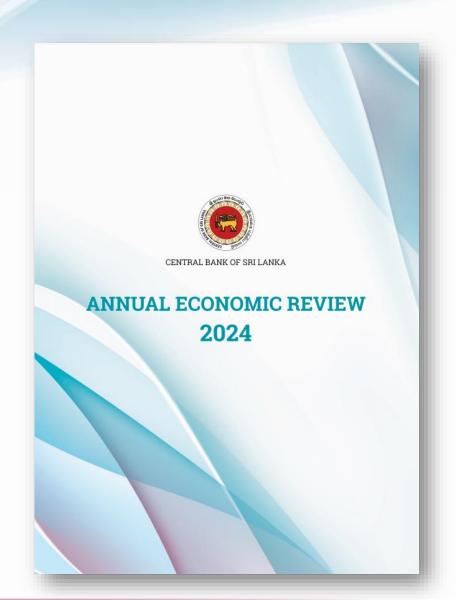


## Annual Economic Review 2024 of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka

Dr. Sujeetha Jegajeevan
Director of Economic Research
Central Bank of Sri Lanka

#### Section 80(3) of Central Bank of Sri Lanka Act, No. 16 of 2023

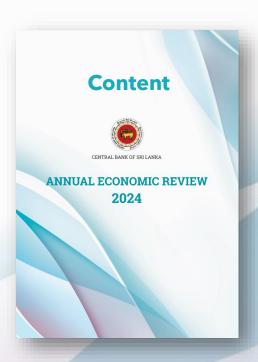


"The Governor of the Central Bank shall ensure that the Central Bank shall, within a period of four months after the close of each financial year, publish, and lay before Parliament through the Minister, a report approved by the Governing Board, on the state of the economy during such financial year emphasising its policy objectives and the condition of the financial system. The report shall include a review and an assessment of the policies of the Central Bank followed during such financial year"

#### **Content of Annual Economic Review**

- 1. Key Economic Indicators & Key Social Indicators
- 2. Executive Summary
- 3. Infographics
- 4. Chapters
  - Chapter 1: Macroeconomic Developments
  - Chapter 2: Conditions of the Financial System
  - Chapter 3: Review of the Central Bank's Policies
  - Chapter 4: Macroeconomic Outlook
- 5. Box Articles
- 6. Featured Charts
- 7. Major Economic Policy Measures Implemented by or Related to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka
- 8. Statistical Appendix
- 9. Special Statistical Appendix

\*Detailed versions of the statistical appendices are available online in excel format.



# The Sri Lankan economy continued to recover steadily in 2024, following its deepest economic downturn experienced two years ago

The road to recovery was difficult, but notably faster compared to most debt-distressed countries

Reforms backed by the IMF programme continued, political stability was restored, and external debt restructuring reached near completion

These supported the country's exit from restricted default rating

# **Infographics 2024** 4,516 Exchange Rate (Rs./USD, end year) Gross Official Reserves (USD br., end year)

#### **Recovery of the Sri Lankan Economy**

At the height 2024 of crisis



Inflation (CCPI, y-o-y, %)

**69.8** Sep 2022 -1.7



GDP Growth (y-o-y, %)

-7.3 2022 5.0



3,464 2022 4,516



Interest Rate (AWPR, %)

**29.7** Week 4, Nov 2022

8.9 end year



Private Sector Credit Growth (y-o-y, %)

**-9.7** May 2023 10.7 end year



Exchange Rate (Rs./USD)

**365** Week 2, May 2022 293 ond your At the height 2024 of crisis



Gross Official Reserves (with PBOC swap, USD bn)

1.7 Aug 2022 6.1



NPL/Stage III Loans Ratio\* (%)

> 13.6 Sep 2023

12.3



Central Government Debt\*\* (% of GDP)

114.2 2022 96.1 end year



Government Revenue and Grants (% of GDP)

8.3 2021 13.7



Overall Fiscal Balance (% of GDP)

-11.7 2021 -6.8

<sup>\*</sup> Data after 2020 are based on SLFRS- based reporting

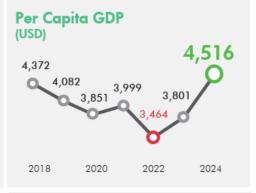
<sup>\*\*</sup>Please refer the footnotes of table 1.21 AER 2024

#### **Recovery of the Sri Lankan Economy**

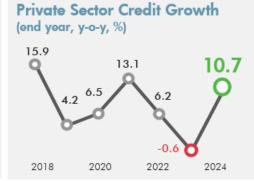




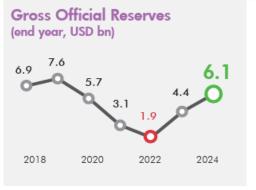


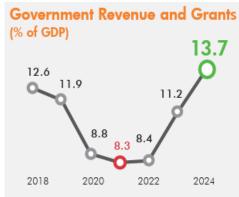


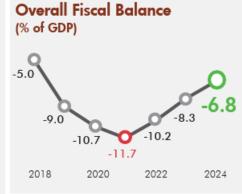


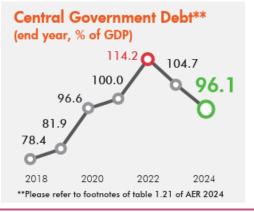






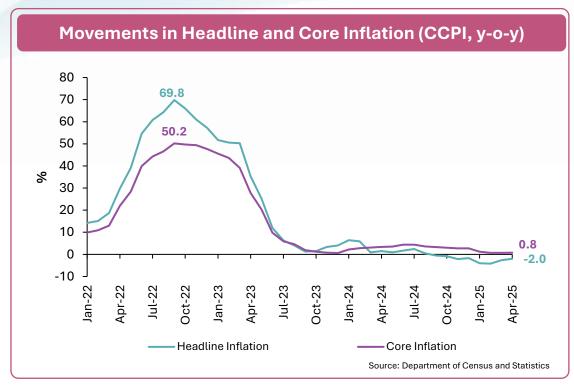






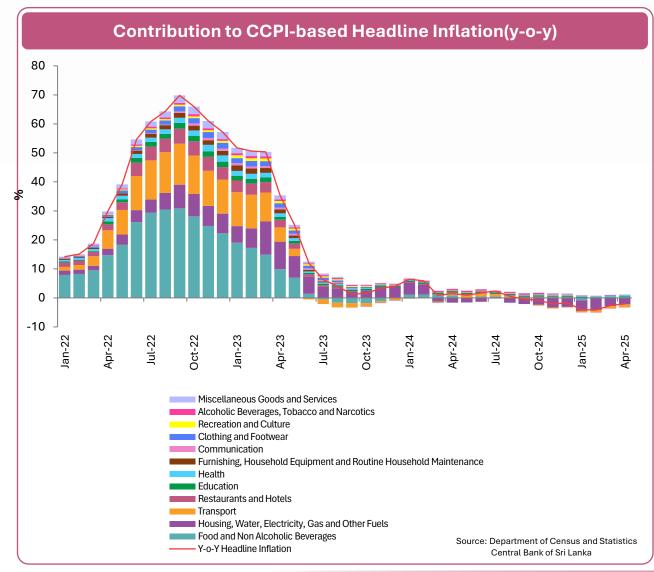
### Inflation and Real Sector Developments

### Inflation followed an overall decreasing trend during 2024 and reached deflationary levels towards the end of the year



