Sri Lanka Cricket What It Comes Down To…

With the successful conclusion of the first ever Sri Lanka Premier League, Nishantha Ranatunga, Honorary Secretary of
Sri Lanka Cricket shares his thoughts on the tournament's influence particularly with the many opportunities it presents for the industry and the country at large.

Compiled by Sonali Kadurugamuwa

According to Nishantha Ranatunga, Honorary Secretary, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), "the objective behind the concept of a Premier League is that it's a good opportunity for the younger generation of cricketers to showcase their talents and get into the national team, through a faster than usual track." He continues to explain, that since most upcoming youngsters in Sri Lanka would not normally get many opportunities to play at such high international standards, events like the Sri Lanka Premier League therefore give younger cricketers the chance to play against and alongside seasoned overseas cricketers and learn from the highly experienced international coaches as well. He believes that the national team is well looked after however, Ranatunga stresses that there is a "gap that we need to bridge" between the under-19 and the national team, where finding talented players is a task at hand.

Elaborating on the impact Premier League cricket has on Sri Lanka, Ranatunga throws light on two positive aspects, the first being the advantages cricketers gain in terms of knowledge of the game as a whole and secondly the personal experience gained from a commercial standpoint, where they are compensated reasonably well for their participation and the opportunity of getting invited to participate in other international leagues is always aspiring. He also adds that, in the process of franchising the seven teams, SLC and effectively its subsidiaries/member districts have benefitted tremendously. "We received over

three million US dollars for less than thirty days of cricket which means a great deal for our future plans regarding the development of the game at the grassroots level thereby giving more and more youngsters the opportunity of looking at this sport as a full time profession. The selection of young cricketers like Akila Dananjaya and Dilshan Munaweera into the national team shall provide inspiration to many young cricketers." Even the stadiums, he says, were built for the same purpose, besides practices of various kinds, to expose local talent at international cricketing levels, and also for spectators from all over the world to see local and international interaction on the cricket field.

While the whole of the Island is benefitted through SLPL, "it also profits the country well at Provincial levels" mentions Ranatunga. He claims that it is the Province that benefits, ultimately through events such as these. "Provinces are very keen," he observes, "to try and develop the Provincial level cricket so that the schools, clubs, Districts in that Province, with recognition, will benefit through these commercial incomes."

As an additional part of Sri Lanka's boom in tourism, SLPL is one event that brings about a new creation of socio-economic highs. With SLC's commitment to cricket in international forums, the country's economy sees added value not in just the game of cricket but in the spectacles within the country it's being played. "Starting from the hotel owners, the transportation and logistical arrangements, to the additional advantage that this tournament was shown in close to 80 countries, on ESPN and various other networks in different parts of the globe, gives an opportunity for the country as an economic and tourism hub, for people to come and invest here and also spend their holidays in Sri Lanka," says Ranatunga.

To ensure that the game of cricket is played in an extremely plausible manner "we handed over the monitoring and managing of anti corruption and anti doping matters to the International Cricket Council." Ranatunga strongly deems that the people of Sri Lanka uphold the game of cricket as a part of their life, hence, "we should promote tournaments like this in other outstation areas, for example, Kurunegala, Badulla, Dambulla or even the SSC grounds. If we can take the game to those areas, it will add a lot of value, not forgetting the North and East. By committing ourselves to this we can anticipate the development and responsibility to build loyalty and furtherance of our fan base."