

Sufficient quantities of rice during New Year season

S.M. WIJAYARATNE,
Kurunegala Daily News Corr.

Steps will be taken to provide sufficient quantities of rice during the forthcoming New Year season. Accordingly, a Kilo of Nadu rice is to be sold at Rs.96 and a Kilo of Kekulu rice is to be sold at Rs.93 from April 1 this year.

This process of distribution would be implemented through CWE outlets and Cooperative shops countrywide, Agricultural Minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage told the *Daily News* in Kurunegala.

"The Paddy Marketing Board (PMB) has already purchased 30,000 metric tons **▶ TO PAGE 02**

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DISCUSSION WITH VILLAGE 16TH PROGRAMME IN MATARA

The 16th "Discussion with the Village" programme presided by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa will be held in Kiriwelkele North, step 03 Grama Niladhari Division in the Pitabeddara Divisional Secretariat Division

in the Matara District today (27). The discussion will commence at 10.00 am at Derangala Maha Vidyalaya. This is the second Discussion with the Village programme in the Southern Province.

The Kiriwelkele Grama Niladhari Division, a highland colony established in 1958, is the most difficult village which falls within the limits of the Pitabeddara Divisional Secretariat area. The total population of the Grama

Niladhari Division is 2,990 comprising 622 families. Most of the owners of small tea holdings in the Matara district live here. The main source of income is tea and cinnamon, rubber, black pepper and coconut.

People in Kiriwelkele and the surrounding villages have long been suffering from a number of common issues. These include poor road conditions and transport difficulties, lack of health and sanitation facilities. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

IMPORT OF UNREFINED, CARCINOGENIC COCONUT OIL STERN ACTION AGAINST CULPRITS - TRADE MINISTER

STOCKS NOT RELEASED TO MARKET

NO POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN PROBE



SANDASEN MARASINGHE, CAMELIA NATHANIEL and AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

Strict legal action will be taken against those who imported unrefined coconut oil that contained carcinogens, Trade Minister Dr. Bandula Gunawardena said yesterday (26) in Parliament.

Dr. Gunawardena added that no

political intervention will be allowed when the culprits are brought to book. He observed that there has been a request made to carry out an investigation on the matter by the Criminal Investigation Department.

Dr. Gunawardena said, "In the last few days, it seems that various parties are trying to spread the idea that people will have to consume

unhealthy coconut oil that would be added to the market in the coming New Year season. Therefore, it is my duty and responsibility as the Minister of Trade to clarify the status of this misconception. In the Dambulla area, traditional coconut oil producers had called a press conference and revealed to the media that there is an attempt to release a consignment of

imported coconut oil that contains carcinogens. When this was published in the media and made headlines, the next morning I called the Chairman of the Consumer Affairs Authority and asked him to investigate. Accordingly, it was learned that the import of unrefined coconut oil has been taking place in the country for a long time. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

PSC to look into revision of electoral system

SANDASEN MARASINGHE, CAMELIA NATHANIEL AND AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI



Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena asserted that the Parliament Select Committee (PSC) as proposed at the Party Leaders' Meeting in Parliament on Thursday would look into revising the electoral system applicable to General Elections as well as Local Government elections.

Responding to a query made by the Samagi Jana Balawegaya MP and Chief Opposition Whip Lakshman Kiriella, Foreign Minister Gunawardena said that all these are commissioned as a part of fulfilling the election pledges by this Government which were mandated by the people at the Presidential election and the General Election. MP Kiriella said that the drafting of a new Constitution has been vested on several attorneys while amending the electoral system has been vested upon a Parliamentary Select Committee and he asked to bring both these under one Parliamentary Select Committee. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

Report to formulate 'Law' in school curriculum to be submitted

The Parliamentary Sub-Committee appointed to formulate a methodology to include 'Law' as a subject in the school curriculum has decided to submit its report to the Consultative Committee in two months.

Meanwhile, the Committee unanimously appointed State Minister Susil Premajayantha as the Chairman of the Committee. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



President Gotabaya Rajapaksa launching the "egunama.moe.gov.lk" website and digital platform at Temple Trees yesterday which will enable the public to electronically submit their proposals on education reforms under the broad topics of pre-school education, primary, secondary and tertiary education and professional and higher education, for the next three months. Ministers Prof. G.L. Peiris and Namal Rajapaksa are looking on. (Picture by Sulochana Gamage)

"DIGITAL PLATFORM" LAUNCHED TO OBTAIN IDEAS ON NEW EDUCATION POLICY

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa points out that the "Digital Platform" is a great opportunity for the public to come up with ideas and creative proposals in order to formulate a "Sustainable Education Policy Framework".

"The vision and philosophy of a country is shaped by its education system. An outdated education system creates a society that cannot keep pace with the modern world. A policy formulated as a result of wide public representation cannot

be changed in the event of a change of Government," the President said. President Rajapaksa states that one of the main objectives of the National Policy Framework, "Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour" is to design **▶ TO PAGE 02**

Parliament to convene from April 5 to 9

SANDASEN MARASINGHE, CAMELIA NATHANIEL and AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

The Committee on Parliamentary Business which met on Thursday under the Chairmanship of Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena decided to convene Parliament for five days from April 5 to 9.

Parliament will convene on Monday, April 5 as a special day from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. and the entire time will be set aside for the Oral Questions of MPs.

The Committee on Parliamentary Business had decided to hold the Adjournment Debate on the Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Easter Sunday Attacks for the fifth day on April 7.

In addition, the Committee has decided to debate the final report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Political Victimization on April 8 and 9. On April 6, eight subjects will be debated, including Regulations under the Imports and Exports Act, Orders under the Strategic Development Projects Act **▶ TO PAGE 02**

India busts transnational drug smuggling ring

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) busted a huge trans-border drug and illegal arms racket after it seized three boats from Sri Lanka. The boats filled with a huge cache of Narcotics and arms were intercepted at Minicoy Island. The boats that were seized on March 18 have now reached the Vizhinjam, Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday.

The boats were carrying 300 kgs Heroin worth Rs 3000 crore, 5 AK-47 rifles with 1000 live rounds, informed the Ministry of Defense Public Relations Unit (PRO) in Trivandrum. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

More than 3,000 smart bus halts to be set up

IRANGIKA RANGE

More than 3,000 new smart bus halts with free Wi-Fi and other facilities will be set up islandwide.

All passengers who take shelter at these bus halts will be automatically covered by Rs. one million worth insurance. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



Inland Revenue received dishonoured cheques worth Rs.240 m - COPA

It was revealed at the Committee on Public Accounts (COPA) held in Parliament recently that the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) had received 6,878 dishonoured cheques worth Rs.240 million (Rs.2,451,465,383), as at December 31, 2020. The Committee directed the IRD officials to take immediate action to recover these funds. It was also revealed at the meeting that Court cases have been filed by the IRD in the Colombo Magistrate's Court to recover Rs. 2670 million in tax arrears from the casino business. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

Petition challenging plantation workers' daily wage hike fixed for support

LAKMAL SOORIVAGODA

A writ petition filed by 20 major plantation companies seeking an order quashing the decision of the Wages Board to increase the daily wage of plantation workers to Rs.1,000 was yesterday fixed for support on March 30 by the Court of Appeal.

The petitioners are; Agaratana Plantations Limited, Balangoda Plantations PLC, Elpitiya Plantations PLC, Horana Plantations PLC, Hapugastenne Plantations PLC, Kahawatte Plantations PLC. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



Chief Magistrate orders release of Johnston, two others from bribery cases

SHAVINI MADHARA

Colombo Chief Magistrate Buddhika Sri Ragala yesterday ordered the release of Minister Johnston Fernando and two others

from two bribery cases filed against them.

The Bribery Commission alleged that the first accused Johnston Fernando had unlawfully

employed 153 employees for election work during the period 2010 to 2014, while he was serving as the Cooperative and Internal Trade Minister. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

TID arrests two for extremist activities

ASELA KURULUWANSHA

The Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) has arrested two individuals from Matala and Kattankudy on the charge

of inciting groups to spread extremist and racist views in the country, Police Spokesman DIG Ajith Rohana said.

"Among the two suspects,

a resident of Kattankudy, has been identified as a close associate of Zahran Hashim, the main perpetrator of the Easter Sunday **▶ TO PAGE 02**

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Rs. 490 m spent on electric fences; but Human-Elephant Conflict unresolved - COPA

The Committee on Public Accounts (COPA) revealed in Parliament yesterday (25) that though a total of Rs. 490 million had been spent on an electric fences in 2019 and 2020, the human-elephant conflict has not yet

been resolved. The cost of constructing the electric fences in 2019 to prevent the human-elephant conflict is Rs.275,447,639 and the amount spent for this purpose in the year 2020 is Rs. 221,505,818. The total

length of the electric fences constructed at this cost is 4,756 km.

However, as of March 23, 2021, 28 human deaths and 83 elephant deaths have been reported in Sri Lanka due to the Human-Elephant

Conflict. Chairman of the Committee Prof. Tissa Vitarana, State Ministers Dayasiri Jayasekara, Lasantha Alagiyawanna, Prasanna Ranaweera, Members of Parliament Tissa Attanayake, Niroshan Perera,

Mohamed Muzammil, S. Sridharan, Dr. Upul Galappaththi, B.Y.G. Ratnasekera, Weerasumana Weerasinghe, Dr. Harini Amarasinghaya and a group of Government officials were present at the meeting.

49th Philip Gunawardena commemoration



The 49th commemoration of National Hero late Philip Gunawardena, anti-imperialist freedom fighter and architect of Sri Lanka's Socialist movement is to be held from 4 p.m. onwards today at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute Auditorium.

The event will be chaired by the Chancellor of Sri Jayawardenapura University Mahanayake of the Kotte Chapter Most Ven. Dr. Ittepana Dhammalankara Maha Thera. The Chief Guest will be Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena while the Keynote Address will be delivered by former Vice Chancellor of the Sri Jayawardenapura University Emeritus Prof. Chandima Wijebandara.

The event is organised by the Philip Gunawardena Commemorative Society.

Sufficient quantities of rice... From page 01

of paddy from farmers and these paddy stocks would be turned into rice and distributed among the people during the New Year season. The PMB has now launched the programme to give farmers a good price for their paddy stocks," he said.

Parliament to convene from... From page 01



and the resolution on the Revision of Salary and Allowances of the Director General of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption. The debate will be held on that day from 10.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and then the Motion at the Adjournment Time will be taken up

for debate from 04.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. The Adjournment Debate on the Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Easter Sunday terror attacks will be held on April 7 from 10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Parliament will convene on April 8 and 9 from 10.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

Discussion with Village... From page 01

lack of drinking and cultivating water, agricultural problems, shortage of houses and lack of communication facilities. There are also issues relating to the educational sector, including inadequate school infrastructure and shortage of teachers. People also face a number of problems related to forest conservation regulations.



out to the people of the villages, understand their problems and find solutions through their own suggestions. Problems that can be solved on the spot are instantly addressed. The rest which take time to deal with are noted down to find solutions later.

The ultimate goal of the "Discussion with the Village" programme is for the President to go the grassroots with officials, to witness the difficulties suffered by fellow citizens first hand, in order to uplift the rural sector. Building a strong national economy based on agriculture is one of the key pledges made to the people by the National Policy Framework, "Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour".

The rural folk who constitute about 75% of Sri Lanka's population, still suffer from a wide variety of problems including economic and social issues. Landlessness, absence of proper title deeds, shortage of water for drinking and cultivation purposes, underdeveloped status of roads and transport issues, health and education issues, the human-elephant conflict, bureaucratic lethargy are a few of them. The objective of the programme is to reach

that affect the rural people from a one-sided perspective is one of the reasons for the delay in giving solutions for their issues. Officials see the problem from their own perspective while villagers have their own sentiments. The President believes that the process of providing solutions could be expedited through correctly identifying all aspects of the problem. This approach has been used in previous "Discussion with the Village" programmes to provide immediate and long term solutions to a number of issues.

The "Discussion with the Village" programme commenced on September 25, 2020 from the Badulla District. Thereafter programmes were organised covering the Matale, Ratnapura, Anuradhapura, Ampara, Polonnaruwa, Kalutara, Moneragala, Kegalle, Kandy, Puttalam, Trincomalee, Kurunegala, Galle and Nuwara Eliya districts.

India busts transnational... From page 01

Nineteen crew members of the three boats were detained and brought to Vizhinjam for further investigation.

This operation is being considered as one of the biggest intelligence successes in India.

According to reports, on March 18, offshore patrol vessels and air assets, including from Goa, intercepted three Sri Lankan fishing boats and on rummaging recovered this huge cache of drugs and arms from the boats.

The ICG said in a statement that they received an intelligence input on March 15 regarding a suspicious foreign boat likely to be engaged in drug trafficking in the high seas near the Lakshadweep Islands. Following this and after verification, the ICG launched a coordinated air-sea operation to track these suspicious vessels in the Arabian Sea.

Finally, after intensive maritime and aerial searches of the regions, on March 18, the patrol units finally espied three suspicious boats off

the Minicoy Isles and intercepted them.

Upon boarding the vessels and interrogating the crew, the ICG sleuths found their statements to be inconsistent, following which they searched the three vessels thoroughly and recovered 300 kgs Heroin worth Rs 3000 crore, 5 AK-47 rifles with 1000 live rounds.

In a similar operation, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has busted a huge trans-border drug racket and arrested the two Sri Lankan Tamil operatives identified as MMM Nawas and Mohamed Afnas, in January 2021.

The operatives were nabbed from Chennai, where they were living by concealing their real identities. The NCB officials have seized 100 kg contraband valued at Rs 1,000 crore. The agency said that the syndicate was based out of Pakistan and Sri Lanka, however, the mastermind's appendage was spread across Afghanistan, Iran, the Maldives and Australia. (OpIndia)

Petition challenging... From page 01

Kegalle Plantations PLC, Kelani Valley Plantations PLC, Kotagala Plantations PLC, Madulsima Plantations PLC, Malwatte Valley Plantations PLC, Maskeliya Plantations PLC, Natural Plantations Limited, Namunukula Plantations PLC, Talawakelle Tea Estates PLC, Udapussallawa Plantations PLC, Watuwala Plantations PLC, Hattion Plantations PLC, Bogawantawala Plantations PLC and Lalan Rubbers (Pvt) Ltd.

The petitioners had named Minister of Labour Nimal Siripala de Silva, Chairman of Wage Board for Tea, Rubber Growing and Manufacturing trade Prabath Chandra-

keerthi and several others as respondents.

The petitioners feared that the plantation industry would have to face dire consequences if they implemented the increase of the workers' daily wage up to Rs.1,000.

The Gazette notification on increasing the daily wage of Estate Workers to Rs. 1000 was published on March 9. This increase comprises Rs.900 as the Minimum daily wage and Rs.100 Allowance.

President's Counsel Romesh de Silva with counsel Sugath Caldera under the instructions of Sanath Wijewardena appeared for the petitioners.

PSC to look into revision... From page 01



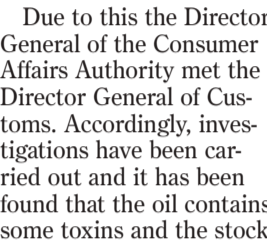
Minister Gunawardena said that this procedure has been approved at the Party Leaders' Meeting in the Parliament on Thursday. He added that it is the general practice to appoint such Select Committees which have been done by all governments. These tasks are not done

hastily but according to the proper procedure. Any MP and the public could contribute their views. MP Kiriella further said that the Provincial Council Election would be delayed at least by one year with this measure. Responding to him Minister Gunawardena said that the elections

were delayed due to a Supreme Court Order and measures are being taken to resolve the matter.

The motion to appoint the Parliamentary Select Committee to make recommendations to amend the electoral system will also be tabled in Parliament on April 5.

Stern action against culprits... From page 01



Due to this the Director General of the Consumer Affairs Authority met the Director General of Customs. Accordingly, investigations have been carried out and it has been found that the oil contains some toxins and the stock of oil has been stored in warehouses for re-export. These have not been released to the market. They have to be re-exported."

Dr. Gunawardena pointed out, "In particular, the Sri Lanka Standards Institution and the Food Division of the Department of Health investigated the matter as separate institutions. Due to the quantity of coconut oil which is unfit for human consumption in these containers, it has been ordered to re-export it without selling it here. They cannot however be taken out until the investigations are completed. A party has requested an investigation from the CID in this regard. We urge the IGP to expedite this investigation and find out the culprits. The culprits should be brought to justice regardless of rank. Therefore, we all have a responsibility not to use this incident as a means to an end. None of the sugar importing companies in particular are involved in importing the said coconut oil stocks."

At this juncture Samagi Jana Balawegaya MP Patali Champika Ranawaka pointed out, "A year ago we conducted a formal inspection on coconut oil produced and imported to this country. Some of these samples were found to contain carcinogens. The CID cannot do this. There is a special institute called ITI (Industrial Technology Institute) to look into matters like these. So do a full investigation on this. If there is any wrongdoing, enforce

the law. When the former President was the Minister of Health, following a problem like this, a large quantity of unsuitable milk was destroyed. So don't store these and re-export as these stocks will reach another community of another country. It is not good for those people to consume these either. These stocks should be destroyed."

Dr. Gunawardena in reply to MP Ranawaka said that they have already sent the coconut oil samples to the ITI to carry out investigations.

Samagi Jana Balawegaya MP J.C. Alawatuwala speaking on the same matter pointed out, "People tell different stories about this scenario. We have received information that there is a problem with this coconut oil. We cannot overlook this matter." In reply State Minister Arundika Fernando said, "The Director General of Customs has asked for a complete re-export of this consignment of coconut oil. We know that this coconut oil contains a lot of toxins. Accordingly, the Director General of Customs has recommended that they be re-exported on March 4. None of the stocks made it into the market."

SJB MP Nalin Bandara pointed out, "Clearly investigate this matter. Due to this the coconut oil industry in our country is collapsing. People are afraid to buy coconut oil. This is a major problem. Some say these stocks were not released to the market while some others say the stocks were released to the market. Find out and take proper action."

State Minister Arundika Fernando assured that none of the said coconut oil stocks has been released to the market.

More than 3,000 smart bus... From page 01

Passengers can charge their phones at these bus halts while digital TV channels would also be available.

Digital screens displaying environmental friendly messages together with CCTV cameras providing 24 hour Security will be installed at these bus halts.

The first smart bus halt equipped with all these facilities was opened by Chief Government Whip and Highways Minister Johnston Fernando near the HSBC Bank in Rajagiriya yesterday.



This project is undertaken by the Ministry of Highways in collaboration with the Road Development Authority and Expressway Transport Company Pvt Ltd.

Inland Revenue received... From page 01

Meanwhile, COPA revealed that according to Section 12 of the Default Taxes (Special Provisions) Act No. 16 of 2010, the amount of tax arrears that could be collected as on 31st December 2020 is around Rs.144,537,364,916. (1,445 million)

The COPA meeting chaired by Prof. Tissa Vitarana was attended by State Ministers Dayasiri Jayasekara, Lasantha Alagiyawanna, Dr. Sudarshani Fernandoopulle, MPs Tissa Attanayake, S. Sridaran, Karder Masthan, Mohamed Muzammil, Niroshan Perera, Dr. Upul Galappaththi, Weerasumana Weerasinghe and Dr. Harini Amarasinghaya.

The Committee on Public Accounts directed the Ministry of Finance to expedite the preparation of a Common Methodology for the implementation of the Revenue Administration Management Information System (RAMIS) under the

Inland Revenue Department in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders.

Steps are being taken to include 29 institutions in the RAMIS. It was revealed at the committee meeting that six of these institutions have already joined this system. It was also revealed that by December 31 this year, six more institutions will be included in this system.

The Committee also recommended that the Central Bank of Sri Lanka should provide guidelines for the inclusion of all banks in the country in the RAMIS.

Officials of the Ministry of Finance, Inland Revenue Department, National Audit Office, Treasury and other institutions included in the Revenue Administration Management Information System participated.

TID arrests two for extremist... From page 01

terror attacks and has been linked to his extremist activities," he said. DIG Ajith Rohana told a media briefing that the 46-year-old from Matale had been deported from the United Arab Emirates on December 5 last year for engaging in extremist activities.

It has been revealed that the suspect had collected money while in the UAE to fund extremist activities

and disseminated extremist ideologies through the Internet to those residing in Sri Lanka.

The Terrorist Investigation Division has revealed that the suspect had collected donations from Sri Lankans working in the United Arab Emirates for his cause. Both have been detained and questioned under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).



A protest organised by the Rally for Animal Rights and Environment (RARE) in conjunction with the Canadian advocacy group Lucy's Edmonton Advocacy Project (LEAP) took place yesterday outside the Canadian High Commission in Colombo in support of Lucy, a 46-year-old Sri Lankan elephant currently housed at the Edmonton Valley Zoo in Canada. Lucy is a Sri Lankan elephant who was sold by the Edmonton Zoo in Canada at the age three and has since remained there for the past 44 years. At the zoo, Lucy resides alone in a small enclosure with painted trees. RARE stated that her unsatisfactory living arrangements coupled with the unnatural cold climate have resulted in Lucy suffering from several captivity-related health issues such as arthritis, foot disease, obesity, sleep disorder, stereotypy, and an undiagnosed respiratory condition. Picture by Dushmantha Mayadunne

"Digital Platform" launched ... From page 01



and nurture knowledge-based human capital to suit the 21st century. To achieve this target, a number of educational reforms need to be implemented. President Rajapaksa says that he expects the future generation of the country to be brought before the world as a generation armed with knowledge and talent through the 'new education reforms. The President made these remarks addressing the ceremony held at Temple Trees yesterday (26) to launch the 'Digital Platform' to solicit the views of the public on the proposed education reforms.

The theme of the 'Digital Platform' is 'Towards a Perfect Education that Enriches Wisdom and Mind'. The President officially launched the 'Digital Platform'. From today for the next three months, the public can submit suggestions and ideas for new education reforms to the "digital platform" through egenuma.moe.gov.lk website.

People are invited to submit proposals under four main sub-sectors specifically Pre-School Education, Primary and Secondary Education, Vocational and Tertiary Education and Higher and Vocational Education. The "Digital Platform" is open to receive wider public feedback and suggestion for a sustainable education policy. Another goal of the reforms is to enhance avenues to

higher education. Job oriented skill development is expected through the modernization and restructuring of curricular in the universities.

The President said that a total overhaul is required in the Open University system so as to assist those who are employed to improve their further educational qualifications.

He said that his aim was to provide a complete sophisticated education to all Sri Lankan children from the pre-school stage and that the current shortcomings in the internet and technology facilities would be fully addressed by the year 2023.

The President noted that he expects to usher a prouder future for Sri Lanka which has inherited a proud past with new education reforms.

The Maha Sangha, other religious dignitaries, Ministers Prof. G.L. Peiris and Nimal Rajapaksa, Governor of the Western Province Marshal of the Air Force Roshan Goonetilleke, Governor of the Eastern Province Anuradha Yahampath, State Ministers Sita Arambepola, Vijitha Berugoda, D.V. Chanaka, Ambassadors, Secretary of Education Prof. Kapila Perera, State Secretary of Education Dr. M. Upali Sedara, Government Officials, several principals, teachers and school students were present at the occasion.

Report to formulate 'Law'... From page 01

This Sub-Committee was appointed at a special joint meeting of the Ministerial Consultative Committee on Education and Justice for the purpose of formulating a mechanism to incorporate 'Law' as a subject into the school curriculum.

At the first Parliamentary Sub-Committee meeting which was chaired by State Minister Premajayantha, upon the agreement of all Committee members declared the proceedings of the Committee to the media. The Committee was also of the view that proposals from the public should be obtained in this regard and a mechanism to facilitate such public proposals should be established.

