the need for foreign involvement due to SLT's challenges in adapting to the rapidly evolving high-tech industry. This approach reflects the NPP's commitment to enhancing SOEs' performance while maintaining public ownership and control.

Meanwhile, the NPP has also appointed Duminda Hulangamuwa, the Chair of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC), as a Special Economic Advisor. Hulangamuwa's involvement in the administrations of Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Ranil Wickremesinghe raises questions about the extent to which this appointment will bring new approaches to economic reform, as his role could signify continuity in economic strategies rather than a departure from past policies.

1.3. IMF

The NPP has outlined a comprehensive framework for Sri Lanka's economic revival, beginning with a renegotiation of the current IMF programme. This shift aims to address austerity measures that have had significant impacts on the population, with a particular focus on alternative strategies for tax administration based on revenue-based fiscal consolidation. Since President Dissanayake assumed office, the NPP has engaged in several discussions with the IMF, World Bank, and ADB to explore better outcomes for the general population, emphasising a more balanced and equitable approach.

The NPP's stance on the IMF programme has evolved over time, reflecting a pragmatic recognition of the need for economic stabilisation. Initially critical, the NPP now supports the programme while insisting that any changes will only be made after assessing their impact. Dissanayake has made it clear that the NPP will not unilaterally exit the programme but will ensure that the means of achieving the IMF's targets are scrutinised. Fiscal and monetary stability, particularly

predictability in exchange rates, interest rates, and inflation, are central to this strategy, as they are key to ensuring market stability and business confidence.

Dissanayake has been particularly critical of the IMF's approach to Sri Lanka's economic crisis, arguing that it focuses too much on superficial adjustments rather than addressing the underlying structural issues. He identifies three major problems with the IMF's interventions: balance of payments, government budget deficits, and foreign reserves and debt.¹¹ The IMF's approach, according to Dissanayake, fails to provide a coherent strategy for increasing production and boosting export income, which are essential for Sri Lanka's long-term economic recovery.

The NPP's criticism extends to the IMF's target of increasing foreign reserves to \$10.3 billion by 2025. Dissanayake considers this target unrealistic, given Sri Lanka's historical performance, and warns that relying on asset sales and loans will only increase the country's debt burden without offering a sustainable solution. He believes that the IMF's approach risks plunging Sri Lanka further into debt without providing a clear path to economic stability.

Other NPP members have also voiced concerns about the IMF programme. The JVP's general secretary (the JVP being the main and only political party in the NPP alliance) Tilvin Silva has questioned the logic of incurring additional debt to resolve a debt-induced crisis, specifically criticising the IMF's 48-month Extended Fund Facility.¹² He argued that the loan's size is insufficient to address the scale of Sri Lanka's economic challenges, particularly when it comes to covering the country's monthly fuel import costs. Silva views the IMF's financial assistance as inadequate, given the broader scope of the nation's economic needs.

Former MP and NPP Executive Council member, Sunil Handunneththi, has articulated a more nuanced stance towards the IMF, acknowledging the potential for cooperation but stressing the need for reforms aligned with national priorities.¹³ He has been outspoken about the persistent

¹¹ Weerasuriya, N. (2023) *Is selling off national resources a remedy or a trap? – Anura*. <https://www.jvpsrilanka.com/english/is-selling-off-national-resources-a-remedy-or-a-trap-anura/#:~:text=There%0are%20three,Employees%20Provident%20Fund>.

¹² Kotelawala, H. (2022) 'Sri Lanka's JVP gen secy makes dubious claim on IMF deal, says loan "pittance",' *Economy Next*, 19 September. <https://economynext.com/sri-lankas-jvp-gen-secy-makes-dubious-claim-on-imf-deal-says-loan-pittance-100045/>.

¹³ *The Sunday Times* (2024) 'JVP wants to deal with the IMF in the future despite differences,' 21 January. <https://www.sundaytimes.lk/240121/news/jvp-wants-to-deal-with-imf-in-the-future-despite-differences-546022.html>.

corruption in Sri Lanka, despite the implementation of anti-corruption measures required by the IMF. Handunneththi criticises the heavy tax burdens imposed on the public, arguing that they fail to deliver the promised benefits. This stance underscores the NPP's broader view that any future engagement with the IMF must be rooted in reforms that directly benefit the people of Sri Lanka.

1.4. Debt

The NPP recognises that Sri Lanka's current debt crisis is the cumulative result of irresponsible borrowing practices by past governments.¹⁴ The NPP is critical of the April 2022 decision by the Central Bank Governor to default on foreign loans without proper consultation, which it views as unconstitutional and detrimental to Sri Lanka's economic sovereignty. The NPP argues that this agreement with the IMF prioritises external financial agendas—such as balance of payments adjustments and asset privatisation—without addressing fundamental economic issues like increasing production and export income.

The NPP calls for a comprehensive debt audit to assess the full scale of the crisis and prevent future mismanagement. The party supports the introduction of a Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA), which will be presented to creditors and the IMF, to create a clear plan for economic reform. This analysis will enable informed decisions to improve Sri Lanka's credit rating and avoid accepting potentially harmful terms from external creditors. In a discussion with the business community, Dissanayake has criticised populist political strategies when managing finances, particularly in relation to unsustainable bonus promises to state workers.¹⁵ The NPP also advocates for merit-based public service, progressive taxation, and improved foreign direct investment (FDI) to drive the nation's economic recovery. As part of this reform, the government promises to restore transparency and accountability in public finance, ensuring that future borrowing and debt management are handled with greater responsibility and foresight.

¹⁴ Weerasuriya, N. (2023) *Is selling off national resources a remedy or a trap? – Anura*. <https://www.jvpsrilanka.com/english/is-selling-off-national-resources-a-remedy-or-a-trap-anura/#:~:text=in%2025%2C%20Mahinda,clauses%20are%20unconstitutional.>

¹⁵ *EconomyNext* (2024) 'Sri Lanka's economy will not collapse under NPP, all changes will be carefully made: AKD,' 4 September. [https://economynext.com/sri-lankas-economy-will-not-collapse-under-npp-all-changes-will-be-carefully-made-akd-178789/.](https://economynext.com/sri-lankas-economy-will-not-collapse-under-npp-all-changes-will-be-carefully-made-akd-178789/)

In a recent development, Sri Lanka has vowed to complete its long-delayed foreign debt restructuring by the end of January 2025, ahead of the presentation of the 2025 national budget. The country had defaulted on its \$46 billion external debt in April 2022 due to a lack of foreign exchange, leading to severe shortages of essential imports like food and fuel. Since then, Sri Lanka's economy has started recovering, aided by an IMF rescue package and austerity reforms to address its financial issues. The debt restructuring, which had been delayed for over two years, has cost Sri Lanka an additional \$1.7 billion in interest. Deputy Minister Anil Jayantha Fernando confirmed the goal of finalising the restructuring of bilateral debt and international sovereign bonds by December 31.¹⁶ Sri Lanka's foreign exchange reserves stood at \$6.4 billion in November 2024, maintaining the same level as the previous month.¹⁷ These reserves comprise both the central bank's monetary reserves and fiscal reserves from loans. In October, Sri Lanka signed a \$200 million loan agreement with the World Bank, though it remains unclear whether the loan has been disbursed. At the height of the currency crisis, Sri Lanka's central bank net reserves were negative by \$4.6 billion, but by September, they had nearly reached zero. Moreover, the central bank has successfully repaid loans from both the IMF and the Reserve Bank of India.¹⁸

1.5. Tax Reforms

The NPP's tax policy focuses on equitable reforms aimed at addressing economic disparities while improving public finances. Anura Kumara Dissanayake has made it clear that the party does not oppose the wealthy but rather those who misuse public funds.¹⁹ Key proposals include raising the tax-free threshold for monthly salaries from Rs. 100,000 to Rs. 200,000, implementing a maximum 24% progressive tax rate, and revising VAT rates.²⁰ The NPP also plans to introduce a

¹⁶ *The Morning* (2024) 'Bilateral debt, ISB restructuring to be complete by year-end: Minister,' 6 December. <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/UHIMdyYN0YUHmTMuugBU>.

