

20 Years of INTERNET

IN SRI LANKA 1995 - 2015

08th June 2015

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Pre-Internet Category

R B Ekanayake



Dr. Ekanayaka (known as RB) was educated at Trinity College and graduated from the University of Ceylon. RB was involved in setting up automated banking in Sampath Bank which introduced the country's first multi-location ATM network and introduced the concept of uni-banking, allowing people to access their accounts from any branch. He then moved to Commercial bank to automate the entire branch network numbering 50-60. After retirement he once again assisted Bank of Ceylon to complete the automation where he connected all the branches numbering approximately 300 to the central system in Colombo. He introduced LEAP which combined networks of the Bank of Ceylon and Sampath Bank so that customers of either bank could use the ATMs of the other.

Radley Dissanayake



Radley Dissanayake was one of those who did the heavy lifting of the implementation of the telecom reforms in Sri Lanka that was necessary for the unqualified success it sees today. He worked as an expert at the Office of the Director General of Telecommunication. He was a deeply involved in critical reform actions being taken at that time, including the issuance of licenses to Sri Lanka Telecom and the private operators. The licenses that were issued in that first phase constituted the foundation of today's competitive telecom market.

Siri Samarakkody



Siri was educated at Royal College Colombo and was the secretary of the school Radio club in 1972/3. During his time in the Radio club, the members built their own equipment including an Amateur (Ham) Radio mainly using vacuum tubes. In his opinion ham radio was where the internet was born. For his tertiary education he went to UK where he obtained an Honours degree in Electronic Engineering and worked at IBM (UK) designing Logic circuits and microcode. In 1980 he returned to Sri Lanka and started Esjay Electronics with electrical engineer Mr K Omprasadham. Around 1987 he was one of 4 local investors who started Celltel along with a Swedish company. As the CEO he was responsible for the technical aspects and initial licensing. He was also one of the founders of Lanka Internet. He is currently the chairman of Esjay Electronics.

Lalith Seneviratne



Lalith Seneviratne joined the Telecommunications Department (presently SLT) in 1982 as an engineer deploying the first software controlled digital telephone exchanges outside Europe and North America. In 1988, he became the CTO of Celltel, South Asia's first mobile operator, being a member of the team who worked for the granting of the country's first private telecommunications operator licence. Later, Lalith joined Motorola Corporation and moved to Singapore where he managed the rollout of many of the region's first mobile networks including the world's first fixed wireless telephone system for SLT. Since leaving Motorola he was the advisor to the Chinese telecommunications manufacturer ZTE and helped to set up its operations in Sri Lanka. He is a Chartered Engineer and a Member of the Institution of Engineering & Technology.

Dumindra Ratnayaka



Dumindra Ratnayaka is currently Chairman and Senior Consultant of Martin & George (Pvt) Limited. Prior to setting up Martin & George, Dumindra was a Board Director and Chief Executive Officer of Etisalat Lanka (Pvt) limited, the pioneering mobile telecommunications network in Sri Lanka. Dumindra also served as the Vice President of the American Chamber of Commerce during the years 2002 and 2003 and is a graduate from the University of Moratuwa in Sri Lanka, with a 1st class degree in Electronics and Telecommunications.

B.A.C. Abeywardana



B. A. C. Abeywardana, or Abey as he is better known is the founder and the driving force of Electroteks. He started his career at Sri Lanka Telecom upon graduation from University of Peradeniya, where he rose to the rank of Chief Engineer. Abey subsequently founded Electroteks which started out in 1983. Electroteks pioneered radio link based automation of banking when in 1988 they linked three branches of Sampath Bank via radio links, as a pilot project. The success of the project initiated a process of banking automation via ATMs & teller terminals - one of the first in South Asia.

Rohith Udalagama



Rohith is currently Managing Director of Lanka Communication Services (LankaCom) Sri Lanka , where he has been employed since 1992. LankaCom is a subsidiary of Singapore Telecom and is a leading provider of Internet and DataCom services to corporates/enterprises in Sri Lanka. It was awarded the first License after liberalization of the Telecom Sector in 1991 and commenced our X.25 network under the brand DataNet in April 1992. During the same year they started providing Digital data services via wireless links domestically and via Satellite internationally. During the early days they provided connectivity to Bitnet and other similar networks via our X.25 services and started offering direct internet services in 1996.

