

VIEWPOINT

Sri Lanka: putting entrepreneurship at the heart of economic revival in the north, east, and beyond

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Economic growth at the national level in Sri Lanka in the past few years has been largely state-led. Similarly, economic growth in the formerly civil war-affected northern province has also been largely state-led (including mushrooming military enterprises) during the past two years after the end of the civil war. This author is of the view that individual and corporate entrepreneur-led growth strategy is the appropriate strategy to revive the national economy and the formerly war-torn regional economies. Moreover, current military peace should be transformed into civil peace in the former war-torn areas.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; military enterprises; military peace; post-war economy; Sri Lanka

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is about putting ideas into action. It is the function of scientists to invent and entrepreneurs to innovate. Whereas scientists invent (or dream of) ideas, it is the entrepreneurs who materialise those ideas into consumable products (innovation), i.e., tangible goods and intangible services. In this opinion piece I am going to spur your minds with the power of ideas as opposed to the power of numbers.

In the first four months of 2010 Sri Lanka went through the ritual of Presidential and Parliamentary elections. As usual, Sri Lankan politicians have outperformed each other with facts and figures about what a marvellous country we live in (or lack thereof) and how they are going to make Sri Lanka an even better place to live in. For both the governing party as well as the main opposition party economic development would be the heart of government. I have no disagreement with putting development at the heart of government. My disagreement is with the ways and means of spurring economic development that were propounded by both the main political parties in the country in the aftermath of the civil war.

It is not only the government (politicians as well as bureaucrats) that lacks innovative ideas to unleash the full potential of the Sri Lankan people; our development partners (bilateral and multilateral donors) and non-governmental organisations as well lack innovative ideas to rebuild a war-torn economy by learning from the experiences of other countries that have undergone such a phase.

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