¹⁷ CEICdata.com (2018) *Sri Lanka Foreign Exchange Reserves*. https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/sri-lanka/foreign-exchange-reserves#:~:text=in%20Nov%202024%3F_.Sri%20Lanka%20Foreign%20Exchange%20Reserves%20was%20measured%20at%206.4%20USD,table%20below%20for%20more%20data.

¹⁸ *EconomyNext* (2024) 'Sri Lanka foreign reserves US\$6.4bn in October 2024, up 7.9-pct,' 7 November. <https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-foreign-reserves-us6-4bn-in-october-2024-up-7-9-pct-186542/>.

¹⁹ *Daily FT* (2024) 'AKD dispels misconceptions about NPP among upper echelons in SL | Daily FT,' 29 February. <https://www.ft.lk/front-page/AKD-dispels-misconceptions-about-NPP-among-upper-echelons-in-SL/44-758973>.

²⁰ Kotelawala, H. (2023) 'Sri Lanka's leading leftist alliance NPP promises tax cuts for the rich,' *EconomyNext*, 31 January. <https://economynext.com/sri-lankas-leading-leftist-alliance-npp-promises-tax-cuts-for-the-rich-110878/>.

turnover tax if necessary²¹ and incentivise non-profit care institutions for persons with disabilities. The party further aims to remove VAT on essential goods like medicines, food, and school items.²² These efforts reflect the NPP's commitment to creating a fairer tax system while tackling corruption and enhancing economic stability.

In his parliamentary speech on December 18, 2024, President Dissanayake announced several key tax policy changes. The personal income tax (PIT) tax-free threshold was raised from LKR 100,000 to LKR 150,000, and PIT rates were adjusted to provide the largest savings for individuals earning under LKR 350,000. Furthermore, the withholding tax (WHT) rate was increased from 5% to 10%. In terms of VAT, locally produced yogurt and other dairy products are set to be exempt from VAT. Moreover, the tax exemption on the export of services was removed, and a concessionary rate of 15% was introduced.²³

²¹ *Daily News* (2024) 'NPP will likely change VAT, introduce turnover tax – AKD,' 9 May.

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2024/05/09/politics/531081/npp-will-likely-change-vat-introduce-turnover-tax-akd/>;

²² Siriwardana, A. (2024) 'NPP government will remove VAT on medicines, school items, food: Anura Kumara,' *Daily Mirror*, 17 August.

<https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/NPP-government-will-remove-VAT-on-medicines-school-items-food-Anura-Kumara/108-289759>.

²³ President's Media Division (2024) *Will Ensure that the 2022-23 Crisis Never Recurs in Our Country - PMD*.

<https://pmd.gov.lk/news/will-ensure-that-the-2022-23-crisis-never-recurs-in-our-country/>.

2. Social Policy

2.1. Education

One of the key stances of the National People's Power (NPP) regarding education is their commitment to increasing public investment in the sector. They plan to gradually raise the education allocation to 6% of the gross domestic product. The NPP's manifesto outlines several initiatives for Early Childhood Development Education, including providing formal education for all children aged 3 to 5 years and establishing an Early Childhood Development Education Centre within 2 kilometers of every child's home or parent's workplace. In terms of Primary Education, the NPP proposes a government school system within 3 kilometers of every child's home or parent's place of work. They also highlight the importance of religious education by advocating for educational programmes that cover major religions in Sri Lanka, as well as instruction about each student's own religion. Moreover, the NPP indicates plans to revise the school syllabus to include age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education, among other subjects.²⁴

On the topic of teachers, the NPP has promised to address pay disparities by eliminating the wage gap between teachers and principals promptly. During their campaigns they revealed that they plan to establish a teacher service constitution and a teacher council to support educators. Furthermore, the NPP intends to elevate the teaching profession to be among the ten highest-paying careers²⁵ and will require teachers to complete one year of professional training in the teaching-learning process before entering the profession.

After being appointed Minister of Education in the interim cabinet, Dr. Harini Amarasuriya had to deal with a serious issue regarding allegations of question leakage from 2024 Scholarship Examination, which led to investigations by the Examinations Department and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). In response, Dr. Amarasuriya suggested creating a seven-member committee to decide if the Grade 5 Scholarship Examination should be held again.²⁶ Aside from

²⁴ Jathika Jana Balawegaya (NPP Sri Lanka) (2024) *A Thriving Nation: A Beautiful Life*. First Edition. <https://www.npp.lk/en/policies/npppolicystatement>.

²⁵ *Newswire* (2024) 'NPP vows to make teaching among the 10 main professions in Sri Lanka - Newswire,' 28 June. <https://www.newswire.lk/2024/06/28/npp-vows-to-make-teaching-among-the-10-main-professions-in-sri-lanka/>.

²⁶ *Ada Derana* (2024) 'Seven-member committee to decide on Grade 5 Scholarship Exam,' 28 September. <https://www.adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=102325>.

that, Dr. Harini Amarasuriya announced that the government would increase funding for education.²⁷ She also asked schools to stop inviting politicians to their events to keep the focus on education.²⁸

2.1.1. Privatisation of Education

In terms of privatisation of education, the NPP has criticised the previous government's decisions to privatise education and reduce subsidies. For instance, the current Prime Minister and Education Minister Dr. Harini Amarasuriya clarified their stance against the General Sir John Kotelawala National Defence University (KNDU) Bill in 2021, stating, “Education should not be a privilege nor militarised.”²⁹ The NPP had also registered its objections to the General Sir John Kotelawala National Defence University Bill, which was discussed in Parliament in July 2021.³⁰ In the past, present President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has also criticised the government's decisions to privatise education and reduce subsidies, viewing these actions as detrimental to the public. He sees them as part of a broader trend of wealth concentration in the hands of a few.³¹

While the NPP has expressed opposition to the privatisation of public higher education institutions in the past, the party's election manifesto for 2024 acknowledges that it is not opposed to the existence of private higher education institutions. They recognise the limited capacity of public higher education institutions to accommodate the number of school graduates each year, along with the increasing demand for tertiary education in the job market. However, the document outlines the need for regulating private higher education institutions in response to the surge in private institutions due to market demand. To this end, the party plans to establish “an

²⁷ *Ada Derana* (2024) ‘Govt. to allocate more funds for education - PM Harini,’ 27 September.

<https://www.adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=102293>.

²⁸ Samarawickrama, C.P. (2024) 'Stop inviting politicians to school events: Education Minister,' Daily Mirror, 26 September. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Stop-inviting-politicians-to-school-events-Education-Minister/108-292527>.

²⁹ Amarasuriya, H. (2021) ‘General Sir John Kotelawala National Defence University (KNDU) Bill will be taken up for debate in Parliament this week.

Education should not be a privilege nor militarised!,' X (Formerly Twitter).

https://x.com/Dr_HariniA/status/1412371419783208962?t=GzIUUVSDRqMuBzyiXql0zQ&s=19.

³⁰ *Daily News* (2021) 'NPP against Kotelawala University Bill,' 7 July.

<https://archives1.dailynews.lk/2021/07/07/local/253340/npp-against-kotelawala-university-bill?page=7099>.

³¹ People's Liberation Front JVP Sri Lanka (2023) Is selling off national resources a remedy or a trap? – Anura.