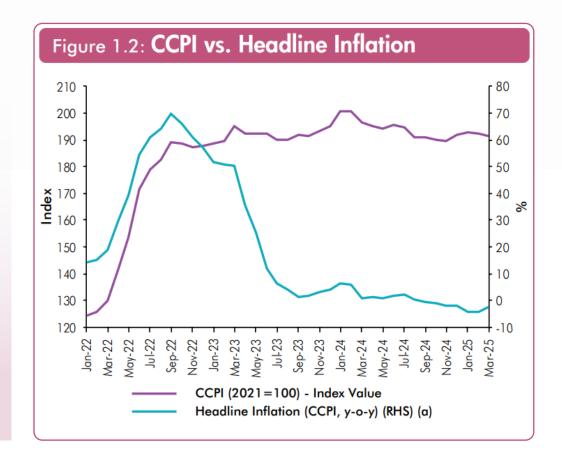


- Other contributing factors:
  - Moderation of global commodity prices
  - Strengthening of the Sri Lanka rupee
  - Statistical base effect



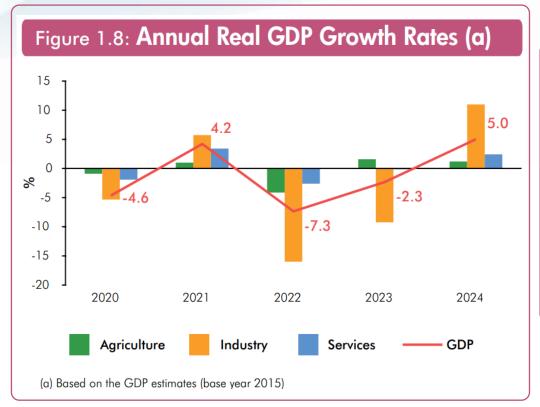
### The general price level exhibited an overall declining trend in 2024

- Prices of food items exhibited an overall declining trend
  - Decline in volatile food prices
  - Decline in prices of imported food items
- Prices of non-food items also exhibited an overall declining trend
  - Downward revisions to cost reflective administrative prices
- As reflected by the annual average change in CPIs, cost of living exhibited a marginal increase in 2024 compared to 2023
- The ongoing temporary period of deflation will help ease the cost of living as well as the cost of production to some extent



Inflation expectations of both corporate sector and household sector followed an overall declining trend during 2024, aligning with realised inflation

### Sri Lankan economy rebounded with a 5.0% real growth rate in 2024, following two years of contraction



Aggregate Demand at Current Market Prices								
Economic Activity	Rs. Bn		As a % of GDP					
	2023	2024	2023	2024				
1. Domestic Demand	28,011.5	30,683.4	102.2	102.6				
1.1 Consumption	21,270.3	22,623.0	77.6	75.7				
1.2 Investment (Gross Capital Formation)	6,741.2	8,060.3	24.6	27				
2. Net External Demand	-591.7	-784.8	-2.2	-2.6				
3. Total Demand (GDP) (1+2)	27,419.8	29,898.6	100	100				

- Overall growth stemmed from industry, led by manufacturing and construction revival
- Service sector also grew strongly, driven by sustained gains in transport and accommodation
- Domestic demand grew, driven by growth in consumption expenditure and investment expenditure

### The Population and Labour force participation rate declined, while the Unemployment rate reduced in 2024

### Table 1.5: Household Population, Labour Force and Labour Force Participation (a)

ltem	2023	2024 (b)
Household Population '000 Persons	17,306	17,551 (c)
Labour Force '000 Persons	8,408	8,316
Employed	8,010	7,949 (c)
Unemployed	398	367 (c)
Unemployment Rate	4.7	4.4
Male	3.6	n.a.
Female	7.0	n.a.
Labour Force Participation Rate (d)	48.6	47.4
Male	68.6	67.4
Female	31.3	29.8
(a) Based on information available as of 28 March 2025		





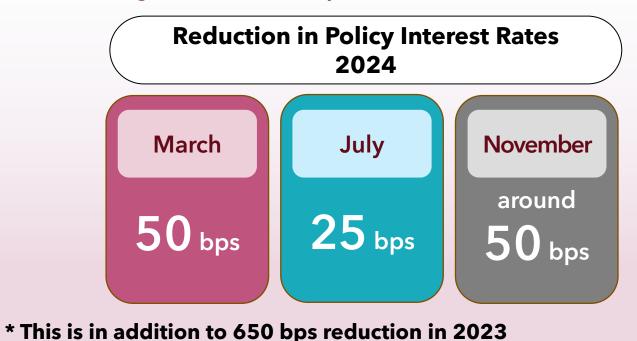
<sup>\*</sup> Total population of Sri Lanka as per Census of Population and Housing 2024 - 21.763 Mn

### Monetary Sector Developments and Policies

#### Monetary policy stance remained increasingly accommodative in 2024

A relaxed monetary policy stance was pursued in 2024 due to;

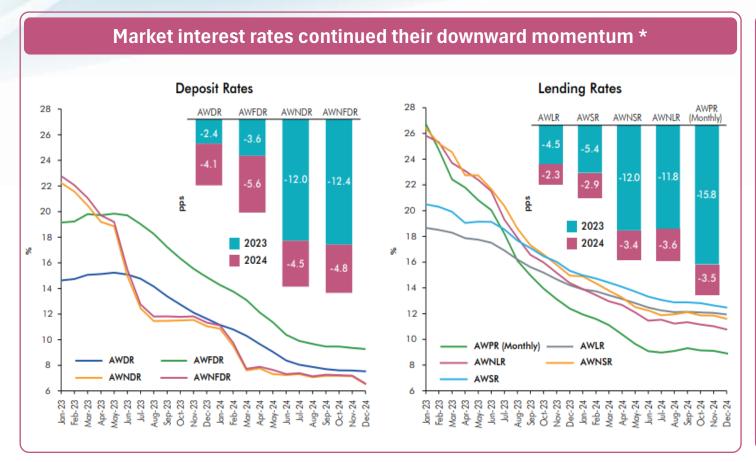
- Subdued inflation
- Well anchored inflation expectations
- Continuation of tight fiscal measures
- Strong external sector performance

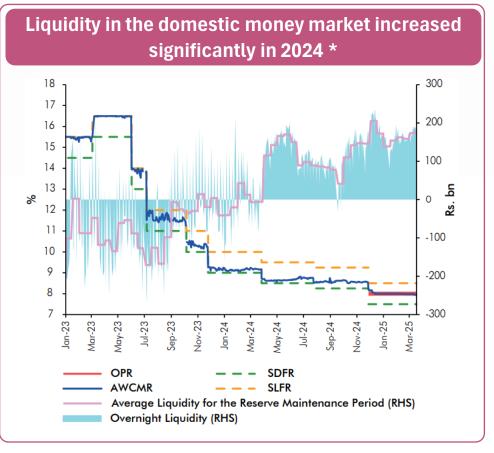


Increased emphasis on Monetary Policy Communication

- ✓ Social media platforms
- ✓ User friendly and straightforward communication material
- ✓ Improving the usual channels of communication
- ✓ Improving awareness of stakeholders
- ✓ Statutory Publications and Report

