



Welcome speech and Moderator



**Vice Admiral Ravindra Wijegunaratne,
WV, RWP & Bar, RSP, VSV, USP, ndc, psn**

Welcome Speech and Moderate Keynote Session

Vice Admiral Ravindra Wijegunaratne is a proud product of Royal College, Colombo 7, and joined the Sri Lanka Navy as an Officer Cadet of the 9th Intake in the year 1980. He underwent his basic training at the Naval and Maritime Academy, Trincomalee and at the prestigious Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, UK. He was the recipient of the 'Best International Midshipmans' award at the BRNC, Dartmouth in 1982. He is a specialist in Anti-Submarine Warfare, a qualified diver, paratrooper and a Special Forces person.

His last sea command was onboard SLNS Sayura, the Flag Ship of the Sri Lanka Navy. The other key appointments he has held during his 36 years of unblemished naval career are: the Commandant Naval and Maritime Academy, Flag Officer Commanding Naval Fleet, First Secretary and the Defence Adviser of the Sri Lanka High Commission in New Delhi, India, Director Naval Operations and Special Forces, Commander Southern, Western, Northern, and Eastern Naval Areas, Director General of the Sri Lanka Coast Guard and the Chief of Staff of the Navy.

He took over the helm of the Sri Lanka Navy on 11th July 2015. Vice Admiral Wijegunaratne is the senior most Special Forces naval officer who was instrumental in forming the Sri Lanka Navy's Special Boat Squadron, which operationally contributed immensely during the conflict period. He commanded this elite unit twice in his career and has led number of SBS operations behind the enemy lines, including the famous 'Poonaryn Amphibious Operation' in 1993.

Vice Admiral Wijegunaratne is a highly decorated senior naval officer with four gallantry medals for his act of bravery and valour. He is a recipient of the 'Weerodhara Vibushanaya', highest gallantry medal in Sri Lanka for non-military nature, 'Rana Wickrama Medal' awarded twice for individual gallantry in the face of the enemy and 'Rana Sura Medal' for collective gallantry in the face of the enemy.

He earned his BSc (Hons) degree in War Studies from the Karachchi University, Pakistan in 1996 and MPhil in Defence and Strategic Studies (First Class pass) from the University of Madras in India in 2010. He is also an alumni of the National Defence University, Washington DC, (NESA Center). He is widely known as an expert in "Asymmetric Naval Warfare" and "Small Boat Operations". He was an outstanding sportsman and has won Navy Colours for Rugby, Sailing and Rowing. He is a top marksman who represented the Navy and subsequently was the President of National Rifle Association. At present he is the President of the Sri Lanka Navy Golf Club.

He is married to Yamuna De Saram, who was Miss Sri Lanka 1989, and blessed with a 24 year old son, Satyajith.