

ComBank wins Green Building – Platinum Award for restored Galle Fort branch building

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Commercial Bank Assistant General Manager Services Chinthaka Dharmasena (second from right) receives the award from GBCSL Chairman Prof. Ranjith Dissanayake in the presence of the Bank's Chief Manager – Premises Department Tilak Wakista (extreme left) and Engineer – Premises Department Ravindra Kumara

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- **Awarded highest eco-friendly rating by Green Building Council of Sri Lanka**

The heritage building which is home to the Galle Fort branch of the Commercial Bank of Ceylon has won a Platinum award from the Green Building Council of Sri Lanka (GBCSL) for its eco-friendly features after it was recently restored to its original grandeur by the Bank.

The Platinum award is the highest rating achievable based on a set of performance standards used to certify the operations and maintenance of a building. Key aspects taken into

consideration by the GBCSL to bestow this rating on a commercial or institutional building includes management, sustainable sites, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, innovation and design process, and social and cultural awareness.

The Commercial Bank of Ceylon ticked all the boxes when it undertook the renovation of this building, built in the early 19th century, which came into the Bank's possession in 1973 when the Bank acquired three branches of the Mercantile Bank of India (MBI). Pivotal features of a Green Building, such as energy efficiency and renewable energy, water efficiency, environmentally preferable building materials and specifications, waste reduction, toxics reduction, indoor air quality, smart growth and sustainable development were focused on during the restoration.

The building consists of the Commercial Bank's Galle Fort Bank branch, the Bank's Regional Office and a holiday home. It also houses a mini museum containing archives and items used since the inception of the branch, which has now become a popular tourist attraction.

The Platinum Rating was accorded to the building for the restoration process that included the recycling of all imperishable material in an environmentally friendly manner, using only locally sourced, specified Green rated raw material in the renovation, disposal of debris in compliance with the Department of Archeology and the Galle Heritage Foundation, installing a 15kW rooftop solar energy generation system, installation of a rain water harvesting system and ecofriendly food recyclers for all meal rooms, and the fitting of a fire protection system, back-up generator, energy efficient Variable Flow Refrigerant (VFR) air conditioning system, and an LED lighting and electrical system to complement the state-of-the-art banking operations of the branch.

The building has achieved 45% energy saving compared to the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) standard baseline and consumes minimal portable water with the use of a tube well and a pump powered by solar energy, the harvesting of rainwater, and the installation of efficient sanitary fittings.

Furthermore, in adherence to the Bank's green agenda, the mechanically ventilated areas of the building are fitted with energy-efficient air conditioners and the carbon dioxide levels of office area are continuously measured to maintain a healthy indoor environment for its occupants.

The building's refurbishment was carried out in consultation with the Galle Heritage Foundation, the Department of Archeology, the Galle Municipal Council and the Urban Development Authority, preserving the old structure wherever possible.

Commenting on the renovation that earned the building the GBCSL Platinum Rating, Commercial Bank Assistant General Manager – Services Chinthaka Dharmasena said: "Sustainability is one of the key pillars of the Bank's corporate agenda, while the preservation of heritage sites and traditions is one of the causes we support through our CSR Trust. Both these aspects were addressed in the renovation of our Galle Fort branch as one of the initiatives to celebrate our centenary year in 2020."

Commercial Bank was also presented the 'Excellent Green Commitment Award' for the Banking Sector in 2019 by the GBCSL for its leadership in multifaceted Green initiatives encompassing lending to support eco-friendly operations, migrating customers to paperless banking, reducing consumption of non-renewable energy, water and other resources in its own operations, and support to community initiatives that help conserve habitats and the environment.

The Green Building Council of Sri Lanka is a consensus-based not-for-profit organisation with diverse and integrated representation from all sectors of the property industry and academia. Established in 2009 as a joint effort of the professional institutions of architects, engineers, structural engineers, town planners, quantity surveyors, university academics, construction industry leaders, environmentalists and business leaders, the organisation's aim is to transform the Sri Lankan construction industry with green building practices and to encourage it to fully adopt sustainability as the means by which the environment thrives, the economy prospers and society grows.

The first Sri Lankan bank to be listed among the Top 1000 Banks of the World and the only Sri Lankan bank to be so listed for 10 years consecutively, Commercial Bank operates a network of 268 branches and 887 ATMs in Sri Lanka.

Commercial Bank's overseas operations encompass Bangladesh, where the Bank operates 19 outlets; Myanmar, where it has a Microfinance company in Nay Pyi Taw; and the Maldives, where the Bank has a fully-fledged Tier I Bank with a majority stake.