#### Accommodative policy stance was reflected in market interest rates

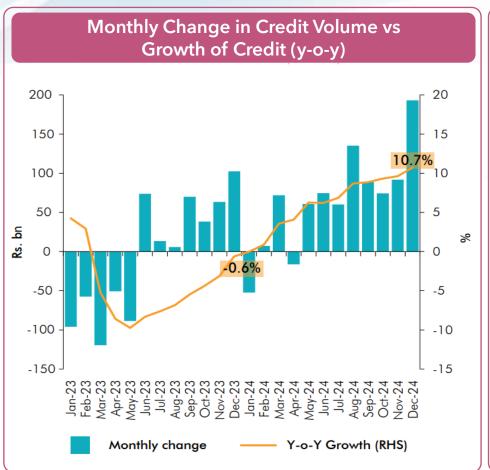


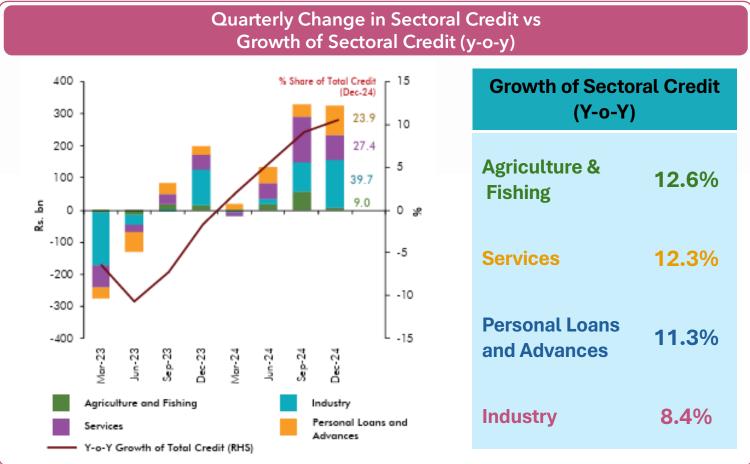


Yields on government securities declined in 2024, in line with the notable improvements in fiscal performance, easing of monetary policy and the gradual dissipation of risk premia

<sup>\*</sup> Please refer annex for acronyms

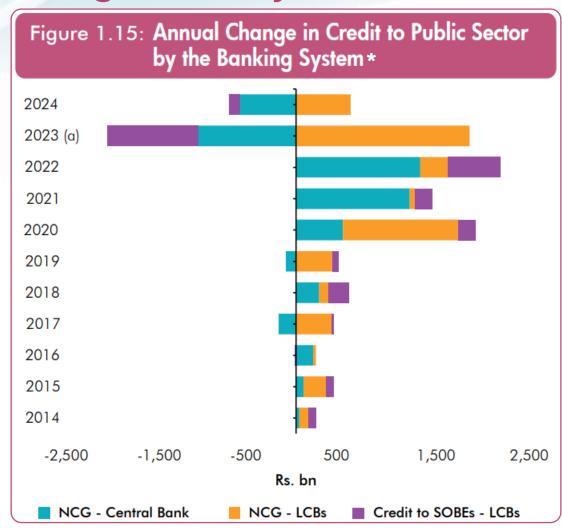
#### Credit extended to the private sector recorded a notable expansion in 2024





#### Credit expansion has been across all the key economic sectors

### The dynamics of the credit to the public sector by the banking system have changed recently



<sup>\*</sup> Outstanding foreign currency debt of the CPC was absorbed into the Central Government debt in 2023

NCG by the Central Bank declined notably by Rs. 602.7 bn in 2024, due to

- Offloading of Treasury bills held by the Central Bank
- Reduced reliance on the Standing Lending Facility of the Central Bank by participatory institutions

In contrast, **NCG by LCBs** recorded an **increase** of **Rs. 587.8 bn** during the year

Credit to **State Owned Business Enterprises** (**SOBEs) by LCBs declined** by **Rs. 113.1 bn** in 2024,

 primarily driven by net repayments from major SOBEs amidst the improved financial performance of such entities

### The Central Bank Act (CBA) stipulates achieving and maintaining domestic price stability as the primary objective of the Central Bank



### Monetary policy framework

- ✓ Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT) with flexible exchange rate regime
- ✓ Central Bank is required to maintain quarterly headline inflation at the target of 5%



### Transparency and accountability

- ✓ Monetary Policy Board to submit a report to Parliament and make available to the public if inflation target is not met for 2 consecutive quarters
- ✓ Coordination council meets quarterly to discuss matters involving the Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance
- ✓ Publishes the Monetary Policy Report biannually

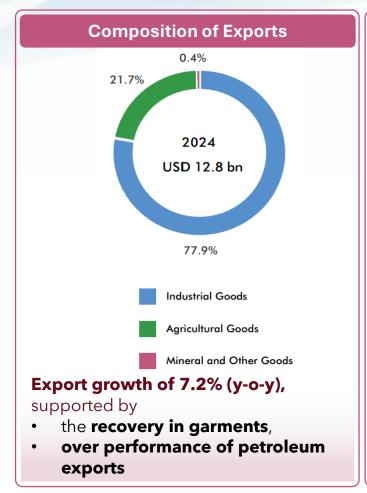


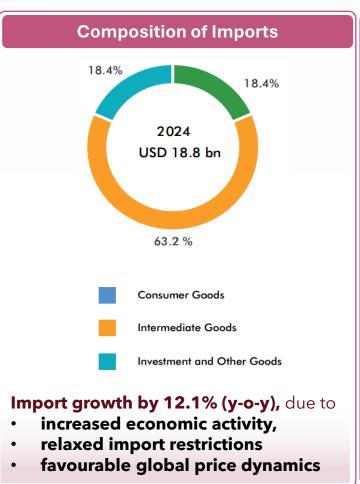
### Overnight Policy Rate (OPR)

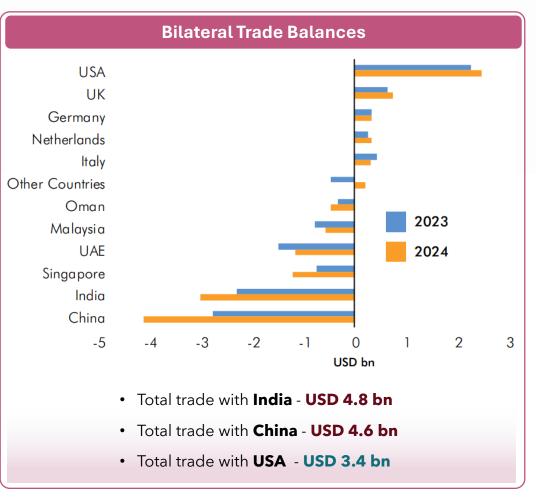
- ✓ Central Bank shifted to a single policy interest rate mechanism from its dual policy interest rate mechanism in 2024
- ✓ AWCMR continues to serve as the operating target
- ✓ At present **OPR** is8.00%

