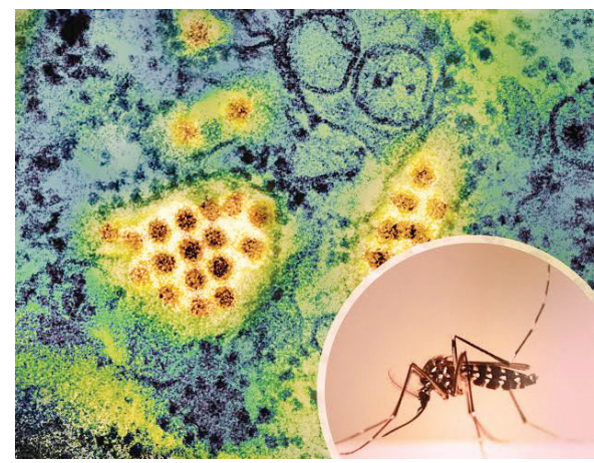


Do not rely on home remedies for dengue



BY NADIRA GUNATILLEKE

Local and foreign Consultant doctors advise Dengue patients NOT to apply home remedies when they suffer from Dengue fever. One such common home remedy is drinking papaya leaf juice. But according to the latest findings, papaya leaf juice damages the liver.

Consultant doctors request the public to avoid unproven herbal megadoses. While traditional remedies like papaya leaf juice, giloy, or neem are popular for platelet support, they can cause intense stomach irritation or vomiting if over-used, masking severe dengue symptoms. They must never replace professional laboratory monitoring, they say.

There are safe home care and supportive remedies. If a professionally qualified Consultant doctor or a hospital has confirmed the case is mild and safe for home isolation, follow these guidelines according to the World Health Organization.

Safe Pain Relief

Use Acetaminophen (Paracetamol) strictly within the recommended dosage limits to control fever and ease bone pain. Advanced hydration is important. Drink a steady balance of Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS), fresh coconut water, clear broths, or electrolyte-infused liquids. Tepid sponging is another solution. Wipe the skin with a damp, lukewarm cloth to gently lower high body temperatures instead of using ice-cold water.

Dengue patients need absolute rest. Stay strictly in bed to conserve energy and allow the immune system to recover. Mosquito isolation is a must. Sleep under a mosquito net and use repellents inside the house. This prevents local mosquitoes from biting the patient and spreading the virus to the rest of the household.

Always schedule regular daily blood tests with your healthcare provider to monitor your platelet counts and hematocrit levels until the critical phase has fully passed.

Dangerous Mistakes to Avoid at Home

NEVER take Ibuprofen, Aspirin, or Naproxen: Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like Advil, Motrin, or Aleve thin the blood. Because dengue naturally lowers blood platelets, these medications significantly increase your risk of catastrophic internal bleeding. Do not rely solely on plain water. Drinking vast quantities of plain water can dilute your blood and trigger dangerous electrolyte imbalances. Avoid unproven herbs, especially megadoses. While traditional remedies like papaya leaf juice, giloy, or neem are popular for platelet support, they can cause intense stomach irritation or vomiting if over-used, masking severe dengue symptoms. They must never replace professional laboratory monitoring.

While mild dengue can be managed at home, severe dengue is a life-threatening medical emergency that requires immediate hospitalisation. There is no specific antiviral cure for dengue, so home care focuses purely on stabilising symptoms and preventing severe dehydration.

Why Nets

Using mosquito nets helps prevent dengue fever by blocking the Aedes mosquitoes that carry the virus. While these mosquitoes mostly bite during the day, using bed nets during daytime naps or installing fitted window and door screening mesh nets provides an effective barrier against bites indoors.

Mosquito nets help block daytime and nighttime mosquitoes from reaching people who are resting. Protect vulnerable family members like children and infants during rest hours. Screen windows and doors using DIY self-adhesive mesh rolls to secure entire rooms. Choose nets with small holes (at least 156 holes per square inch) to keep tiny insects out. Tuck them in. Ensure bed nets are large enough to tuck securely under mattresses.

Colombo Plan at 75



LAHIRU FERNANDO

As the Colombo Plan marks its 75th anniversary, the organization stands at an important moment in its long history of development cooperation. Founded in 1951 on the principles of self-help and mutual help, the Colombo Plan has evolved from its early focus on technical assistance and infrastructure development into a wider platform for human capital development, South-South cooperation, capacity building, reduction of drug demand and supply, climate and environmental action, and emerging areas of regional cooperation.