A Technical Committee consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Education and the State Ministry



of Educational Reforms, National Institute of Education, Ministry of Justice and Bar Association of Sri Lanka was also appointed for the purpose of assisting the committee and formulating a report on this regard.

It was also decided not to introduce 'Law' as a one subject but to include it systematically to the curriculum and also to explore the experience of other countries having in educating Law to school children.

MPs and Committee Members Rauff Hakeem, S. Shrirathan, Weerasumana Weerasinghe, Sagara Kariyawasam, Amarakeerthi Athukorala, Diana Gamage, Major Sudarshana Denipitiya and officials representing the National Institute of Education, Ministry of Justice, Bar Association of Sri Lanka were present at the meeting.

Chief Magistrate orders... From page 01

The Director General of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption filed these corruption cases against three accused under Section 70 of the Bribery Act on three charges.

The Magistrate made this order

considering the order issued by the Colombo High court. Accordingly, former CWE (Lak Sathosa) Chairman Eraj Fernando and former Minister's Private Secretary Raj Mohideen Mohammad Sakeer were also released from the two cases.

Pakistan, a trusted partner of Sri Lanka - Aluthgamage

MOHAMMED RASOOLDEEN

Agriculture Minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage said on Tuesday that Pakistan has been a trusted partner of Sri Lanka and has been supportive in times of need.

Minister Aluthgamage was speaking at a reception hosted by High Commissioner of Pakistan, Maj. Gen. (R) Muhammad Saad Khattak to mark his country's National Day at the Kingsbury Hotel, on Wednesday. The Minister was the Chief Guest at the ceremony.

Aluthgamage recalled the robust relations between the two countries and said that Pakistan and Sri Lanka have always maintained close, cordial and mutually supportive relations which are broad-based and multifaceted.

Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, Justice Minister Ali Sabry, PC, Trade Minister Dr. Bandula Gunawardena, Labour Minister Nimal Siripala De Silva, Parliamentarians Rauf Hakeem, Rishad Bathui-

deen, Ali Sabry Raheem and S.M.M. Musharraf and members of the Diplomatic Corps, including Pakistan Honorary Consul Afzal Marikar and well wishers were present.

High Commissioner of Pakistan Saad Khattak in his welcome address elaborated that the foundation of strong brotherhood between Pakistan and Sri Lanka was laid in 1948 when the former Prime Minister of then "Ceylon" D. S. Senenayake visited Pakistan. He said the relationship between the two peoples has existed

for over two thousand years. These relations are further cemented by the commonality of eternal values of universal peace and love, espoused both by Buddhism and Islam.

While talking about the region's security situation, the High Commissioner explained that, despite provocation, Pakistan has demonstrated prudence and extreme restraint as a responsible state. He also said that Pakistan supports peaceful resolution of all bilateral and regional disputes through meaningful negotiations and

mediation. He also appreciated Government of Sri Lanka's support for promotion of peace and harmony in South Asia.

High Commissioner Khattak announced that the Government of Pakistan, through its High Commission, will be awarding 1,000 scholarships to Sri Lankan students in diverse fields. He added that modalities are being discussed with concerned authorities to establish a world-class high-tech university in Sri Lanka under the auspices of



COMSATS. The High Commissioner hoisted his country's national flag to mark the commencement of the celebrations in the presence of Sri Lankan well-wishers and Pakistani expatriates at the mission premises.

New Court of Appeal Justice Menaka Wijesundera pledges to uphold Rule of Law

LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

Newly appointed Court of Appeal Justice Menaka Wijesundera pledged to uphold the Rule of Law and weigh the scales of justice accordingly.

Justice Wijesundera made these remarks while speaking at the Ceremonial Sitting held at the ceremonial hall of the Supreme Court complex to welcome her as a Judge of Court of Appeal.

Newly appointed Court of Appeal Judges Menaka Wijesundera, D.N. Samarakoon, M. Prasantha de Silva, M. T. M. Laffar, C. Pradeep Keerthisinghe, Sampath B. Abayakoon, M. S. K. B. Wijeratne, S. U. B. Karaliyadde, R. Gurusinghe, G. A. D. Ganepola, K.K.A.V. Swarnadhipathi, Mayadunne Corea, Prabaharan Kumararatnam and W. N. N. P. Iddawala were accorded a warm welcome at the ceremonial sitting by an array of Judges of the Court of Appeal, High Courts, District Courts and the Magistrate's Courts.

Here are excerpts of Court of Appeal Justice Menaka Wijesundera's speech at the ceremonial sitting.



Justice Menaka Wijesundera

"Mr. Attorney, President of the Bar Association

"I take this opportunity to thank the Attorney General and the President of the Bar for ceremoniously welcoming me today and to all the sentiments expressed about me by both of you. I also thank all those who are present here today to grace this occasion.

"Today all of us have gathered here under very unusual circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic which is plaguing the whole world and not only Sri

Lanka. We all know the impact it has had on our lives. We as members of the legal fraternity are trying our level best to function the court system as normal as possible.

"Upon such demanding situation we have gathered here today and I take this opportunity to remind me of the onerous duty that is cast upon me by being appointed to this Bench and I, pledge to uphold the Rule of Law and weigh the scales of justice accordingly.

"If I may reflect upon myself a little, I who received my school education at Visakha Vidyalaya, Colombo hailing from a legal background was not initially interested in a career of law but wanted to pursue the career of a writer. But faith cut a cross my path and although having gained entrance to the University of Peradeniya, the situation in the country made me enter the field of law in addition to my university education.

"Upon enrolling as an Attorney-at-Law I joined the public service as a junior state counsel to the Attorney General's Department in 1994. In the

Attorney Generals Department as State Counsel and Senior State Counsel I ventured through all forums of law from Magistrates Court to the Supreme Court. After serving the Attorney Generals Department for 15 long years I joined the Judiciary as a High Court Judge in 2009.

"As a High Court Judge I served in many provinces in the country and I observed the cultural and social differences varying from province to province. This variation influenced the nature of cases pending in the courts I presided. Having served in the High Court for 11 and half years today I am being welcomed here by all of you to adjudicate in the CA.

"I take this opportunity to fondly remember my parents, my family my friends and of course my husband Ashoka, and I say a word of thank you to all of them.

"Once again I thank the Attorney General, the President of the Bar and everybody else for being here today to welcome me and May the Noble Triple Gem bless all of you and may you be bestowed with good health. Thank you and stay safe".

New technology to streamline land surveying - Minister

A new mobile service using modern technology will be launched throughout Sri Lanka to expedite and streamline land surveying, Minister of Lands S.M. Chandrasena said in Parliament recently.

He said so while responding to a suggestion made by the members of the Consultative Committee on Lands.

Members of the Consultative Committee suggested that land surveying was not being carried out properly and therefore an effective programme was needed. MPs further said that a mobile service should be set up throughout Sri Lanka soon for this purpose.

Land Ministry officials who participated in the meeting said that this mobile service will be launched in the 'Thirapane' area using the latest technology as a pilot project.

MPs who were present at the meeting also said that "Bim Saviya" lands should be surveyed accurately and deeds should be issued soon. MPs pointed

out that the people in these lands have problems even in getting a bank loan and that these people have been facing this problem for many years.

The Minister also instructed the officials to survey the lands of the land owners who wish to get their lands surveyed and issue deeds as soon as possible.

The MPs also suggested that deeds be issued for religious places such as temples without deeds. There are about 325 temples in the country without deeds and deeds will be issued expeditiously for those temples under the post of Chief Incumbent, officials said.

Minister Mahinda Amaraweera and MPs Chinthaka Amal Mayadunna, Charles Nirmalanathan, Sudath Manjula, Upul Mahendra Rajapaksa, Rohana Dissanayake, Ali Sabri Rahim, S.M.M. Musharraf, Manjula Dissanayake, Karder Masthan, Muditha de Zoysa and Gunathilaka Rajapaksa were present at the meeting.



Minister of Lands S. M. Chandrasena addressing members of the Consultative Committee on Lands in Parliament recently.

Officials lament Galle district paddy buying issues

MAHINDA P. LIYANAGE, Galle Central special Corr.

Many problems have arisen due to the lack of sufficient number of employees to check the moisture content of the paddy, collect the bills and check the accuracy of the bills while purchasing paddy in the Galle District, Galle District Agrarian Development Assistant Commissioner Hemapala Warushawithana said.

The Paddy Marketing Board has temporarily deployed two employees to check the moisture. Those employees also had to go in lorries to buy paddy. The Paddy Marketing Board has deployed only two clerks at all 33 Agrarian Service Centres in the Galle District to collect bills and check the accuracy of bills, the Assistant Commis-

sioner further said. Due to this situation, the purchase of paddy in the Galle District has been severely hampered, however the farmers are willing to provide paddy to the Paddy Marketing Board. But they are being discouraged due to problems including paddy loading.

A very dilapidated lorry has been used to collect dry paddy and due to the lack of adequate vehicles, many problems have arisen in purchasing paddy stocks from farmers.

Assistant Commissioner (Department) of Galle District Agrarian Development Hemapala Warushawithana has informed the Chairman of the Paddy Marketing Board and the Commissioner General of Agrarian Development in writing about the situation.

Despite many problems and obstacles, the purchase of paddy in the Galle District is being carried out very successfully and for the first time in the history the Paddy Marketing Board is purchasing paddy from farmers in the Galle District. Galle District Agrarian Development Assistant Commissioner (Administration) Hemapala Warushawithana and Galle District Agrarian Development Assistant Commissioner (Department) are directing the paddy procurement process.

Galle District Manager, Paddy Marketing Board Puthrama Indika, together with Agricultural Research Production Assistants contribute their share day and night for the success of the initiative.

Fraud Bureau probes alleged dismissal of employee

LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

The Colombo Fraud Investigation Bureau has informed Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court that it has commenced an investigation to ascertain whether the dismissal of an employee of a foreign Dairy Company in Sri Lanka had been done illegally using forged documents.

S. Seneviratne, an employee of a foreign Dairy Company had lodged a complaint with the Labour Department in Colombo alleging that the company had terminated her service illegally.

Although the Assistant Director of Human Resources of the

Dairy Company has given a statement that the letter terminating the employee's service is an authentic document, the Fraud Investigation Bureau sought an order directing the company that the laptop computer be handed over to the Colombo Fraud Investigation Bureau in order to refer the questionable document to the Government Investigator to verify its authenticity.

However, the company had raised objections to release the computer until the complainant party appears in court.

Further magisterial inquiry was fixed for April 20.

JVP leader's Writ Petition fixed for March 30

LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

The Writ Petition filed by Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake seeking an order staying the operation of recommendations of Presidential Commission of Inquiry appointed to probe incidents of political victimization was yesterday fixed for support on March 30.

President's Counsel Romesh de Silva appearing for the JVP leader emphasized the importance of hearing this petition as much as possible.

Accordingly, a Court of Appeal two-Judge-Bench comprising Justice Arjuna Obeyesekere and Justice Mayadunne Corea fixed the petition to be taken up for on March 30 at 9:15 am.

In his petition, Anura Kumara Dissanayake had cited the commissioners of Presidential Commission retired Supreme Court Judge Upali Abeyratne, retired Court of Appeal Judge Chandrasiri Jayatilake and former IGP Chandra Fernando, Commission Secretary Pearl Weerasinghe, Cabinet of Ministers and the Attorney General as respondents.

The petitioner stated that the recommendations and decisions made in several instances against the petitioner is purely on the basis that he was a member of the National Executive Council or the Anti-Corruption Unit.

The petitioner stated that the recommendations of the PCoI are unreasonable, arbitrary and breach of his legitimate expectations.

ADA KOTIPATHI - Saturday
Draw No.: 1233 Colour: Yellow
Date: 27.03.2021
Today's Jackpot
Rs. 121,895,785/-
Winning tickets are valid for 6 months.
Development Lotteries Board
356, Dr. Colvin R. De Silva Mawatha, Union Place, Colombo 2
Tel: 0112 333 546-47 Fax: 2 333 546-47
Hotline: 0114 824 824, 0112 333 778 or 1919
For Interactive Voice Response Service - Call 0114 825 825

Thursday Draw No.: 3563
Date: 25.03.2021 Colour: Red
Total Value of Prizes
Rs. 4,314,460/-
Winning Numbers
14 | 33 | 70 | 71
English Letter
W
Winning tickets are valid only for six months

Thursday Draw No.: 1233
Date: 25.03.2021 Colour: Dark Blue
Total Value of Prizes
Rs. 5,137,000/-
Winning Numbers
34 | 49 | 70 | 71
English Letter
F
Winning tickets are valid only for six months

Wednesday Draw Number: 3114
Date: 25-03-2021 Colour: Brown
SUPER JACKPOT
Rs. 2,231,215.60
Winning Numbers
15 | 19 | 28 | 50
Aries
TOTAL VALUE OF PRIZES
Rs. 12,092,280/-
The winning ticket will be valid for 6 months.

Thursday Draw Number: 421 Colour: Blue
Date: 25-03-2021
SUPER JACKPOT
Rs. 11,292,456/-
Development Fortune
English Letter
G
Winning Numbers
30 | 31 | 37
Fate Number
4
Total Value of Prizes
Rs. 3,040,560/-
Next Super Jackpot
Rs. 11,445,968/-
The winning ticket will be valid for 6 months.

Draw Number: 1407 Colour: Green
Draw Date: 25.03.2021 Date: Thursday
Winning English Letter and Numbers
Q | 16 | 17 | 26 | 67
Total Value of Prizes
Rs. 4,365,800/-
The winning tickets will be valid for 6 months.
Development Lotteries Board
356, Dr. Colvin R. De Silva Mawatha, Union Place, Colombo 2
Tel: 0112 333 546-47
Hotline: 0114 824 824, 0112 333 778 or 1919
SMS: DLB-space-LOT-space-98 & send to 999
For Interactive Voice Response Service - Call 0114 825 825

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A salutary move

The decision taken by the Elections Commission not to register political parties with religious or ethnic labels is indeed commendable, and would go a long way in eliminating the prevailing friction among communities based on religious or ethnic differences. The Commission has even gone further and decided to amend the titles of already registered political parties with religion/ethnic based identities and also bring in to scrutiny the constitutions of such parties with a view to erase any mention of religion and ethnic content contained therein.

This decision was long overdue. But the exigencies of the major political parties who were assiduously wooing the minority vote which at one time was decisive at elections perhaps thwarted such moves. The leaders of these ethno-religious political parties exploited the largely backward and uninitiated voters in their community to obtain an easy ticket to Parliament and obtain ministerial office.

They also use their clout to obtain undue privileges such as important postings in the Government for their kith and kin and supporters such as diplomatic appointments. Most feel that it is these ethnic or religion based political parties that formed the core in the militancy and radicalization of youth belonging to these groups.

Why do political parties have ethnic or religious labels other than to exploit religion and ethnicity to their advantage? This phenomenon of identifying political parties with a particular religion or ethnicity is largely confined to politics of the North and the East. It is easy to appeal to the baser instincts of the voter than take the long route of expounding on political ideology to a largely politically illiterate electorate. With the block vote assured they are in a position to bargain from a position of strength with the major parties for lending support to form Governments after elections.

It was President Gotabaya Rajapaksa who bucked the trend to win on his own accord without reliance on the minority parties at the Presidential Election.

This pernicious practice of labeling parties after a religion or a particular ethnic group encouraged division and heralded the break-up of communities on ethnic lines destroying the national cohesion that was witnessed when the country gained Independence. The naming of political parties based on ethno-religious identities have had other consequences as well such as militancy and extremism that developed into the stage that prepared the groundwork for the Northern conflict and the Easter Sunday carnage. The association of leaders of a particular ethno-religious political party with Saharan and his accomplices only goes to show the dangers of mixing religion and politics. One also recalls that the founder leader of this self-same political party exhorting his voters that a vote against his party was indeed a vote against God for which they would have to account for.

This could well have been the beginning of radicalization of the youth belonging to this particular religion culminating in the Easter Sunday tragedy. Needless to say, it is such conduct that went a long way in accentuating the prevailing ethnic and religious tensions leading to strife. Besides, having political parties based on ethnic or religious identities is a sure recipe for isolating one community from another leading to communal disharmony and xenophobic tendencies that have fractured the cohesive fabric of this nation and those responsible for this state of affairs deserves the severest of condemnation for the damage they have caused to the unity of this country.

There are political parties in the South too which have ethnic and religious labels though mercifully not having any acceptance among the voters of the majority community. Nevertheless their caustic rhetoric and inciting speeches could have a deleterious impact on ethnic harmony and cause further division among communities. In fact one of the recommendations of the Presidential Commission report on the Easter Sunday attacks was calling for the ban on political parties with ethnic and religious labels which needless to say has led to deep divisions and is the cause of ethnic and religion based violence that we have been witnessing from time to time in this country.

It is not that we haven't had politicians from minority communities representing major political parties who held their own in electorates dominated by the majority community in the past. Politicians such as A.C.S. Hameed and M.A. Baker Markar readily come to mind. They ran against candidates representing the majority community and prevailed over their rivals in the Sinhala Buddhist majority electorates. Ideally it is such a scenario that should be nurtured in the present day if we are to remove suspicion and distrust among communities.

Religion is practiced in private and ethnicity is an accident of birth. There is no logic whatever in bringing the two to the forefront as a vehicle for achieving political ends. It is individuals who have little or no confidence in their abilities who use religion and ethnicity to climb the political ladder and this applies even to those politicians among the majority community who think nothing of exploiting religion and race to realize their political ambitions. This trend should end, now.

Inquiries, justice and reality



GUEST Column

RAVI PERERA

A visitor to Sri Lanka will be struck by the very large number of persons employed in what may be broadly described as security, investigative and inquisitorial activity. For the able bodied, and even the not so able bodied, the ranks of security guards or bodyguards are wide open 24/7. Practically every building, establishment and office in the country is guarded around the clock. The stature of a person is assessed not by his character, but the number of bodyguards assigned by the State to guard his person.

If the visitor decides to spend a few days in the country, he will learn that defence makes the biggest expense item in the country's national budget; Perhaps here is one occasion when the country stands in the front ranks with international behemoths like the United States, China and Israel.

Sri Lanka being an island State, has no land border to defend; geographically our only significant neighbour in terms of a potential threat is India, a country we cannot match in any manner; a country which has no demands on our territory, and is on the friendliest terms with us. Our relative smallness in size as well as in numbers, taken with Sri Lanka's economic vulnerability makes it unthinkable to go militarily against larger, stronger countries. It is said that discretion is the better part of valour, sagacious diplomacy runs through the fabric of our foreign policy like a golden thread; we are friend to all, and enemy to none.

Where then lies the threat, who do we arm against? The warlike Romans used to say, if you want peace, prepare for war. Then, the Romans were warriors and empire builders of a historic scale. There are others who think that if you keep preparing for war, eventually you will get your war, an unhappy prospect indeed. They argue that social spending; education, health and infrastructure; while raising living standards and thereby general contentment, can also bring more meaningful security. From the scenarios we have witnessed thus far, the enemy is within, persons born in the country, who for a multiplicity of reasons have become radicalized, turning against the edifice; a repeating theme. A small country, deeply unhappy within.

Further investigation by our academically inclined visitor would reveal that Sri Lankans are unusually litigious, there is hardly a citizen without a pending matter in some court or quasi-judicial tribunal, either as a party to a dispute, or as a witness. Across the country, thousands are compelled to devote their workdays to these interminable law suits on a daily basis, undergoing the inconvenience of attending inquiries, spending money they can ill-afford. Many are victims of crime, mostly petty, while others are caught in a web of civil offences, committed by unfaithful malingerers. Agreements are breached, leases ignored, undertakings dishonoured with abandon, often the offender feigning victimhood; the true victim having to undergo years of frustration waiting for justice.

Justice system

With a satisfactory system of justice seemingly beyond the nation's capabilities, perhaps even at odds with its cultural imperatives, our visitor would think that the citizens of this country would have lost their taste for legal processes. But not so, if he looks at any newspaper he will see that more inquiries are afoot; parliamentary committees, presidential commissions, special audits are working around the clock to untangle a hopelessly tangled web of deceit. It



Central Bank of Sri Lanka

is assumed that such special investigations are needed because the usual investigative bodies such as the police are inadequate, or are hamstrung by legal limitations. Perhaps, with more evolved minds coming to bear on the investigations, the deeper causes; ethnic, religious, social, moral and structural roots of the problem can be highlighted. But do such commissions of inquiry end the matter, bring closure to an objectionable, destructive happening?

About five years ago there was the Sovereign Bond scandal, which shook a nation's trust in its financial structure right down to its administrative core. In 2015, Ranil Wickremesinghe, the then Prime Minister, appointed his long-time associate Arjuna Mahendran Governor of the Central Bank, ignoring the misgivings of several, including the President. The two careers appear to run parallel, whenever Wickremesinghe alighted on the chair of the Prime Minister, Mahendran secures a strategic government appointment from his patron.

Mahendran's last appointment finally exposed the facade; undoing Wickremesinghe, the UNP, and even that 2015 Government. His son -in-law Aloysius was a well-known primary dealer in sovereign bonds, a subject which came under the purview of the Central Bank, now in the hands of Governor Mahendran, reporting to his friend, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe. After making some routine comments about the economy to sound profound, then ordering a new wardrobe of designer brand formal wear to look the part, Mahendran got down to business. No sooner he stepped into his office things began to go seriously wrong with the issue of sovereign bonds. Beginning the fateful day with a breakfast meeting with old friends (now ministers); the bid quantities were changed perfunctorily, the interest on the bonds re-adjusted, not all dealers were informed and the son-in-law ended up securing an overwhelming quantity of the bonds.

Despite the sustained efforts of the politicians to break their spirit, there still survives little islands of integrity in the public service. Appalled at the Governors' brazen conduct, those little voices of conscience spoke quietly, but clearly. A most vital aspect of the system of governance we have inherited is the independent media. A section of the media took up the issue of bonds being loaded in the favour of the Governors son-in-law; naturally, all hell broke loose.

What did the Prime Minister do? He first disparaged those raising questions, suggesting they would not know the difference between sovereign bonds and James Bond. Neither an economist, nor a secret agent fighting international



Former Prime Minister
Ranil Wickremesinghe



Arjuna Mahendran



Arjun Aloysius

crime syndicates, the Prime Minister implied that he was more than expert in these esoteric fields. But the public outcry was loud, not easily to be swept under the rug with inanities.

In a patent effort to obfuscate the issues, he appointed three lawyers from his own political party, the UNP, to investigate the matter which obviously had his party men deeply implicated. Meanwhile, a parliament select committee also began investigating the scam. Here, the UNP MPs played a different role, they were more or less arrayed to challenge the investigation, not unexpected, given that the finger pointed straight at the highest ranks in the UNP Government.

Several investigations

With so many investigations happening one would have thought that the long arm of the law would have reached out for the perpetrators sooner. Not so, in addition to the investigation by the three UNP lawyers, there were two parliamentary investigations and then a Presidential Commission of investigation. All these investigations had copious support from the Police and other agencies. Much time and money were spent, yet there is no closure, in fact, they recommended further investigations. The purpose of the several investigations seems to be just that, to keep investigating.

More recently we had another presidential commission investigating the Easter bombing outrage, when a handful of Islamic extremists blew themselves up in targeted churches and hotels killing and maiming hundreds of innocent civilians. The economic consequences from the horror were dire, especially on the tourism sector. Some of the hotel bombers had checked in at the hotels, providing personal information, while others were caught on security cameras. Even before the day ended, the contours of the orchestrated attack were emerging.