### **External Sector Performance**

### The merchandise trade deficit widened in 2024 compared to 2023, yet remained lower than recent historical averages







2024: USD 6.1 bn

2023: USD 4.9 bn

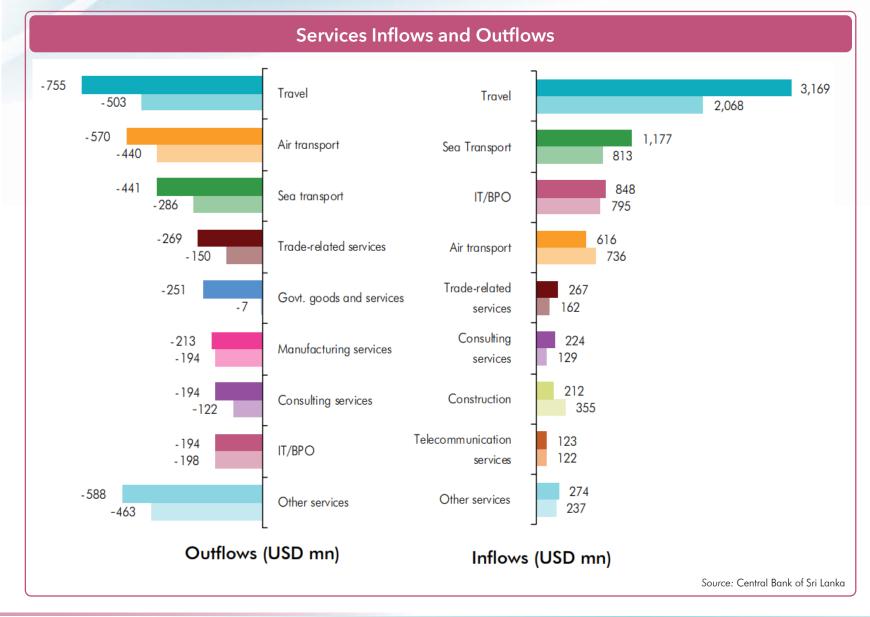
Trade Deficit

Q1 2025: USD 1.5 bn

Q1 2024: USD 1.2 bn

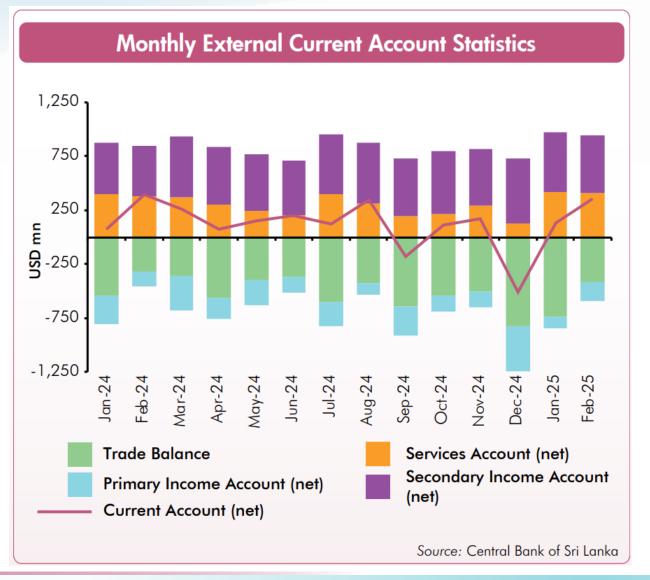


#### The services account surplus recorded a notable increase in 2024

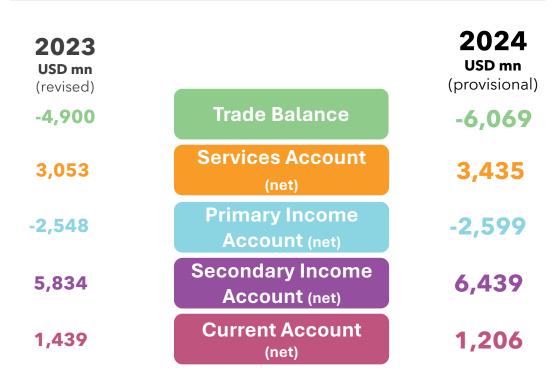


- The surplus in the services account rose to USD 3.4 bn in 2024, compared to USD 3.1 bn in 2023
- This growth was driven by strong inflows to key services sectors, including tourism, sea transport, and computer and information technology (IT)/business process outsourcing (BPO) sectors
- The tourism sector continued its momentum further by recording
   2.05 mn tourist arrivals in 2024, compared to arrivals of 1.49 mn recorded in 2023
- Earnings from tourism in 2024 are
   estimated at USD 3.2 bn, compared
   to USD 2.1 bn in 2023, recording a
   y-o-y growth of 53.2%

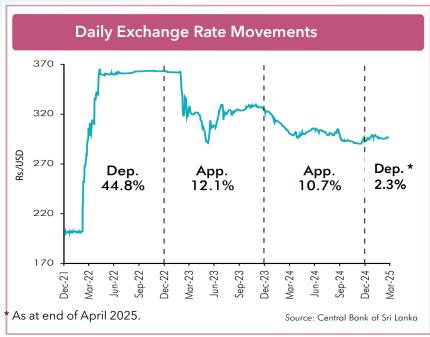
### The external current account recorded a sizeable surplus in 2024 for the second consecutive year

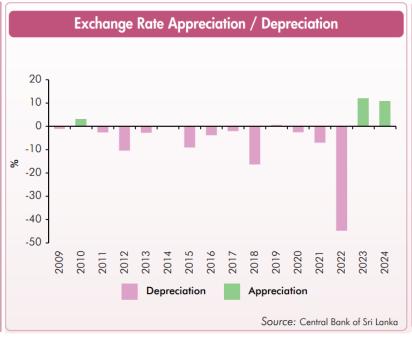


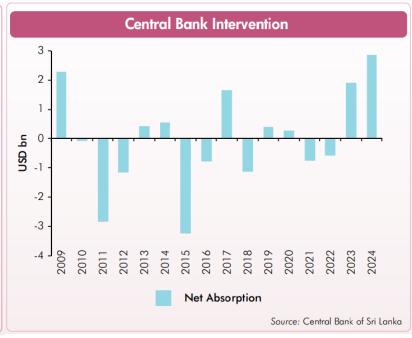
### Current account recorded a surplus of USD 1.2 bn in 2024



### The exchange rate recorded an appreciation for the second consecutive year despite intermittent volatility

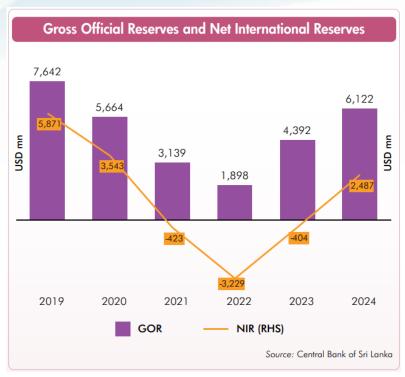


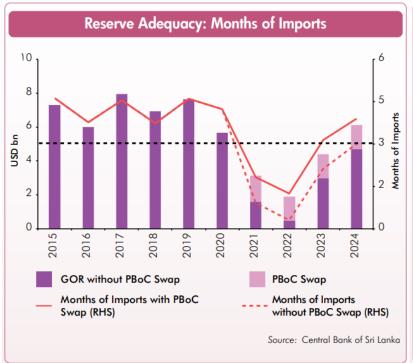


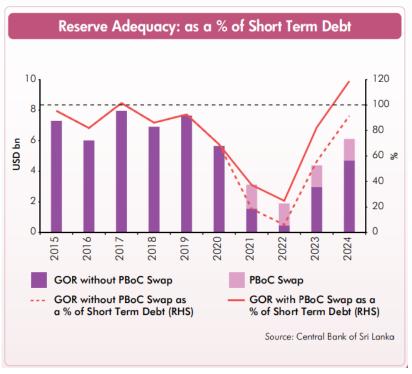


- Central Bank intervened in the domestic foreign exchange market, purchasing record levels of foreign exchange in 2024
- Both currency depreciation and appreciation have their own merits and demerits
- Under the flexible exchange rate arrangement, the exchange rate movements would be determined largely by demand and supply conditions