The organization has now entered a new chapter under the leadership of Ambassador Chulamanee Chartsuwan, the newly appointed ninth Secretary-General who will be serving in the position for the 2026–2030 term.

With a career spanning over nearly four decades in Thailand's diplomatic service, the new Secretary-General is expected to bring considerable diplomatic experience to an organization that has evolved far beyond its original mandate.

Ambassador Chulamanee previously served as Thailand's Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives from 2017 to 2021 and represented Thailand as a Council Member of the Colombo Plan during that period.

In an interview with the *Daily News*, the Ambassador discusses her vision for the Colombo Plan, the priorities that will shape her tenure, and the organisation's evolving role in the current global context.

Here are the excerpts from the interview.

Q: Tell us a little bit about yourself, your professional career, and the experience that would shape your role as Secretary-General of the Colombo Plan?

A: I have spent nearly four decades in Thailand's foreign service, serving across four continents—from Europe and North America to South and Southeast Asia between 1984 and 2022. Along the way, I negotiated Thailand's Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union and later led my country's negotiations under the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework with thirteen partner economies. These experiences exposed me to different political systems, cultures and perspectives, but more importantly, they taught me how trust is built across countries with diverse interests.

Over the years, I have come to believe that successful diplomacy rests on a few simple principles; preserving goodwill, even when interests diverge, being honest with yourself before asking others to trust you and acting with integrity in everything you do. Throughout my career, I have learned

that durable agreements are built not by winning every argument, but by creating confidence that every party has been heard and treated fairly.

I come to the Colombo Plan not simply as a diplomat, but as someone who has spent a career building consensus across governments, institutions and cultures. As Secretary-General, I hope to strengthen the Colombo Plan as a trusted platform for co-operation—one that is responsive to its members, delivers meaningful results, and continues to make a positive difference in the lives of people across our region.

Q: What are the current focus areas of the Colombo Plan and how the organisation is responding to the evolving needs of its member countries?

A: The Colombo Plan has 26 members spanning every level of development, from Least Developed Countries to advanced economies. That is a challenge. Every member has different needs — but it is also our richest asset. It gives us a wide field for exchange. Every country has something to teach its neighbours. I want to build more peer learning into how we work, and more triangular co-operation, where a third country brings the technical piece that completes the match.

On evolving needs — this is the right question to ask. Too often it has been supply-driven. Donors decide what training to offer, then look for takers. I want to invert that. Also, another crucial step would be to develop capacity-building mechanisms that respond to each country's stated priorities.

In addition, in a world that is changing fast, people need constant reskilling and upskilling. That changes how we should design training, not just what we offer. Through training the trainers, we can outreach more people faster, which is also more sustainable when travel and delivery budgets are under pressure. Bringing the curricula that have been built and tested over years online also lets us reach far more people, more often, at lower cost per learner and it lets a country come back for the next module as needs shift, rather than waiting for the next in-person cycle.

I also intend to move away from one-size-fits-all. Training should be tailored to the different contexts of different workplaces.

Q: What are your main priorities and plans for the Colombo Plan? How do you envision the Colombo Plan positioning itself as a relevant and responsive development organisation in the years to come?

A: My mission is straightforward to state, harder to deliver, but fully adapted to the world as it is now, not as it



Ambassador Chulamanee Chartsuwan, the newly appointed Secretary General of Colombo Plan. Picture by Ranjith Asanka

was in 1951. That rests on four priorities; broadening our donor base, strengthening the sense of ownership member countries feel toward the organisation, improving how the Secretariat itself functions, and repositioning the Colombo Plan for contemporary relevance.

Traditional funding lines are narrowing across the development sector and an organisation that depends too heavily on any single donor is fragile by definition. Therefore, we are deepening ties with long-standing partners while actively opening new ones.

For contemporary relevance, the organisation will be repositioned as a knowledge hub, a facilitator of South-South cooperation, and a neutral convening platform in a moment when neutral platforms are increasingly rare and increasingly valuable.

Q: Traditionally, the Colombo Plan has worked closely with government agencies. Do you see opportunities to engage more directly with private sector entities in member countries?

