

Sri Lanka – Key Data

Introduction of Buddhism

In 247 BC the monk Mahinda, son of the Indian ruler Ashoka, came to Sri Lanka to spread Buddhism. He met King Devanampia Tissa of Anuradhapura on the Missaka mountain and through conversation he was converted to Buddhism. Since about 200 BC Buddhism became state religion of the Kingdom Anuradhapura.

Late Antiquity and Middle Age

From 6th century BC to the 11th century AD Anuradhapura was the first capital of the Singhalese Kingdom. Until 14th century AD the capitals changed frequently i.e. Polonnaruwa and Sigiriya. Since 13th century AD there also was a Tamil kingdom with the capital Jaffna.

Colonial period

Sri Lanka was taken over several times by colonial powers like Portugal, Netherlands and United Kingdom. In the beginning only the costal areas could be conquered. The kingdom of Kandy which lies in the Highlands was able to maintain its position a long time. In the year 1815 Kandy also came under the British rule. 1796 the British rule started and 1803 Ceylon became crown colony.

Independence

On 4th February 1948 Ceylon became independent within the British Commonwealth. On 22nd May 1972 the country became a republic called Sri Lanka.

Civil War

From 1983 onwards there was a long lasting civil war in which Tamil separatists fought for their independence in the north-eastern regions of the country. In 2009 the conflict was ended with a military victory of the Srilankan government troops.

Economy

- Export goods:
- Tourism
- Tea
- Textilies/clothing
- Gems
- Coconut products

In the 19th and 20th century the plantation economy dominated. Cinnamon, rubber and tea has been planted. Between 1948 and 1977 the economy policy was determined by socialism, the plantation economy gave way to the nationalization of industrial facilities. After this the way of economy became inefficient and loss-making. For this reason the government decided 1977 to promote the private sector stronger.

Due to several factors Sri Lanka was effected by a severe economic crisis that peaked in 2021 and 2022. This was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In March 2023 the IMF confirmed an aid program of around 3 USD billion. If the economic situation will continue to stabilize, 2024 should be a slight growth.