If the evidence suggests that the

bombings was planned and executed by the bombers themselves, then there is closure because the culprits are also dead. They may have had prior dealings with other Muslim groups, but mere association does not amount to complicity, unless there is shared guilt in the planning and execution of this particular act.

Going to the root of our amplified security urges, insistent demand for further inquiries and continuous recourse to legal processes, is perhaps a suspicious mind, easily given to conspiracy theories.

Our general thinking patterns have resulted in no significant scientific breakthroughs or notable intellectual advancements. Although the country reality provides little evidence of superior reasoning powers, or even work capacity, we see dark shadows and deeper motives behind every phenomenon. Being himself a part of some category, and unable to act outside of the requirements of that category, it is very easy for a person here to reduce another to the status of a mere pawn, a stooge or an agent, an automaton just like himself. By that logic, no one is a self-actuated or self-reliant human being; he is only acting at the behest of a hidden person or power.

To that way of seeing the world, it is impossible that the Easter Sunday terrorists were the prime culprits, they were mere pawns of an invisible Chess grandmaster. The same goes for Prabhakaran, Wijeweera, Bin-Laden, Lenin, Mao and for that matter, every other historical figure; all agents for a hidden power; the Sri Lankan mind explores much farther.

On that Easter day, the terrorists could have saved themselves by merely leaving the bombs at the target locations. There were hardly any security checks. Instead, that they chose to die themselves, gives an inkling to their mind-set, or motivations. Their beliefs, interpreted through the narrow prism of fanaticism, beckoned death, instead of promising life.

Anyhow, if there was a hidden hand behind them, a civilian commission of inquiry cannot unravel what investigative agencies like the Police were unable to. A commission of inquiry does not interrogate suspects, administer water-boarding, tap telephones, intercept communications and indulge in other methods which are commonly used in investigating clandestine movements. The commission is duty bound to follow the laws of the land, to the letter.

We are now inured to the bustling security guards, the multiplicity of investigations and the endless inquiries. What in other countries would be a rarity, has become commonplace here. However, we provide intrusive security, conduct unending investigations and end up with long drawn out trials. In the public perception, all these activities are illusory, more an intimidation, a drama which has lost the plot. Meanwhile, justice is sinned against, again and again.



Easter Sunday terror attacks.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

There is more power in unity than division.
- Emanuel Cleaver

ON MY WATCH

BY LUCIEN RAJAKARUNANAYAKE

The United States and its allies - Canada, Britain and the European Union - have announced sanctions on several Chinese officials alleged to have links to what U.S. officials say is a genocidal campaign against Uyghur Muslims.

The sanctions are a change from the foreign policy aspects of former President Donald Trump, and come after a tense high-level meeting between U.S. and Chinese officials in Alaska.

"Amid growing international condemnation, the [People's Republic of China] continues to commit genocide and crimes against humanity" in the Xinjiang region, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement. "The United States reiterates its calls on the PRC to bring an end to the repression of Uyghurs, who are predominantly Muslim, and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang, including by releasing all those arbitrarily held in internment camps and detention facilities."

The international, coordinated sanctions drew condemnation and some immediate retaliatory sanctions from Beijing, showing a growing divide between China and the United States and its trans-Atlantic allies.

Blinken, who is in Europe this week visiting counterparts, noted that the U.K., Canada and the EU were also imposing various sanctions. "These actions demonstrate our ongoing commitment to working multilaterally to advance respect for human rights and shining a light on those in the PRC government and [Chinese Communist Party] responsible for these atrocities," Blinken said.

The EU sanctions were believed to be the first from the bloc to target China on human rights since the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989.

The U.K. imposed sanctions on four individuals and one entity, including the two individual sanctions by the United States.

Canada, meanwhile, announced it is imposing sanctions on the same four individuals and one entity. The Canadian sanctions come at an unusually sensitive time: China has put on trial two Canadians, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, on espionage charges. The men's supporters say they have been detained in retaliation for Canada's arrest of a Chinese telecom executive.

Blinken was among the U.S. officials who met with top Chinese officials in Anchorage last week. The meeting began with harsh words from both sides, with Blinken warning the Chinese that the U.S. did not see its human rights abuses in places like Xinjiang as merely internal matters but rather as threats to the rules-based international order.

China refutes charges

Beijing has dismissed US allegations of genocide in its Xinjiang region as "absolutely ridiculous and completely contrary to the facts," and said it's the lawmakers in Washington who should be wearing the "hat of genocide."

Speaking on Wednesday, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said Beijing firmly opposes the US' insistence on spreading rumours and false information about China's internal affairs, calling on Washington to provide real evidence.

Regarding reports concerning China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang, Zhao stated that the Uyghur population has doubled from 5.55 million to more than 12 million in the past 40 years. He contended that the so-called "hat of genocide" is America's to keep, as he accused Washington of wiping out the native Indian population of North America.

"Anyone who knows American history should know that the United States, through the Westward Expansion, expelled and killed American Indians. The Indian population plummeted from five million in 1492 to 250,000 at the beginning of the 20th century, a decrease of 95 percent," Zhao claimed.

The countermeasures by Beijing on the EU, targeted outspoken members of the European Parliament; Dutch, Belgian and Lithuanian officials; a prominent German think tank focused on China; a Danish foundation; and two European scholars known for their work on the Xinjiang region.

The sanctions block those on the list and their families from

travelling to the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong or Macao, or from doing business with China.

Meanwhile, Russia and China have jointly condemned Western sanctions, a day after the EU, UK, US and Canada blacklisted some senior Chinese officials for rights abuses against ethnic Uyghurs.

The joint response came during a visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to Guilin in southern China. He said EU "unilateral decisions" had "destroyed" ties with Russia.

His Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, said the era of interfering in China's internal affairs had "gone forever".

US and NATO

"We want to revitalise the alliance, to make sure it's as strong and effective against the threats of today as it has been in the past," US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken told a joint news conference with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

He sought to reassure NATO allies, in his first in-person talks with fellow foreign ministers in Brussels, after four years of tension under former President Donald Trump.

"We want to revitalise the alliance, to make sure it's as strong and effective against the threats of today as it has been in the past. ... The meetings in Brussels reaffirm the United States' commitment to our allies and European partners on our shared agenda," State Department spokesman said ahead of the meeting.

NATO Sec.Gen. Stoltenberg said the alliance is "now opening a new chapter" in the transatlantic relationship.

He thanked President Biden for committing to "rebuild the strength of the alliance" and make it "future-proof in a more competitive world".

"There will be no European defence without NATO and there will be no efficient and relevant NATO without Europeans," said French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian.

The State Department said Blinken would focus on concerns over Afghanistan, China, Iran and Russia, climate change, cybersecurity, terrorism and energy security.

The Biden administration has placed great emphasis on repairing relations with European allies, strained by Trump's demands ranging from increasing defence spending to trade rows.

After four years of friction with Washington under the presidency of Donald Trump, who said the alliance was obsolete, NATO's European allies have also welcomed the change in tone under the U.S. President Joe Biden.

Stoltenberg has set out areas where NATO could modernize over the medium term - from climate measures to more sustainable funding of military operations - and needs U.S. support.

Myanmar protests

The mass protests by the people of Myanmar against the military coup continue as the Security Forces open fire on anti-coup protesters. The numbers killed are now 280, with several hundred injured, and thousands detained.

With the continuing mass call for a return to democracy, the military junta has unleashed a deadly wave of violence as it struggles to quell nationwide protests against the February 1



US-NATO revitalise alliance



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (R) elbow bumps with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken ahead of a NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels on Monday. - AFP

oustment and arrest of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

A seven-year-old girl was killed in her home when Security Forces opened fire in Myanmar's second city Mandalay, becoming the youngest victim so far in a crackdown against opposition to last month's military coup.

Staff at a Mandalay funeral service told Reuters that a seven-year-old girl had died of bullet wounds in Chan Mya Thazi township on Tuesday... Soldiers shot at her father but hit the girl who was sitting on his lap inside their home, her sister told the media.

Protests continue defying night time curfews to stage candlelight vigils for the dead, and taking to the streets early in dawn marches to avoid Security Forces. Despite the police action, protesters continue staging impromptu gatherings throughout the day, driving through the towns and flashing the three-finger salute - a sign of resistance against the junta.

Early-bird protesters were also out in parts of Myanmar's commercial hub Yangon, marching with red balloons at dawn with signs saying "Get out terrorist dictator", according to local media.

In the country's second largest city Mandalay, scores of health workers paraded through the streets at dawn carrying flags.

Thursday's protests followed a day of "silent strikes" on Wednesday that left the streets of Yangon and other major centres deserted. International

condemnation from the UN, United States and former colonial power Britain has done little to quell the violent crackdowns.

On Wednesday the United Nations Human Rights Council expressed grave concern over human rights violations and reiterated that those responsible should be held to account...The resolution called for Myanmar to allow UN monitoring officials unrestricted access to assess the country and for the junta to free all those arbitrarily detained - including Suu Kyi and President Win Myint.

"We remain concerned at ongoing arbitrary arrests, including of journalists and civil society leaders," deputy UN spokesman Farhan Haq said.

Israeli polls

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu could not obtain a clear majority in the election held this week. His Likud Party and its current allies will not obtain the 61 seats required to control the Knesset or Parliament.

This is the fourth election in two years, where Netanyahu has failed to obtain a clear majority. He will now have to negotiate for another coalition. His rightwing bloc will win only 59 seats - two short of a threshold in the 120 seat Knesset.

In a surprise development, an Arab party - Raam - which is projected to get five seats could hold the balance of power. It is an 'unnatural' ally to form a coalition with Netanyahu, but

the political confusion makes it a new Netanyahu approach.

The Netanyahu opponents are projected to win 56 seats, according to the latest tally, and although backing from Raam could give them a majority, they are fragmented and unlikely to be able to agree to work together.

If neither bloc succeeds, the country could face its fifth election since 2019.

Israel's electoral system, a form of proportional representation, makes it almost impossible for a single party to win an election outright.

After the initial projections by Israel's main broadcasters on Tuesday night, Benjamin Netanyahu took to the stage smiling at Likud's headquarters. He declared the vote "a great achievement" and spoke of the need for a "stable government" for Israel. His opponent Mr. Lapid said he was "proud" of Yesh Atid's "enormous" achievement and that he would "do everything possible to establish a sane government".

Saudi-Houthi conflict

Saudi Arabia has presented a new peace initiative to end the war in Yemen, including a nationwide ceasefire and the reopening of air and sea links, but its Houthi enemies said the offer did not appear to go far enough to lift a blockade. The initiative announced by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, would include reopening Sanaa airport, and allow fuel and food



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

imports through Hodeidah port, both of which are controlled by the Iran-aligned Houthis.

Political negotiations between the Saudi-backed government and the Houthis would be restarted, he told a news conference. It would take effect when the Yemeni sides accepted.

Yemen's internationally recognised government issued a statement welcoming the offer.

But the Houthis said the initiative provided "nothing new", as it still fell short of their demand for a complete lifting of the blockade on Sanaa airport and Hodeidah port.

"We expected that Saudi Arabia would announce an end to the blockade of ports and airports and an initiative to allow in 14 ships that are held by the coalition," Houthi chief negotiator Mohammed Abdul salam told Reuters. A "humanitarian right" should not be used as a pressure tool, he said.

The United States has welcomed the commitment of Saudi Arabia and Yemen's internationally-recognized government to a ceasefire and negotiations. The Saudi-Houthi war has killed more than 100,000 people, many of them civilians, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLEDD), a database that tracks violence in Yemen.

Rohingya refugees

A huge blaze ripped through a sprawling Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh, forcing at least 50,000 people to flee. Fifteen people are feared dead in the biggest fire to hit the shanty settlement to date.

Nearly 1 million of the Muslim minority from Myanmar, expelled from Myanmar, live in cramped and squalid conditions at the camps in the Cox's Bazar district, with many fleeing a military crackdown in their homeland in 2017.

Officials said the fire on Monday was believed to have started in one of the 34 camps - which span about 8,000 acres (3,237 hectares) of land - before spreading to two other camps.

Humanitarian organisation Refugees International said many children were missing and "some were unable to flee because of barbed wire set up in the camps".

A Save the Children volunteer, Tayeba Begum, said "people were screaming and running here and there [and] children were also running scattered crying for their family".

Two big blazes had also hit the camps in January, leaving thousands homeless and gutting four Unicef schools.

Amnesty International's South Asia campaigner, Saad Hammadi, tweeted that the "fre-

quency of fire in the camps is too coincidental, especially when outcomes of previous investigations into the incidents are not known and they keep repeating".

Afghanistan

The Biden administration is considering a six-month extension for American troops in Afghanistan, just weeks before the May 1 deadline that the Trump administration had negotiated with the Taliban to withdraw all US forces from the country.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has made an unannounced visit to Kabul amid a looming deadline for Washington's final troop withdrawal from the country. He discussed the spike in violence there with President Ghani.

Lloyd Austin's surprise visit to Afghanistan on Sunday came weeks ahead of Washington's final troop pullback, scheduled under a deal reached with the Taliban last year.

According to the Afghan presidential palace, the two sides condemned the increase in violence in the war-battered country and stressed on the need for a durable and just peace process to address the current situation there.

"It's obvious that the level of violence remains pretty high in the country," Austin said. "We'd really like to see that violence come down and I think if it does come down, it can begin to set the conditions for, you know, some really fruitful diplomatic work."

COVID-19: Third Wave

A third wave of the coronavirus pandemic is raising much concern, especially in Europe, with highly increased infections, and a sharp rise in infections in Brazil and India.

Brazil with 12,220,110 infections had 309,685 deaths, pushing hospitals to the brink, being the second country after the US to pass 300,000 deaths. The death toll here has more than tripled since the start of the year, to an average of 2,273 for the past week.

President Jair Bolsonaro announced earlier he was launching a crisis committee to deal with the pandemic, a change of course amid mounting pressure over a situation he has repeatedly minimized.

Brazil, a sprawling country of 212 million people, has now administered at least one dose of vaccine to around six percent of its population, but is far off pace to reach its goal of vaccinating all adults by the end of the year.

India is seeing a new surge in coronavirus cases, and has also observed a substantial number of coronavirus variants.

In midweek, India reported 47,262 new cases, the highest jump since November. Coronavirus-related fatalities are also increasing with 275 deaths reported on Wednesday, the most India has seen since this year.

The western Indian state of Maharashtra, home to the commercial capital Mumbai, is leading the surge and is responsible for more than 60% of new infections. On Wednesday, Mumbai reported more than 5,000 new cases, the most it has seen since the pandemic began.

With the need to increase vaccinations in view of the rise in infections, India has now banned the export of the AstraZeneca vaccine that is largely produced there. This would also affect the supply of vaccines to the Covax facility of the WHO, and also affect the supply of vaccines to many Third World countries.

The COVID-19 vaccine supply in the West is having its own crisis situations, with the EU seeking to stop the export of any vaccines manufactured there to other countries, which will largely affect the UK. The EU and UK are now negotiating an agreement that may prevent a major confrontation on vaccine exports, largely affecting AstraZeneca.

Most EU countries that had temporarily stopped use of the AstraZeneca vaccine, to fears of blood clots, have now approved its use, after the EU medical authorities confirmed it had very little danger.

Details of the COVID-19 spread and deaths are: World - 124,894,108 infected (2,745,702 deaths). US - 30,011,551 (545,282). Brazil - 12,220,110 (309,685). India - 11,787,534 (160,692). France - 4,374,785 (93,083). UK - 4,326,645 (186,624). Italy - 3,440,862 (106,339). Spain - 3,234,319 (73,744). Germany, Poland, Austria and other European countries are also facing a sharp rise in infections, and partial lockdowns are being imposed in the Easter holiday period.



Smoke rises following a fire at the Rohingya refugee camp in Balukhali, southern Bangladesh on March 22, 2021.

All former Government politicians should be held responsible for Easter attacks: Anura Kumara



All politicians of the former government should be held responsible for the Easter Sunday attacks, National People's Power (NPP) Leader MP Anura Kumara Dissanayake said in Parliament yesterday. He said so joining the Adjournment Debate on the report submitted by the Presidential Commission of Inquiry that investigated the Easter Sunday attacks.

Dissanayake said that the entire former government ignored the

extremism that was budding within the community in order to fulfill their personal and political agendas. He added, "A number of groups have already held press conferences and stated that the Commission's report has shortcomings."

"Some parts of the report contain accurate information, whereas others have incorrect conclusions based on correct information—as well as information that has been distorted. However, it is undeniably evident that cru-

cial information regarding the attacks has been swept under the rug," he added.

The NPP Leader said, "We are not judges. However, for those who expect a fair conclusion on this report, I believe our opinions about it will matter. It is true that the previous government was weak, but they clearly had the information and means to prevent this attack."

"After 2015, new phrases such as the 'hunting of war heroes' appeared.

They were followed by talks about the country's intelligence services being compromised. All these stemmed from political agenda, and were solidified when the Easter Sunday attacks occurred," Dissanayake said.

"There was some tension following the attacks, and the country lost its stability. However, the previous government's political leaders did nothing to prevent the spread of extremist ideals in the country. It is in this

backdrop that the present government rose to power, but even they used the tragedy for political mileage," he added.

"Zaharan's activities did not go unnoticed by the intelligence services. The previous government chose to ignore it. The Commission's report should have a broader scope, as all political leaders of the previous government should be held accountable for the attacks. They must face justice," he added.

Forty percent of unrefined coconut oil imports contain toxic chemicals: Arundika

About 40% of the unrefined coconut oil imported to the country contains toxic chemicals, State Minister Arundika Fernando said in Parliament yesterday. Furthermore, he added that crude oil import should be discontinued as well.

He was speaking at a discussion regarding a recently-imported stock of unrefined coconut oil that was unfit for consumption.

MP J.C. Alawathuwala said that there was information suggesting that the stock had been released to the market. However, State Minister Fernando denied the allegations, stating that due to the importation of cheap and unrefined coconut oil, about 40% of the oil contains toxic chemicals.

"A chemical called aflatoxin is present in coconut oil before it is refined. It is

removed from the oil when refined. However, the stock that was imported contained a large amount of aflatoxin. Even if it were to be refined, the percentage of the chemical was too high for it to be completely removed from the stock," the state minister said.

"Therefore, based on a report issued by health officials and the Sri Lanka Standards Institute, the Customs Director-General

issued an order on March 4 to re-export the stock of oil. As high-quality coconut oil is expensive, importers tend to request cheap coconut oil. These consist of 60% coconut oil, 30% synthetic oils, and 10% coconut oil aroma. The ministry has continuously demanded a total ban on coconut oil imports, similar to the one imposed on palm oil," he added.



PARLIAMENT

Sandasen Marasinghe, Camelia Nathaniel and Amali Mallawaarachchi

Sirisena says no witnesses claimed he had prior knowledge of Easter attacks

Former President Maithripala Sirisena said in Parliament yesterday that none of the witnesses interviewed by the Presidential Commission on the Easter Sunday attacks had stated that he was informed of the attacks beforehand. He was speaking at the Adjournment Debate regarding the report on the Easter Sunday attacks submitted by the Presidential Investigation Commission.

The former President said that the day after the attacks, a minister said he knew about the attacks beforehand. He added that several others said the same later on. "This proved their hatred towards me. Even the media played a role in damaging my image by distorting my statements," he said.

"We suffered the LTTE for three decades, from the time it surfaced in the J.R. Jayawardena regime to the day it was defeated by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. During that period, a large number of people were killed in the Sri Maha Bodhiya attack, Central Bank and Maradana bombings, and the Aranthalawa bhikkhu massacre. However, no inquiry was held against the heads of the forces, or any other person in power for that matter, as it was deemed a terrorist attack," Sirisena said.

"Black July was led by ministers of the then government. It marred the image of the country on an international level. During R. Premadasa's rule, police

in East were attacked. They were ordered to surrender, but 800 of them were killed by the LTTE. We have to consider the Easter Sunday attacks as a similar attack," he added.

Sirisena said that the former Prime Minister, Parliament, and Cabinet were not under his control. "Very few listened to me. However, even with these obstacles, I took action for the betterment of this country. Although the US Ambassador insisted on me signing the MCC Agreement, I did not do so. I also stopped the Singapore Commission as its clauses would have affected us," he added.

Since 2015, I instructed the Security Council to prevent terrorism and extremism in Sri Lanka. The first warrant on Zaharan was issued in 2017, but he was not arrested.

The Commission had to consider that fact, but it had not done so. Furthermore, I asked the Council in January, 2019, as to why Zaharan was not arrested," MP Sirisena said. Around 60 terrorists involved in this Easter Sunday attacks were arrested by the police. Priority should be given to take legal actions against them. Information on the attacks had been circulated among high-ranking officials, but I was not informed.

I was the acting Defence Minister when former Presi-



dent Mahinda Rajapaksa was abroad and Prabhakaran was killed. The Security Council is not a new place to me. I would never be negligent about such a matter if I had prior knowledge of it," Sirisena added.

"None of the witnesses who gave evidence before the Commission said that they had informed me about the pending attack. Following the incident, I appointed a special committee to investigate it and report within two weeks. Afterwards, on the request of many, I appointed the Presidential Committee," the MP said.

He suggested that an Anti-Terrorism Centre should be set up in Sri Lanka, as in many other countries had done the same after such attacks.

OBITUARY



MRS. INDRA JAYASURIYA (Mrs. Katulanda)

(Retired Vice Principal - Eriyawetiya Maha Vidyalaya) - Beloved wife of Mr. Somaratne Katulanda (Senior Manager Retd People's Bank) mother of Mahesh Katulanda (Attorney-at-Law), Dr. Prasad Katulanda (Consultant Endocrinologist/Senior Lecturer) and Vindya Katulanda (HSBC Dubai) mother-in-law of Dr. Gaya (NHCL) Mrs. Preethi (Attorney-at-Law) and Mr. Manoj Ladivickz (Abudabi Commercial Bank Dubai), grandmother of Manthi, Ovin, Jaindu and Movinya, passed away. Remains lie at **AF Raymond's at Borella from 9.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. on Friday the 26th & at family home Uswatta Road, Natuduwa Kiribathgoda from 27 morning. Cremation at Endermulla Kanatte on Sunday 28th at 3.00 p.m.**

'Harin could have prevented Easter attacks, but chose to stay silent'

The Easter Sunday attacks could have been prevented had the then Minister Harin Fernando informed the Security Forces what his father had known, Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna Parliamentarian Sanath Nishantha said in Parliament yesterday. He was speaking at the Adjournment Debate on the report regarding the Easter Sunday attacks submitted by the Presidential Investigation Commission.

He said that Harin Fernando failed to inform the Security



Forces about his father's advice about not going to church on Easter Sunday. He added that without doing so, Fernando just stayed at home, allowing innocent civilians to fall prey to the attacks.

Nishantha said the UNP was responsible for the attacks. He added that the Samagi Jana Balawegaya's argument about former President Sirisena being the one responsible for it was

hypocritical as they were the ones who helped him come to power.

"The Opposition said that we won the election due to the attacks, but our victory was guaranteed one year before that, at the Chilaw Cooperative Election. We won all 84 seats back then. The public refused the former regime long before the Easter attacks," he added.

The former regime not only compromised national security, but also crumbled the economy. The economy rate went from 7.5% to 3% during its rule, the MP said

'All members of previous Government knew about Easter attacks beforehand'

MP Kumara Welgama revealed in Parliament yesterday that all members of the previous regime had been informed about the Easter Sunday attacks prior to the incident.

"Parliament convened on the April 24, three days after the incident. At that time, I stated that we were all notified that such an attack was imminent. Claiming that no one knew about this attack is a lie," he said.