#### Post crisis, Gross Official Reserves (GOR) have recorded a V-shaped recovery







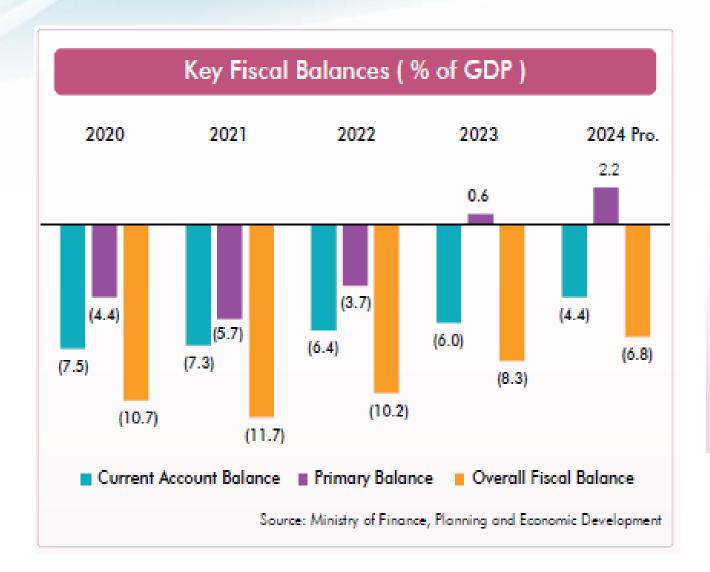
The **reserve adequacy** sharply **improved** in 2024 compared to the crisis period

#### At end April 2025 (Provisional)

- GOR = USD 6.3 bn
- Reserve Adequacy: Months of Imports = 3.9
- Reserve Adequacy: as a % of Short-Term Debt = 123% (based on short term external debt at end Dec 2024)

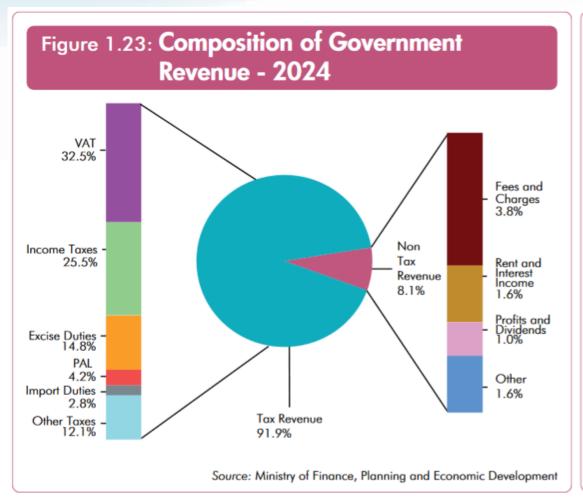
### **Fiscal Sector Performance**

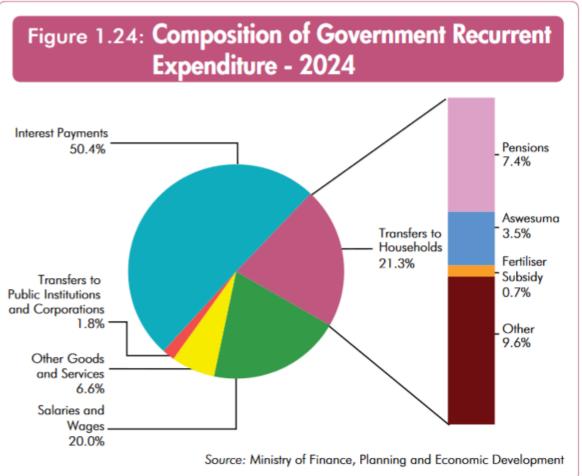
#### All fiscal balances improved notably in 2024



- Primary balance Surplus of Rs. 650 bn (2.2% of GDP)
  - Maintaining a positive primary balance is essential for fostering fiscal and debt sustainability and preserving hard-earned macroeconomic stability
- Current account Deficit declined to Rs.1,309 bn (4.4% of GDP)
- Overall budget balance Deficit declined to Rs. 2,040 bn (6.8% of GDP)

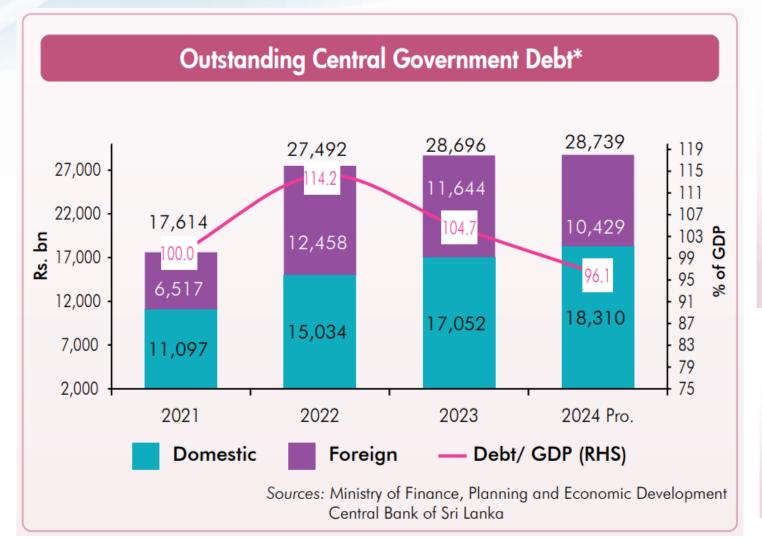
### The momentum of rigorous revenue enhancements and expenditure rationalisation measures continued in 2024





The Government revenue and recurrent expenditure grew by 32.2% and 13.6%, respectively, in 2024 (y-o-y)

#### The central government debt as a percentage of GDP improved



- Central government debt to GDP ratio declined, driven by nominal GDP growth and appreciation of the Sri Lanka rupee on foreign currency debt
- The Government continued to rely on domestic sources to finance the budget deficit
- In 2024 Sri Lanka nearly completed its debt restructuring process, ending its debt standstill status
- International rating agencies upgraded the country's sovereign credit ratings in December 2024

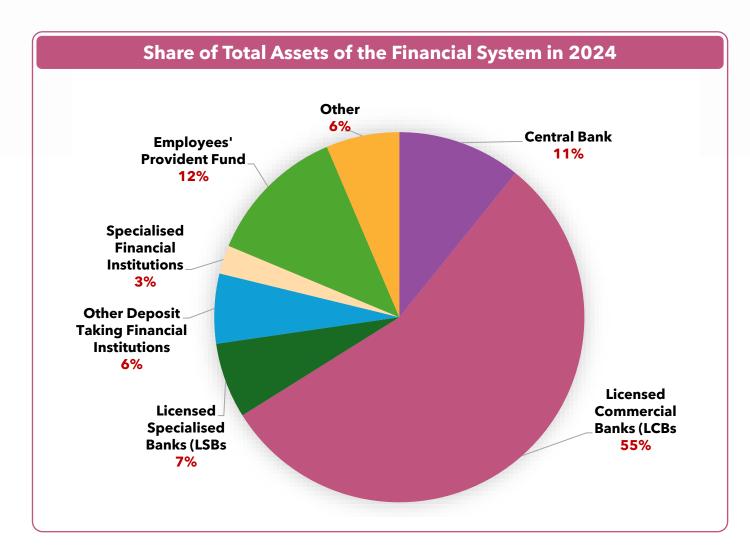


<sup>\*</sup> Please refer page 53 of AER 2024 for more information regarding outstanding central government debt compilation