<https://www.jypsrilanka.com/english/is-selling-off-national-resources-a-remedy-or-a-trap-anura/>.

independent regulatory unit under the Ministry of Education to regulate the programmes of existing private educational institutions,” which will monitor the quality of education and fee structures of the courses or degrees offered by these institutions.³²

On December 20, 2024, the Provincial Ministry of Education issued a circular banning schoolteachers in the Western Province from conducting private tuition classes for students from their own schools. However, following objections raised in response to the circular, the implementation of this ban has been temporarily suspended. The decision to suspend the ban came after instructions from the Governor of the Western Province, with Deputy Minister of Labor, Mahinda Jayasinghe, confirming the suspension and citing the concerns that had emerged after the circular’s issuance.³³

2.2. Welfare

The National People's Power (NPP) has been a vocal critic of the previous government's handling of welfare programmes. For instance, Vijitha Herath of the NPP has previously criticised the previous government’s management of the *Aswesuma* poverty alleviation scheme, calling it deceptive. “This is merely yet another deceptive tactic to suppress any dissent,” he claimed.³⁴ He argued that the mistakes in selecting beneficiaries were due to flawed government policies, not the fault of officials. Herath pointed out that 400,000 families were removed from the welfare programme over six months, with another 400,000 excluded by March 2023. While the remaining beneficiaries will receive Rs. 8,500 per month for three years, he emphasised that during a crisis, the government should be expanding, not reducing, its social welfare programmes. In May 2023, Dr. Harini Amarasuriya also criticised the politicisation of welfare programmes, stating, “All welfare programmes launched in this country have been politicised,” and highlighted that the *Aswesuma* Welfare Benefit Payment Scheme had been similarly politicised.³⁵

³² Jathika Jana Balawegaya (NPP Sri Lanka) (2024) *A Thriving Nation: A Beautiful Life*. First Edition.
<https://www.npp.lk/en/policies/npppolicystatement>.

³³ *Ada Derana* (2024) ‘Ban on private tuition by Western Province teachers temporarily lifted,’ 24 December.
<https://www.adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=104456>.

³⁴ Borham, M. (2023) NPP says Aswesuma appeals system a mere deception | Daily FT.
<https://www.ft.lk/news/NPP-says-Aswesuma-appeals-system-a-mere-deception/56-750223>.

³⁵ Range, I. (2023) ‘Aswasuma scheme must not be politicised like Samurdhi - NPP,’ Daily News, 13 May.
<https://archives1.dailynews.lk/2023/05/13/political/303285/aswasuma-scheme-must-not-be-politicised-samurdhi-npp>.

In response to these issues, the NPP outlined its approach to welfare and poverty alleviation for low-income earners in its manifesto, proposing a programme called *Prajashakthi*. This plan includes several key initiatives: providing a minimum monthly financial grant of Rs. 10,000 to low-income families, introducing a digital platform to identify eligible beneficiaries using new criteria within a year, and offering financial assistance to all qualifying individuals. Along with that, it proposes a monthly allowance of Rs. 5,000 to senior citizens needing assistance, as well as an interest rate that is 5% higher than the normal bank rates for senior citizens' fixed deposits. The plan also includes a provision of Rs. 10,000 monthly financial aid for persons with disabilities in low-income families and individuals with chronic illnesses, based on need. Following these policy promises, on October 10, 2024, the President's Media Division reported that the president Anura Kumara Dissanayake instructed officials from the Ministry of Finance to take necessary action to provide a monthly interim allowance of Rs. 3,000 to all pensioners starting the following week.³⁶

2.3. Health

During the presidential election campaign, the National People's Power (NPP) party, led by Anura Kumara Dissanayake, emphasised its commitment to improving access to health and education for all Sri Lankans. This vision was further reinforced by the Minister of Health and Mass Media, Dr. Nalinda Jayatissa, who stated that the new Constitution will recognise the right to healthcare as a fundamental human right.³⁷ This would allow individuals to seek legal recourse if their right to healthcare is violated. They pledged to alleviate financial burdens by removing the Value Added Tax (VAT) on essential goods, including medicines, school supplies, and food—ensuring these basics were affordable for every family.³⁸ This promise was central to Dissanayake's campaign,

³⁶ President's Media Division (2024) President Directs Officials to Provide a Monthly Allowance of Rs. 3,000 to Pensioners from Next Week - PMD. <https://pmd.gov.lk/news/president-directs-officials-to-provide-a-monthly-allowance-of-rs-3000-to-pensioners-from-next-week/>.

³⁷ *Daily News* (2024) 'Healthcare to be a fundamental right under new constitution,' 24 December. <https://www.dailynews.lk/2024/12/24/admin-catagories/breaking-news/694011/healthcare-to-be-a-fundamental-right-under-new-constitution/>.

³⁸ Siriwardana, A. (2024) 'NPP government will remove VAT on medicines, school items, food: Anura Kumara,' *Daily Mirror*, 17 August. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/NPP-government-will-remove-VAT-on-medicines-school-items-food-Anura-Kumara/155-289759>.

highlighting his focus on securing health, education, and food security as fundamental rights.³⁹ The NPP's campaign platform also called for substantial government investment in public health and education. Dissanayake pledged to direct resources toward strengthening healthcare infrastructure, expanding medical services, and improving access in underserved rural areas. These promises resonated strongly with the public. Surveys such as the Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey (SLOTS) indicated that Sri Lankans were eager for improvements in healthcare and education, viewing these as essential steps toward a better future.⁴⁰ As part of its campaign, the NPP organised events such as the National Nursing Conference on July 28, 2024, in Maharagama. This event demonstrated the party's commitment to the health sector and helped build support in the lead-up to the election. However, the Campaign for Free and Fair Elections (CaFFE) raised concerns, alleging that government nurses attended the event in uniform, which they saw as potentially problematic for election fairness.⁴¹ During this conference, Anura Kumara Dissanayake stated, "Compared to the salary in 2021, today's salary has decreased by 30%. Salaries should be adjusted to match the rising cost of living. We will ensure this adjustment under a National People's Power government."⁴²

Their 2024 manifesto has pledged to increase health funding to at least 3% of GDP, improve transparency, and fight corruption. Key initiatives include digitising patient records, establishing community-based health programmes, enhancing food safety regulations, and supporting occupational health with workplace safety assessments. Elderly care focuses on counselling and specialised clinics, while primary care will be improved by appointing family physicians, clustering facilities, and creating rehabilitation services. Hospital care enhancements ensure adequate facilities, patient rights protections, and ISO-certified testing. Essential drug policies aim to prevent shortages, ensure fair pricing, and expand local production. Mental health services prioritise early detection, youth support, and community-based care. The plan also includes

³⁹ *EconomyNext* (2024) 'Food, health, education immediate goals of NPP-led Sri Lanka govt: AKD,' 25 March. <https://economynext.com/food-health-education-immediate-goals-of-npp-led-sri-lanka-govt-akd-155908/>.

⁴⁰ Rannan-Eliya, R. P. and Fonseka, S. (2024) Voters want more government spending on health and education - Groundviews. <https://groundviews.org/2024/09/13/voters-want-more-government-spending-on-health-and-education>.

⁴¹ *Ada Derana* (2024c) 'Election Comm. notified over nurses attending NPP's meeting in uniform,' 29 July. <https://www.adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=100858>.