Welgama added that no matter how much the incident is discussed, those responsible must eventually face justice. "That is what needs to



be done right now. It is the responsibility of the Head of State to find out who was responsible for the attacks. The present government came to power on the promise that they would arrest those responsible for the Easter attacks. Therefore, I urge them to keep their word," he added.

Ranil had no prior knowledge of Easter Sunday attacks: Harin

Former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe had no prior knowledge of the Easter Sunday attacks, Samagi Jana Balawegaya Parliamentarian Harin Fernando said. He said so during the Adjournment Debate on the Presidential Investigation Commission's Report on the Easter attacks.

Fernando said that former President Maithripala Sirisena did not hand over the functions of the Defence Ministry to an acting minister when he went abroad. He added that conflict was a means for politicians to further their agendas. Those responsible for the Easter Sunday attacks need to face justice soon, the MP said.



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in East were attacked. They were ordered to surrender, but 800 of them were killed by the LTTE. We have to consider the Easter Sunday attacks as a similar attack," he added.

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He suggested that an Anti-Terrorism Centre should be set up in Sri Lanka, as in many other countries had done the same after such attacks.

OBITUARY NOTICE



ALOYSIUS DOMINGUPILLAI CHRISTIE (CANADA)

Retired Asst. Supt. of Postal Dept, Sri Lanka

Beloved husband of Annette (Rajes), former teacher - St. Lawrence Convent, Wellawatte, passed away peacefully on 23rd March 2021. Loving father of Pradeep (Jude), Renuka (Rosemarie) and Dileep (Bede), father-in-law of Chitra and Kanmani, cherished grandpa of Haren (Jeremy), Suwetha (Jasmine), Rishi (Lionel) and Oviya (Julie) - all residing in Canada. Son of late Saverimuttu and Margaret Domingupillai and son-in-law of late P. Joseph and Cecelia Joseph Manuelpillai, loving brother of late Jayam, Mani, Anton, Devi (SL) and Roche (USA), loving brother-in-law of late D.P. Francis Xavier, late Victor Nicholas, Puvila Domingupillai, Nicholas Jayanathan (Colombo), Anton Phillippupillai (USA), late Victor Swampillai and Jayasothy Swampillai (Canada), Dr. Arulraj and Dr. Theresa Joseph (UK), late Jeyaraj and late Anna Joseph.

Private catholic service to be held at 'Our Lady of Good Health' Parish - Canada.

Information: Family

Obituary



"Safe in the Arms of Jesus" Prof. Samuel Jeyam Seevaratnam (F.R.C.S. LDN, F.R.C.S. EDIN, M.B.B.S. Cey)

98 years dearly beloved husband of late Alexander Rosamany (Atputham) Seevaratnam nee Mather, precious dad of Jayantha Seevaratnam (Australia) and Pratheep Seevaratnam (UK), beloved father-in-law of Shirleen Seevaratnam nee Mather entered Glory peacefully in UK on 17th March.

Friends and relations kindly accept this intimation.

Sender Jayantha Seevaratnam (Australia)
Jseev21@gmail.com

New Navy Deputy Chief of Staff calls on Navy Commander



Navy Deputy Chief of Staff Rear Admiral Meril Sudarshana with Navy Commander Vice-Admiral Nishantha Ulugetenne.

Rear Admiral Meril Sudarshana, after having assumed office as the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Navy on March 21, called on Commander of the Navy Vice-Admiral Nishantha Ulugetenne at the Navy Headquarters yesterday.

Rear Admiral Sudarshana, a product of S. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa, joined the Navy on February 28, 1986, as an Officer Cadet of the 14th

intake in the Executive branch. He is an Anti-Submarine Warfare Specialist and has commanded many ships and shore establishments during his career.

The Rear Admiral has also held important appointments such as Director Naval Personnel, Director Sports, Director General Personnel, and Naval Assistant to the Commander of the Navy.

Obituaries

AMARASENA - Y.A. DE SILVA, retired Assistant Commissioner, Labour Department, dearly beloved husband of late Mrs. M.D. Pathma de Silva, beloved father of Tissa, Damith, Chamath and Kithmini, father-in-law of Lekha, Priyanka, Kanchana and Saraj. Remains lie at **Welegedara, Ahungalla**. Cremation at Ahungalla Cemetery at 4.00 p.m. on Saturday March, 27. 023324

ANTON PERERA - (Retired Bank Manager - International Division, People's Bank). Dearly beloved son of late Haysinth and Perlyn Perera, loving husband of Dushathi, darling father of Prashanthi & Rajeeva De Alwis Jayasinghe, Angelo & Dilhara Perera, darling seeya of Joshua, Jacob, Deandre & Brayden. Cortege leaves residence at 3.30 p.m. Saturday 27th March 2021 for Burial at St. Peter & Paul Church, Ragama at 4.00 p.m. (133A, Thewatte Road, Ragama). 024353

RITA WALLEES (nee CLARK) - Beloved wife of Emile Walles, loving mother of Keith, Arlinda and Marian, mother-in-law of Loxly, Nishantha and Andrea, grandmother of Kevin, Adrian, Nicola and Declan, expired. Remains lie at **No. 596, Thewatta Road, Ragama**. Cortege leaves the residence for Burial Service at 4.00 p.m. The Burial will be at Peter and Paul Church, Ragama at 4.30 p.m. on 27th March 2021. 024103

Children adopted after parents die in Passara bus accident

PRASANNA PATHMASIRI,
Uva Provincial Group Corr.

Three children, aged nine, eight and three who were left orphaned following the tragic death of their parents who died

in the bus accident in Passara have been adopted and are to be taken in by the new parents who after hearing of their plight have come forward to care for these three children.

The grandmother of the children is said to be unwell and not in a position to look after the three children.
The father of the child was an epidemiologist while his wife was a teacher in

Ampara who had been living at a rented home in Udapanguwa village, Adawatte, Lunugala.
Both died in the accident while in Badulla for medical treatment.

The images of the children were shared widely on social media with relations seeking financial support to care for them.
It was after seeing this, that a couple had come forward to adopt the children.

Educate youth on dangers of drug abuse - Ven. Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera

ARIYAPALA WANSHATHILAKE,
Kurunegala Central Special Corr.

Ven. Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera participating in a drug prevention programme held at the Kurunegala District Secretariat recently, said that religious leaders and Civil Societies are duty bound to create an awareness and educate the younger generation on the dangers of drugs and alcohol abuse.

Ven. Nalaka Thera requested religious leaders and members of Civil Societies to join forces to eliminate drug addiction among people, especially students and teachers.

He also requested the relevant authorities to submit periodic reports of the progress of drug prevention programmes.

Additional District Secretary G. A. Kithsiri said the

country must be developed systematically so as to guide the younger generation on the correct path. The Government should do its best to discourage illicit liquor consumption which mainly affects the poor and down-trodden masses.

The drug prevention programme was organised by the Kurunegala Secretariat Buddhist Cultural Society.

Circular sent to School Heads on student safety

S.M.WIJAYARATNE,
Kurunegala Daily News Corr.

Thirty eight people including 16 school children have died by drowning while bathing and swimming in unsafe waterways and deep village tanks countrywide during this year.

Consequently, the Education Ministry has requested all schools heads in a Circular

that when school educational and field trips are organised, students should not be allowed to bathe in unsafe rivers, village tanks or reservoirs under any circumstances by teachers responsible for the respective students.

"During the past three years, about 168 persons in Sri Lanka have died by

drowning while bathing and hence, much care on students has to be taken by school authorities," the Circular has emphasized. During the forthcoming New Year season, both school teachers and parents should be on alert of such tragedies, school heads have been instructed by the Education Ministry in the Circular.

"Great Leaders Award-2021"

A teacher of Siri Mihindu Sunday School, Egodayana, Moratuwa and Justice of Peace (Whole Island) and Sri Lanka Navy Officer Deshamanya Lieutenant Commander Lalinda Silva was awarded with the "Great Leaders Award-2021" by Indo-Sri Lanka Friendship Organization at BMICH.

This award was conferred on him in appreciation for outstanding leadership in social services of the country and for the splendid contribution towards mankind and the nation through his excellence, proficiency and simplicity.

Lalinda Silva is a

product of Prince of Wales College, Moratuwa and completed his Masters and Bachelor Degrees in Logistics Management from reputed universities in the country.



He is also a recipient of the Mahatma Gandhi Global Award in 2019 and Deshabandhu title in 2018.

SAARC Development Fund
Thimphu, Bhutan

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Applications for the following positions are invited from the Nationals of SAARC Member States (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan & Sri Lanka) for appointment at SAARC Development Fund, the umbrella financial institution of the SAARC, which is located in Thimphu, Bhutan:

- Assistant Director, Legal
- Assistant Director, Monitoring & Evaluation
- Assistant Director, Economic & Infrastructure Windows

The Terms of Reference (TORs) and prescribed application Form for the above-mentioned positions are available on SDF website <http://www.sdfsec.org/career>.
Application Form, CV, copies of educational and experience certificates should be sent by email to info@sdfsec.org and admin@sdfsec.org latest by April 23, 2021.

NOW SCREENING

हाथी मेरे साथी
HAATHI MERE SAATHI 2021 (HINDI)

Liberty by Scope Cinema 10.30a.m
PVR Cinema - Colombo 9.45 p.m
Scope - Colombo City Centre 4.30 / 7.30 & 10.00 p.m

supported by Liberty Lands and Development Pvt Ltd

MEGA POWER

DRAW NUMBER : 799

OFFICIAL RESULTS

DATE: 25.03.2021

Prize Structure	Prize Money	No. of Winners
1st PRIZE: If all 4 Numbers are correct	1,000,000.00	-
2nd PRIZE: If only 3 Numbers with English Letter is correct	100,000.00	05
3rd PRIZE: If all 3 Numbers are correct	1,000.00	104
4th PRIZE: If only 2 Numbers with English Letter is correct	500.00	186
5th PRIZE: Only 2 Numbers are correct	100.00	5,593
6th PRIZE: If only 1 Number with English Letter is correct	40.00	3,631
7th PRIZE: Only 1 Number are correct	20.00	90,940
8th PRIZE: Only English Letter are correct	20.00	16,541

NEXT MEGA SUPER PRIZE
Rs. 124,967,972.40

NEXT POWER SUPER PRIZE
Rs. 20,938,204.80

NEXT GRAND SUPER PRIZE
Rs. 10,000,000.00

Total Prizes Won in This Draw
Rs. 3,551,360.00

SRI LANKA ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE ASSOCIATION (SASA)

POSTPONEMENT OF 38TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby served to the membership that The 38th AGM of SASA which was scheduled to be held on March 31, 2021 has postponed on the decision of Executive Committee due to unavoidable circumstances.

The new date for holding 38th AGM will be May 07, 2021 at Waters' Edge, Battaramulla, 9.00 a.m. onwards with the honorary participation of H. E. the President, Goyabaya Rajapaksha.

All members intending to attend the AGM are advised to confirm your attendance on or before April 30, 2021 via telephone/fax or email.

Aruna Devendra
Honorary Secretary
Sri Lanka Administrative Service Association (SASA)

TENDER NOTICE

Ministry of Company Estate Reforms,
Tea Estate related Crops,
Tea Factory Modernization and
Tea Export Promotion

Elkaduwa Plantations Ltd.

Applications are invited for Registration of Purchasers for purchase of the coconut yield at Millawana / Hapugaspiya and Nalanda Plantations.

Applications and conditions could be obtained from 29.03.2021 up to 12.30 p.m. on 12.04.2021 from the relevant Plantation Offices from the Sub-Office of the Elkaduwa Plantations Ltd. located at No. 320, Janawathu Piyasa, T.B. Jayah Mawatha, Colombo 10 and from the Head Office of the Elkaduwa Plantations Ltd. at Ratwatta, Ukuwela, after paying a non-refundable fee of Rs. 500/=.

Duly completed sealed applications will be accepted by the Chairman of the Tender Board, at the Head Office, Ratwatta, Ukuwela up to 4.00 p.m. on 12.04.2021.

Chairman, Procurement Board, Elkaduwa Plantations Ltd. Head Office, Ratwatta, Ukuwela.

Tel. Nos : 066-2242522 - Head Office
066-3682461 - Millawana Plantation
066-3669882 - Hapugaspiya Plantation
066-3682755 - Nalanda Plantation
011-2698059 - Sub Office

25.03.2021 - TOTAL PRIZE WINNERS PRODUCED BY NATIONAL LOTTERIES BOARD 965,317

TOTAL PRIZE MONEY DISTRIBUTED AMONG WINNERS Rs.44,797,420.00

Rs.2,000,000.00 PRIZES 02 Rs.1,00,000.00 PRIZES 43

SEVANA

DATE: 25/03/2021
DRAW NUMBER: 325

English Letter: **S** Winning Number: **18 30 37 61**

COMBINATION	PRIZE	NO. OF WINNERS
1st Prize: If all 4 numbers are correct	Rs.1,000,000/-	-
2nd Prize: If 3 numbers are correct	Rs.100,000/-	07
3rd Prize: If 2 numbers are correct	Rs.1,000/-	83
4th Prize: If 1 number is correct	Rs.200/-	166
5th Prize: If any 2 numbers are correct	Rs.100/-	4,120
6th Prize: If English Letter and 1 number is correct	Rs.50/-	2,393
7th Prize: If 1 number is correct	Rs.20/-	58,502
8th Prize: If only Super number is correct	Rs.20/-	9,027

Total Prize Won in this Draw
Rs. 2,698,430/-

Supper Prize for the Next Draw
Rs. 14,000,000/-

SAMPATHA DRAW

DATE: 25-03-2021

Winning Letter: **U** Winning Numbers: **9 5 2 5 7 2**

Prize	Prize Money	No. of Winners
01	2,000,000.00	01
02	100,000.00	04
03	10,000.00	04
04	1,000.00	081
05	100.00	6,631
06	20.00	56,056
07	10,000.00	4
08	1,000.00	67
09	100.00	652
10	50.00	6,630
11	20.00	26,336

LAGNA WARAMA DRAW

Winning Zodiac: **GEMINI** Winning Numbers: **39 71 84**

Prize	Prize Money	No. of Winners
1	500,000.00	07
2	50,000.00	148
3	5,000.00	1,523
4	500.00	5,878
5	50.00	64,809
6	20.00	55,477

Total Prizes won in this draw Rs. 15,938,520.00

The Super Prize of next draw
Rs.10,102,066.20

DHANA NIDHANAYA Official Results

Date - 25/03/2021
Draw Number - 474

English Letter: **D** Winning Number: **32 54 72 79**

COMBINATION	PRIZE	NO. OF WINNERS
1st Prize: If all numbers are correct	Rs. 1,000,000.00	-
2nd Prize: If English Letter and 1 number are correct	Rs. 100,000.00	05
3rd Prize: If any 2 numbers are correct	Rs. 3,000.00	98
4th Prize: If English Letter and 2 numbers are correct	Rs. 1,000.00	222
5th Prize: If any 2 numbers are correct	Rs. 100.00	5,347
6th Prize: If English Letter and 1 number is correct	Rs. 60.00	3,659
7th Prize: If 1 number is correct	Rs. 20.00	91,119
8th Prize: If only English Letter is correct	Rs. 20.00	17,111

Total prize money won in this draw Rs. 3,934,840.00
Number of Prize Winners in this draw 117,561

Next Draw Super Prize
Rs.89,921,928.00

MAHAJANA SAMPATHA

DATE: 25-03-2021

Winning Letter: **K** Winning Numbers: **0 4 2 5 7 4**

Prize	Prize Money	No. of Winners
1st Prize: If all 6 numbers are correct	Rs. 2,000,000.00	01
2nd Prize: If 5 numbers are correct	Rs. 100,000.00	14
3rd Prize: If 4 numbers are correct	Rs. 10,000.00	128
4th Prize: If 3 numbers are correct	Rs. 1,000.00	1,305
5th Prize: If 2 numbers are correct	Rs. 100.00	12,837
6th Prize: If only 1 number is correct	Rs. 20.00	128,975
7th Prize: If all 6 numbers are correct	Rs. 10,000.00	13
8th Prize: If 5 numbers are correct	Rs. 1,000.00	128
9th Prize: If 4 numbers are correct	Rs. 100.00	1,304
10th Prize: If 3 numbers are correct	Rs. 50.00	12,713
11th Prize: If 2 numbers are correct	Rs. 20.00	80,731

Value of prizes won in this draw - Rs.11,844,870.00

The Super Prize of next draw
Rs. 11,061,878.00

Govisettha Official Results

DATE: 25/03/2021

English Letter: **L** Winning Numbers: **06 68 72 79**

Prize	Prize Money	No. of Winners
1 PRIZE: If all 4 numbers correct	Rs. 1,000,000.00	-
2 PRIZE: If 3 numbers correct	Rs. 100,000.00	08
3 PRIZE: If 2 numbers correct	Rs. 2,000.00	182
4 PRIZE: If 1 number correct	Rs. 1,000.00	429
5 PRIZE: If any 2 numbers correct	Rs. 100.00	10,113
6 PRIZE: If English Letter and 1 number correct	Rs. 50.00	6,566
7 PRIZE: If any number correct	Rs. 20.00	187,410
8 PRIZE: If only the letter is correct	Rs. 20.00	30,444

TOTAL WINNERS OF THIS DRAW **215,291**

TOTAL PRIZE MONEY WON IN THIS DRAW
Rs. 6,829,400.00

SUPER PRIZE FOR THE NEXT DRAW
Rs. 79,152,526.80



President Gotabaya Rajapaksa with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa with Chinese President Xi Jinping

Former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena

PASCAL LOTTAZ and ASANKA PRABODANI JAYATHILAKE

Sri Lanka has been playing the non-aligned card in its diplomacy for a while, but with increasing pressure from China, India, and the U.S. in the fields of foreign investment and security cooperation, some analysts have suggested that the small island nation of 22 million will have to choose sides soon. Meanwhile, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has been stepping up his rhetoric about “Sri Lankan neutrality,” which is different from non-alignment and a new foreign policy concept for the country. In September 2020, at the United Nations General Assembly, he strongly emphasized that “Sri Lanka is committed to follow a neutral foreign policy with no affiliations to any particular country or power bloc...”

In fact, talk of neutrality has become a staple on President Rajapaksa’s agenda. In another typical instance late last year, he told a group of foreign diplomats that since “Sri Lanka is located in a place of strategic importance [...] our country is attracted to many parties. In this context, Sri Lanka has chosen neutrality as its foreign policy [...]” At the same time, President Rajapaksa has been visibly anxious to dispel accusations about a China-friendly foreign policy. Sri Lanka’s dependence on Chinese investment has already led to several policy blunders, most famously China’s (partial) control over two Sri Lankan ports, which the President insisted “was only a commercial transaction between our two countries.” While “some described this as a manifestation of a pro-China policy [...] Sri Lanka is a friend of all countries,” according to President Rajapaksa.

However, in terms of political manoeuvring, he has leveraged neutrality-talk mainly against U.S. demands for Sri Lanka to curb its dependency on China. On this front, the United States achieved little under the previous coalition government in Colombo, in which even the West-leaning Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was aiming for a balanced relationship at best. And the current government under President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has turned Washington’s advances down even more firmly, stating neutrality as a reason. That happened again prominently last October, after a visit of then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, during which he called the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) “a predator.” President Rajapaksa reacted to this in a tweet, writing that “Sri Lanka will always maintain a neutral stand in foreign policy and will not get entangled in struggles between power blocs.” Chinese media were visibly pleased with this show of support.

Also domestically, President Rajapaksa has used references to neutrality to reject foreign meddling in internal affairs, especially against human rights accusations about the civil war in which he, as a former military officer, was actively involved. Naturally, the question arises if President Rajapaksa’s love for neutrality amounts to mere lip service or if this rhetoric is the beginning of a foreign policy that might last.

There are signs to suggest both. Sri Lanka has a long history of neutrality, which used to be a base-line foreign policy. That helped the country to regain control over two military bases in 1957 and terminate a security agreement with Great Britain, which used to tie the island’s military fate to the former colonizer. The decoupling allowed Sri Lanka to scale back perceived West-leaning tendencies and, in 1961, to become a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

For a long time, Colombo maintained a strong affinity to the NAM, hosting its fifth summit in 1975, and holding the chairmanship from 1976–1979. The movement provided a platform for Sri Lanka to engage in multilateral diplomacy among the newly decolonized world and within the United Nations, too. During the 1960s and ’70s, Sri Lanka’s main concern was the development of its sovereignty, economy, and independence while staying clear of great power disputes.

Today, Sri Lankans still speak and think fondly of non-alignment. Rathindra Kuruwita recently noted that there “is a widespread belief among Sri Lankan policy wonks that the country’s non-aligned foreign policy allowed the country to navigate the Cold War relatively unscathed, and that this can be again replicated through proper policy initiatives.” Therefore, the nascent re-adjustment toward neutrality could be interpreted as a natural next step in this history and as a tool to push back against U.S., Chinese, and Indian demands for stakes in Sri Lanka’s domestic affairs.

However, the conceptual shift away from non-alignment toward neutrality is not just a difference in jargon. President Rajapaksa’s neutrality talk has not so much complemented but replaced altogether references to non-alignment. The two concepts, although similar, have vastly different implications. Rhetorical manoeuvring between them often indicates underlying foreign policy shifts, as the opposite cases of Sweden and Finland show — both dropped references to neutrality to signal readiness for closer collaboration with NATO.

The most noticeable difference between neutrality and non-alignment is that the for-

SRI LANKA: THE CASE FOR NEUTRALITY

THERE ARE SOUND DOMESTIC AND STRATEGIC REASONS FOR COLOMBO TO PURSUE A STRATEGY OF NEUTRALITY



Foreign Secretary Admiral Prof. Jayanath Colombage

In fact, talk of neutrality has become a staple on President Rajapaksa’s agenda. In another typical instance late last year, he told a group of foreign diplomats that since “Sri Lanka is located in a place of strategic importance (...) our country is attracted to many parties. In this context, Sri Lanka has chosen neutrality as its foreign policy (...)”



West Container Terminal



Madam Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the Chairperson addresses the fifth Non-Aligned Summit held in Colombo in 1975

mer is a well-defined status under international law, with several hundred years of precedents in the realms of trade, military affairs, and humanitarianism. Non-alignment, on the other hand, is a purely political concept, which lost some relevancy due to the end of the Cold War and the fact that de-colonization — one of the NAM’s core topics — is less and less an issue 70 years after most former colonies gained their independence. That is another reason why President Rajapaksa does not need to worry much domestically when he alludes to neutrality, which is a typical European concept of great power balancing.

It is worth noting that neutrality has strong military connotations, as international law under the Hague Conventions (of 1899 and 1907) forbids neutrals from aiding any party in a shooting war. That includes the prohibition to lend neutral territory to belligerents. While this might look like going against Chinese interests in Sri Lankan ports, there are no indications in Chinese media or state publica-

tions that the CCP interprets this as a problem.

THE DOMESTIC FACTOR

Sri Lanka’s shift toward full neutrality also has a local component, although that, too, is connected to the influence of external actors. President Rajapaksa, who came to power in 2019, is the brother of the former President and current Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, under whose presidency Sri Lanka’s debt to China first spiraled out of control. The subsequent lease agreements that were struck to clear the debt included an infamous deal for one terminal at Sri Lanka’s main port in Colombo, which handed full sovereignty over the facility to China. In 2014, Beijing took strategic advantage of the terminal by having a submarine dock there on the very day when Japan’s then-Prime Minister Abe Shinzo visited Sri Lanka.