### Financial Sector Policies and Performance

### The financial sector performance continued to improve in 2024, supported by improved macro financial conditions

- Banking sector stability was maintained with both capital and liquidity buffers being preserved above the regulatory thresholds, while maintaining compliance with prudential requirements
- The Finance Companies (FCs) sector also remained resilient during 2024 with adequate capital and liquidity buffers
- The financial infrastructure of the country continued to operate smoothly, facilitating stability of the financial sector



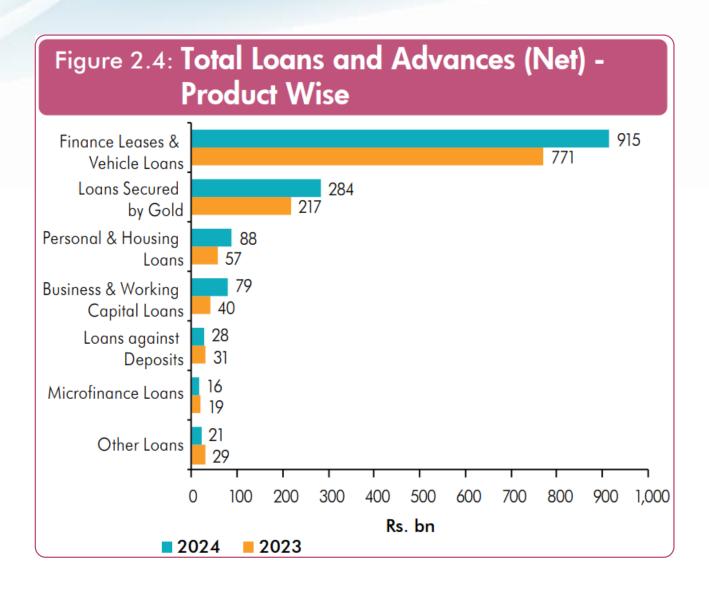
#### Banking sector continued to maintain stability

### Table 2.3: Composition of Assets and Liabilities of the Banking Sector

ltem	2023 (a)		2024 (b)		Change (%)	
	Rs. bn	Share (%)	Rs. bn	Share (%)	2023	2024
Assets						
Loans & Receivables	11,020.8	54.0	11,473.7	51.7	-2.6	4.1
Investments	7,299.9	35.8	9,083.7	41.0	23.1	24.4
Others (c)	2,073.7	10.2	1,618.2	7.3	-4.5	-22.0
Liabilities					*	
Deposits	16,630.5	81.5	17,969.4	81.0	8.7	8.1
Borrowings	1,397.4	6.9	1,280.0	5.8	-25.3	-8.4
Capital Funds	1,765.5	8.7	2,043.2	9.2	10.5	15.7
Others	601.0	2.9	883.1	4.0	-7.3	46.9
Total Assets/Liabilities	20,394.4	100.0	22,175.7	100.0	5.0	8.7

- Loans and receivables grew by 4.1% in 2024, reversing the 2.6% contraction in 2023
- Deposits of the banking sector which represented 81.0% of total liabilities and equity,
   recorded a growth during 2024
- NPL/ Stage III loans ratio of the banking sector marginally declined to 12.3% at end 2024 compared to 12.8% at end 2023
- The banking sector's profit after tax rose to Rs.
   309.7 bn, boosting Return on Assets (ROA) and Return on Equity (ROE) to 2.6% and 15.6%, respectively

#### Finance Companies recorded a significant expansion in 2024



- Loans & advances grew by 22.8% in 2024
- Credit quality improved as the Gross NPL ratio fell to 11.3%
- Liquidity level of finance companies remained well above the stipulated minimum
- Profit after tax rose to Rs. 59.7 bn

### Legal and regulatory frameworks of the financial sector were further strengthened in 2024

- Enactment of the Banking (Amendment) Act in 2024, was a milestone in strengthening the legal framework, governing the licensed banks
- Enhanced macroprudential surveillance by the Central Bank to identify potential systemic risks and strengthen financial stability
- Introduction of a range of regulatory measures on risk management and corporate governance
- Establishment of Business revival units in Licensed Banks to support MSMEs
- Continuation of efforts to enhance financial literacy, promote financial inclusion, and foster digital transformation in the financial sector
- Gradual assignment of Public debt management functions carried out by the Central Bank to the new Public Debt Management Office (PDMO)



#### PARLIAMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA

BANKING (AMENDMENT) ACT, No. 24 OF 2024



CENTRAL BANK OF SRI LANKA

28 March 2024

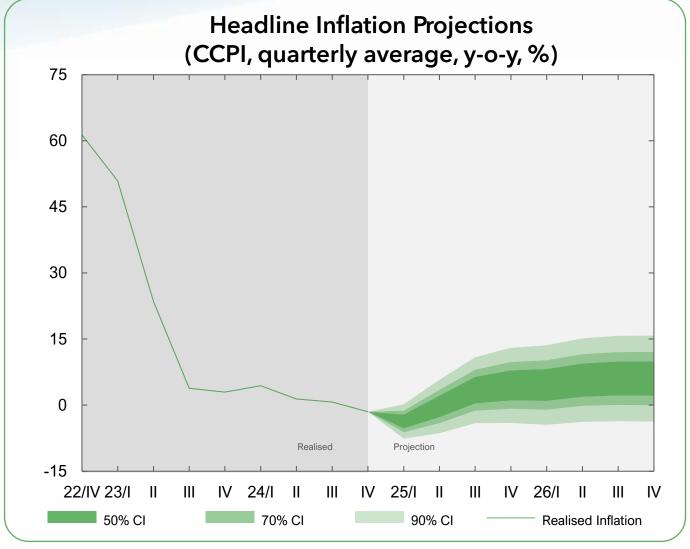
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GUIDELINES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BUSINESS REVIVAL UNITS IN LICENSED BANKS

### Macroeconomic Outlook

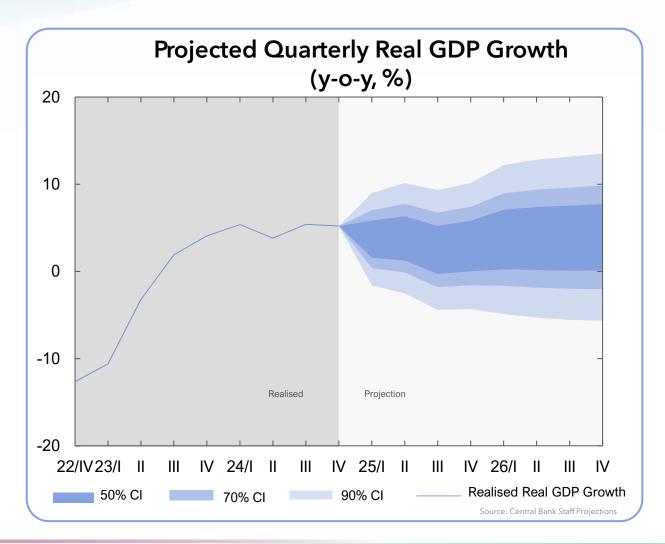
### Inflation is projected to turn positive by mid-2025 and stabilise around the 5% target over the medium term



The Central Bank's independence and greater transparency & public accountability in monetary policy making would be instrumental in maintaining price stability

Source: Central Bank Staff Projections

# With the restoration of macroeconomic stability, the Sri Lankan economy is expected to maintain its positive growth momentum over the medium term