⁴² Dissanayake, A. Kumara (2024) "The political virus that has destroyed the country should be given a medicine that can cure it," 28 July. <https://www.npp.lk/si/news-view/national-nurses-meeting>.

district-level rehabilitation and palliative care, oral health programmes for children, targeted health support for plantation communities, and expanded indigenous healthcare. As they view medical tourism and regulated private healthcare aim to improve accessibility and quality across the sector. This aligns with the President's goal of attracting 4 million tourists and generating \$8 billion in revenue within the next 3-4 years, as outlined during the presentation of the Government Policy on November 21, 2024.⁴³

The Ministry of Health was under scrutiny during the past government, especially with former Health Minister Keheliya Rambukwella and five others who were in remand custody. They were accused of procuring substandard immunoglobulin vials using forged documents for Customs clearance, with the vials failing quality tests. Several Health Ministry officials and the supplying company were also implicated in the scandal.⁴⁴ After serving as the Minister of Education in the cabinet formed immediately after the election of the new president, Dr. Harini Amarasuriya was appointed as the Minister of Health, where she addressed issues in medical procurement. The Cabinet has approved a one-year buy-back agreement to procure medicines from 49 selected local companies to support domestic manufacturing. This move builds on policies from 2013 and 2018, aimed at prioritising local production to meet 20% of the country's medical supply needs, with potential growth to 40%. A pricing committee will determine medicine prices, and Dr. Amarasuriya's proposal ensures no conflict with existing contracts with the State Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Corporation or other local suppliers.⁴⁵

Moreover, Health Minister Dr. Nalinda Jayatissa has attributed the ongoing issues in Sri Lanka's pharmaceutical sector, including drug shortages, to the limited capacity of certain suppliers. He explained that delays in receiving specific drugs have been caused by these suppliers' operational challenges. Minister Jayatissa clarified that the problem is not with the existing laws but with the small number of suppliers, which sometimes leads to delays in procurement. He also pointed out

⁴³ President's Media Division. (2024, November 21). *The full speech delivered by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake at the inauguration of the first session of the Tenth Parliament - PMD*. <https://pmd.gov.lk/news/the-full-speech-delivered-by-president-anura-kumara-dissanayake-at-the-inauguration-of-the-first-session-of-the-tenth-parliament/>

⁴⁴ *Ada Derana* (2024) 'Ex-Health Minister Keheliya and 5 others further remanded,' 25 July. <https://www.adaderana.lk/news/100773/ex-health-minister-keheliya-and-5-others-further-remanded>.

⁴⁵ *Ada Derana* (2024) 'Govt. to procure medical supplies and drugs from local manufacturers,' 15 October. <https://www.adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=102701>.

the lack of coordination between key public institutions, including the Medical Supplies Division (MSD), the State Pharmaceuticals Corporation (SPC), and the National Medicines Regulatory Authority (NMRA), which has affected drug procurement and data collection efforts. Delays have been observed even in joint ventures between SPC and suppliers, as well as from the NMRA's side. Minister Jayatissa also emphasised the need for better collaboration among these institutions to prevent future delays. He reassured that the government has managed to address essential drug shortages to some extent and suggested adopting scientific solutions to reduce foreign exchange losses caused by unnecessary drug imports.⁴⁶

During the inauguration of a new building at Apeksha Hospital, Health Minister Nalinda Jayatissa announced that future donations to Sri Lanka's health sector would need to align with a national development plan, effectively prohibiting unsolicited contributions.⁴⁷ He emphasised that while well-intentioned, uncoordinated donations often become burdensome over time due to maintenance challenges and misalignment with the health system's priorities. This stance sparked some lash back for not recognising the value of philanthropic efforts essential for addressing immediate healthcare needs, especially in the context of an economic crisis. Supporters, however, contend that a structured approach ensures resources are utilised effectively and sustainably, reflecting the government's commitment to a more strategic and long-term development of the health sector.

2.4. Land

The National People's Power (NPP) party has firmly opposed the sale of state-owned enterprises and resources, warning foreign nations against purchasing state assets. They argue that such actions could undermine national sovereignty and economic stability. For instance, in March 2024, NPP Economic Council member Sunil Handunnetti held a news conference where he expressed concerns over the government's intention to sell state properties, including SriLankan

⁴⁶ Tennekoon, S. (2025) 'Drug procurement and shortages: Pharma suppliers' capacity issues blamed,' *The Morning*, 1 January. <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/wsKXTRkzIbnjkCsjFLY5>.

⁴⁷ Newswire (2025). 'No for random donations: Govt to outline criteria for health sector donations,' 3 January. <https://www.newswire.lk/2025/01/03/no-for-random-donations-govt-to-outline-criteria-for-health-sector-donations/>.

Airlines, Telecom, CEB, and Litro Gas, at discounted rates, suggesting that these actions were driven by the desire to secure commissions before the anticipated electoral defeat.⁴⁸

In response to apprehensions regarding private property ownership, the NPP has clarified its position: they do not support the privatisation of land that should remain under public control. Apart from that, during an address to the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC) on September 17, 2024—just days before the presidential election—Vijitha Herath emphasised that the NPP would only implement the 13th Amendment in its current form and would not grant police and land powers to the Provincial Councils.⁴⁹

In their manifesto the NPP proposes initiatives to enhance land management and agricultural productivity, including digital land mapping, integrated farming systems, and restrictions on non-agricultural use of fertile lands. They aim to establish a National Land Council, streamline land administration processes, and protect sensitive areas. Additionally, they plan to improve surveying and mapping through advanced technologies, ensure effective land registration, and create a National Spatial Data Integration Treaty for comprehensive data management.

Following the election of Anura Kumara Disanayake as president, significant developments have occurred regarding land management. The president directed officials to allocate 11,000 acres of land owned by the Kantale Sugar Company to farmers for short-term crop cultivation. These lands will be divided into plots not exceeding five acres each, and the president has called for the establishment of a proper mechanism for this allocation.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Siriwardana, A. (2024) 'NPP warns foreign countries against purchasing state property,' Daily Mirror, 13 March. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/NPP-warns-foreign-countries-against-purchasing-state-property/108-278770>.

⁴⁹ Siriwardana, A. (2024) 'Will uphold Article 9 of Constitution: NPP assures ACBC,' Daily Mirror, 17 September. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest-news/Will-uphold-Article-9-of-Constitution-NPP-assures-ACBC/342-291848>.

⁵⁰ 'President @anuradisayanayake has directed officials to allocate 11,000 acres of land, owned by the Kantale Sugar Company, to farmers for short-term crop cultivation.(1/2) These lands will be provided in plots not exceeding five acres each, and the President also instructed that a proper mechanism be developed for this process. (2/2)' (2024) *X (Formerly Twitter)*. <https://x.com/PMDNewsGov/status/1844381221738131966?t=WIEeDKFpLCHZUy-ORMedeQ&s=19>.

2.5. Food security

The National People’s Power (NPP) has placed a strong emphasis on agricultural development and food security within its manifesto, envisioning these efforts as a path to generate up to LKR 3 million per acre annually. Key policy targets include surpassing 400 million metric tons in national tea production, increasing coconut yield to 80 coconuts per tree annually, boosting rubber production to 1,300 kilograms per hectare each year, and achieving a paddy yield of 6 metric tons per hectare. The NPP has outlined plans to restart the Kantale sugar factory and expand sugarcane cultivation, along with offering loan schemes up to Rs. 1 million per hectare for high-yielding, semi-perennial, or perennial crops equipped with micro-irrigation systems. These efforts will be supported by performance-based incentives for agricultural extension officers to enhance productivity and efficiency.

After being elected, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake assumed control of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land, Livestock, Irrigation, Fisheries, and Aquatic Resources—a position he previously held in 2005 under the United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) during Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga’s administration. Alongside this, Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya was entrusted with the Ministry of Trade, Commerce, Food Security, Cooperative Development, Industries, and Entrepreneur Development. To reinforce food security, the government is currently working on establishing a Food Security Act and a dedicated authority, chaired by Amarasuriya, which will prioritise food accessibility and stability.⁵¹

The NPP’s commitment to boosting rice production has been a focal point in several political rallies. President Dissanayake, addressing farmers and supporters, emphasised that local farmers have the capability to meet domestic demand, saying, “If the farmers in this country are capable of producing the onions we need, we will stop importing them. We will only import rice necessary for the tourism industry; not a single other grain of rice will be imported from abroad”.⁵² In response to public concerns about potential rice shortages, he clarified that although stock issues

⁵¹ *News 1st* (2024) ‘Sri Lanka to set up Food Security Act and Authority,’ 4 October.

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2024/10/04/sri-lanka-to-set-up-food-security-act-and-authority>.