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Internet Inception Category

Sampath Ranpatige



Sampath Ranpatige after having gained his secondary education at Ananda College Colombo and went on to get a BSc Eng with 1st Class Honours in Electronic and Telecommunications Engineering from the University of Moratuwa. He was a Project Consultant and General Manager of Engineering in Lanka Internet Services Limited (LISL). One of the most significant projects that he was involved in was the design and installation of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and Data Point of Presence for Lanka Internet Services Limited in New York and in United Kingdom. This valuable project enabled Sri Lanka to be connected to the internet.

Prof. Abhaya Induruwa



Professor Abhaya Induruwa pioneered academic and research networking and Internet deployment in Sri Lanka. In 1989 he proposed the setting up of the Lanka Experimental Academic & Research Network (LEARN). With limited resources he introduced LEARNmail in 1990, deployed LEARN in 1993 and established Internet connectivity in 1995.

He graduated from the University of Moratuwa and earned a PhD from Imperial College London. He founded the CSE Department at the University of Moratuwa in 1985 and served as the head of that department until 1998. Prof. Induruwa was inducted to the Internet Hall of Fame 2014.

Clement Adams



After receiving his BSc (Eng) Electronics and Telecommunication from University of Moratuwa, Clement was part of the JICA project to uplift the computer facilities in the University from technical specification preparation to implementation and also in the installation of Novell server in the University. In 1991 he became involved in setting up and managing the first Sri Lankan email network which connect several universities, research institutes in Sri Lanka and providing gateway access to INTERNET. He worked as the Postmaster of this email network which was the start phase of the LEARN network.

In his position as the IT Manager in UNDP he handled many projects including the design and implementation of entire UNDP office network where the first Fibre-optic local area network was implemented in Sri Lanka.

Dr. Shantha Fernando



Dr. Shantha Fernando played a pioneering role in enabling the use of Internet based e-mail in Sri Lanka. He modified the source code of then popular mail server software, i.e., sendmail, by modifying the e-mail transfer protocol to include floppy disks as the media. He also worked on gateways for transforming Internet based e-mails to fax, e-mail billing information processing at server side, and integrated client software for e-mail and USENET News Groups. When the fully on-line Internet was introduced to Sri Lanka, he implemented mail servers, proxy servers, firewalls, authentication systems, dial-in servers and secure IT infrastructure for several ISPs. He is one of the pioneering members of LK Domain Registry.

Channa de Silva



Channa was the engineer responsible in establishing the first-ever dedicated Internet connection to Sri Lanka in May 1995 on behalf of Lanka Internet. He was also the first-ever web master for Sri Lanka by creating the first e-commerce portal (<http://www.lanka.net/>) in 1994. Other major projects that were implemented under his supervision were 1st newspaper online (Daily News), 1st radio station on-line (TNL Radio), International IP Telephony Network, State-of-the-art NOC, Wi-Fi network using spread spectrum technology, F3 standard Earth Station, Network security infrastructure and first Pre-paid Internet card system (Internet-in-a-box) etc. He obtained his MBA from the Post Graduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Jayewardenepura and BSc and MSc in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the State University of New York, USA.

Nalin Karunasinghe



Nalin Karunasinghe, Senior Lecturer at University of Moratuwa is also an Assistant Commissioner at the Inventors Commission. In 1996 when the technology was in infant stage, Nalin designed and developed the first automated Fax over IP system, fax to email, email to fax, email to pager and offline VoIP system while he was at Lanka Internet Services Ltd. At that time, LISL had only 64k Bandwidth and he had to start from scratch. He designed a power status monitoring system to send alerts, for Lanka Internet internal use in 1995 and it was the first IoT (Internet Of Things) product in Sri Lanka. Nalin graduated in 1995 with an honors degree in Electronic and Telecommunication Engineering then obtained his MEng from National University of Singapore.

Ajith Silva



Ajith graduated from University of Peradeniya in 1982 with First class Honours in Electrical and Electrical Engineering. After which he joined the Padukka Satellite Earth of the Dept. of Telecom as an Engineer. In 1990 he became the Deputy General Manager International Transmission. As a result of the exposure Ajith received during his period in International Transmission, he was able to establish Data and Internet Services for Sri Lanka Telecom in the during 1993/1994. Subsequent to the launch of Internet and Data services units for SLT, he was instrumental in formulating the Enterprise Customer Division and management of large and government accounts in 1998. During this period Ajith was able to bring in major networks such as Schoolnet, Lanka Gov Net and Distance Education network.

