

President's Speech at the Annual Lecture and Lunch Event 2025

Opening Remarks

Good Afternoon,

Dr. Coomaraswamy, SCOT members, distinguished guests, and cherished supporters—

I am Sivakumaran, and as President of SCOT, it is both an honour and a pleasure to welcome you to our Annual Tamil New Year Lunch and Lecture for 2025.

Whether you've been with us on this journey for years or are attending for the first time, thank you for being here. Your presence speaks volumes. It is the compassion and commitment of individuals like you that enable SCOT to continue its mission—touching lives, building futures, and creating lasting change.

Today's event is a cornerstone of our calendar—not only an important fundraising occasion, but also a moment for us to come together, reflect on our impact, and look forward with hope and purpose.

It is now my privilege to introduce our distinguished guest speaker, Dr. Indrajit Coomaraswamy.

A highly respected economist, Dr. Coomaraswamy was educated at Royal College, Colombo and Harrow School, before going on to earn his BA (Hons) and MA from Cambridge University—where, incidentally, he also played first-class cricket for the university team in the early 1970s. He later completed a Doctorate at the University of Sussex.

He served as the Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka from 2016 to 2019, steering the nation through a particularly turbulent chapter in its economic history. Today, he will share his insights on *Economic Stability and Transformative Growth*—a timely and thought-provoking topic we are all eager to explore.

Reflecting on the Past Year

SCOT stands proudly as one of the long standing Tamil organisations in the United Kingdom. Our mission is clear: to uplift vulnerable Tamil-speaking communities in Sri Lanka—especially in the Northern, Eastern, and Central provinces—through focused, sustainable initiatives in **Education, Employment, and Empowerment**.

This past year has been especially meaningful. Let me share just a few highlights from our recent projects:

- **Handloom Projects – Batticaloa District**
Partnering with NGO LIFT, we funded to the tune of £8,000 new handloom machines and infrastructure in Arayampathy-Selva Nagar and Kaluwanchikudy, empowering women-headed households with vital income-generating tools.
- **Support for Vanni Hope**
We contributed £2,800 to support the education of 30 visually impaired children—or children of visually impaired parents—preparing for their A/L exams. This programme, led by individuals with lived experience, supports many families.

- **Funding for Children’s Homes**
£3,000 was allocated to support education and facility upgrades at Thilahavathiyar Mahalir Illam, Hari’s Children Home, and Vivekananda Children Home.
- **Ootru Valaiulaga Kalaignargal Mandram – Vaharai, Mutur**
In its fourth year of funding, this initiative received £2,500 to provide extra academic support to students from low-income families.
- **Nallur Drama Nights – Active Theatre Movement, Jaffna**
With a £3,300 grant, we funded creative drama sessions for youth and supported local theatre artists through steady employment opportunities.
- **Trinco Hope School for Children with Disabilities**
We funded a £3,000 auto rickshaw to overcome transport barriers, increasing school attendance and providing the school with a sustainable income stream.
- **Greenhouse Project – Batticaloa**
A £1,500 donation established a greenhouse at the Vocational Training Centre in Kumburumoolai, helping disabled youth gain hands-on agricultural training.
- **Cataract Surgeries – Kilinochchi and Batticaloa**
In collaboration with the Rotary Club of Colombo Port City, we funded 110 life-changing cataract surgeries at a cost of £4,000.
- **Pre-School Teacher Diploma Programme – Vavuniya University**
We invested £4,000 to support a 15-month diploma course to enhance the quality of early childhood education in the region.

Each of these projects is a testament to what we can achieve—together.

Call to Action

As proud as we are of these accomplishments, the need continues—and so must our work.

I invite you all to continue walking this path with us. Whether through donations, volunteering, or simply spreading awareness of our mission, your support is vital. Every act, big or small, contributes to a brighter, fairer future for those we serve.

Together, we *can* and *will* continue to create hope, opportunity, and meaningful change.

Closing Remarks

Before I close, let me extend my heartfelt thanks once again—for your presence, your support, and your belief in what we do.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the SCOT General Council members for supporting me to carry out my duties as the President.

Dr. Menaca Pothalingam, a long-standing SCOT member, accomplished dental surgeon, and leadership consultant for healthcare professionals, will guide us through today’s programme as our host.

As we share a meal today and listen to Dr. Coomaraswamy's lecture, let's reflect on of the incredible impact we make when we unite behind a common cause.

Please join me now in warmly welcoming Dr. Indrajit Coomaraswamy to the stage.

Following his address, we'll have a Q&A session. This session will be presided by our immediate past President Dr Bala Canagasabey. You'll find paper and pens on your tables—feel free to jot down your questions, which will be collected by our volunteers.

The full programme for today's event is also available on your tables.

Thank you

S. T. Sivakumaran

President, SCOT