⁵² *Ada Derana* (2024) ‘Anura Kumara outlines plans for IT growth, tourism boost, and agri independence,’ 18 September. <https://www.adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=102054>.

may arise in some outlets, there is no national shortage⁵³. Furthermore, Dissanayake has issued a warning to rice millers that legal action will be taken against those who do not adhere to controlled prices, and he pledged government support to small- and medium-scale rice mill owners to stabilise the rice market⁵⁴.

On November 20, 2024, Sri Lanka announced plans to import 70,000 metric tonnes of rice to address a market shortfall, according to Minister of Trade, Commerce, Food Security, and Cooperative Development Wasantha Samarasinghe. He stated that importing rice was the best solution to meet the demand. The rice would be imported through two state agencies, Sathosa and the State Trading Corporation.⁵⁵ By December 29, 2024, Sri Lanka Customs had cleared 75,000 metric tonnes of rice, following the government's decision to allow rice imports without permits.⁵⁶ This decision, implemented on December 3, 2024, aimed to mitigate the shortage caused by adverse weather conditions affecting local production. The decision marked a reversal from the National People's Power (NPP)'s pre-election stance on rice imports. Previously, President Dissanayake had claimed that the country was facing an “artificially created shortage” of rice, blaming rice mill owners and asserting, “There is no rice shortage in the country.”⁵⁷

In support of paddy farmers, President Dissanayake proposed an increase in the fertiliser subsidy for the 2024/25 Maha season, raising it from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 25,000 per hectare, effective October 1.⁵⁸ However, the Election Commission (EC) stepped in to suspend this policy change until after the November 14 parliamentary elections, aiming to ensure impartiality during the

⁵³ *Newswire* (2024) ‘President AKD rules out Rice Imports - Newswire,’ 24 October.

<https://www.newswire.lk/2024/10/24/president-akd-rules-out-rice-imports/>.

⁵⁴ Priyan (2024) ‘Government to boost capacity of Small and Medium rice mill owners to stabilise market,’ *The Island*, 25 October. <https://island.lk/government-to-boost-capacity-of-small-and-medium-rice-mill-owners-to-stabilize-market/amp/>.

⁵⁵ *EconomyNext* (2024) ‘Sri Lanka to import 70,000 tonnes of rice to address shortage: Minister,’ 20 November. <https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-to-import-70000-tonnes-of-rice-to-address-shortage-minister-188960/>.

⁵⁶ *Newswire* (2024) ‘75,000 MT imported rice cleared by Customs,’ 29 December. <https://www.newswire.lk/2024/12/29/75000-mt-imported-rice-cleared-by-customs/>.

⁵⁷ *Tamil Guardian* (2024) ‘Dissanayake makes U-turn on rice import pledge,’ 23 November. <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/dissanayake-makes-u-turn-rice-import-pledge>.

⁵⁸ *Daily News* (2024) ‘President advises to increase fertiliser subsidy for paddy farmers,’ 26 September. https://www.dailynews.lk/2024/09/26/admin-catagories/breaking-news/638154/president-advises-to-increase-fertilizer-subsidy-for-paddy-farmers/#google_vignette.

electoral period⁵⁹. The government has announced compensation for farmers impacted by recent floods, which damaged 91,300 acres of paddy fields entirely and partially affected 86,225 acres, along with 750 acres of vegetable crops in Nuwara Eliya. Under the crop insurance scheme, paddy farmers will receive Rs. 40,000 per acre for up to two hectares. For crops like maize, potatoes, chilli, big onions, and soybeans, compensation will be Rs. 40,000 per acre for up to one hectare. It was reported that these funds will be allocated from the 2025 Agriculture and Agrarian Insurance Board provisions.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Weerasooriya, S. (2024) 'EC shoots down AKD's enhanced subsidies in view of 14 Nov. polls,' *The Island*, 1 October. <https://island.lk/ec-shoots-down-akds-enhanced-subsidies-in-view-of-14-nov-polls/amp/>.

⁶⁰ *Daily FT* (2024) 'Govt. to provide Rs. 100,000 per hectare in flood relief for farmers,' 25 December. <https://www.ft.lk/front-page/Govt-to-provide-Rs-100-000-per-hectare-in-flood-relief-for-farmers/44-770987>.

3. Reconciliation and the National Question

3.1. Devolution of Power

The NPP, with its historical roots in the JVP, has long maintained a cautious stance on devolution of power through the Provincial Council system, via the 13th Amendment of the Constitution. In a 2013 interview with *Daily Mirror*, JVP General Secretary Tilvin Silva voiced skepticism about Provincial Councils as a solution for the Tamil community, stating, “It is true that the Tamil people are enduring immense hardships. But, we should politically convince them that the PC system is not the way out for them.”⁶¹ Silva argued that devolution in the Tamil-majority North-East was “not necessary,” framing Tamil grievances as primarily “economic.”⁶²

The proposed constitutional reforms in the NPP's manifesto promise to guarantee equality and democracy, including the devolution of political and administrative power to local governments, districts, and provinces, allowing for broader public involvement in governance within a unified country (page 127). Following his election, President Dissanayake instructed Provincial Governors to draft reforms for a more streamlined and effective Provincial Council system. He emphasised that, during the transitional period, Provincial Councils should focus on delivering high-quality services to improve living conditions across the country.⁶³ While the manifesto is vague about specific strategies for devolving power, it is more direct in its commitment to abolish oppressive laws like the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), ensuring civil rights across the nation, and implementing the National Language Policy recognised in the 16th Amendment of the Constitution (page 127 & 128).

The NPP's victory in the 2024 Sri Lankan Parliamentary Elections marked a significant shift in the political landscape. The NPP won nearly all districts, except for Batticaloa, securing a strong

⁶¹ Bandara, K. (2013) ‘PC System not a panacea for present problems-Tilvin,’ *Daily Mirror*, 3 June.

<https://www.dailymirror.lk/print/opinion/pc-system-not-a-panacea-for-present-problems-tilvin/172-30350>.

⁶² *Tamil Guardian* (2024) ‘No devolution for Tamils, confirms JVP General Secretary,’ 17 October.

<https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/no-devolution-tamils-confirms-jvp-general-secretary>.

⁶³ *Daily Mirror* (2024) ‘AKD instructs Governors to prepare new proposals to rationalise Provincial Council system,’ 22 October. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/AKD-instructs-Governors-to-prepare-new-proposals-to-rationalize-Provincial-Council-system/108-294284>.

presence in traditionally minority-dominated regions in the North and East. This result was seen as a breakthrough, particularly since minority parties had historically dominated these areas in previous elections. The NPP's success is seen as a potential turning point for improving relations between the Tamil and Sinhala communities, a dynamic that had been challenging during past administrations. This transformation reflects the evolving political landscape in Sri Lanka, where the NPP's victory signals a potential shift toward greater unity and reconciliation, despite the long-standing ethnic divisions.

3.2. 13th Amendment

The NPP's stance on post-war peacebuilding, reconciliation, and devolution, both before and after coming to power, reveals ambiguity. In their 2024 manifesto, the NPP avoided directly addressing the 13th Amendment or making any commitment to federal arrangements for ethnic minorities. Historically, the JVP—the major power within the NPP—has opposed implementing the 13th Amendment. They recently adjusted its stance to support the implementation of the 13th Amendment. On 11 June 2024, JVP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake met with members of the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi (ITAK) in Jaffna, where he expressed the party's commitment to backing the amendment's implementation in the Sri Lankan Constitution⁶⁴. The 13th Amendment originated from the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord; an agreement signed without Tamil political input. It aimed to create Provincial Councils and grant devolution of land and police powers to a merged North-East to address ethnic grievances, though it has since become contentious. In the 1980s, the JVP staunchly opposed the Accord and the Amendment, even leading an insurrection partly in response to the perceived devolution of powers to Tamils in the North-East, resulting in significant loss of life. In 1986, JVP leader Rohana Wijeweera criticised Tamil demands for self-determination, framing them as aligning with foreign interests, specifically US in his 1986 book “Solutions for Tamil Eelam Struggle”.⁶⁵

During a rally in Jaffna on September 5, prior to the presidential election, President Dissanayake clarified that an NPP administration would focus on a new constitution rooted in equality,

⁶⁴ JVP flips the 13th Amendment in meeting with ITAK. (2024, June 12). *Tamil Guardian*.