Though possible headwinds from the global economy could weigh on the economic outlook, timely proactive and reactive policy measures are expected soften any adverse impact

#### **Macroeconomic Outlook**

#### Monetary

- The Central Bank will continue to adopt a data-driven approach to monetary policymaking
- Yields on government securities to remain normalised and domestic market interest rates to remain stable at low levels
- Expansionary momentum in credit to the private sector by the banking sector to continue

#### **External**

- Trade deficit is expected to remain at manageable levels in the medium term
- Services account is anticipated to strengthen further while primary income deficit is likely to narrow in 2025
- Workers' remittances are expected to increase steadily in 2025 though lower growth in Middle Eastern economies due to low oil prices could impact remittances in the medium term
- External sector stability is expected to be bolstered by maintaining a market-determined exchange rate and building reserves

#### **Financial**

- The **resilience of the financial sector is expected to strengthen** further in 2025, with macroeconomic recovery, policy actions, and reforms
- Exposures of banks to State-Owned Enterprises would gradually reduce
- AML/CFT framework will be strengthened in preparation of the third Mutual Evaluation (ME) in 2026

#### Post-publication updates on the US tariff changes

No formal announcement on reciprocal tariff of the US was made at the time of finalising this Report

Channels through which the **possible increase in tariffs could affect Sri Lanka were briefly discussed** in the Report

Reciprocal tariff of **44%** applicable on Sri Lanka's exports to the US was announced on 02 April 2025 and came to effect on 09 April 2025. Subsequently, **this high tariff was paused for 3 months**. Accordingly, **the universal tariff of 10% is currently applicable to Sri Lanka** 

Sri Lanka commenced negotiations with the US authorities. First round of negotiation between Sri Lanka and US authorities already happened and the negotiations continue

Positive signs are emerging lately on easing trade uncertainties

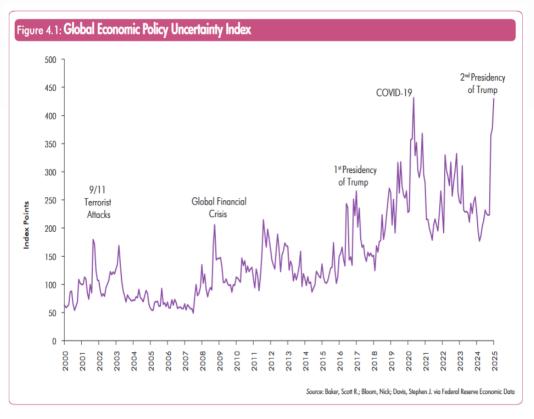
## Impact of the US tariff changes to the global economy is expected to be high

#### **Growth and Trade**

- The IMF projects global economic growth to slowdown to 2.8% in 2025
- The WTO has reduced the global merchandise trade volume projection for 2025 to -0.2%
- Increased trade
   uncertainty and global
   fragmentation may lower
   investment, reduce
   market efficiency, distort
   trade flows, and disrupt
   supply chains

## **Inflation and Monetary Policy Normalisation**

- Uncertain inflationary impact of Tariffs
- Monetary policy implications may be determined by the country specific implications
- Consequences of Higherfor-Longer Interest Rates
  - Increased fiscal, financial & external risks
  - Shifts in capital flows & global imbalances
  - Tightened global financial conditions

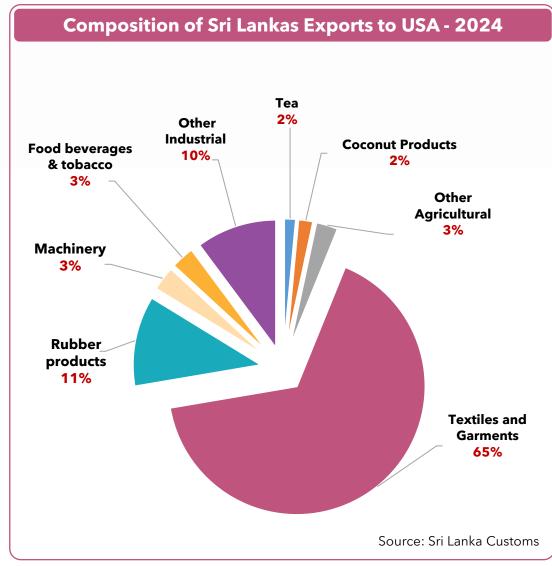


Note: The index value has increased further up to 543 index points by March 2025

## Sri Lanka's exports could have negative implications due to their high exposure to the US market

Trade between Sri Lanka and the USA (USD mn)								
	2017*	2018*	2019*	2020*	2021	2022	2023	2024
Exports	2,909	3,085	3,141	2,500	3,108	3,321	2,769	2,911
Share of Exports %	25.6	25.9	26.3	24.9	24.9	25.3	23.2	22.8
Imports	492	519	542	495	511	378	504	443
Share of Imports %	2.3	2.3	2.7	3.1	2.5	2.1	3.0	2.4
Trade Balance with the US	2,417	2,566	2,600	2,006	2,597	2,942	2,265	2,468
* Period of President Trump Presidency								

Export sectors such as **garments, textile articles, rubber products, coconut products, iron and steel articles, toys**, etc. could be at risk due to high exposure to the US market



### **Concluding Remarks**

The economic downturn, the hardships that the citizens have undergone during the recent crisis, and the accumulated economic vulnerabilities offer no room for further policy errors

Sri Lanka's economic prosperity in the period ahead will largely hinge on the preservation of hard-earned macroeconomic stability and the implementation of appropriate growth-oriented reforms

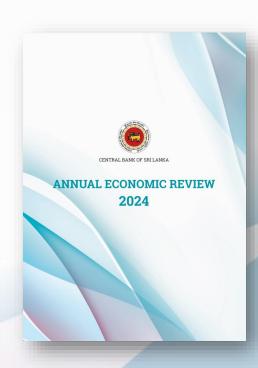
## TO-DO LIST for the country's progress towards sustained stability and long-term economic growth

- Unwavering commitment to the ongoing macroeconomic adjustment and growth-enhancing structural reform
- Continued prudence in policymaking and further strengthening of external and fiscal buffers
- Improving the performance and resilience of the external sector
- Embrace foreign investments in productive and foreign exchange-generating sectors
- Assuring a fair and secure business environment for investors
- Structural economic transformation, particularly through **technology adoption, digital inclusiveness** and skill enhancement
- Fostering **private sector participation** through consistent policies, legal, regulatory & institutional support

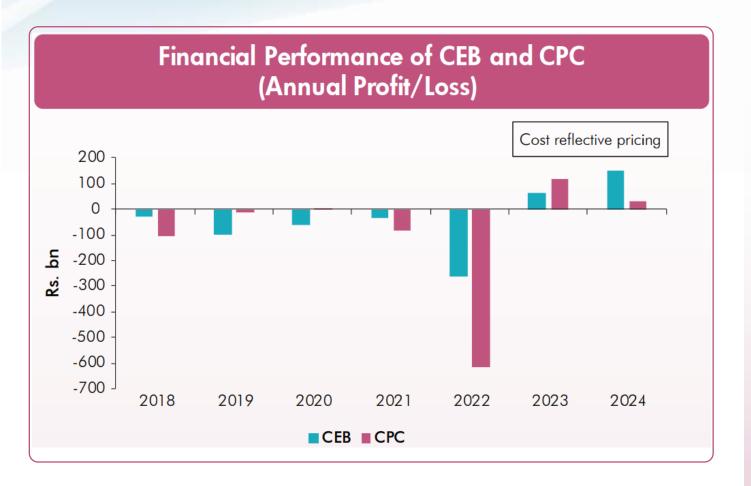
### **Featured Charts**

#### **Featured Charts**

- 1.1. Trends in Domestic Fuel Sales and Prices
- 1.2. Importance of Cost Reflective Pricing for Utilities
- **1.3. Monthly External Current Account Statistics**
- 1.4. Financing of the Pre-Crisis Current Account Deficit and Post-Crisis Dynamics of the Financial Account
- 1.5. Improving Sri Lanka's Reserve Adequacy Indicators
- 1.6. Post-Crisis Turnaround of International Reserves
- 1.7. Exchange Rate Dynamics Under the Flexible Exchange Rate
- 1.8. Government Revenue, Expenditure and Key Fiscal Balances