The affair was one of several embarrassments about the port that had political consequences for the older Rajapaksa. In 2015, he lost the presidency and his party suffered at the polls. However, even his successors could not undo the damage. Sri Lanka was forced to hand over also a second port (in Hambantota) including 15,000 acres — albeit this time with explicit guarantees that it could not be used for military purposes.

Recently, President Rajapaksa has shown signs that he does not want to repeat past mistakes and hopes to counteract one-sided Chinese programmes by diversifying Sri Lanka’s investor portfolio, especially through Indian participation in infrastructure projects. The government’s 2019 decision for a deep-sea terminal at Colombo Port (right next to the Chinese-owned terminal) operated by India and Japan has widely been seen as part of this rebalancing strategy. However, such projects have themselves been subject to political fallout and zigzagging. After intense local protests, the government decided that it would abandon the project in favour of a fully nationally owned terminal, which angered both potential partners. But, on March 2, President Rajapaksa’s government once again reversed course, announcing that the West Container Terminal (WCT) would, after all, be offered for investment to India and Japan, allowing them to hold 85 percent of stakes — the same rate that China has on its terminal next door.

The episode shows the delicate connection between domestic affinities and foreign relations. Alleged Indian attempts at meddling in Sri Lankan internal and foreign policy have been a constant source of public anxiety and frustration. At the same time, China will not be safe from local unease either. The public has shown increasing distrust and worries about the opaque and unaccountable nature of China’s “easy money.” Worries about failing mega-projects, the increasing number of Chinese labourers in the country, and growing

debt rate have led to protests against the pro-Chinese government, too.

With these experiences, it comes as no surprise that the Rajapaksa brothers have become more cautious. Already during the election campaign, in 2019, Gotabaya Rajapaksa showed a strong preference for full neutrality, which became part of his inaugural address. To his local audience, he promised that “Sri Lanka will remain neutral in the global arena and will not intervene in any conflicts.”

Importantly, the past experiences also led to something of a national consensus. Neither President Rajapaksa’s internal rivals nor the main opposition party, the SJB, have voiced disapproval over his neutrality course — although Wickremesinghe has not picked up the same language. Moreover, also in the Foreign Office, Sri Lanka’s top diplomats are beginning to frame their country’s foreign policy as one of equidistance from great powers. In February 2021, Foreign Secretary Admiral Jayanath Colombage told India’s prominent English language daily, *The Hindu*, that Sri Lanka would “maintain neutrality” in “the major power game” and that friendly relations for economic purposes with all countries, “will determine our foreign policy.”

THE CASE FOR “FULL NEUTRALITY”

All in all, full neutrality is a relatively new concept in Sri Lanka’s foreign policy discourse, and it is connected to the political development of the Rajapaksa family. However, despite good reasons to doubt the sincerity of the approach, the current neutrality talk is not only a one-sided affair. It also gives the government the possibility to fence off encroachments from all sides, including China. In particular, worries about territorial sovereignty over ports make a neutrality policy a viable and sensible option.

Neutrality has always been a policy tool that created diplomatic wiggle-room for countries that did not see their future in the tight embrace of one or the other regional or global power. For domestic and international reasons, following a neutrality policy makes sense to Colombo and will probably also make sense to future governments. The more pressure foreign actors put on Sri Lanka, the stronger the case for a true neutrality policy will become domestically. What that policy will be — for instance, an armed, legally-based, and permanent neutrality, akin to those of Switzerland or Austria, or rather a political commitment like those of Mongolia or Serbia — remains to be seen. On which pillars it will stand, and whether or not that will include closer ties again to the NAM, is certainly up for debate. (*The Diplomat*)

For a long time, Colombo maintained a strong affinity to the NAM, hosting its fifth summit in 1975, and holding the chairmanship from 1976–1979. The movement provided a platform for Sri Lanka to engage in multilateral diplomacy among the newly decolonized world and within the United Nations, too. During the 1960s and ’70s, Sri Lanka’s main concern was the development of its sovereignty, economy, and independence while staying clear of great power disputes

After two months at the training school, having enhanced their fitness, trainees begin the Assault Obstacle Course, which has 15 formidable challenges. This tests every muscle in your body and your mind's coordination. Amongst the obstacles, the recruits had to crawl under razor-sharp barbed wire, climb onto a net and walk carefully on the trapper lines. Now sweating and pumped up, they began stepping with speed on swinging logs, a 90-degree 'Iguana' wall – a real challenge and finally a jump across a nine-foot wall



CREATING THE FORMIDABLE STF COMMANDO

Jungle training is carried out for 14 days. The police commandos are also taught helicopter drills. Ambitious recruits master the basics on how to board and exit a helicopter, with their weapons primed and ready. The STF are the pioneers of Small Team Operations in Sri Lanka. Their formidable Cheetah Teams contributed significantly throughout the conflict era. Today the Cheetah teams are ready to respond to other threats

DISHAN JOSEPH

The Sri Lanka Police has a history of more than 150 years. Since its inception, it primarily took on the role of crime prevention and crime detection. This nation witnessed an insurgency from the South and years later from the North.

In the early 1980s, police stations in the Northern and Eastern Provinces came under attack from LTTE cadres. At this juncture, there was a need for the then Police Department to have a rapid response force with enhanced firepower. It was the late Ravi Jayawardene who fully understood the need to fill this lacuna and laid the foundation for the Police Special Task Force (STF). He is still venerated as the founding father of the STF. His visionary leadership prompted him to take bold decisions amidst challenges, to set up the STF Training Academy in Katukurunda.

I have been privileged to be associated with this academy for many years. Its location and different forms of natural terrain are ideally suited for this kind of rigorous training. The school compound is bestowed with dense foliage and small hills which replicate a jungle environment, as the STF often finds itself in the similar theatre of combat. During my preliminary visits I was guided by the then Director - Training, Superintendent of Police Athula Daulagala (presently SSP/Deputy Commandant). How does a young man or woman qualify to become an elite police commando? After a recruit enters the school, his educational certificates are verified along with other documents. He is paired with a 'buddy' – another new recruit. I was given a camp orientation with Sub Inspector Dilshan Kudahetty. The academy is a massive area and includes an armoury, stores, library, gym, swimming pool, firing range, parade ground, mess (meal hall), hospital, salon, administration office, temple and accommodation billets.

The entire compound covers 65 acres of land that has a mixed terrain with jungle thickets, rock formations and fields. Our first stop was at the stores where an Inspector issued a blue drill overall, boots and blue beret to every new recruit. They also receive a mess tin (utensil to eat), a poncho (military style raincoat), backpack, rope and a groundsheet. One of the first series of lectures for the recruits is to appreciate and understand the history of the STF, the law and its implications, the court systems, the Evidence Ordinance and criminal proceedings. Another key subject is taught by Sub Inspector A.M.S. Rajitha. He teaches recruits to use the compass and GPS (Oregon 650) systems and read maps which are vital for reconnaissance. This is an important element of training when small STF teams are deployed to attack the enemy, travelling long distances from the safety of their home base.

Physical and mental wellbeing is paramount to produce a robust batch of police commandos. It is assumed that a young recruit would burn 2,500 calories per day. At boot camp, a refreshing mug of tea is served at 5.30 am, after which a range of physical training is carried out. A glass of milk is served at 8.00 am. This is followed by breakfast at 8.30 am. The recruits eat and barely talk at the table. Theory sessions are conducted in classrooms until 12.30 pm and the young men and women adjourn for lunch. The men and women have their own intakes. The next break is at 3.30 pm for tea and after a rigorous day on the field in the scorching sun, dinner is a looked forward to meal dished out at 7.30 pm. Each trainee has so much of information to process, as they learn many new topics. At 9.00 pm, a roll call is done by the platoon OIC to ensure that all have survived the day and remain ready to take on the following day.

The next segment is the most crucial for any recruit - learning the lessons of commando tactics. Tactics are crucial to achieve a given mission objective with a team. Tactics also include fieldcraft: the way of moving in the jungle silently as an effective platoon. I was taken into the dense foliage by Sub Inspector L.H. Silva, a veteran tracker who showed me how to blend in with the trees and bushes. Mosquitoes buzzed around us. In real life combat scenarios, STF teams have encountered poisonous snakes, scorpions, deadly spiders, bees and elephants.

We joined a six-man foot patrol moving with caution. At the helm is the lead scout who always maintains a 160-degree field of vision. He must remain alert using hand signals to caution the others. The second is the cover man: his task is to provide cover to the scout. The section commander is in position 3, followed by the com-

municator who carried a Cougar manpack VHF radio. He relayed real-time feedback to the base. The medic is flanked by the last man on the team who carried a light machine gun. The heat and mosquito stings test your patience. Jungle training is carried out for 14 days. The police commandos are also taught helicopter drills. Ambitious recruits master the basics on how to board and exit a helicopter, with their weapons primed and ready. The STF are the pioneers of Small Team Operations in Sri Lanka. Their formidable Cheetah Teams contributed significantly throughout the conflict era. Today the Cheetah teams are ready to respond to other threats.

At the end of this exercise, we were joined by the academy's Chief Instructor, Chief Inspector Gihan Gunaratne who explained the technique of 'harboring' which is a position of resting. A poncho (raincoat) is spread on the ground. A second poncho is attached on top using a rope. This makes a tent-like shelter where two team members can rest, as two others stand on duty. These are the risks when operating in hostile environments. Returning to the administration block, I observed a Drill Instructor (DI) Sergeant. Under his tutelage, recruits learn to salute. It is the role of the DI to maintain discipline. In the evening, we headed to the firing range. I had anticipated witnessing this as the firearms training of the STF is world class. An experienced instructor emphasized the need for safety at all times. Issuing an automatic rifle like the M-16 or T-56 to a recruit is done carefully. Marksmanship is not only about hitting the target, but requires discernment and temperament to discharge the weapon.

Special Task Force recruits do practise 'dry' runs of loading a T-56 rifle. STF men and women must be able to shoot accurately from three positions: prone, kneeling and standing. Additional firing is done in the jungle-training segment. At 8.30 pm, training ended for the day. The young trainees were surely feeling tired, but their eyes resonated with determination. This firing is later augmented with advanced weapons such as Light Machine Gun (LMG), MPMG and 60mm mortar. After breakfast on Day 2, I entered the classroom of the Explosives Branch. Inspector P.R.S. Bandara taught a class on the basics of searching a human for concealed weapons or explosives. Recruits realized the impact of various exploding devices from a hand grenade to deadly claymore mines. The young men and women also learn first aid and communication. Both these subjects are vital, especially, when sent on a danger-laden mission.

After two months at the training school, having enhanced their fitness, trainees begin the Assault Obstacle Course, which has 15 formidable challenges. This tests every muscle in your body and your mind's coordination. Amongst the obstacles, the recruits had to crawl under razor-sharp barbed wire, climb onto a net and walk carefully on the trapper lines. Now sweating and pumped up, they began stepping with speed on swinging logs, a 90-degree 'Iguana' wall – a real challenge and finally a jump across a nine-foot wall. For those later advancing to specialized teams, paratrooper training is conducted with the assistance of the Air Force. Water survival courses are conducted by the Navy.

STF Commandos learn the art of abseiling and rappelling using ropes and metal harnesses from a 54-foot tower, a test of endurance. On completion of basic training, the recruits take part in a passing out parade and wear the coveted Green Beret which is a symbol of national pride. These young men and women have been tried and tested. Their willpower is enhanced in a manner which sharpens their thinking and decision-making. Teamwork is inculcated to achieve solid results as the STF is called upon to intervene into dangerous situations. The present STF Commandant is DIG Waruna Jayasundara and the Director Training is Superintendent of Police R.A.A.K. Rathnayake. The gradual transformation of a recruit into a resilient Special Task Force commando is a journey of determination.



Pfizer begins COVID vaccine trial in children

US: Pfizer said Thursday it had begun clinical trials for its COVID vaccine in children under the age of eleven, an early sign of the next stage of the global immunization campaign.

"Together with our partner BioNTech, we have dosed the first healthy children in a global Phase 1/2/3 continuous study to further evaluate the safety, tolerability, and immunogenicity of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine," the company said in a statement to AFP.

"We are proud to start this much needed study for children and families eagerly awaiting a possible vaccine option."

According to details posted on the site clinicaltrials.gov, the company is testing three different dosing levels for use in this age group.

The company is already testing the shots in children aged 12 to 15, and its US emergency authorization covers people aged 16 and up.

Pfizer joins Moderna and AstraZeneca in testing their vaccines in younger children, while Johnson & Johnson has plans to follow.

Under-18s account for roughly a fifth of the US population of 330 million, and most experts believe it will be necessary to make inroads

towards immunizing children in order to achieve population level immunity.

Mexico passes 200,000 COVID deaths

Mexico became the world's third country to surpass 200,000 COVID-19 deaths, as fears grew of another wave of infections after Easter. The nation's COVID-19 fatality toll now stands at 200,211, the health ministry said in its daily update. It was on March 18, 2020 that a man named Carlos Hernandez became Mexico's first known COVID-19 victim, at a time when doctors were facing an adversary they knew little about.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who has himself recovered from the virus, was accused of being slow to impose a lockdown and has worn a mask only on rare occasions.- AFP

Brazil surpasses 100,000 new COVID cases in a day

Brazil recorded 100,000 new COVID-19 cases in one day on Friday adding another grim record in a country where the pandemic

has killed more than 300,000 people, the Health Ministry said.

With the new cases, at least 12.3 million people are now known to have been infected with the coronavirus in Brazil. The average of new daily infections over the past seven days is 77,050 - twice what it was in January.

On Tuesday the daily death toll surpassed 3,000 for the first time. Brazil's daily number of fatalities is now the highest in the world.

Syria sends oxygen aid to Lebanon

The Syrian Government Wednesday offered 75 tonnes of oxygen to neighbouring Lebanon during a visit by its health minister in response to a request for Covid-19 assistance.

"We will supply Lebanon with 75 tonnes of oxygen in instalments of 25 tonnes a day for a period of three days," Health Minister Hasan al-Ghabbash told reporters after a meeting with his Lebanese counterpart.

US workers offered bonuses to get COVID-19 vaccination

As COVID-19 vaccination drives get into

gear across the United States, some businesses are offering transportation, paid time off and bonuses of up to \$500 to encourage workers to get the job.

Labour-intensive industries like slaughterhouses, supermarkets and farms, whose workers are at higher risk of contracting the virus, have taken the lead, with several large grocery chains offering two to four hours paid leave time for employees to get vaccinated.

California-based Bolthouse Farms, which sells carrots, smoothies and juices, holds weekly immunization sessions at its main site and pays \$500 to all full-time employees who accept the shot

India delays vaccine exports as cases soar

India appeared Thursday to have put the brakes on exporting COVID-19 vaccines as it battles a new wave of COVID-19 infections at home.

India recorded more than 50,000 new coronavirus cases on Thursday for the first time since November, and aims to inoculate 300



A healthcare worker prepares a Pfizer coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination.

million people by August. So far, 53 million shots have been given so far.

India is a major vaccine supplier to other nations, particularly poorer ones, including under the Covax global inoculation programme led by the World Health Organization and the Gavi alliance.

So far it has sent more than 60 million doses to 76 countries, mostly AstraZeneca shots manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII), the world's largest vaccine maker by volume. - AFP

In first press conference as President

Biden doubles vaccine pledge, plans to run again



US President Joe Biden speaks during a news conference at the White House, on Thursday.



US: US President Joe Biden on Thursday promised 200 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine would be administered in his first 100 days in office, doubling his initial goal, as he said at his first news conference that he intended to seek another term.

Biden also said the United States would likely miss a May 1 deadline set by former President Donald Trump to pull all troops from Afghanistan, although he made clear he expected to end America's longest war within the year.

Delving into details and offering low-key answers,

Biden cast a dramatically different character than his bombastic predecessor in his first formal encounter with reporters in the White House's imposing East Room since he entered office on January 20.

Biden waited longer than any modern President to hold a news conference, with his aides apparently worried that the free-wheeling 78-year-old politician - who joked that he entered the Senate "120 years ago" - would veer off a carefully crafted message.

But Biden appeared largely at ease and in command as he cast himself as a seasoned Washington operator who would tackle pressing problems starting with COVID-19, which has

killed nearly 550,000 people in the United States.

"I've been hired to solve problems, not create division," Biden said, pointing to passage of a \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill that sends money to most Americans.

"I'm a fairly practical guy. I want to get things done." Biden began his news conference by announcing that he planned to administer 200 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine in his first 100 days - the end of April.

Biden pushed back on Republican charges of a crisis and voiced compassion for people from Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua who are fleeing violence and poverty.

Biden has put Vice Presi-

dent Kamala Harris in charge of the border situation, for the first time giving a specific portfolio to his number two who has constantly been at the side of America's oldest ever President.

But amid speculation that Biden is laying the groundwork for Harris in the 2024 election, the President said he was "a great respecter of fate" but plans to run.

"My plan is to run for reelection. That's my expectation," Biden said. Biden also promised to "respond accordingly" if North Korea escalates missile testing, after Pyongyang fired two suspected ballistic missiles into the sea, but also offered diplomacy. - AFP



Tornadoes kill five in Alabama

US: A cluster of tornadoes swept through the southern US state of Alabama Thursday evening, killing at least five people, authorities said.

Video posted on social media showed debris swirling in the air, trees uprooted and homes damaged.

Three members of one family were killed while sheltering in "a wooden structure" in the town of Ohatchee

and another died in mobile home there, Calhoun County coroner Pat Brown told AFP. Another person died in the town of Wellington, Brown said.

The sheriff's office said on Facebook that there had been significant damage in Calhoun County and advised residents to stay home and off the roads as more storms were expected. - AFP



Residents survey the damage to homes after a tornado hit the town of Birmingham in Alabama, damaging a number of homes on Thursday.

Australians warned of deadly spider 'plague' after floods

AUSTRALIA: A "plague" of the world's most venomous spiders could swarm Sydney after torrential rain and flooding, the Australian Reptile Park said, warning that the deadly arachnids could seek refuge in homes as they escape the deluge.

Relentless downpours have caused vast flooding in New South Wales state, with parts of suburban northwest Sydney still under water.

Residents welcomed sunshine after days of rainfall, only to receive an "urgent warning" to brace for an influx of the deadly funnel-web spider, which is endemic to the Sydney region.

"The upcoming warm weather and high levels of humidity is the perfect storm for a funnel-web spider BOOM in coming days," park director Tim



The funnel-web spider is one of the world's most venomous arachnids.

Faulkner said in a statement.

"With the incredible flooding that we've experienced across the Greater Sydney area, they have

been forced out of their habitat and are seeking refuge in dryer areas," he added. "Unfortunately, this could mean that they'll be finding their way into resi-

dential homes very shortly."

Images of thousands of spiders escaping floodwaters have already gone viral on social media in recent days, terrifying arachnophobes as masses of the eight-legged creatures swarmed up fences and buildings.

Sydney funnel-webs are widely feared for their notoriously toxic and fast-acting venom, with 13 recorded deaths from bites. However, no one is believed to have died since an anti-venom programme was introduced in the early 1980s.

The Australian Reptile Park - which supplies life-saving antivenom - has encouraged people who "feel safe enough to do so" to catch and deliver wandering funnel-web spiders to designated collection facilities. - AFP

Struggle to refloat grounded Suez Canal megaship

Russia trolls Suez Canal with northern 'alternative'

RUSSIA, EGYPT: Russia cheekily pushed the Northern Sea Route Thursday as an "alternative" to Egypt's Suez Canal after a huge container ship blocked the busy shipping lane.

President Vladimir Putin has long promoted the passage along the country's Siberian coast as a rival to the Suez Canal, and Russia seized on the Egyptian route's traffic jam to play it up again.

The Japanese-owned, Panama-flagged MV Ever Given got stuck Tuesday during a sandstorm, blocking the waterway that connects the Mediterranean with the Red Sea and which handles more than 10 percent of global maritime trade.

Meanwhile, the owners of a giant container vessel blocking the Suez Canal said Thursday

they were facing "extreme difficulty" refloating it, prompting Egypt to suspend navigation through one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

The Suez Canal Authority (SCA) said it was trying to refloat the Panama-flagged MV Ever Given, a 400-metre (1,300-foot) long vessel which veered off course and ran aground in a sandstorm on Tuesday.

Satellite pictures released by Planet Labs Inc show the 59-metre wide container ship wedged diagonally across the entire canal. The Suez Canal drastically shortens travel between Asia and Europe because it prevents vessels from having to navigate around southern Africa's Cape of Good Hope.

The Singapore-to-Rotterdam



Satellite image shows the MV 'Ever Given' (Evergreen) container ship lodged sideways and impeding all traffic across Egypt's Suez Canal.

route, for example, is 6,000 kilometres (3,700 miles) and up to two weeks shorter than going around Africa. Nearly 19,000 ships passed through the canal last year

carrying more than one billion tonnes of cargo, according to the SCA. Egypt earned \$5.61 billion in revenues from the canal in 2020. - AFP

Thailand faces meth trafficking surge after Myanmar coup

THAILAND: Thailand braces for a fresh methamphetamine influx after a coup in neighbouring Myanmar.

The kingdom's narcotics bureau has already seized more than 80 million "yaba" pills just in the past six months, a record haul partly blamed on a supply glut caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

But now the United Nations warns of an even bigger deluge as Myanmar's legal economy tanks, following weeks of nationwide unrest and strike action following the military takeover.

Synthetic drug production is already the number one revenue source for several insurgent groups and militias



Village watchmen on the Mekong river are Thailand's first line of defence against a fresh methamphetamine influx from Myanmar.

in lawless pockets of Myanmar close to the borders of Thailand and Laos. Methamphetamine's more potent crystallised form normally gets sent on to

wealthier overseas markets such as Australia and Japan, although pandemic transport bottlenecks have disrupted that trade.

- AFP

XI STRESSES MORE EFFORTS TO SERVE, INTEGRATE INTO NEW DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

CHINA: Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed more efforts to serve and integrate into the new development paradigm in fully building a modern socialist country.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks during his inspection trip to east China's Fujian Province from Monday to Thursday.

Xi also called on Fujian to make greater progress in developing a modernized economy, take bigger strides in exploring a new way of integrated development on both

sides of the Taiwan Strait, and achieve greater breakthroughs in creating a high-quality life.

The inspection trip took Xi to the cities of Nanping, Sanming and Fuzhou. He researched local efforts in implementing the guiding principles of the fifth plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, facilitating a good start in the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), and coordinating regular epidemic control and economic and social development.

On Monday afternoon, Xi visited the Wuyishan National Park, one of the pioneers in piloting the national park system.

The aim to build a nature reserves system centering on national parks is to keep the ecosystem intact and protect biodiversity, Xi said.

Visiting a tea farm, Xi called for coordinated efforts to promote tea culture, the development of the tea industry and the use of technology in the sector.

He also stressed more efforts in implementing the arrangements to dispatch technical professionals to rural areas to help with local development.

After the tea farm, Xi visited a park dedicated to Zhu Xi, a renowned Chinese philosopher of the 12th century. The

president called for innovative efforts to transform and develop fine traditional Chinese culture.

While visiting Shaxian District of Sanming on Tuesday, Xi made his first stop at Shaxian General Hospital where he learned about the reform of local medical and healthcare system and emphasized that people's health is a hallmark of socialist modernization.

Xi also called for deepening reform of the medicine and healthcare system, balanced distribution of high-quality medical resources and improved infrastructure at the primary level.

- XINHUA



General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and President Xi Jinping learns about local efforts to develop the tea industry while visiting an eco-friendly tea garden in Nanping City, Fujian Province. - XINHUA

HASINA CALLS ON BANGLADESHIS TO TAKE NATION TO NEW HEIGHTS

BANGLADESH: Bangladesh marked 50 years of independence from Pakistan on Friday.