<https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/jvp-flips-13th-amendment-meeting-itak>

⁶⁵ *Tamil Guardian* (2024) ‘JVP flips on 13th Amendment in meeting with ITAK,’ 12 June.

<https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/jvp-flips-13th-amendment-meeting-itak>.

democracy, and participatory governance as one country. He criticised southern politicians' repeated promises of the 13th Amendment, calling such deals deceptive, and emphasised his goal of building trust between the North and South.⁶⁶ On September 17, just days before the election, NPP MP Vijitha Herath confirmed that an NPP government would maintain Article 9, giving primacy to Buddhism, and would not devolve police or land powers to Provincial Councils. He argued that the 13th Amendment does not address core national issues or contribute to provincial development.⁶⁷ This contradicts the statement made by the current Prime Minister, Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, in 2023. She stated that the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, already part of the law, should be implemented, as it was presented as a solution to the national problem. However, she also acknowledged an ongoing debate about its viability as a long-term solution.⁶⁸ However, recent statements suggest that an NPP government would not implement the 13th Amendment, a position that resonates with some in the North and East, who feel the Amendment fails to fully address their concerns. Although the NPP's approach to the North and East reflects a bias toward the Sinhala Buddhist majority, their electoral success across the island, including in the North during the parliamentary elections, highlights broad support for their agenda.

It is notable that during President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's inaugural visit to India, the 13th Amendment was not mentioned in the joint statement. In contrast, Indian Prime Minister Modi had previously emphasised India's expectation that Sri Lanka's government should fully implement the 13th Amendment during talks with former Sri Lankan presidents and joint press conferences. The joint statement issued during Dissanayake's visit, which covered 31 aspects of political, economic, and strategic cooperation, did not address a political solution to the ethnic issue, post-war reconciliation, or the aspirations of the Sri Lankan Tamil people. Instead, PM Modi stated, "We hope that the Sri Lankan Government will fulfill the aspirations of the Tamil people

⁶⁶ *EconomyNext* (2024) 'AKD pledges new constitution, provincial polls, commission on discrimination,' 6 September. <https://economynext.com/akd-pledges-new-constitution-provincial-polls-commission-on-discrimination-178924/>.

⁶⁷ Siriwardana, A. (2024) 'Will uphold Article 9 of Constitution: NPP assures ACBC,' *Daily Mirror*, 17 September. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Will-uphold-Article-9-of-Constitution-NPP-assures-ACBC/108-291848>.

⁶⁸ Indrajith, S. (2023) 'NPP for implementation of 13A, says Harini,' *The Island*, 2 February. <https://island.lk/npp%E2%80%88for-implementation-of-13a-says-harini/>.

and meet their commitment towards fully implementing the Constitution of Sri Lanka and conducting Provincial Council elections,” during the joint press conference.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Thanabalasingham, V. (2024) ‘What did Modi convey to AKD by not insisting on 13A?,’ *The Morning*, 22 December. <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/3KXWEZmMk8syQ74hlmo9>.

4. Governance

The NPP manifesto states that a new constitution will be drafted and passed through a national referendum. The National People's Power (NPP) Government announced that it would take approximately three years to introduce a new Constitution.⁷⁰ Their proposed governance structure included appointing 25 ministers and corresponding deputy ministers for 25 logically defined ministries, while abolishing all State Ministerial posts. The NPP also plans to abolish the executive presidency, instead having parliament appoint a president without executive powers. A new parliamentary electoral system is also part of their reforms (page 108).

On January 1, 2025, the government launched its “Clean Sri Lanka” programme, which President Dissanayake described as an effort to “rebuild a fractured nation.” The President appointed an 18-member Task Force to plan and implement the programme. The initiative aims to uplift society through social, environmental, and ethical revival, with a focus on eradicating corruption. The “Clean Sri Lanka” programme is closely aligned with the government’s broader mandate of a “Clean Parliament,” which emphasises transparency, integrity, and accountability in governance. It also incorporates the idea of a national “*Shramadanaya*” (community work) to encourage collective action and volunteerism among citizens, further strengthening the drive for national renewal and reform.

4.1. Corruption

The National People's Power (NPP) party in Sri Lanka has made an anti-corruption agenda a central part of its political platform. For years, they have actively criticised past governments for corruption and have pledged to create a corruption-free country. Before President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's election, they vowed to eradicate corruption. In an interview with Bloomberg in Colombo, Harini Amarasuriya stated, “We don’t want easy money coming in to fund unproductive projects and not care about corruption. That’s what we expect of any country, and that’s how we would want it to be with China.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ Tennekoon, S. (2024) ‘New Constitution to take at least 3 yrs.’, *The Morning*, 4 December. <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/MTrY4NjuD2Jw6MYEJeKc>.

⁷¹ Ondaatjie, A. (2024) ‘Sri Lanka leftist candidate gains ground with Anti-Corruption push,’ *BNN Bloomberg*, 29 August. <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/business/international/2024/08/29/sri-lanka-leftist-candidate-gains-ground-with-anti-corruption-push/>.

The NPP's campaigns prominently feature the slogan "a clean parliament," which resonates strongly with the public's demand for accountability and reform. Their manifesto outlines a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy, proposing the establishment of a Public Asset Recovery Agency with international support, empowering the Bribery Commission to enforce global standards, and setting up district Anti-Corruption offices. They also plan to fast-track financial crime cases through a dedicated High Court bench and implement laws to hold both corrupt individuals and their enablers accountable. Moreover, the NPP aims to raise public awareness on corruption and review previously withdrawn cases for potential prosecution (page 111 & 112).

Following Dissanayake's election, the government has already moved to seize assets linked to former officials, including vehicles owned by the family of former Minister Rohitha Abeygunawardena.⁷² Former State Minister Lohan Ratwatte and his wife were arrested for allegedly using a luxury car that had been illegally assembled in Sri Lanka and lacked valid registration. Acting on information received at police headquarters, the Mirihana Police took Ratwatte into custody on October 31 in Kandy.⁷³

The election of Dissanayake and the NPP's parliamentary victory reflect widespread public frustration with corruption in previous governments. The anti-corruption wave even discouraged senior politicians from contesting the elections, while those who did were unable to secure seats. This strong mandate has given the NPP unprecedented power to pursue its reform agenda and challenge entrenched corruption.

4.2. Accountability & Equality of Law

The NPP has made strong commitments toward establishing equality before the law and reaffirming judicial independence. On September 7, 2024, at the NPP Lawyers' Conference, a leading spokesperson stated, "We will ensure the independence of the judiciary. We do not need

⁷² Senevirathna, S. (2024) 'Police seize luxury vehicles from house of former Minister's son-in-law,' *Daily Mirror*, 20 October. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Police-seize-luxury-vehicles-from-house-of-former-Ministers-son-in-law/108-294165>.

⁷³ *Times Online* (2024) 'Ex-State Minister Lohan & wife further remanded,' 7 November. <https://sundaytimes.lk/online/news-online/Ex-State-Minister-Lohan-wife-further-remanded/2-1147350>.

to regulate the judiciary for our personal objectives.”⁷⁴ In addition, the NPP has previously expressed support for extending judicial authority to the village level, hinting at a goal of making legal frameworks accessible at the grassroots. At a campaign event in Kundasale, NPP representative Lal Kantha declared, “The process of administering the law, which currently reaches the Magistrate’s Courts, should be extended further down. The right of the common people to retain political power should be formally and scientifically enshrined in the Constitution and granted to them.” He also emphasised that “This system already exists. We should formalise and expand it further to provide more opportunities to the people.”⁷⁵

The NPP manifesto outlines several key judicial reforms. These include appointing a committee of legal experts to review and update existing laws, introducing modern technology into the judicial process, and enhancing the efficiency of the courts through proper training for judges and staff. The party also promises the establishment of smart courthouses with digital records and the appointment of research officers to assist judges in delivering timely and accurate judgments. Other commitments include the creation of an International Arbitration and Conciliation Center for South Asian commercial disputes, improving the infrastructure for the storage of evidence in criminal cases, and enacting laws to expedite the return of property to aggrieved parties. The NPP has also pledged to revise bail laws, prioritise cases involving sexual offenses against minors and women, and establish provincial branches of the Department of Government Analyst to speed up the judicial process (page 111).