Ajith Silva



Mr. P K Wickramarachi served as the Director of the Department of Telecommunications till 1991 and was the first Managing Director of Sri Lanka Telecom. He coordinated the launching of the first packet switching technology by Lanka Communications Service –**DataNet** service in 1992 linking Sri Lanka with over 60 countries. He followed up with the Data Division of the SLT in introducing SLT’s own public data networking facility with the launching of **DataPac** service in 1993 in collaboration with VSNL of India. These efforts paved the way as a platform for the introduction of E- Mail and INTERNET services initially by Lanka Internet in 1994 and by SLT in 1995. He is a Chartered Electrical Engineer and a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka and of the Institution of Engineering & Technology (IET), UK. He has served the IET Sri Lanka Network as its Chairman and also as Vice Chairman of the Asia Region Board.

M. I. Deen



M.I Deen joined Sri Lanka Telecom in 1991 in the capacity of Engineer (IT Operations) and Customer Service Development. During this tenure he was involved in setting up the first computerized customer service unit in Sri Lanka Telecom. He was instrumental in Re-architecting the SLT Internet Network to a robust and fault tolerant network, creating the service infrastructure and the security and governance framework of the SLT Internet. Thereafter he spearheaded the setting up of the first SLT ADSL roll out as pilot project within this period, including project managing a project to setup the first IPTV service for the broadband customers in Sri Lanka, giving a multitude of services such a linear TV, TSTV, and VOD. He holds degrees of BSc (Eng) Hons in Electronics, Computer and Systems Engineering, MSc in Digital Communication Systems, from Loughborough University, UK, and MBA from Postgraduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Jayawardhanapura. He is a Chartered Engineer and Chartered IT Professional, and has membership of the bodies IET (UK), IESL (Sri Lanka), BCS (UK) and MCS (Sri Lanka).

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Policy and Application Category

Prof. V K Samaranayake



Vidya Jyothi Prof. V. K. Samaranayake pioneered computing & IT development industry and usage in Sri Lanka and is considered the "Father of Information Technology" in Sri Lanka. Sam was the founder of the Department of Statistics and Computer Science and of the Institute of Computer Technology of the University of Colombo which later were merged as the University Of Colombo School Of Computing (UCSC) in 2002 of which he was the founding director.

He pioneered work on IT Policy & Law, EDI/E-Commerce, Security, Computer Awareness and IT Education. The Infotel Lanka Society through which he organised the Infotel series of exhibitions are credited with putting Sri Lanka on the IT map. Samaranayake was actively involved in the initial activities of getting Internet to Sri Lanka, and promoted setting up Internet exchanges in Sri Lanka. He led the development of the academic network in Sri Lanka under the SIDA/IT project.

Abhaya Amaradasa



Abhaya Amaradasa, a product of Royal College was the Chief Printer and Production Manager at Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited (Lake House) and was involved in deploying staff and handling operations as the content of the newspapers were first made available online. Daily News in September 1996 along with the Observer one month later were two of the first newspapers in South Asia to publish online.

Amaradasa is currently the General Manager of Lake House and also Director and Visiting Lecturer of Sri Lanka Institute of Printing (SLIOP) and Managing Editor of Business.lk Magazine.

Niranjana Meegammana



Niranjana Meegammana began his quest for localization in 1992 by creating first Sinhala font “Kandy” for Windows 3.1. He founded Kaputa.com and e-fusion in 2000 to provide local content and e-services in Sri Lanka. As a member of Sinhala Unicode Group, e-Society and CSSL, Niranjana lead the deployment of local language content, applications and e-services on internet. His innovation Shilpa Sayura e-learning system reached rural youth through Nenasala Telecentres benefitting the local community at large. Niranjana is a graduate from institute of Surveying and Mapping and BCS.