The former East Pakistan emerged as a new nation in 1971 after a brutal war involving India marked by horrific abuses that Bangladesh says killed as many as three million and displaced many more.

For decades the nation was ravaged by famines, coups and natural disasters but in recent years under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has boomed economically with GDP per head more than quadrupling since 2000.

Hasina, 73, daughter of Bangladesh's murdered "founding father" Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has been the Prime Minister of Bangladesh since 2009.

Hasina's Government had planned a year-long programme of events to mark her father's birth centenary and the golden jubilee of independence, but most festivals were suspended because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Still, and despite COVID-19 case numbers rising in recent weeks, Dhaka has held 10 days of celebrations culminating on Friday for Independence Day in the presence



In this photo provided by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi's twitter handle, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives a bouquet of flowers from Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka, Bangladesh yesterday, to join celebrations marking 50 years of the country's independence.

of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other regional leaders.

"Let's forget all divisions and get inspired by the spirit of the liberation war to build Bangladesh as a developed and secular Sonar (Golden) Bangla as envisioned by the Father of the nation," Hasina said

in an address broadcast live on television and on social media Thursday evening. She called on the country's 168 million people to "take a fresh vow" to take Bangladesh to new heights as she charted a blueprint to make it a "developed nation" by 2041. - AFP

NEPAL RELAXES QUARANTINE RULES AHEAD OF EVEREST SEASON

NEPAL: Nepal has eased quarantine rules for visitors in an effort to attract more climbers to Mount Everest, officials said Friday, after the pandemic wiped out last year's season and devastated the tourism industry.

Visitors will be tested on arrival and will have to stay in quarantine only until their results come back negative, under a policy made public Thursday evening.

"We expect that climbers and trekkers who were postponing expeditions or trips due to tough rules will be coming to Nepal after this decision," Mira Acharya, director at the country's tourism department, told AFP.

Earlier, visitors had to stay in quarantine for seven days. They will still have to present proof of vaccination or a negative PCR result before arriving in the country. Dambar Parajuli, president of the Expedition Operators Association of Nepal, said the decision "opens doors

for revival of tourism". "This sends a positive message. Last-minute bookings are unlikely, but it will help long-term," he said.

Nepal has so far issued 45 permits for various Himalayan mountains, and it is expected that there will be around 300 foreign climbers on Everest, the world's highest mountain.

The Tibet side of Everest continues to be closed to foreigners this year, possibly adding more climbers on the Nepal side. Before the pandemic, Nepal was struggling to cope with the large number of people summiting Everest, with sometimes deadly consequences.

In 2019, the traffic-clogged spring climbing season saw a record 885 people climb the peak, 644 of them from the south and 241 from the northern flank in Tibet. The season ended with 11 deaths on the mountain, with at least four blamed on overcrowding. - AFP



A long queue of mountain climbers line a path on Mount Everest during the 2019 climbing season.



MYANMAR BEAUTY QUEEN HITS OUT AGAINST MILITARY COUP



Myanmar beauty queen Han Lay, in Bangkok competing for the Miss Grand crown.

THAILAND: A commitment to "world peace" might be a beauty pageant cliché, but as blood spills in the streets of Myanmar, Miss Grand International contestant Han Lay made a plea to end the violence in her homeland.

The Myanmar junta has unleashed deadly violence as it struggles to quell nationwide protests against the February 1 ouster and arrest of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Han Lay, in Bangkok competing for the Miss Grand crown against 63 other contestants, hit out at the crackdown, in which more than 280 people have been killed.

"I want to say from here to the world: please support the Myanmar people," she told Thailand's Khaosod English news outlet.

"So many people die in Myanmar by the guns of the military... Please save us."

The psychology student said some of her peers had been detained since the coup.

"Students from the University of Yangon, my university, were also detained," she said on her Instagram page.

"In a democracy, it is important that we can speak. Our voices must be heard. But now we have no freedom in Myanmar. It is a human rights violation. Release our students."

During the pageant's national costume contest on Wednesday, Han Lay's golden outfit channelled "Goddess of Peace," according to her Instagram account.

"Our Myanmar people are walking on the streets to fight for democracy. As a representative of Myanmar I will walk on the stage of Miss Grand International with the (message) stop the war and violence," she wrote on her Facebook page.

Her social media posts are a mix of graphic photos and footage from the unrest back home, protest messages and photos of herself wearing ballgowns.

The winner of Miss Grand International will be announced Saturday in Bangkok. - AFP

ISRAELI FACES ANOTHER POLITICAL DEADLOCK AFTER FOURTH GENERAL ELECTION IN TWO YEARS

ISRAEL: Israelis faced further political gridlock Wednesday after their fourth general election inside two years offered no clear indication on whether Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or his rivals could form a government.

Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party won the most votes, boosting his chances of building a coalition with a majority in the 120-seat Knesset.

But a rival "Anyone but Netanyahu" camp of parties was running neck-and-neck, spelling more uncertainty ahead as the official vote count continues and parties engage in intense horse-trading.

Once again, however, Netanyahu was denied a clear path to victory, even though Likud scored more than 24 percent of the vote and handily beat its closest rival, the centrist Yesh Atid, which took around 14 percent.

Analysis by state broadcaster Kan showed that, with close to 90 percent of ballots counted, the combined strength of the declared pro-Netanyahu parties was 52 seats while those seeking to end his long tenure commanded 56.

This leaves both camps short of the 61 seats required to build a government and in search of more partners.

Netanyahu will likely require support from two, dramatically opposed, kingmakers: his estranged former protégé Naftali Bennett of the right-wing Yamina party, which by Kan's projection won seven seats, and the leader of the conservative Islamic Raam party, Mansour Abbas.

Bennett, a multi-millionaire former high-tech entrepreneur who made a name in politics with hard-line religious-nationalist rhetoric, has so far not declared which way he will jump. If Netanyahu can't reach a deal with Bennett and his opponents cannot unite, a fifth election is possible. - AFP



Israel's never-say-die Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu.



African elephants

SHARP DECLINE IN AFRICAN ELEPHANT POPULATIONS

SWITZERLAND: Decades of poaching and shrinking habitats have devastated elephant populations across Africa, conservationists said Thursday, warning that one species found in rainforests was a step away from extinction.

In an update of its "Red List" of threatened species, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) highlighted the broad deterioration of the situation for elephants in most of Africa.

Forest elephants on the continent have been particularly hard-hit, it said. Their numbers have fallen by more than 86 percent

over three decades, and they are now considered "critically endangered" - just a step away from becoming extinct.

The population of the African savanna elephants had meanwhile decreased by at least 60 percent over the past 50 years, IUCN said, with the Red List now listing that species as "endangered".

Previously, elephants on the continent were assessed as a single species considered vulnerable, but not endangered.

"Today's new IUCN Red List assessments of both African elephant species underline the per-

sistent pressures faced by these iconic animals," IUCN chief Bruno Oberle said in a statement. Just half a century ago, around 1.5 million elephants roamed across Africa, but in the most recent large-scale assessment of population numbers in 2016, there were only around 415,000 remaining.

"These are really sharp declines," said Benson Okita-Ouma of Save the Elephants and the co-chair of the IUCN African Elephant Specialist Group.

While the next full assessment of African elephant population numbers is not expected until

2022 or 2023, he told AFP that the declines seen already should really sound "alarm bells".

Okita-Ouma said the COVID-19 pandemic was taking a toll on conservation efforts as many countries had seen tourism revenues used to fund protection measures evaporate.

At the same time, he said, the dramatic decline in human activity in many areas had allowed elephants to "recolonise" areas they had previously been driven from.

"During the lockdowns, we have seen animals moving all over, and that is a positive side for the animals." - AFP

PROCUREMENT NOTICE

UVA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

Sealed bids are received under Competitive Bidding Procedure up to 28.04.2021 by the Chairman, Procurement Committee of the Provincial Department of Buildings of the Uva Provincial Council from qualified contractors and construction institutions registered with the Construction Industry Development Authority (CIDA) in the relevant field to perform the undermentioned works.

Serial No.	Contract No.	Name of Work	Value of Civil Works (Rs. in Millions) Without VAT	Required CIDA Grade in Building Construction Field	Refundable Bid Security Amount (If paid in Cash) (Rs.)	Construction Period (Days)	Bid Document Fee (Rs.)	Office Issuing Bid Documents	
1	UPBD/H/PSSP/2021/01/01	Construction of a Building for the Emergency Treatment Unit at the Welimada Base Hospital	59.60	C4 and C3	298,500.00	545	15,000.00	Office of the Provincial Director of Buildings	
2	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/01	Construction of 110x25 Two Storey Building for Mo / Alupotha Muslim Primary Vidyalaya - Final Stage	11.35	C6 and C5	57,000.00	180	5,000.00		
3	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/02	Construction of the Final Stage of 90x25 Three Storey Building of Ba / Fathima Muslim Ladies Vidyalaya	7.72	C7 and C6	39,000.00	180	3,000.00	Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings), Badulla	
4	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/03	Construction of 80x20 building of Ba / Polgaha Araawa Maha Vidyalaya	8.62	C7 and C6	43,500.00	180	3,000.00		
5	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/04	Construction of 70x25 Three Storey Building of Ba / Uva Vidya Vidyalaya - Final Stage	8.50	C7 and C6	42,500.00	180	3,000.00	Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings), Badulla	
6	UPBD/H/PSSP/2021/01/02	Repairing of Doctors Quarters at Divisional Hospital in Bibilegama	2.83	C8 and C7	14,500.00	120	3,000.00		
7	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/05	Construction of 50x25 Two Storey Building of Ba / Nugathalawa Vidyalaya - First Stage	6.0	C7 and C6	30,000.00	180	3,000.00	Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings), Bandarawela	
8	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/06	Repairing the 160x20 Main Hall of Ba / Kalubululanda Maha Vidyalaya	3.87	C8 and C7	19,500.00	120	3,000.00		
9	UPBD/H/PSSP/2021/01/03	Renovation of the Kitchen, Verandah and Electrical System of Koslanda District Hospital	3.45	C8 and C7	17,500.00	120	3,000.00		
10	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/07	Construction of Security Side Wall for Dam opposite Ba / Welimada Vijaya Vidyalaya (First Stage)	2.80	C8 and C7	14,000.00	120	3,000.00		
11	UPBD/H/PSSP/2021/01/04	Repairing the Quarters of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Specialist of Diyatalawa Base Hospital	2.44	C8 and C7	12,500.00	120	3,000.00		
12	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/08	Construction of Security Side Wall near 80x20 Building of the Primary Division of Ba / Uduhawara Maha Vidyalaya and taking action to prevent soil erosion	2.24	C8 and C7	11,500.00	120	3,000.00		
13	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/09	Repairing the 60x20 Pragna Hall of Ba / Gammedda Vidyalaya	2.18	C8 and C7	11,000.00	120	3,000.00		
14	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/10	Repairing the 60x20 Mihindu Hall of Ba / Thawalampola Vidyalaya	2.15	C8 and C7	11,000.00	120	3,000.00		
15	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/11	Repairing the 110x20 Mahagamasekera Hall of Ba / Sri Ratanajothi Maha Vidyalaya	2.06	C8 and C7	10,500.00	120	3,000.00		
16	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/12	Construction of 70x25 Two Storey Building as a Hall at Mo / Mahavelamulla Muslim Vidyalaya (Final Stage)	6.92	C7 and C6	35,000.00	180	3,000.00		Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings) Wellawaya
17	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/13	Construction of 80x20 Classroom Building of Mo / Dutugemunu Model Primary Vidyalaya	6.73	C7 and C6	35,000.00	180	3,000.00		
18	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/14	Construction of 80x20 Classroom Building of Mo / Bandaranyake Primary Vidyalaya (Kiri Ibbanwewa)	6.47	C7 and C6	32,500.00	180	3,000.00		Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings) Wellawaya
19	UPBD/H/PSDG/2021/01/01	Repairing Ward No. 01 of Wellawaya Base Hospital (Stage Two)	3.00	C8 and C7	15,000.00	90	3,000.00		
20	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/15	Repairing the 120x30 Building and Renovation of Office at the Mo / Aluthwewa Kanishta Vidyalaya	2.18	C8 and C7	11,000.00	120	3,000.00	Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings) Monaragala	
21	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/16	Repairing the 100x20 Vijay Hall of Mo / Hindikiula Primary Vidyalaya	2.96	C8 and C7	15,000.00	120	3,000.00		
22	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/17	Repairing the 60x20 Building of Ba / Aluththarama Kanishta Vidyalaya	2.29	C8 and C7	11,500.00	120	3,000.00	Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings) Bibile	
23	UPBD/EDU/PSDG/2021/01/18	Repairing the 60x20 Laboratory Building of Mo / Senapathiya Maha Vidyalaya	2.09	C8 and C7	10,500.00	120	3,000.00		

- Bids will be conducted through National Competitive Bidding Procedure and with regard to works included in this advertisement of which the total estimated value does not exceed Rs. 50 million, regional preference of contractors and the preference of grade registered with the Construction Industry Development Authority as per Finance Ministry Circular No. 04/2016(iii) will be taken into consideration when evaluating the bids.
- Successful, eligible bidders who are not blacklisted and have the CIDA registration in the relevant field as given in the table above are eligible for award of bids.
- Bids will be evaluated as per the Finance Ministry Circular No. 3/2020(i) and subsequent amendments and the following qualifications will be taken into consideration when evaluating the bids. Bids that do not fulfill the required qualifications will be rejected.
 - Should have the experience of performing a work of minimum 80% of the civil works or equivalent during last five years (This condition will not be applicable to works where the minimum CIDA registration required is C 7 or C8.)
 - Should have maintained a turnover average similar to the above construction civil works during last five years. (This condition will not be applicable to works where the minimum CIDA registration required is C 7 or C8.)
- Financial Capability
- Financial and Physical progress of the works currently performing
- Bidder should register under the Public Contract Act No. 03 of 1987 for works of which the civil works value is Rs. 5 million or above and the Registration Certificate or documentary proof should be submitted with the bid. The bids that are not accompanied by the Registration Certificate or documentary proof will be rejected.
- A complete set of bid documents in English language may be obtained by interested bidders on submission of a written application to the abovementioned offices during office hours from 31.03.2021 until 27.04.2021 upon payment of the bid document fee mentioned in the table above and the bid documents may be inspected free of charge.
- All bids should be accompanied by a bid security if not paid in cash. A Bid security may be submitted and that should be double the amount shown in the table above only in the form of a bank guarantee obtained from a commercial bank approved by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and the bank guarantee should be Unconditional and On Demand. Bid security should be valid up to 28.08.2021.
- Duly perfected bids in duplicate should be submitted to the Procurement Committee to receive before 10.00 a.m. on 28.04.2021 and bids should be mentioned as Original and Duplicate and inserted in separate covers and both covers should be reinserted in a single cover mentioning the name of the work on the left hand top corner of the envelope, sealed and may either be sent by registered post addressed to "Chairman, Procurement Committee, Uva Provincial Department of Buildings, Pinarawa, Badulla" or deposited in the Tender Box kept at that office and late bids will be rejected.
- Duplicate should be a photocopy of all the pages of the original.
- Interested bidders may obtain further information either from the Uva Provincial Department of Buildings - 055-2229629, Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings) Bandarawela 057-2222025, Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings) Monaragala 055-2276038, Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings) Wellawaya - 055-2274362, Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings) Badulla - 055-2224752, Office of the Divisional Engineer (Buildings) Bibile 055-2265317.
- Bids should be valid up to 28.07.2021
- Bids will be opened at 10.00 a.m. on 28.04.2021 at the Provincial Department of Buildings, Badulla and the bidder or his representative may be present at the time of opening of bids.
- A Pre-Bid meeting will be held at 10.00 a.m. on 21.04.2021 at the office of the Provincial Director of Buildings, Pinarawa, Badulla and the prospective bidders may request clarifications regarding the project requirements at this meeting. Further a site visit could be arranged if necessary.
- Procurement Board reserves the right to accept any eligible bid or to reject all bids and the decision of the Procurement Committee is final.

Chairman - Procurement Committee
Provincial Department of Buildings
Pinarawa,
Badulla
Tel. No./Fax No. 055-2229629,
Email - bdplanningunit@gmail.com
Date: 24.03.2021

CHANGE OF NAME
Wish to inform the General Public of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka that I, **BERNADETH NIROSHINIE PANDITTESEKERA** bearing Identity card No 695373457 V and Passport No N3085576 of NO 216, Malyadewa Mawatha, Medalanda, Watta, Kutunegala, Sri Lanka and at present residing at No 63 Thomhill, Ontario, L3T2N9 Canada, that I have changed my name from **BERNADETH NIROSHINIE PANDITTESEKERA** to **DONA CATHERINA CICILIA WICKRAMASINGHE PERERA** for all future purposes, and Legal documents and I will be using my name as **DONA CATHERINA CICILIA WICKRAMASINGHE PERERA**
DONA CATHERINA CICILIA WICKRAMASINGHE PERERA

BIKES FAIR ANURADHAPURA

VEHICLE NO.	MODEL	TYPE
NC BIL-37XX	NTORQ	Bike
NC BEV-00XX	RAY-ZR	Bike
NP BFD-14XX	XL SUPER HD	Bike
NC 8GZ-09XX	WEGO	Bike
NC BDH-17XX	PLATINA	Bike
NP BEB-75XX	PULSAR 150	Bike
NP BIR-85XX	CT 100	Bike
NP BFV-17XX	RAY-ZR	Bike
NP BGW-01XX	FAZER	Bike

Inspections can be done at company vehicle yard, on 29th March 2021 from 9.00 am at Yapanaya junction, Anuradhapura. (In front of United Motors)
The management of the company has the right to withdraw any vehicle from the fair without prior notice.

071 2125664 / 071 9919986
025-5622661-2

Date of vehicle fair: 30th March 2021
Time 10.00 am

Head Office
Arpico Finance Company PLC
No.146, Rawllock Rd, Hinthirigaya, Colombo 15.
Tel: 0115 553663

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NOTICES OF INCORPORATION

Notice is hereby given in terms of Section 9(1) of the Companies Act No. 07 of 2007.

Name of the Company : **I Bay Lanka (Private) Limited**
Company Reg. No. : PV 85255
Registered Address : 321D, Old Kandy Road, Kelaniya.

Name of the Company : **P.S.D. Facilitators (Private) Limited**
Company Reg. No. : PV67917
Registered Address : No. 79, 2nd Lane, Kotikawatta Road, Gothatuwa New Town, 10620

Name of the Company : **M.V.A. Investment Lanka (Pvt) Ltd**
Company Reg. No. : PV 130242
Registered Address : Kabalana, Welhengoda, Ahangama.

Name of the Company : **M.V.A. Plantation Lanka (Pvt) Ltd**
Company Reg. No. : PV 130241
Registered Address : Kabalana, Welhengoda, Ahangama.

Name of the Company : **Wijesekara Construction (Private) Limited**
Company Reg. No. : PV80636
Registered Address : Mahaheella, Beliatta.

Name of the Company : **S T A Spice Exports (Pvt) Ltd.**
Company Reg. No. : PV99873
Registered Address : No. 81, Sri Sumangala Road, Rathmalana.

Company Secretaries

SRI LANKA STATE PLANTATIONS CORPORATION

Invitation for Bids

TENDER NO. SLSPCPL/SOLAR/T-57/2021

Sealed quotations are invited for the supply & installation of Solar Power Plants in 10 Tea Factories coming under Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation for complete Roof Panel and Roof on rent.

Details can be collected by visiting following sites contacting the Superintendent of relevant Estate.

Woodside Estate, Medamaharuwara	0815102288
Rangalla Estate, Rangalla	0815634904
Cottaganga Estate, Rangalla	0815634905
Goomera Estate, Thawalantenna	0815634907
Kellebokka Estate, Madulkelle	0815633905
Hunnasgiriya Estate, Elkaduwa	0815634910
Nicholoya Estate, Rattota	0665679801
Midlands Estate, Rattota	0665677868
Dankanda Tea Factory	0665677868
275, Sri Dhamma Mawatha, Dematagoda	0115921465

Please send your bids addressed to "The General Manager, Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation, No.21, Meeraniya Street, Colombo 12 to be reached on or before 2.00 p.m. on 19th April 2021. Tenders will be opened on same day at 2.30 p.m. Bidders are invited to participate at the Opening date.

**The Chairman,
Procurement Committee,
Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation
No. 21, Meeraniya Street,
Colombo 12.**
24.03.2021

GALLE CO-OPERATIVE HOSPITAL LTD TENDER NOTICE

PROCUREMENT OF MEDICAL & GENERAL EQUIPMENT

Sealed tenders are invited from registered suppliers for the supply of following medical & general equipment to the Galle Co-Operative Hospital Ltd.

01. LED PHOTOTHERAPY (Infant Warmer)	- 02 Nos
With standard accessories	
02. Wall Mounted Air Conditioner 12000 BTU	- 11 Nos
03. Wall Mounted Air Conditioner 18000 BTU	- 04 Nos
04. 18000 BTU OUT Door	- 03 Nos
With standard accessories	

GENERAL CONDITIONS

- The offer should indicate price in Sri Rupees. All taxes transport and installation charges should be mentioned separately.
- There should be a comprehensive warranty period of minimum 03 years for the product, and 10 years available for spare parts.
- Tender validity shall remain in forces for 60 days from the date of tenders. Price variations during this period are not accepted under any circumstances.
- Tender forms could be obtained from the office of the General Manager on free of charge from 9.00 AM to 4.00 PM during normal working days from 27.03.2021 until 05.04.2021. (A Separate application should be submitted for each item & item name should be mentioned on the left hand corner of the envelop)
- All tenders should be addressed to "Chairman, Galle Co-Operative Hospital Ltd, No. 65, H.V.I. Amarasooriya Mw, Galle" and send under registered cover to reach on or before 12.00 pm on 05.04.2021. Tenders may be deposited in the tender box kept at the office of the General Manager.
- Tenders will be open at 3.00 pm on 06.04.2021.
- Any clarification or further details please contact General Manager 0912233460



General Manager
GALLE CO-OPERATIVE HOSPITAL LTD.
Tel: 091 2233460 / Fax: 091 4385200
Email: gallecoophospital@gmail.com
27.03.2021

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

STATE MINISTRY OF ESTATE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Programme of Providing Sewing Machines to Self employment beneficiaries

Provision of 50 Nos. sewing machines, for the prospective plantation community, expecting self employments, through the Saumyamoorthi Thondaman Memorial Foundation, under the State Ministry of Estate Housing and Community Infrastructure

01. Sealed bids are hereby invited, under the National Competitive Bidding (NCB) Procedure, to supply, delivery and hand over 50 Nos. sewing machines, to the Thondaman Vocational Training Centre, Hatton (Pool Bank), under this Ministry, by the State Ministry of Estate Housing Community Infrastructure No. 45, St. Michael's Road, Colombo 03.

Summary of the requirement is given in the following table.

Item	Quantity/Units
Sewing Machines	50

02. Bidders should have to bid for all the sewing machines of complete quantity as listed above in case bids were submitted for a part of the quantity of sewing machines those bids will be rejected, considering them as substantially non responsive bids.

03. Bidding will be conducted through National Competitive Bidding (NCB) procedure and governed by the procurement guidelines of the Government of Sri Lanka, bidding is open to all the eligible and qualified bidders who fulfill all the requirements of eligibility and qualification requisites given in the bidding documents.

04. Further details in this regard, could be obtained by interested bidders from 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. on working days from 24.03.2021 to 21.04.2021 from the Procurement Division, State Ministry of Estate Housing and Community Infrastructure, No. 45, St. Michael's Road, Colombo 03 and the bidding documents could be inspected free of charge, on normal working days at the same address above (Telephone No. : 0112-441847).