4.2.1. Justice for the Victims of the Easter Sunday Attack

The NPP has also made significant pledges regarding justice for the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks. In August 2024, then-presidential candidate Anura Kumara Dissanayake promised to deliver justice to the victims, and after his election, reaffirmed this commitment.⁷⁶ During a meeting with families affected by the attack at St. Sebastian’s Church in Katuwapitiya, Negombo,

⁷⁴ Siriwardana, A. (2024) ‘NPP will uphold judicial supremacy, equality: AKD tells lawyers,’ *Daily Mirror*, 7 September. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest-news/NPP-will-uphold-judicial-supremacy-equality-AKD-tells-lawyers/342-291253>.

⁷⁵ *Daily News* (2024) ‘Judicial power should be further extended at village level – NPP,’ 30 May. <https://www.dailynews.lk/2024/05/30/politics/559606/judicial-power-should-be-further-extended-at-village-level-npp/>.

⁷⁶ *News 1st* (2024) ‘AKD pledges justice for Easter attack victims,’ 20 August. <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2024/08/20/akd-pledges-justice-for-easter-attack-victims>.

on October 6, 2024, President Dissanayake stated, “Such a tragedy will not happen again” and has advised to start the investigations properly.⁷⁷ Since the NPP formed government, Ravi Seneviratne was appointed as Secretary to the Ministry of Public Security and Shani Abeysekera as the Director of the Central Criminal Intelligence Analysis Bureau. Both individuals have made critical statements about the investigation into the attacks. Seneviratne revealed that the attacks could have been prevented if SIS and DMI had not misled the CID,⁷⁸ while Abeysekera revealed that the attacks were part of a coordinated conspiracy rather than an isolated incident.⁷⁹ He also shared details of how false leads were provided during the investigation and how he was removed from the case under the previous administration. Abeysekera’s decision to join the NPP reflects his belief that the new government will prioritise a thorough and transparent investigation into the attacks. In addition to the calls for accountability regarding the Easter Sunday attacks, there are growing demands for justice on other critical issues, such as the Central Bank bond scam and the government’s handling of the 2022 economic crisis. People are seeking accountability for the financial mismanagement that led to the crisis, with many calling for investigations into the actions of those responsible.

⁷⁷ *President assures justice for Easter Sunday victims* (2024). <https://pmd.gov.lk/news/president-assures-justice-for-easter-sunday-victims/>.

⁷⁸ *Daily Mirror* (2024) ‘Easter Attack could have easily been avoided if SIS and DMI hadn’t misled CID - Senior DIG Ravi Seneviratne,’ 13 June. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/news-features/Easter-Attack-could-have-easily-been-avoided-if-SIS-and-DMI-hadnt-misled-CID-Senior-DIG-Ravi-Seneviratne/131-284704>.

⁷⁹ *Newswire* (2024) ‘Shani Abeysekera reveals disturbing details on Easter Attack investigation - Newswire,’ 26 September. <https://www.newswire.lk/2024/09/26/shani-abeysekera-reveals-disturbing-details-on-easter-attack-investigation/>.

5. Gender

The National People's Power (NPP) has established itself as a strong advocate for women's rights and empowerment in Sri Lanka. Harini Amarasuriya, a leading figure within the NPP, has described the party as uniquely positioned to support women through policies promoting gender equality and women's active role in governance. The NPP has demonstrated this commitment through various women's summits and rallies across the country, rallying under the slogan "ගැහැනු එක මිටට මාලිමාවට" or "We, women, as one for NPP," to increase women's political representation. The party's dedication to women's leadership was further solidified with Amarasuriya's appointment as Prime Minister after the presidential election, marking her as Sri Lanka's third female prime minister. In the recent parliamentary elections, the NPP nominated 36 women on its national and district lists, surpassing most other parties except the People's Struggle Alliance, which fielded 37 women, though women still represented only about 12 percent of NPP candidates.⁸⁰

While the NPP has been successful in mobilising women, questions remain about how the party will specifically empower women in the future. Notably, there have been no female deputy ministers, and only two women in the cabinet - Prime Minister Dr. Harini Amarasuriya serving as the Minister of Education, Higher Education, and Vocational Education, and Ms. Saroja Savithri Paulraj appointed as the Minister of Women and Child Affairs. Following the elections, 19 female candidates, including Amarasuriya, were elected to Parliament, with her securing the second-highest vote count. The NPP's manifesto outlines its vision for gender equality, pledging to address the gender pay gap, expand political education and support for women, enact laws to gradually ensure 50% female representation in political institutions, and implement recommendations from the 2012 Law Commission report to allow safe termination of pregnancy. Additionally, the NPP aims to revise discriminatory laws, such as penal code sections 365 and 365(a), which impact women, children, and marginalised communities, and to improve access to critical state services, including healthcare, legal assistance, social protection, and justice for LGBTIQ+ groups. The party also plans to reform institutions such as the Human Rights Commission and Legal Aid Commission to protect marginalised groups, reflecting its commitment to fostering an inclusive

⁸⁰ Gamage, R. and Dassanayake, H. B (2024) 'Can Sri Lanka's newly empowered NPP deliver a new dawn for women in politics?', *Himal Southasian*, 8 November. <https://www.himalmag.com/politics/sri-lanka-harini-amarasuriya-dissanayake-npp-jvp-women-gender>.

and equitable society through policies that support the rights and empowerment of women and marginalised communities in Sri Lanka (page 44 & 45).

6. Foreign Relations

Since Anura Kumara Disanayake assumed the presidency under the JVP-led National People's Power (NPP), several key incidents have shaped Sri Lanka's foreign policy during the first month of his presidency.

6.1. Stance on the Indo-Lanka Accord and Relations with India

The JVP, the main party within the NPP, opposed the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord and the 13th Amendment, which established Provincial Councils to devolve powers to Tamil-majority regions. The party viewed this as a threat to Sri Lanka's sovereignty and resisted it through a major insurrection. In February 2024, the current Foreign Affairs Minister Vijitha Herath firmly stated, "This stance has not changed and will not change"⁸¹ emphasising its commitment to defending the country's autonomy, especially in its dealings with India. In February 2024, the NPP leader Anura Kumara Disanayake visited India, meeting key officials including External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, and Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan. Dr. Jaishankar tweeted, "A good discussion on our bilateral relationship and the mutual benefits from its further deepening. Also spoke about Sri Lanka's economic challenges and the path ahead. India, with its Neighbourhood First and SAGAR policies will always be a reliable friend and trusted partner of Sri Lanka."⁸² Disanayake also met Gujarat's Chief Minister and Industry Minister, discussing development strategies and the 'Gujarat Model' for poverty alleviation and governance.

The NPP's stance on the Adani Wind Power Project is particularly significant when examining the relationship between India and Sri Lanka. Before his election, President Anura Kumara Disanayake strongly opposed the project, calling it a corrupt deal and vowing to cancel it if elected.⁸³ However, on November 7, 2024, the interim Cabinet decided to review the project

⁸¹ *Tamil Guardian* (2024) 'Strongly opposed to Indo-Lanka accord,' confirms JVP,' 13 February.

<https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/strongly-opposed-indo-lanka-accord-confirms-jvp>.

