

CEPA not transparent - DSI chairman

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Only two words in the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) have been changed so far and there is a huge gap between the theory and the practical side of this case, Nature's Secret Chairman Samantha Kumarasinghe said.

Speaking on "Why India is keen on CEPA" at a panel discussion organized by the Institute of Engineers Sri Lanka (IESL) on Monday, referring to agreements with regard to film industry he said it will change the culture of Sri Lanka once it is implemented.

"Most of the details given with regard to getting down Indian professionals is not transparent and creates many doubts as a result,"

he said. He mentioned the case of a leading Sri Lankan hair dresser doing business in India facing many difficulties in obtaining visas to India and she has to obtain the SAARC visa paying a huge amount as visa fee which is very unfair.

D Samson Industries Chairman Kulatunga Rajapakse said the CEPA document is not transparent as none of the businessmen concerned about it has got an opportunity to read the full copy upto now.

"In the case of the FTA no one objected to it although there were problems they were resolved step by step.

He said most of the



**Kulatunga
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imported Indian products are sub standard and therefore companies have to be careful when they import Indian goods," he said.

Commerce Department Director General Gomin Senadeera speak-

ing about the current situation and future plan of CEPA said Sri Lanka is one of the few countries without a comprehensive trade agreement with other countries. Sri Lanka negotiated with India and Pakistan because they agreed to sign a comprehensive agreement. However, he assured that CEPA has not opened up the professionals sector and the agreement would be restrictive.

The government will

decide whether to disseminate or not the contents of it.

IESL President Prof. Ananda Jayawardena said CEPA is very important, controversial, sensitive and have far reaching consequences either beneficial or otherwise considering its vast scope. If it is going to benefit SL or at least have mutual benefits no one will disagree.

"The controversy and concerns are that the agreement is going to be a framework agreement and there can be a lot of undesirable features in the annexes and that even the framework agreement is not available for interested parties to study and comment. The IESL is also very concerned about the agreement and specially about the professional services," he said.

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