



THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA

The Colombo Fort Tunnel: Discovery, Historical Significance and its Potential for Cultural Tourism By Chamikara Pilapitiya

The Monthly Lecture Series No: 180 of the National Trust

Thursday 30th July 2026 at 6.00 pm

at the Auditorium of the College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka

No. 6, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7

(For those who join online: https://www.youtube.com/live/8rHY4_RfE2w)

In 2021, during drainage pipe-laying work carried out by the Colombo Municipal Council, an underground tunnel was discovered beneath the York Street. There after the Municipal Council officials, together with a Navy team, entered and examined the tunnel. Based on the uncovered evidence, the tunnel discovered beneath York Street appears to form part of a wider underground tunnel network extending beneath the Colombo Fort area. Colombo Fort is the historic and commercial heart of Colombo, blending centuries of colonial heritage with the modern financial center of Sri Lanka. Originally fortified by the Portuguese in the 16th century and later expanded by the Dutch and the British, the area served as a strategic military and trading hub due to its strategic location beside the harbour. Today, Colombo Fort remains home to important government institutions, historic buildings, banks, hotels, and corporate headquarters, while traces of its colonial past survive through its architecture, streets, and underground structures.



Chamikara Pilapitiya is a tea taster by profession, an author and independent researcher on Sri Lankan history, gunpowder, and firearms, with expertise in historic firearms, artillery, military tunnelling, and warcraft. He has served as an expert on historic cannons and artillery for the World Bank funded rehabilitation of the fortifications at Galle Fort and was appointed by Department of National Museums as an expert in historic firearms. He contributed to an international provenance research project in collaboration with the Rijksmuseum of the Netherlands, examining six Sri Lankan artifacts now displayed at the National Museum in Colombo. He is currently engaged in researching the newly discovered tunnel network beneath Colombo Fort.

The National Trust – Sri Lanka conducts monthly lectures generally on the last working Thursday of each month. The lectures are open to the members and the general public.

Further information can be obtained from the Trust Office Tel.0112682730/ 0719566929