S T Nandasara



S.T. Nandasara developed the first ever national web site for Sri Lanka (www.lk). Later he joined hands with the Internet Research and Development Unit of NUS, Singapore to transform www.lk to be a multilingual national portal available in Sinhala, Tamil and English. He also served as the project coordinator for the Kothmale Community Internet Radio Project. He was a member of the Sectoral Committee on Information Technology of the Sri Lanka Standard Institute (1993-2008). Nandasara was the National Coordinator and a Member for the ISO WG2 (1997-1998), by closely working with ISO and the Unicode Consortium, he was instrumental in standardization of Sinhala scripts. Nandasara is also an alumnus of University of Colombo and holds a degree in development studies and statistics.

Harsha Wijayawardhana



Some of Harsha's very first projects were providing technical advice for connecting Sarvodaya Telecentres in early 1997 and providing Internet connectivity to Radio program, "Internet Sampath bhavithaya". He designed and established the network of Kothmale Community Radio Internet Project (KCRIP). KCR also had very first Sinhala only Web repository which was known as www.kirana.lk with content on health, agriculture etc. In 1999, he designed and several websites including www.priu.gov.lk one of the first news sites in SL and www.danuma.lk on CINTEC servers, and became its first Web master. He also set up the present network of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with 150 points with VLANs in 2000 and running of www.mfa.gov.lk. In 2005, he designed the Virtual Village Project with the funding of IDRC and this project established two telecentres in Gampaha and Hatton which explored the possibility of establishing several free Wi Fi zones in rural Sri Lanka in associations of those two telecentres.

Prof. Rohan Samarajiva



Professor Rohan Samarajiva is founding Chair of LIRNEasia, an ICT policy and regulation think tank active across emerging economies in South and South East Asia. Before setting up LIRNEasia, he was Team Leader at the Sri Lanka Ministry for Economic Reform, Science and Technology, and the Director General of Telecommunications. He was Honorary Professor at University of Moratuwa, Visiting Professor of Economics of Infrastructures at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands and Associate Professor of Communication and Public Policy at the Ohio State University in the US. He played a role in popularizing the Internet through the “Antharjayala Obey Nivasata” TV program in 1998-99.

K.K. Gunawardena



After completing his secondary education at St. Thomas College and tertiary education at University of Ceylon in 1963, Mr. Gunawardana was recruited by the Department of Telecommunications. After becoming the Director of Telecommunications in the early eighties he was principle in setting up the Telecommunication Act of 1991 which sought to liberalise the telecommunication sector. Mr. Gunawardana was also part of the Presidential Commission on Telecommunications in 1985 which reported on reforms and reorganization of the telecom and was central in the setting up of the SLTA. In his capacity as the 'Area expert on Network Management' and 'Area representative' of the SAARC countries and China in International Telecommunication Union (ITU) he was involved in setting up of Internet in many areas in South Asia and China.

Prof. K.K.Y.W. Perera



Vidya Jyothi Professor K.K.Y.W.Perera was the founder and Head of the Department of Electronics and Telecommunications Engineering at the University of Moratuwa and its predecessors (1969 onwards). This was the first ever Department of Electronics & Telecom Engineering in a Sri Lankan University, and was formally instituted in 1972 at the formation of the Katubedda Campus of the then University of Sri Lanka.

Professor K.K.Y.W.Perera also contributed during the formative years of Internet as the Chairman of the Computer and Information Technology Council of Sri Lanka (a statutory Board then known as CINTEC) during the period 1992 to 1993). He also served a period as the Chairman of Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT). After serving periods as the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering & Architecture, and President of the Katubedda Campus of the University of Sri Lanka, Professor K.K.Y.W.Perera is presently the Chancellor of the University of Moratuwa.

Lalith Weeratunge



Lalith Weeratunga holds a Bachelors Degree in Natural Sciences and a Masters Degree in Business Administration from the University of Colombo. He entered the Sri Lanka Administrative Service (SLAS) in January 1977 and has held a number of senior positions in the public service culminating in becoming Secretary to President of Sri Lanka in 2005, a position he held till his retirement.

Mr. Weeratunge became interested in the potential of computers and Internet in governance in the 1990s and became Director, e-Governance of the ICT Agency of Sri Lanka in 2003. He continued to pursue this agenda after becoming Secretary to the Prime Minister and later, Secretary to President as he enabled the pervasive use of computers and communication in the public service, and the use of the web for delivery of public services, through the government web portals, www.gov.lk and gic.gov.lk (1919).