

# Sri Lanka: politically connected businessmen manipulate rice prices

Group of Four affiliated to SLPP manipulates paddy prices, says DEW

Friday 15 April 2022, by [FERDINANDO Shamindra](#) (Date first published: 16 February 2022).

## Weerasumana warns of fresh youth unrest

Former Minister DEW Gunasekera has alleged that the four major millers representing the interests of the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) decides the price of rice, according to the Communist Party organ, *Aththa* (13 Feb).

DEW Gunalasekera last represented Parliament on the UPFA National List in 2015.

Addressing the Matara District Convention of the Communist Party recently, the one-time General Secretary of the party Gunasekera explained how the group of four bought about 46 percent of the total paddy production, hoarded and then released the stocks to the market a year later, thereby retaining the capability to decide the market prices.

The veteran politician said that the public were aware of the real reason for the crisis in the market due to manipulation of the market.

The Cabinet of Ministers on 27 Sept. last year removed the price controls imposed on rice, rescinding the previously issued Gazette Notification on maximum retail and wholesale prices of rice.

The former lawmaker, who had led the Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) investigation into the Treasury bond scams perpetrated in 2015 February, told the CP gathering that corruption could never be eliminated. However, waste, corruption and irregularities could be controlled, the ex-MP said, underscoring the failure on the part of those responsible to correctly identify the daunting challenges faced by the country.

Pointing out the economic crisis experienced by the US economy, the former minister emphasised that both the US and Sri Lanka printed money excessively though our currency wasn't acceptable for international trade.

Gunasekera stressed that the national economy was in bad shape as a result of the preparation of fiscal policies by successive governments to suit new-liberal strategies. Declaring the current crisis as the worst ever since the country gained independence over seven decades ago, Gunasekera advised the government that the overwhelming crisis couldn't be resolved by printing money.

According to available official records the government during 2021 has printed a staggering Rs 678.33 bn.

Gunasekera urged the government to take tangible measures to enhance government revenue or

face the consequences. The CP veteran recalled the relevance of the economic proposals once proposed by Dr. S. A. Wickremesinghe. The former Minister regretted that the crisis hasn't resulted in a wider discussion involving all stakeholders as well as the public.

CP member Weerasumana Weerasinghe said that their party, too, was responsible for exploring ways and means of addressing current challenges.

Matara District MP Weerasinghe said that the country paid a huge price for wrong economic policies pursued by successive governments. The CP contested the last general election on the SLPP ticket. However, the CP could win only one seat whereas the promised National List was not given.

Pointing out that the growing unemployment posed quite a threat, lawmaker Weerasinghe said that the Matara district was the worst affected. Emphasising the urgent need to address the issues at hand, MP Weerasinghe said that the failure on the part of those responsible to address unemployment could create a dangerous situation. Referring to JVP-led insurgencies in 1971 and 1987-1990, MP Weerasinghe stressed the need to address the grievances of the youth.

When *The Island* asked ex-Minister Gunasekera whether he could name those who fixed the market prices of rice, he said there were two Polonnartuwa-based businessmen, in addition to Dudley Sirisena and State Minister Siripala Gamlath.

Gunasekera alleged that the government has caused a catastrophic situation by taking hasty decisions on matters of importance. The ban on fertiliser and agro chemicals was a glaring example of bad decision making, the former CP General Secretary said.

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