

Palmyrah – A Rising Pillar of Sri Lanka’s Rural Economy

The Palmyrah Development Board (PDB), originally operating under the Ministry of Plantations and Community Infrastructure, was constituted through the Gazette Notification of 18 August 1978 in accordance with Amendment No.24 of 1975 to the Sri Lanka Coconut Development Act No.46 of 1971. Since its inception, the Board has carried the national mandate of nurturing, expanding and commercializing the Palmyrah sector — an industry deeply rooted in the livelihood, heritage and socio-cultural history of Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka.

The PDB strives to build a strong foundation for Palmyrah-based development, backed by research, technology transfer ,community empowerment ,product development, restoration of palmyrah plantations and marketing facilitation of palmyrah products.

The Palmyrah Development Board with its head office in Jaffna, carries out its activities on an island-wide basis through a network of 9 regional offices, 15 sales centers named “Katpaham”, 11 production centers, 01 Research Centre, 01 Palmyrah Arrack Distillery and 07 Palmyrah model farm. The Colombo City Office serves as the liaison office for the Regional Offices, the Ministry, the Treasury and other important institutions. This is the only Government Organization to improve the livelihood of the palmyrah community.

Palmyrah is truly a gift of nature, offering significant economic value while providing notable environmental benefits. This versatile tree yields a wide range of organic products from top to bottom, many of which possess important medicinal properties. Its growing recognition in the global market further highlights its potential as a sustainable and valuable resource for both local communities and the broader economy.

Over 7,000 families are directly employed in tapping, cultivation and raw material supply, while more than 1000 families earn through value-added products and cooperative-based productions. There are 34 palm product development co-operative societies more than 50 palmyrah based handicraft and food production groups ,nearly 75 small scale palmyrah based production industries and 50 exporters form the backbone of the industry.

Recognizing the economic potential and export capacity of Palmyrah, the Government of Sri Lanka has identified it as a priority sector for national economic development. This year, the allocated government fund of Rs. 25 million was efficiently utilized for various development projects. In addition, approximately Rs. 18 million was allocated for institutional strengthening and

infrastructural development of the Palmyrah Development Board and the Palmyrah Research Institute.

Key Development programs implemented and performance of PDB for the year 2025

1. Restoration of Palmyrah Plantation:

Following the war—during which Palmyrah trees were severely affected by shelling and widely cut down for the construction of bunkers—large numbers of trees have continued to be removed for various development activities, including housing, road expansion, electricity supply, alternative crop cultivation such as coconut, and major infrastructure projects such as wind farms. As a result, the restoration of Palmyrah plantations has become essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of the industry. Recognizing the importance of replantation, the Palmyrah Development Board has declared the month of October as the National Palmyrah Replantation Month. During this period, 300,000 Palmyrah seeds were planted with the support of Divisional Secretariats. In addition, community-based organizations, private institutions, and cooperative societies have also been encouraged to participate actively in seed planting efforts. In order to ensure the availability of quality planting material, a mother-plant selection program was also carried out, through which nearly 500 suitable Palmyrah palms were identified and documented. PDB also plays a critical role in **controlling illegal tree felling**, working closely with DS offices, GN networks and Police units to regulate cutting permits and protect mature palms.



2. Empowerment and capacity development through technology transfer training

The objective of this program is to empower rural communities by transferring the skills, technologies, and knowledge required for income-oriented Palmyrah-based industries. Under this initiative, both basic handicraft training and pulp production and preservation training were conducted. The handicraft training is a structured six-month program implemented in seven villages, with approximately 20–25 participants in each location. Trainees receive a monthly allowance of Rs.

2,000 during the training period, and upon completion, they are provided with essential handicraft tools and equipment to begin production. Additionally, training on pulp production, preservation, and value-addition techniques was conducted in six villages, with nearly 190 participants benefiting from the program. Trainees were provided direct market access through Katpaham sales outlets, offering long-term livelihood security.



3. Increase the Production and improve the quality of palmyrah products produced by PDB Production Division.

The Palmyrah Development Board (PDB) purchases Palmyrah-based raw materials from rural producers and processes them into value-added products at its model production centers. These value-added products include Palmyrah fruit pulp, crushes and jams, Odiyal and instant Odiyal flour, Pamposa, Panattu, Pannattu, biscuits, confectioneries, and desserts. In order to enhance production capacity and improve product quality, four production centers were upgraded to full operational standards, and essential industrial equipment was either purchased or repaired to



ensure efficient functioning. The total production value of PDB's production centers up to October 2025 is 43.6 MnRs.



4. Increase sales and export of palmyrah products

The Palmyrah Development Board operates 15 *Katpaham* sales outlets across the country to promote the sale of Palmyrah-based products. To further strengthen market reach, a new *Katpaham* outlet was established and opened in Uppuveli, Trincomalee, during the year. In addition, franchise sales centers and exhibition stalls were organized to enhance product visibility and increase sales. Alongside domestic marketing efforts, export promotion activities were also undertaken to expand the international market for Palmyrah products. As part of these initiatives, exporters'–producers' forums and exporters' meetings were organized to facilitate engagement and strengthen export potential. PDB marketing division has strengthened product branding, introduced mobile sales, supported exporters, and facilitated participation in exhibitions to enhance local and international reach.



2025 Market Performance

- Domestic revenue: **LKR 69.5 million**
- Export revenue: **LKR 569.4 million (USD 1.9 million)**
- Expanded export links to Europe, Middle East, USA, Canada, Australia & Japan

5. Strengthening of Research and Development

Palmyrah Research Institute (PRI) Located in Jaffna, the PRI functions as the national research and innovation centre for the Palmyrah industry. Its mission is to advance scientific knowledge, improve product quality, develop new technologies and support economic expansion.

2025 Achievements:

- **Five research studies** completed
- **Two technology dissemination programmes** concluded successfully
- ISO scope enhancement & quality standard expansion works completed
- Infrastructural facilities of the PRI was improved ,Provision of laboratory equipments,glasswares and chemicals facilitated the research activities and analytical works
- PRI provided 880 no laboratory test reports for the food samples of local industrialist and earn MnRs.6.0 As income.

Research-based knowledge directly contributes to new product development, value addition and export competitiveness — transforming Palmyrah into a high-growth economic commodity.

Palmyrah — An Ancient Tree Becoming an Industry of Tomorrow

From rural households to international markets, Palmyrah has emerged as a symbol of resilience, economic opportunity and national identity. With scientific development, export expansion and community empowerment at its core, the Palmyrah Development Board is steering the industry toward a future rich in prosperity — one that uplifts people, protects heritage and unlocks a new era of natural resource-based growth for Sri Lanka.