05. A complete set of bidding documents in English language, may be obtained by the interested bidders on submission of a written request to the Accountant (Supplies), State Ministry of Estate Housing and Community Infrastructure, No. 45, St. Michael's Road, Colombo 03, from 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. from 25.03.2021 to 21.04.2021, upon payment of a non refundable fee of Rs. 500/= (five hundred) in cash, to the Secretary, State Ministry of Estate Housing and Community Infrastructure of the above address.

06. Duly completed sealed bids in duplicate, marked "Original" and "Duplicate", enclosed in two separate envelopes, sealed and both the envelopes, again enveloped in a separate single cover, marked as the caption to the effect, "Supply of Sewing Machines", on the top left hand corner of the envelope, and sealed should either be sent by registered post to the above address or hand delivered and deposited in the tender box kept at the Accounts Division, 05th floor, of this Ministry, to be received at or before 10.00 a.m. on 21.04.2021. Late bids, and the bids sent electronically will not be accepted and will be rejected. Bids will be opened immediately after the closing of bids, and one of the representatives of the bidder / institution may be present on this occasion.

07. All the bids shall be accompanied by a bid security of Rs. 50,000/= (Rupees Fifty Thousand), issued by any commercial bank, operating in Sri Lanka and approved by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, valid up to a period of 04 (four) months duration, since the closing date of bids. Bids sans the bid security or bids, not in conformity with the format, given in the bidding documents, will be rejected.

08. Bids will be valid up to 03 months period from the closing date of Bids.

09. Secretary or any other Officer of the Ministry will not be held responsible for any cost or expenses, incurred by the bidder in connection with the preparation or delivery of the bids.

10. The procurement committee reserves the right to accept or reject any bid as a whole or a part thereof and the decision of the procurement committee will be the final.

D.P.G. Kumarasiri,
Secretary,
State Ministry of Estate Housing and Community Infrastructure
No. 45, St. Michael's Road, Colombo 03.
22.03.2021

BIKES FAIR KOTTAWA

VEHICLE NO.	MODEL	TYPE
UP BFU - 98XX	ROCKSTAR	Bike
WP BAX-77XX	GUSTO	Bike
WP BDO-88XX	HUNK	Bike
SP BIB-79XX	NAVI	Bike
SP BII - 30XX	MT-15	Bike
WP BEX 43XX	WEGO	Bike
WP BIJ - 14XX	WEGO	Bike
WP BIC - 55XX	NTORQ	Bike
WP BDJ - 64XX	DIO	Bike
WP BDP-68XX	DASH VX	Bike
NC BIO - 09XX	FZ-16	Bike
WP BEX - 88XX	DIO	Bike
WP BIR - 63XX	BURGMAN	Bike
SP BIA-93XX	NAVI	Bike
SP BIR - 05XX	RAY ZR	Bike
WP BCR - 91XX	FZ	Bike
WP BDH-85XX	DASH VX	Bike
WP BDE-33XX	PULSAR	Bike
WP BAP-96XX	PULSAR	Bike
WP BGI-44XX	DIO	Bike
WP BIL-71XX	MT-15	Bike
WP BIR - 83XX	RAY ZR	Bike
WP BET-50XX	NAVI	Bike
WP BHT - 50XX	NAVI	Bike
WP BCD-88XX	CT 100	Bike
NC BON-55XX	PULSAR	Bike
WP BCN -81XX	PULSAR	Bike
SP BGS - 65XX	XL SUPER HD	Bike
SP BHC-44XX	XL SUPER HD	Bike
SP BIK - 85XX	RAY-ZR	Bike
SP BGM - 93XX	APACHE RTR	Bike
WP BIQ - 92XX	NTORQ	Bike
WP BGR-35XX	DIO	Bike
WP BGC-98XX	DIO	Bike
WP BEH - 48XX	DIO	Bike
NW BIK-77XX	DIO	Bike
NW BIB - 86XX	NAVI	Bike
NW BDH24XX	CT 100	Bike
NW BHW-09XX	DIO	Bike
NW BIQ - 63XX	FZ 5	Bike
CP BHV - 31XX	FZ 5	Bike

Inspections can be done at company vehicle yard, on 29th March 2021 9.00 am to 4.00 pm at No 17/1, Pinhena Junction, Horana Rd, Kottawa.

The management of the company has the right to withdraw any vehicle from the fair without prior notice.

Call to reserve your seat in advance (Fee 1,500) Contact Number- 0719919586

0719 919 986 / 0712 591 067

Auction Date : 30th MARCH 2021
Time 10.00 am

Head Office
Arpico Finance Company PLC
No. 146, Havelock Rd, Thimingsgaya, Colombo 05.
Tel: 0115 553663

CANCELLATION OF FOREIGN POWER OF ATTORNEY

I, Udagedara Nilni Kanchana Kumari Senarath of No. 334/B, Wilamuna, Theldeniya, Kandy (working at 19, Sunlight Road, BLI4RN, Bolton, Greater Manchester, United Kingdom) do hereby inform that the Power of Attorney registered under volume No. 173, folio 85, day book No. 233 of Central Zonal Office, Kandy attested by K.B.L. Solicitors LL.P at New Mansion House 63-65, Chorley, New Road, Bolton, BL14QR, dated 25.01.2021, granted by me to Nilusha Priyadarshani Senarath of No. 334/B, Wilamuna, Theldeniya, Kandy is hereby cancelled and annulled.

CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL POWER OF ATTORNEY

I, Udagedara Nilni Kanchana Kumari Senarath of No. 334/B, Wilamuna, Theldeniya, Kandy do hereby inform that the Power of Attorney granted by me to Udagedara Nilusha Priyadarshani Senarath of No. 334/B, Wilamuna, Theldeniya, by Power of Attorney No. 966, dated 05.12.2018 attested by H.A.M. Rathnayake Notary Public, Colombo is cancelled and annulled.

Employment Opportunities



UNIVERSITY OF JAFFNA, SRI LANKA VACANCY

The University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka will entertain applications from suitably qualified persons for the following posts:

1. TECHNICAL OFFICER (AUDIO VISUAL) GRADE III

- Qualifications:**
- i) Should pass in three (3) subjects at the G.C.E (A/L) examination in any stream
 - AND
 - ii) a) Having obtained a certificate of proficiency not below than the N.V.Q level 5 in the field of Electronics and Telecommunication/Electronics/Multimedia or Audio Visual Techniques from an institution recognized by Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission or a statutory institution which has been established by an act passed by the Parliament.
 - OR
 - b) Having obtained technical qualifications in the field of Electronics and Telecommunication /Electronics/Multimedia or Audio Visual Techniques accepted as equivalent to the above qualification of (ii)(a) by Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission with one year experience in Audio Visual work in reputed organization.

Age limit : Should not be less than 18years and not more than 45years
Salary Scale : U-MT1 (III) - Rs.31,625-7X300; 10X355-37,275.p.m
Selection : By written and/or practical test and an interview

2. SUPERVISOR (CIVIL) GRADE III

- Qualifications:**
- i) National Certificate in Technology or equivalent qualifications with 3 years' experience obtained while following the NCT course;
 - OR
 - ii) G.C.E (Ordinary Level) Examination in six subjects at not more than two sittings with at least 5 years' experience as a Supervisor in the relevant field in a Government, Local Government or State Corporation or a recognized Engineering Establishment.

Age limit : Should not be less than 18years and not more than 40years
Salary Scale : U-MT1 (III) - Rs.31,625-7x300;10x355-37,275 p.m.
Selection : By Interview

STATUTORY BENEFITS

1. Allowances approved by the University Grants Commission
2. Membership in Universities Provident Fund and Pension Scheme in the University System
3. Gratuity payment
4. Employment Trust Fund benefits
5. Free medical care

Applications should be on **specified form (for each post)** issued by the University. Application Form and other particulars for the above posts can be downloaded only from the University **website - www.jfn.ac.lk**

Applicants should deposit the Application Fee of Rs.100.00 at any branch of the People's Bank in favour of University of Jaffna Collection Account Number: **97000090000387**. A copy of the Bank Deposit Slip should be attached with the application as the proof of the payment of Application Fee.

Sample Deposit Slip is given below:



All the Educational/Professional qualifications and experience obtained as at the closing date of the applications **will only be considered** when evaluating the candidates. Applications without the copy of the supportive documents for Educational/Professional and Experience will be rejected.

The envelope containing the duly filled application form must bear title of the post which you are applying for on its top left hand corner and send under registered post to reach us on or before **27.04.2021** to the following address.

**Deputy Registrar/Non-Academic Establishments,
University of Jaffna,
P.O. Box 57,
Thirunelvely,
Jaffna**

Applicants from Government Departments, State Corporations and Statutory Bodies should apply through their Heads of respective Institutions. Advance copies of applications may be sent in the first instance. However, no such applicant will be considered for appointment if the application routed through the Head of Department is not received.

Incomplete and illegible applications and applications that are received after the closing date will be rejected without intimation.

**REGISTRAR,
University of Jaffna.**
26.03.2021

Invitation for Bids Regional Directorate of Health Services, Vavuniya Procurement of Goods, Services & Works

The Chairman, Regional Procurement Committee of the Regional Directorate of Health Services, Vavuniya invites sealed bids from eligible and qualified bidders for the works described in given table below.

Works

S. No	Bid Number	Description of Work	Estimated Mn	Bid Bond/Validity	ICTAD Grade
01	NP/04/43/03/BCP/PSSP/2021/04	Construction of Nursing Officer Quarters (Stage-II)DH, Mamaduwa, Vavuniya	3.64	40,000.00 09.07.2021	C8/C7
02	NP/04/43/03/BCP/PSSP/2021/05	Construction of Nursing Officer Quarters (Stage-II)DH, Neriyaakulam, Vavuniya	3.64	40,000.00 09.07.2021	C8/C7
03	NP/04/43/03/BCP/PSSP/2021/06	Extension of OPD Building (Stage-II)DH, Neriyaakulam, Vavuniya	5.51	56,000.00 23.07.2021	C7/C6
04	NP/04/43/03/BCP/PSSP/2021/07	Construction of Medical Officer Quarters, DH, Ulukulam, Vavuniya	5.45	55,000.00 23.07.2021	C7/C6
05	NP/04/43/03/BCP/PSSP/2021/08	Renovation of Medical Officer Quarters, DH, Puliyanakulam, Vavuniya	3.7	40,000.00 09.07.2021	C8/C7
06	NP/04/43/03/BCP/PSDG/2021/01	Construction of MO Quarters, DH, Mamaduwa, Vavuniya	5.49	55,000.00 23.07.2021	C7/C6
07	NP/04/43/03/BCP/PSDG/2021/02	Construction of NO Quarters, DH, Sithamparapuram, Vavuniya	8.27	83,000.00 23.07.2021	C7/C6

Medical Equipment & Furniture

S. No	Bid Number	Description of Item & Qty	Estimated Mn	Bid Bond/Validity
01	NP/04/43/03/ME/2021/01	Multipara monitor-2,Sucker-1, Nebulizer-1, ECG Machine-1, Medicine trolley-3, Emergency cart-4, Bed side screen-3, Dressing trolley-3, Bed side cupboard-10, IV Stand-3, Wheel chair-2, Examination bed-1, Cardiac bed for ETU-2	2.5	25,000.00 09.07.2021
02	NP/04/43/03/ME/2021/02	Dental chair-1, Infrared thermometer-4, Spot lamp-1, BP Apparatus-25, Adult beam scale-10, Height measuring board-8, Length measuring board-10, Spring balance-8, Infant scale(Digital)-5, Infant scale(Manual)-5, Laryngoscope -2	2.5	25,000.00 09.07.2021
03	NP/04/43/03/ME/2021/03	Mini auto clave-6, Electric satirizer-1	3.0	30,000.00 09.07.2021

1. Bidding will be conducted through **National Competitive Bidding (NCB)**.
2. A complete set of Bidding Documents in English language may be purchased by interested bidders on submission of a written application to the **Regional Directorate of Health Services, Mannar Road, Vavuniya** (T. No : 024-2224865, FAX - 024-2222892) **from 29.03.2021 until 08.04.2021 from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Rs. 1,000.00** for each category. The method of payment should be by cash.
3. Bids shall be delivered or sent by registered post to the **Chairman, RPC, RDHS Office, Mannar Road, Vavuniya** on or before the **closing time of bids at 10.00 am on 09.04.2021 (Friday)**. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be opened soon after closing in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
4. Interested bidders may obtain further information from the above address given in 2 and inspect the bidding documents at the same place on any working days from a **9.00 hrs to 15.00 hrs**.
5. Pre-Bid Conference will be held at Regional Director's Office, Department of Health Services, Mannar Road, Vavuniya commencing at **10.00 am on 05.04.2021 (Monday)**.
6. Bids shall be accompanied by a **bid security** as per the information given in the Table.

Dr. M. Mahendran,
Chairman, Regional Procurement Committee,
Regional Directorate of Health Services,
Vavuniya.

27.03.2021

Classifieds

Employment

325
Positions Vacant
General

Buying, selling of houses, lands, vehicles. Sub-contractors for building houses, commercial centres, managers promotion officers, Beauticians wanted permanently 076-1894626, 0767004626. 024010

Need Wharf Clerk and Accounts Executive. Wharf Clerk - With 05 years experience - With CHA/RPU/A pass - Custom & Port related work experience. Accounts Executive - Five years experience - Age below 35 - AAT, CIMA, ACCA part or fully qualified. Please forward your CV to: murali@monamilines.com Tel - 0777715441/ 0773950123. 023151

Replies to Classifieds & Casual Advertisements published C/o the **Daily News** should only be sent by ordinary post. Replies sent under registered cover will not be accepted.

SL performs first 'Simultaneous Bilateral Cochlear Nucleus Freedom Series' implant at state hospital

Marking a milestone in hearing healthcare, the first ever simultaneous bilateral cochlear nucleus freedom series implant surgery was successfully performed at the Sri Jayewardenepura General Hospital recently. The team of doctors led by Dr. Sanjeevani Rupasinghe, Consultant ENT Surgeon of the Sri Jayewardenepura General Hospital, performed the surgery on a 2 ½ year old child, in early February. The surgical procedure implanted the Cochlear Nucleus Freedom Series implant, a most technologically advanced device available in the world at present. The processor was then switched on, on the 24 February at the Wickramarachchi Hearing Institute in Nugegoda, to coincide with the World Cochlear Implantation day that fell on 25 February.



Chairman Wickramarachchi Hearing Care with the family

The Cochlear implant is an established, effective and long-term solution for people with moderate to profound hearing loss. It replaces the function of a damaged

inner ear, providing sound signals to the brain, as opposed to the function of a hearing aid, which only makes the sound louder. It benefits those who have moderate

to profound hearing loss in both ears or those who receive less or no benefit from hearing aids. In light of all that has happened over the past year, access to hearing and hearing healthcare is more important now than ever. Hearing connects people, and access to sound for those with hearing loss is important for connection as we continue to socially distance ourselves to mitigate the COVID 19 virus. As such, this surgery marks the first step towards creating a safe environment to those with hearing impairment. The pandemic conditions under which the successful first procedure was conducted, reinstates the qualitative standards that the local healthcare system has, as one of the most affordable and best services in the Asian region.



Doctors at performing the implant

Vogue Jewellers to crown Mrs. Sri Lanka

Vogue Jewellers has been appointed as the official 'Crown Provider' for Mrs. Sri Lanka for Mrs. World 2021 contest. The most awaited annual beauty pageant will this year see one of Sri Lanka's premier jewellers, Vogue Jewellers, reputed for creating several exquisite crowns and tiaras for exclusive beauty pageants during its glamorous journey of nearly six decades, crafting the crown for the winner of the event. Continuing its legacy of fashion innovation, Vogue brings in a whole new design concept inspired by our very own peacock to this dazzling crown. Mrs. Sri Lanka crown created by Vogue Jewellers will be encrusted with approximately 3,000 Blue and Green Cubic Zirconia and Blue Topaz stones.



"Blue and green stones that complement the peacock design is a spectacular masterpiece, taking our beauty pageants to a whole new level," an official said. The crown has been created by Sri Lanka's most awarded world-class team of designers and master craftsmen at Vogue Jewellers. A legendary figure in Sri Lanka's fashion world, Yvonne Gulamhussein



worked closely with the late Sarath Hemachandra, founding Chairman of Vogue Jewellers who possessed a special talent to bring together design innovation and quality standards. Numerous magnificent crowns and tiaras he created for Miss Ceylon, Miss Lanka and Sundaree beauty pageants were ground breaking creations for the most significant beauty parades in the past. Unwavering commitment to highest standards at all levels has made Vogue Jewellers a world-class jewellery

manufacturer, and becoming the world's first jewellery manufacturer to be ISO 9001:2015 certified. Vogue was awarded TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice award 2020 - a gold standard for its unparalleled customer service. Winning the highest number of local and international awards for its creations has made Vogue Jewellers the most awarded jeweller in Sri Lanka. The new genre of beauty pageants - Mrs. World was created in 1984. It is not another traditional beauty

pageant, but rather a platform for women across the world to raise awareness and funds in aid of humanitarian causes. Sri Lanka has a unique association with Mrs. Sri Lanka for Mrs. World with the present Mayor of Colombo, Mrs. Rosy Senanayaka being crowned the first ever Mrs. World. It was a milestone written in gold. Mrs. Caroline Juri being crowned Mrs. World at the most recent Mrs. World contest was another victory for Sri Lanka.

Fake romance, influencer scams thriving on Instagram

Facebook-owned Instagram has seen a surge in frauds on its platform that were up by 50 per cent since the pandemic began, and scams related to romance, phishing and influencer sponsors top the chart, a new report by Sophos said recently. According to Sophos Naked Security, part of the cybersecurity firm Sophos, the scamming on Instagram has worsened over the past year. "Phishers try to get access to your Instagram account by sending you a suspicious link, either as an Instagram direct message or via email, where you are then tricked into putting in your username and password on a fake login page," the researchers said in a statement. "These crooks have your login details, they can access your personal information and even change your password to lock you out of your own account. Scammers are also taking advantage of the rise in influencers on social media to exploit the influencers themselves. "These scammers pretend to be an established brand and offer influencers an advertising deal. If the influencer is unlucky enough to believe that the deal they are receiving is legitimate, they may hand over their personal banking details in order to be 'paid' by the brand," the report noted. Since its launch in 2010, Instagram has seen more than 1 billion accounts opened, and users on the service share close to 100 million photos every day. Romance scams are also witnessing a surge on the platform. Here, fraudsters enter into a fake online relationship, often speaking with their targets for weeks, months or even years to earn and then to abuse their trust. Once the target is ensnared, the scammer starts asking for money for visas, flights, travel expenses



Left: Fake email 'copyright warning' pretending to be from Instagram. Right: DM claiming to be from an official Instagram account. (Note 13,000 'followers' but 0 posts!) Right: Use 'Privacy' option on the Instagram Settings page to make your account private. Right. Toggle the 'Private account' slider on.

and more. But there's always an excuse why the scammer wasn't able to get the visa, or board the flight, or do whatever they said they would. "Sudden travel restrictions due to Covid-19 regulations have apparently become a popular excuse during the coronavirus pandemic. The scammer will continue asking for money for as long as the person at the other end continues to send it," the researchers noted. Don't use the same password as you do on any other sites, they urged. "If you think you may have given away your password on a fake site, change it as soon as you can before the crooks do. Consider using a password manager if you don't have one already," the researchers advised. "As much as it seems to be common to share a lot of your life on Instagram nowadays, you don't have to give away everything about yourself. Also think about who or what is in the background of your photos before you upload them," they added.

'Daraz Avurudu Waasi' begins

With Avurudu just around the corner, Daraz is offering an extra spark of celebration with Daraz Avurudu Waasi, to revel in an exciting digital Avurudu. Starting from March 25 to April 6, Daraz shoppers get up to 75% off on over 3 million products on sale. Daraz caters to every need this season with up to 2 million rupees' worth of discount

vouchers coupled with Mega deals on electronics, fashion, lifestyle and groceries at the lowest prices in town. Daraz Mall brings over 450 trusted brands by authorized sellers, with 100% genuine products and a 14-day return policy. The Avurudu Wasi excitement for shoppers includes up to 30% OFF on mobile phones, up to 70% OFF on TV, home theatre systems,

refrigerators, air conditioners and washing machine along with Rs. 1 million worth bundle offers from Browns. Shoppers also stand a chance to win an iPhone 12 with purchases of above Rs. 1000 from Reckitt Benckiser via DarazMall. Avurudu is also a time for a new look for shopper with special offers and gifts from Signature, LICC, Laveena

Sarees, MIKA and Blink International. Even bill payments are made attractive with 'Daraz Easy Bills' where an extra 10% will be waived off from the total for all electricity bills. "It is not only shopping excitement that Daraz brings with Daraz Avurudu Wasi. Make your Avurudu an unforgettable shopping experience by playing game that



gives a chance to win a Huawei Watch fit, Oppo Enco earbuds, a Yamaha guitar, a 4-burner stainless steel gas cooker, Skullcandy wireless headphones and many other amazing gifts for one rupee" an official from Daraz said.

Central Campus Colombo and Imperial College battle it out on the field At RBCC Sri Lanka Finals

This year, amidst the many challenges that have arisen around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Red Bull has defied the odds and taken the necessary health and safety precautions to ensure a true sporting tradition lives on. As such, Red Bull has once more hosted the ninth edition of Red Bull Campus Cricket (RBCC), giving young, aspiring sportsmen the ideal opportunity to represent their campus and country on an international field. The first leg of the local tournament kicked off this March, held at the BRC grounds in Colombo, culminating in exciting semifinals on 13th of March, with finals held on 14th. The tournament has seen the participation of 12 college-level Sri Lankan teams, namely Central Campus Colombo, Kotelawala Defense University (KDU), ESOF, Royal Institute of Colombo, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology, Imperial College, Sri Lanka Institute of Management, SAEGIS, ICON Business School, Sri Lanka Technological Campus, ACBT, and ICBT Campus. Battling their way to the semi-finals was the Central Campus Colombo (CCC) team, who triumphed over SAEGIS in the quarter-finals, winning by 9 runs. At the semi-finals stage, they played against SLIM, who had defeated the SLIIT team in the quarter-finals, winning by 5 wickets. Of the two talented teams, CCC emerged victorious, winning by a whopping 8 wickets. Heshan Dhanushka emerged as the star player for CCC, bringing home 55 runs, closely followed by Chamindu Wijesinghe, and Deshan Fernando, who took one of the team's two wickets in 17 deliveries. Meanwhile, Kanishka Uggalpayya emerged as the star player from SLIM, scoring 51 of their 124 runs during the semi-finals match. As the day drew to a close, the highly anticipated second semi-final was held, between Imperial College and ESOF. The Imperial College team fought their way to the semis by defeating the ACBT team, followed by the KDU team during the quarter-finals, winning by 2 wickets. Meanwhile, ESOF made its way to the

semis by triumphing over SLTC, and was awarded a walk-over by the ICBT team during the quarter-finals. The second semi-final match resulted in a victory for Imperial College, who won by 5 wickets, as ESOF was bowled out in 19.5 overs. Sajith Priyal emerged as the star player for Imperial College, having scored 53 runs. Other noteworthy players of this match include Pawantha Weerasinghe, who scored 32 runs, and Neranjana Wanniarachchi, who took 2 wickets in 22 deliveries. ESOF's star players include Raminda Wijesooriya and Kavindu Irosh, who both secured 31 runs each, along with Pawantha Weerasinghe and Ayesha Harshana, who both took 3 wickets each. As such, in a highly unanticipated twist, the semifinals saw two teams who are new to the RBCC playing field emerge victorious. CCC and Imperial College battled it out at the BRC grounds in an exciting final match the following day. Imperial College took the trophy home, winning by 1 wicket.