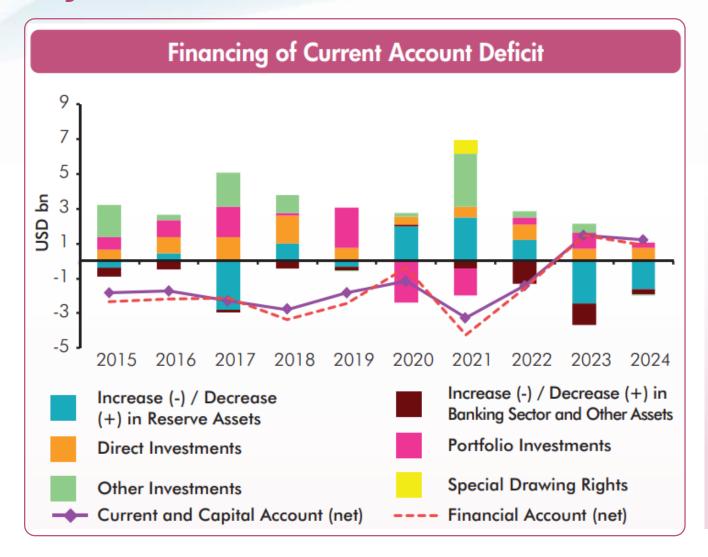


#### Importance of Cost Reflective Pricing for Utilities



- Sri Lanka's untargeted utility subsidies strained state finances and crowded out investments
- Though untargeted energy subsidies
   provided short term reliefs to the public
   and businesses, ultimately, they had to
   bear accumulated cost later in the form
   of high prices for energy, taxes and overall
   inflation
- Deviation from the cost reflective pricing mechanism for utilities is not beneficial for the Government or businesses or the public in the long run

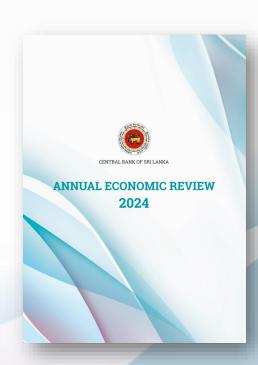
# Financing of the Pre-Crisis Current Account Deficit and Post-Crisis Dynamics of the Financial Account



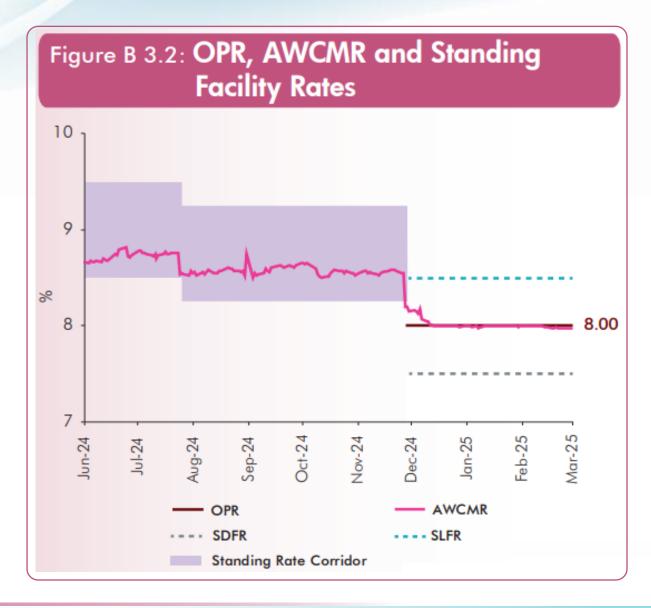
- Prior to the crisis, Sri Lanka's current account deficits were largely financed through foreign loans and investments
- But declining inflows from 2020 to 2022 led to significant reserve drawdowns
- Post-crisis external sector stabilisation led to surpluses in 2023 and 2024, contributing to reserve accumulation and strengthening the banking sector's foreign assets

#### **Box Articles**

- 1. Refining External Sector Statistics: Key Insights on Services Trade
- 2. Recent Banking Sector Reforms to Strengthen Resilience
- 3. Transition to a Single Policy Interest Rate Mechanism
- **4. Monetary Policy Accountability and Inflation Targets**



#### Transition to a Single Policy Interest Rate Mechanism



The Central Bank introduced the Overnight Policy Rate as the primary monetary policy tool for signalling and implementing its monetary policy stance

#### This would,

- ✓ simplify monetary policy communication
- ✓ enhance the efficiency of monetary policy transmission
- ✓ lower the uncertainty in policy direction
- ✓ facilitate informed decision making with greater confidence
- ✓ help accurately price financial products

#### Refining External Sector Statistics: Key Insights on Services Trade

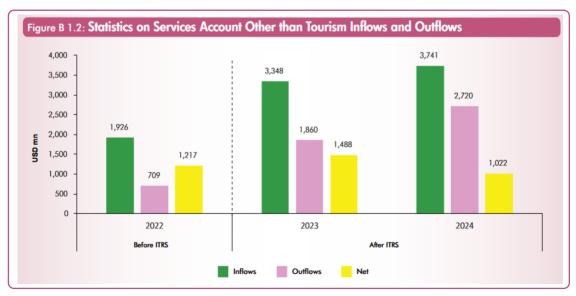
The Central Bank developed the International Transactions Reporting System (ITRS) to enhance the accuracy and granularity of external sector statistics

The **ITRS** collects and classifies **cross-border transactions** based on actual foreign exchange inflows and outflows reported in the banking system

The ITRS enabled the Central Bank to report monthly services trade statistics

More frequent and accurate reporting of current account statistics offers valuable insights for policymakers





### More Data for Annual Economic Review 2024 is accessible through the Central Bank website

Scan the QR code to access the full report...



# Thank you!

#### **Annex**

AWDR	:	Average Weighted Deposit Rate
AWFDR	:	Average Weighted Fixed Deposit Rate
AWNDR	:	Average Weighted New Deposit Rate
AWNFDR	:	Average Weighted New Fixed Deposit Rate
AWPR	:	Average Weighted Prime Lending Rate
AWLR	:	Average Weighted Lending Rate
AWNLR	:	Average Weighted New Lending Rate
AWNSR	:	Average Weighted New SME Lending Rate
AWSR	:	Average Weighted SME Lending Rate
AWCMR	:	Average Weighted Call Money Rate
СВА	:	Central Bank of Sri Lanka Act
OPR	:	Overnight Policy Rate
РВОС	:	The People's Bank of China
SDFR	:	Standing Deposit Facility Rate
SLFR	:	Standing Lending Facility Rate