⁸² Jaishankar (2024) 'Pleased to meet @anuradisnayake, Leader of NPP and JVP of Sri Lanka this morning ...' *X (Formerly Twitter)*. <https://x.com/DrSJaishankar/status/1754396670715215938?t=fUK9LyhCORqr13UMu0q7-A&s=19>.

⁸³ *Newswire* (2024) 'Sri Lanka's AKD vows to cancel 'Corrupt' Adani Wind Power project if elected - Newswire,' 15 September. <https://www.newswire.lk/2024/09/15/sri-lankas-akd-vows-to-cancel-corrupt-adani-wind-power-project-if-elected>.

details, leaving the final decision to the newly appointed Cabinet after the parliamentary elections. President Dissanayake clarified that his government is not concerned with Adani Group's dealings in other countries but is focused solely on the company's operations in Sri Lanka. He explained, "We are primarily concerned with our investments and development. We will assess how Adani has operated in Sri Lanka. If their work aligns with our initiatives and benefits us, we have no problem continuing our partnership." He also noted that Adani is involved in completing the west terminal of the Colombo Port and exploring investments in the energy sector. However, he acknowledged that environmental concerns have been raised, with a case filed by those who oppose the company's projects. "We will consider the pros and cons of the case pending in court, as well as the views of the public, to determine the best course of action," Dissanayake said.⁸⁴ His comments came shortly after his inaugural official visit to India.

During President Dissanayake's visit to India on December 18-19, 2024, several significant agreements were made, including a memorandum of understanding to avoid double taxation and to provide civil service training. He also emphasised the importance of adopting sustainable fishing practices to address the ongoing fisheries conflict in the Palk Bay, a dispute that affects both Sri Lankan and Tamil Nadu fishermen. Sri Lanka's Minister of Fisheries, Ramalingam Chandrasekar, stressed that the conflict could only be resolved if India stops using bottom trawlers.⁸⁵

Significantly, there was no mention of the 13th Amendment in the joint statement issued during President Dissanayake's visit, indicating that new developments on this bilateral front are to be expected.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Chaudhury, D. Roy and Samanta, P. Dhal (2024) 'Adani Group dealings with other countries not Sri Lankan concern: President Anura Kumara Dissanayake,' *The Economic Times*, 18 December.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/company/corporate-trends/adani-group-dealings-with-other-countries-not-lankan-concern-sri-lankan-president-anura-kumara-dissanayake/articleshow/116412134.cms?from=mdr>.

⁸⁵ *Ada Derana* (2024) 'Bottom trawling by Indian fishermen must stop: Sri Lanka's Fisheries Minister,' 13 December.

<https://www.adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=104204>.

⁸⁶ *Newswire* (2024) '34-point joint statement from President AKD's visit to India - Newswire,' 16 December.

<https://www.newswire.lk/2024/12/16/34-point-joint-statement-from-president-akds-visit-to-india/>.

6.2. NPP's China Policy

The NPP government has made it clear that Sri Lanka will maintain a neutral stance in its relations with global powers. Minister Vijitha Herath stressed that Sri Lanka would not favour any country, asserting, “We are doing business with China just as we are doing business with India.”⁸⁷ This balanced approach is evident in Sri Lanka’s engagement with both India and China. For example, a Chinese military training vessel was welcomed in Colombo with full naval honors, part of regular diplomatic engagements. Following objections from India, Colombo denied permission last year for China's research vessel, Xiang Yang Hong 3, to enter Sri Lankan waters. Despite India's concerns, it was clarified that the ship was a training vessel, not a research craft. This situation sparked discussions on how Sri Lanka, under an NPP-led government, would navigate its relationships with both India and China. President Dissanayake reaffirmed the NPP's commitment to neutrality, stating, “We don’t want to be sandwiched, especially between China and India. Both countries are valued friends and, under an NPP government, we expect them to become close partners. We also want to maintain relations with the EU, the Middle East and Africa,”

During his meeting with Ms. Qin Boyong, Vice Chairperson of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) on December 18, 2024, President Dissanayake thanked China for its support in Sri Lanka's debt restructuring, economic crisis, disaster relief, and aid like school uniforms. He highlighted the need to complete the Central Expressway and speed up projects in the Colombo Port City and Hambantota District. Ms. Qin reaffirmed China's commitment to strengthening ties, including restarting maritime research and establishing Chinese businesses in Hambantota.⁸⁸ President Dissanayake also announced plans for an official tour to China in mid-January, following his recent visit to India.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Vikrant Singh (2024), “Prez Dissanayake’s ‘balanced approach’ under scrutiny as Colombo welcomes Chinese vessel,” WION News, 09 October. <https://www.wionews.com/south-asia/prez-dissanayakes-balanced-approach-under-scrutiny-as-colombo-welcomes-chinese-vessel-765842>.

⁸⁸ *President Expresses Gratitude to China for Debt Restructuring Support and Economic Assistance - President's Office* (2024). <https://www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk/president-expresses-gratitude-to-china-for-debt-restructuring-support-and-economic-assistance/>.

⁸⁹ *The Hindu* (2024) ‘Sri Lankan President Dissanayake to visit China mid-January,’ 21 December. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lankan-president-dissanayake-to-visit-china-mid-january/article69013720.ece>.

6.3. BRICS and Global Engagement

The NPP government has also expressed interest in expanding its global economic relations, particularly by seeking membership in the BRICS economic bloc. The NPP government views this as essential for strengthening its international economic position. In line with the NPP's foreign policy vision, their manifesto states: "Priority shall be given to promote and strengthen the Diplomatic, economic and cultural relations with G20 countries, BRICS+ countries, ASEAN, Middle East and African Continent." The NPP sees BRICS as a key platform to achieve economic growth through cooperation. As Minister Vijitha Herath stated, "We consider BRICS to be an effective partnership to realise our aspirations for mutually beneficial cooperation, peace, and development, through strengthened and inclusive multilateralism within the framework of the UN Charter." However, Sri Lanka's application to join BRICS has not been accepted, as it was rejected by nine of the group's current members. On the other hand, Sri Lanka's request to become a member of BRICS' New Development Bank (NDB) has been approved.⁹⁰ In the joint statement issued during the President's inaugural visit to India, it was reported that President Dissanayake requested Prime Minister Modi's support for Sri Lanka's bid to become a member of BRICS.⁹¹

6.4. Human Rights and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

Regarding human rights, the NPP has maintained a firm position on addressing such issues domestically rather than through external interventions. At the 57th session of the UNHRC, Sri Lanka rejected a resolution that would extend the powers of the external evidence collection mechanism. Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath stated, "The Cabinet of Ministers has endorsed Sri Lanka's position to reject the draft resolution at the current session of the UNHRC."⁹² This approach reflects the NPP's preference for managing human rights issues through local systems rather than accepting international mandates, consistent with their emphasis on national sovereignty.

⁹⁰ *EconomyNext* (2024) 'Sri Lanka's BRICS membership application rejected, NDB membership offered,' 7 November. <https://economynext.com/sri-lankas-brics-membership-application-rejected-ndb-membership-offered-186569/>.

⁹¹ *India - Sri Lanka Joint Statement: Fostering Partnerships for a Shared Future* (2024). <https://www.mea.gov.in/incoming-visit-detail.htm?38797/India++Sri+Lanka+Joint+Statement++Fostering+Partnerships+for+a+Shared+Future>.

⁹² Newswire (2024) 'Sri Lanka will continue to oppose UNHRC resolution 51/1 : Cabinet Spokesperson - Newswire,' 8 October. <https://www.newswire.lk/2024/10/08/sri-lanka-will-continue-to-oppose-unhrc-resolution-51-1-cabinet-spokesperson/>.

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Muragala | Centre for Progressive Politics & Policy (CPPP) is a politics and policy-oriented think tank which promotes equal & equitable societies in Sri Lanka & the region. Our work lies at the intersection of political science, political economy, and political sociology. Together, we aim to generate ideas, enrich the discourse, and mobilise social action to create a more robust Global South discourse and politics.

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