A: Yes, and I think this is one of the more significant shifts ahead of us. The Colombo Plan has traditionally worked from government to government, and that relationship remains the backbone of what we do and it will always be. But the private sector increasingly shares an interest that used to sit exclusively with development agencies: human capital. Workforce readiness, occupational health, mental wellness, community resilience — these used to be framed purely as development outcomes. Today, they are also business interests, and they sit squarely inside what companies now describe as the social pillar of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG).

That overlap is an opening for us, not a departure from our mandate. We already have the trainer networks, the curricula, and the field-tested models that a corporate partner would otherwise need years to build on their own. What we need to do is present that expertise in language the private sector recognises and invite corporate and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partners into programming that was, until recently, offered almost exclusively to Governments.

I would put it this way: companies can buy data, and they can buy frameworks. What they cannot buy is seventy-five years of trust with Governments across this region, access to communities, and curricula that have already been tested in the field. That is what we bring to the table, and we are ready to make it available to partners who share our objectives.

Concretely, I see at least one entry point. Our Drug Advisory Programme's prevention and resilience curricula can be adapted into workplace wellness and talent-retention programming. A healthier workforce is, after all, a stronger one.

None of this dilutes our identity as an intergovernmental organisation. It simply recognises that the people we exist to serve benefit when more resources — public and private — are working toward the same outcome.

Q: As the Colombo Plan continues to evolve, what kind of structural or institutional changes do you think may be necessary to strengthen the organisation's effectiveness?

A: Practically, this means modernising how the Secretariat operates. We are a largely contract-based, geographically dispersed workforce, which is efficient in some ways and creates real

challenges in others — institutional memory, internal communication, and consistency of standards. We are investing in the systems that let a distributed organisation still function with clarity and cohesion: stronger financial and audit controls, standardised operational policies, and better internal knowledge-sharing so that expertise does not leave with any single person.

Internal control is not simply a compliance exercise. When a member state, quite fairly, asked why they should commit more resources without a clearer sense of what the Colombo Plan offers in return, it underlined something we already knew: fiduciary discipline is part of the value proposition, not separate from it. Programme-level financial controls, timely and transparent reporting to the Standing Committee and Council, and fiduciary standards consistent with international benchmarks are what allow members and partners to trust the organisation with more. They are also what open doors currently closed to us — several multilateral funds require exactly this kind of accreditation before they will work with an implementing partner. We are building toward that standard deliberately, not because an auditor asked us to, but because it is the precondition for the Colombo Plan to be taken seriously as a delivery partner in this region.

We are also working to diversify how the organisation is funded, along parallel tracks — deeper, more specific engagement with member states, broader bilateral and multilateral partnerships, and new instruments we have not fully used before — so that resilience is structural rather than dependent on any one relationship holding steady.

And we are looking at how we present ourselves publicly. Visibility has not historically been a priority for this organisation, and in a crowded development landscape, that has cost us name recognition we should have earned by now given the quality of the work. Clearer branding, more disciplined communication with members, and stronger public narrative are not vanity projects — they are what make the funding diversification and the trust-building actually land.

None of this changes what the Colombo Plan is for. It changes whether the organisation is equipped to keep doing it well for the next 75 years.

Q: The Colombo Plan has maintained a long-standing relationship with Sri Lanka, where it was conceived. How do you reflect on this historic relationship, and what role does Sri Lanka continue to play in the organisation's journey?

A: First, Colombo Plan was brainchild of one of Sri Lanka's most prominent son – J.R. Jayawardene, at that time Finance Minister, and Sir Percy Spender, Australia Foreign Affairs Minister at that time.

The acclamation of the Colombo Plan has been clearly reflected in the Colombo Plan Monument, in front of the Colombo Plan Municipality. The monument which was erected in 1952 is exceptionally rare because it bears its message of international co-operation in nine different languages. This design choice reflects the massive geographical and cultural diversity of the member nations, transforming a concrete pillar into a literal multilingual symbol of global unity.

Sri Lanka's role as host country is written into how this organisation actually functions — our accounts are audited by the Auditor-General of Sri Lanka under our own constitution, our Council is made up of the heads of diplomatic missions resident here in Colombo, and every major decision this Secretariat takes is taken on Sri Lankan soil, under Sri Lankan law. Host country status, for us, is not a plaque on a building. It is a working partnership.

