



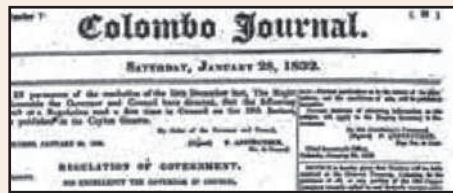
THE HISTORY OF NEWSPAPERS IN SRI LANKA



Newspaper publishing in Sri Lanka has a history of 180 years during which they have provided a mirror on society

Early days of English newspapers

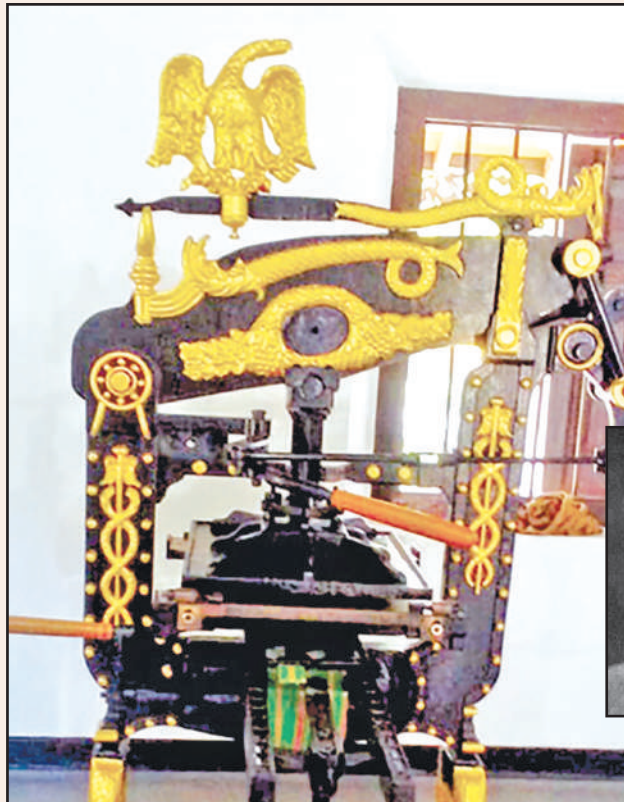
By the time the first Sinhala newspaper appeared in 1860, several English newspapers had been published in Sri Lanka. **The Colombo Journal** (1832) was the first to be launched when Robert Wilmot Horton was the Governor. It was followed by **The Observer and Commercial Advertiser** (1834). **The Ceylon Chronicle** was the next launched in May 1837, with **The Ceylon Herald** starting publication in September 1838.



A few European merchants started **The Examiner** (January 1846) which, after several changes in ownership, passed on to a syndicate of Ceylonese lawyers and its name changed to **Ceylon Examiner**. It was also regarded as the first English newspaper in the country that gave its readers news other than commercial and administrative news.

Ceylon Times came into being in July 1846, to further the interest of the mercantile community. It became the **Times of Ceylon** as an evening daily in 1883. The **Ceylon Independent** (July 1888) claimed to be the paper with the largest circulation. It was selling 3,270 copies. It continued to be published for 50 years till 1937.

While these newspapers were being published in Colombo, several newspapers appeared in the outstations. The oldest newspaper outside Colombo was the **Ceylon Freeman** founded in Jaffna in 1862. Two more weekly papers were started in Jaffna – the **Ceylon Patriot** (1863) and the **Catholic Guardian** (1876).



The Lankalokaya press in Galle

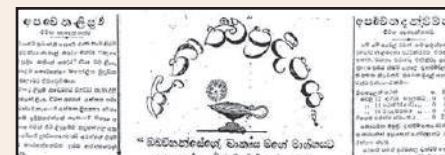
D.R. Wijewardene bought the **The Observer and Commercial Advertiser** newspaper in 1923 and it was relaunched as **The Observer** daily and **Sunday Observer** weekly.

The **Sri Lanka Gazette**, officially The Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, the **Gazette** is the oldest surviving newspaper in Sri Lanka, having been published continuously since 1802.



The first Sinhala newspaper **Lankalokaya** was published in 1860 in Galle. In 1862, **Lakmini Pahana**, the oldest registered Sinhala newspaper was published.

In 1866, the **Gnanartha Pradeepaya**, the Catholic newspaper was founded by the Catholic Priest Peter Ilari and John Fernando. It marked 150 years in 2016.



In 1909, the **Dinamina** Sinhala daily newspaper pioneered by journalist H.S. Perera, was bought by ANCL founder D.R. Wijewardene and was relaunched as a Lake House publication.

In 1917 **The Ceylonese** newspaper relaunched it as **Ceylon Daily News** (CDN). The first issue of the Daily News was printed on January 3, 1918. The centenary of the **Ceylon Daily News** was celebrated in 2018.

In 1930, the **Silumina**, Sunday Sinhala weekly, was launched by ANCL.

In 1926 the **Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited** (ANCL) was established which published seven newspapers **Dinamina**, **Silumina** (Sinhalese), **Daily News**, **the Observer**, **Sunday Observer** (English), **Thinakaran** and **Sunday Thinakaran** (Tamil). ANCL shifted its operations to a purpose-built building along the banks of the Beira Lake, which was called Lake House owned by press magnate D.R. Wijewardene.



Several weekly periodicals are also published by ANCL. Today, it is the oldest newspaper publishing group in Sri Lanka.



In 1947 **Lankadeepa** the Sinhala newspaper launched by the **Times of Ceylon** Company.

In 1961, a new Sinhala daily newspaper **Dawasa** was published by **M.D. Gunasena and Company**. The new company established to publish the newspaper was **Independent Newspapers Ltd**.

It was soon followed by a Sinhala weekly, the **Rividina** in 1960. (Its name was changed to **Riviresa** in January 1963). English newspapers – **Sun**, a daily and **Weekend**, released on Sunday.

The new major newspapers companies emerged in the country, a few decades ago such as **Wijaya Newspapers** and **Upali Newspapers**. Apart from these there are a few newly formed newspaper groups such as **Ceylon Newspapers** and **Liberty Publishers**. They publish daily, weekly and periodicals in English and Sinhala languages.