Chamindu Wijesinghe from Central Campus Colombo

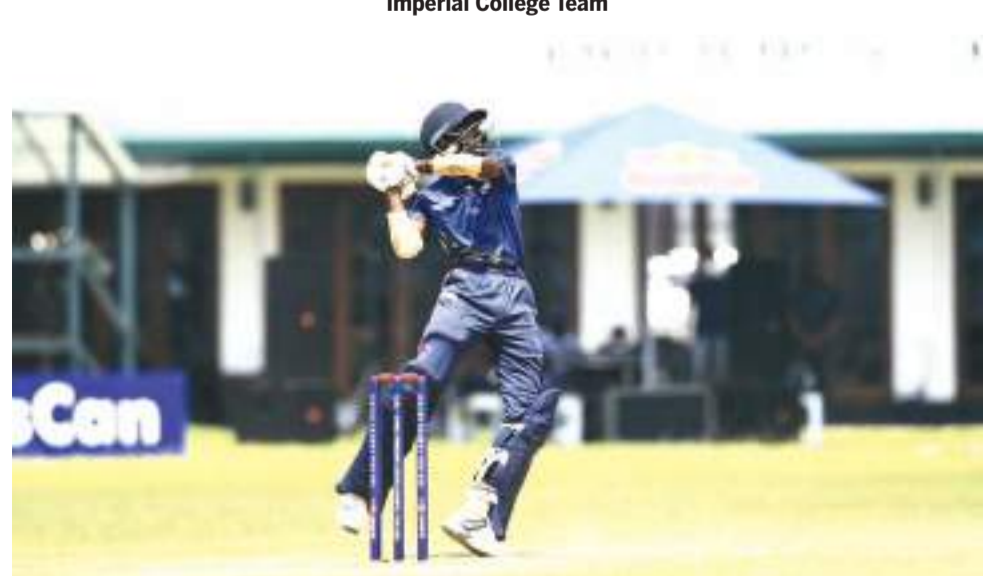
The Man of the Series was Chamindu Wijesinghe from CCC, with a total of 42 runs and 9 wickets under his belt. Ayesha Harshana from the winning team, Imperial College, was another star player, who scored 11 runs and took 9 wickets throughout the tournament. Another outstanding player was Nipun Malinga, from CCC, with 35 runs and 8 wickets under his belt. The RBCC field has truly paved the way for young sportsmen to gain recognition on an international platform. Enriching this tradition even further, Red Bull is now gearing up to launch its very first RBCC Women's Tournament later this year, celebrating women's sports and taking yet another leap to show the world that #BigGirlsCan. As the local leg draws to a close, it is certain that Red Bull has once more achieved its longstanding goal, bridging the gap that exists for players between school and club teams. With its abundance of emerging talent, the victorious Imperial College team will go on to represent Sri Lanka on the international field at the RBCC World Finals to be held later in Oman this year.



Imperial College Team



Rohan Sanjaya



Thiwanka Lakruwan

Nethmi Dulanjani an athletic star in the making

DILWIN MENDIS

Moratuwa Sports Special Corr.
Sixteen year old Junior National and Relay Carnival representative, school athletic captain and volleyball player Kuruwita Archchige Nethmi Dulanjani has brought honour and glory to her Alma Mater Wekada Maha Vidyalaya.

Nethmi was born in the year 2005 and in 2011 she was admitted to Daraluwa Junior School Katugampola and her then Principal was Mr. Bandara and her first class teacher was Mrs. Kusum and when she was in Grade Three she participated at the school sports meet and won her events. In 2013 she won the 100, 200 metre events and in the following year she participated in the school sports meet and won her events and in 2014 due to Grade Five Scholarship Examination she kept away and in 2016 she was the school's athletic champion upto 2020.

In 2016 she participated in the Divisional Meet and in 100 metres she came first and in the Zonal meet she was third and in the District Level she came fourth and annually up to 2020 she won at the Divisional, Zonal and District meets.



Wekada Maha Vidyalaya Girls Athletic contingent posed for a photograph at the Sugathadasa Stadium Colombo just after the Inter School Relay Carnival in 2020. Standing L/R - Darshani Subashini, Navodya Senali, Nethmi Dulanjani, Hashini Dilrukshi, Hansika Dewmini, Shashini Sandeepani, Rashmi Uma-yangana (Picture by - Dilwin Mendis Moratuwa Sports Special Correspondent)

In 2017 after her performances she was selected to participate in the Junior National Meet held at Anuradhapura and she

came third in long jump and in the following year too participating at the Junior Nationals in the under 15 age group she

achieved the qualifying timing in 100 metres and came fourth in the Long Jump Event.

In the same year her

school participated at the Relay Carnival held at Sugathadasa Stadium Colombo and in the semi finals they came second in

4x400 metres events and she led the team. In 2019 she carried away the Best Athlete Award of her school.



Nethmi Dulanjani with her trophy and medals

Finally in 2020 after becoming the under 16 champion at the school by becoming second in 200 metres and third in Long Jump and after winning the heats of the 100 metre finals at the Divisional Meet it was cancelled on day two due to Covid 19. As she is good in volleyball her parents Uditha Jayasekera and Himali Liyanka encouraged her to

take up to volleyball too. She played in the Inter House Volleyball Tournament from Grade Six to Nine and she was the captain through out and her coach and Prefect of Games is Suman Bandara. In this context her Principal Wasantha is always supportive and her elder sister Umesha Gimhani and Iresh Sanjeeva are helping her financially.

Pavithra was a top class flanker

ALTHAF NAWAZ

In the game of rugby flanker is the position where the player should have all-round attributes: speed, strength, fitness, tackling and handling skills. Flankers are always involved in the game, as they are the players most commonly involved in winning the ball in open play, especially the open side flanker. Pavithra Fernando was one of the players who occupied this position from school days upto National level putting up a belligerent performance.

Pavithra who is in early 40's was born in Colombo and his father is Hemasiri Fernando who is a well-known figure in the sporting world especially in the field of Athletics, where he rendered yeoman service in uplifting the standard of athletics in the country. His mother is Sheila a house wife. He grew up in Bambalapitiya and was admitted to Royal College, Colombo to continue his educational career, from 1986 to 1999. Pavithra was very particular about his physical fitness and maintained a well figured body from his younger days. Due to this, he was a sports enthusiast and had a determination that one day he should represent the country at least in one sport. He ultimately launched his

sporting career at the age of 13 years in 1993 in both cricket and rugby at school. He continued both these sports disciplines until the under-17 age group.

While maturing as a sportsman, Pavithra fell in love with the oval shaped ball game and became a sensation, the talk of the school's rugby arena. He played as a flanker (Open and Blind side) with his school team and turned out to be a regular member of college first XV rugby team from 1996 to 1999, where he was awarded the College Rugby Colours for four consecutive years.

The other unique feature of his senior rugby career is that, he was only 16 years old at the time he donned the first XV jersey, where he transformed to a robust and an indefatigable player representing his "Alma Mater". He was adjudged the 'Most Outstanding Sportsman of Royal College' in the year 1999.

He was associated with some of the great captains who led Royal 1996 (Rukman Gunathilake) 1997 (Abdulla Yousuf) 1998 (Shanaka Perera) and 1999 (Dinesh Rahim).

While he was playing for the school senior team, he was invited to play for CR and FC and didn't hesitate



to lock horns with them as most of his team and school mates played for them. His illustrious career with the Longden Place club commenced from 1999 and went on to surge ahead until the 2009 season occupying the same position of flanker. While mingling with them he had his National call in 1999 and competed in the same period which he dedicated to his club rugby.

During his tenure as player with the CR and the National team, he was instrumental in winning several competitions and annexing various trophies which were on offer.

He led the Sri Lanka National Rugby team at the Asian Division one Tournament in Dubai in 2009.

He also captained CR Rugby team in three consecutive seasons from 2004

to 2006. He also led his club to win the Clifford Cup Knockout Tournament after 17 years in 2006, beating Havelocks 37-5 in the final where he entered the list of players who were loyal and remained to one club without moving to other clubs.

He has some unblemished memories during his rugby career which includes beating Isipathana 14-10 and ending their 37 match unbeaten streak in 1998 in the school's league championship.

The other was while playing for CR edging out the mighty Kandy team 24-23 at Nittawela in 2001, in a nerve tingling encounter, and beating Thailand by over 50 points in Dubai under his captaincy.

He played under several captains like Haris Omar, Pradeep Basnayake and Sajith Mallikarachchi at the three Rugby Asias in 2002, 2004 and 2006 respectively. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration (Northwood University).

He is the Owner and the Managing director of JF Tours and Travels (Cey) Ltd. Inbound Tourism, Maritime Lanka Ltd - Recruitment, Rasa Bojun (Pvt) Ltd - Restaurant and Energy Link (Pvt) Ltd - Solar power systems

Sri Lankan Olympic stars of yesteryear

Zal Chitty - a champion marksman who brought laurels to country

Zal Chitty, who represented Sri Lanka in rifle shooting events at the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988, was born in Colombo on September 9, 1962.

He showed much promise in athletics and tennis while studying at Royal College, Colombo. He was the Under-14 Tennis Champion.

His father, Ajit Chitty and his grandfather George Chitty had both represented Royal College in shooting contents. His uncle Kumar Chitty had represented Sri Lanka at Asian and World Shooting Championships.

Under their influence, Zal turned to shooting and by 1984 had attained a fair degree of competency and won his first title in 1985.

In 1986, at the National Rifle Shooting Championships he surprised many by winning five events and setting up records in each event.

In 1987, he won the air rifle and three position events once again and in 1988, he set up a new National record in the air rifle event. In 1990, he won the three-position event while setting up a new National record and in 1991 too he won this event. For the first



Zal Chitty

time he represented Sri Lanka in 1986 at the Moscow International Shooting Championships and that year he also participated in the Asian Shooting Championships held in Seoul, South Korea. He returned to Korea in 1987 for the World Shooting Championships and was placed 17th in his event. The points scored by him in these events easily surpassed the Sri Lanka record score for these events. By scoring 573 points, in this event he came up to the standard set by the International

Olympic Committee to qualify for the Olympic Games and he was selected to represent Sri Lanka in the air rifle event at the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988.

In 1990, he was a participant at the Asian Shooting Championships held in China. At the World Shooting Championships held in Australia in 1991, he came third in the overall points table and won a Bronze Medal.

That year, he participated in three other competitions, in Zurich, the Asian Championships in Beijing and the SAF Games held in Colombo where he won a Silver Medal in the team event and a Bronze Medal in the air rifle event.

In 1987, Zal joined an International Shooting Training Centre in Texas, USA and underwent three months training under a former World champion and Olympic Gold Medallist. In 1991, he received training in Russia for a month under S. Doygol and Lanny Bassham. He has continued to participate in shooting championships and has set up a record 580 points for the air rifle event. He also won the three-position event. (C.D)

Colombo Masters beat Ambalangoda Masters by five wickets

M.H. YAKEEM

Colombo Masters overcame Ambalangoda Masters by five wickets, in a 35 over game which was played at Ambalangoda recently.

In an invitation from the Ambalangoda Masters, Colombo Masters, President, Mahes de Zoysa took an interest in playing the game on their ground, Ambalangoda Masters batting first, made a respectable total with P.Milton stroking a gallant 99 not out, just missing his century by one run and was well supported by R.M.Jayantha, S.Hewa-

wasam, S.Mohan, P.Weerasinghe and S.Senanayake reaching double figures with Amal Karunaratne claiming 3 wickets and Chaminda Rajapaksa two wickets.

In the run chase, Ex Tamil Union Cricketer, Suranjith Dharmasena taking control of the bowlers, played a patient knock scoring 74 runs and 63 year old Rohan Raj Perera, former Kingswoodian Cricketer of repute, coming all the way from Dambulla to take part in this game showed his talent at that age, stroking a fluent 54 runs and went back to the

pavilion retired hurt and contributions from Lasantha Perera, Palitha Liyanage, and Chaminda Rajapaksa who was 24 not out sealed the victory with one over to spare. Chamara Silva and R.M. Jayantha were the pick of the bowlers with 2 wickets apiece.

AMBALANGODA MASTERS - 243/8 in 35 overs Saman Mohan 16, S.Hewawasam 13, P.Weerasinghe 13, P.Milton not out 99, R.M.Jayantha 35, S.Senanayake 24

COLOMBO MASTERS- 244/5 in 34 overs Palitha Liyanage 23, Suranjith Dharmasena 74, Rohan Raj Perera rtd hurt 54, Chaminda Rajapaksha 24 not out.

SLARDAR appoints new committee for 2021



The Sri Lanka Association of Racing Drivers and Riders (SLARDAR) reappointed Suminda de Silva as its President for 2021 at the recently held 37th Annual General Meeting. He has previously held the positions of President in 2020 and was also the Assistant Secretary and Vice-President over the years. The office-bearers: Seated (from left): Shameera Abeynayake, Pubudu Wickrama, Suminda de Silva, Rodney Mason and Chanaka Hettiarachchi. Standing (from left): Dan De Silva, Saranga Gunawardena, Shane Gunawardena, Kamil Hussain, Muditha Adikari, Nishan Wasalathanthri, Andreas Klaus and Mahiman Perera

Football in Kandy in search of past glory



HAFIZ MARIKAR

The incoming president of the FFSL, is all out to give a big hand to bring back Kandy's football to its former position, which will be a great help for footballers. Kandy had not been in action for some time.

Some of the leading clubs at that time in Kandy were Old Antonians SC, Old Kingswoodians SC, Police SC, Kandy YMCA, Greenfield SC, Kandy Sports Club, Phoenix SC, St. Michael's SC, Gampola Chums, Rovers SC, Kandy YMMA and Red Stars SC. It was at that time Kandy District Amateur Football League was formed. It subsequently changed its name to Kandy Association

Football League and served football in Matale, Gampola, Nawalapitiya, Kurunegala and Kegalle, and as the years rolled by, these towns formed their own leagues.

It was St. Anthony's College which first played football. It must be recalled that late M.S. Jainudeen as Secretary of Kandy football, went all out to popularize the game in Kandy at that time. Kandy is a

founder member of the football's controlling body. In the good old days league tournaments were conducted with over 250 matches at a time, with only one ground available.

Today football is not heard of much in Kandy. Football has apparently hit rock bottom. When will Kandy football reach its past glory? Earlier, Kandy won the All Island Senior and junior League champi-

onship for the first time and also toured Nepal. It was the first ever Kandy team to tour overseas.

What the controlling body should do is to appoint an interim committee and run football in Kandy until it is properly organized with the support of those who have done great service to this game in the past Kandy football is at a crucial stage, so every one hopes the incoming presi-

dent of FFSL Dr. Manil Fernando will bring back the game to its former position.

First president from Kandy at FFSL was DIG Bodhi Liyanage and the first secretary was Hafiz Marikar. Some of the people who gave a big hand for football in the early days were late Col. V.H.L. Anthonisz, A. C. L. Ratwatte E.L. Senanayake, M.S. Jainudeen, Dr.C.D.L.

Fernando, M. Nadaraja, Kumal Mohamed. When football flourished in Kandy, schools were the nursery of the clubs. Where St. Anthony's, Kiingswood, Dharmaraja, Sri Rahula, St. Paul's (now known as Sri Sumangala), Berrawatts, Vidyarthi and St. Sylvester's excelled. In 1963 the Kandy Schools Football Association was formed and it did an excellent job to promote the

game. Zahira Gampola, Nugawela Central, Gampola Vidyalaya, Wickramabahu, Kathiresan from Nawalapitiya, Highlands from Hatton and Zahira Matale played under the Kandy Schools Association. Today football is a forgotten game in Kandy. A few years back football was the most popular sport in Kandy. When will Kandy football reach its past glory?

WORLD OF SPORTS

(MARCH 27) LOCAL EVENTS CRICKET

(Inter-Schools U-19 Tournament):
St. Joseph's vs Royal at Darley Road
Ananda vs St. Peter's at Ananda Mawatha
Richmond vs Wesley at Galle
St. Sebastian's vs Dharmasoka at Moratuwa
(Women's Division One Tournament):
Air Force SC 'B' vs Army SC 'A' at Katunayake
Chilaw Marians CC vs Army SC 'B' at Katunayake
Seeingama CC vs Navy SC at Hikkaduwa
Colts CC vs Air Force SC 'A' at Colts Grounds
GAMES (National Sports Festival):
Men's and Women's race walking at Kataragama

FOREIGN EVENTS CRICKET

New Zealand Women vs Australia Women (1st T20) at Hamilton

(MARCH 27 AND 28) LOCAL EVENTS TENNIS

Clay Court Nationals at SLTA Courts, Green Path

BASKETBALL

Masters Tournament at Sugathadasa Stadium

(MARCH 28) LOCAL EVENTS CRICKET

(Major Club Tournament):
Air Force SC vs Badureliya CC at Katunayake
Army SC vs Bloomfield at Panagoda
CCC vs Kandy Customs SC at CCC Grounds
Panadura SC vs Lankan CC at Panadura
Chilaw Marians CC vs Ragama CC at Katunayake
Galle CC vs Navy SC at Galle
NCC vs Ace Capital CC at NCC Grounds
Tamil Union vs Negombo CC at P. Sara Oval
Nugegodda SC vs Kalutara TC at Maggona
SSC vs Kurunegala YCC at SSC Grounds
Saracens SC vs Moors SC at Moratuwa
Colts CC vs Sebastianites CC at Colts Grounds

FOREIGN EVENTS CRICKET

New Zealand vs Bangladesh (1st T20) at Hamilton
India vs England (3rd ODI) at Pune

Skipper Wellalage lifts St. Joseph's after batting collapse vs. Royal

DHAMMIKA RATNAWEERA
Skipper Duniwell Wellalage hit a brisk knock of 71 in 76 balls with five fours and five sixes as St. Joseph's College compiled 210 in their first innings on the opening day of their Inter-Schools Under-19 traditional match against Royal College which began at Darley Road yesterday.
St. Joseph's were struggling at 74 for five wickets at one stage, but Wellalage and Yesith Rupasinghe (28) added a fighting 77-run stand for the sixth wicket stand to rebuild the innings.
Royal paceson Sonal Amarasekara and leg-

spinner Gishan Balasooriya took three wickets apiece.
Chief scores
● **At Darley Road**
St. Joseph's: 210 (Duniwell Wellalage 71, Sonal Amarasekara 3/21, Gishan Balasooriya 3/78)
Royal: 33/0.
● **At Ananda Mawatha**
Ananda: 187/6 (Hansaja Jayasinghe 41, Saviru Binura 35 n.o.) vs St. Peter's.
● **At Galle**
Richmond: 175/4 (Bhanuka Manohara 75, Kavindu Nirmana 57 n.o.) vs Wesley.
● **At Moratuwa**
St. Sebastian's: 241 (Sanesh Fernando 102, Bihanga Mendis 52,

Lohan de Soysa 5/40, Sahana Sankapala 3/35)
Dharmasoka: 30/1. (Limited over tournament):
● **At Wijerama Mawatha** (Gurukula won by five wickets)
D. S. Senanayake: 169 in 48.2 overs (Abhishek Liyanarachchi 58, Amitha Dabare 32, Sasindu Gunaratne 31 n.o., Thushara Wani-gasinghe 5/20)
Gurukula: 172/5 in 28.3 overs (Rashmika Mewan 52, Kemira Nayanatharu 43, Janitha Shehan 37 n.o.)
● **At Gampaha** (Sri Sumangala won by three wickets)
Galahitiyawa
Central: 148 in 46.2 overs (Ashan Hapuar-



Royal wicket-keeper Shehan Herath executes a stumping to dismiss St. Joseph's batsman Deshan Seneviratne. Pic by Samantha Weerasiri
achchi 34, Vishwa Lahiru 3/30)
Sri Sumangala: 150/7 in 38.5 overs (Duranka Silva 48, Esanda Sithum 4/25).
● **At Panadura** (St. John's won by 89 runs)
St. John's: 177 in 47 overs (Reshan Malith 47, Bimsara Ranawaka 39, Isuru Udara 3/29)
Kalutara Vidyalaya: 88 in 30 overs (Sumudu Udara 4/19, Reshan Malith 3/19).
● **At Weyangoda** (Bandaranayake MMV won by seven wickets)
De La Salle: 110 in 41.5 overs (Thilina Gunatilleka 42)
Bandaranayake MMV: 111/3 in 18.2 overs.

Karunaratne impressed with Sri Lanka's batting



Sri Lanka Test Captain Dimuth Karunaratne (L) and Dinesh Chandimal.

DHAMMIKA RATNAWEERA
Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne said that Sri Lanka's batting performance in the second innings was impressive after the opening Test match against the West Indies ended in a draw at Antigua on Thursday.
"When we got out for 169 in the first innings, we knew we were far behind the game. But we did well in the second innings," he emphasised.
"Oshada Fernando scored a gem of an innings and debutant Pathum Nissanka batted well. It wasn't easy facing bowlers like Roach, Holder and Gabriel."
"However he knew what he's capable of and

he had a good game plan that he executed very well and it paid off," Karunaratne stressed.
"He's done a great job the last three years in the domestic season so that's why he was called and he took this opportunity with both hands."
"Niroshan Dickwella got some runs on his name but unfortunately he missed his well-deserved century once again."
"The second game is important and we need to give our best before we move on to the Bangladesh series," added Karunaratne.

SCORECARD

SRI LANKA 1st Innings - 169 WEST INDIES 1st Innings - 271	SRI LANKA 2nd Innings - 476 WEST INDIES 2nd Innings
K. Brathwaite c Embuldeniya 23 J. Campbell c Dickwella b Fernando ... 11 N. Bonner not out 113	K. Mayers c Thirimanne b Embuldeniya 52 J. Blackwood b Fernando 4 J. Holder not out 18 Extras: (b4, lb8, nb3) ... 15 Total (100 overs, 4 wkts) . 236 Fall: 1-12, 2-78, 3-183, 4-204 Bowling: S. Lakmal 25-10-33-0, V. Fernando 19-0-73-2 (1nb), L. Embuldeniya 28-9-62-2 (1nb), D. Chameera 18-3-44-0 (1nb), D. de Silva 10-5-12-0

Dickwella - created a Test record to his name

INDIKA WELAGEDARA
Sri Lanka wicket-keeper batsman Niroshan Dickwella created an unfortunate record to his name in the first Test against the West Indies at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua, after falling four runs short of his maiden Test century.
Dickwella had played a brilliant knock until that point but fell agonisingly short of his first Test century when he tried to play a late cut towards the third-man off fast bowler Kemar Roach.
By the virtue of the same, Dickwella has now scored the most number of fifties in Test cricket without a century. The left-hander surpassed India's late Chetan Chauhan as he has now scored 17 fifties in the longer format of the game, while Chauhan had 16 without reaching the three-figure mark.



Niroshan Dickwella

Old Rathianz win by 91 runs

HAFIZ MARIKAR
Old Rathianz Cricket Club beat Onslaught CC by 91 runs in the Kandy District Cricket Association Limited Over Cricket Tournament first quarter-final played at the Prisons Grounds in Palkele yesterday.
Old Rathianz CC batting first went on to score 142 runs in 27.3 overs and

Onslaught CC in their turn were bowled out for 51 runs in 20.4 overs.
Chief scores
Old Rathianz CC: 142 in 27.3 overs (S. K. Seelaratne 102, M. B. N. Jayaweera 3/40, G. Tharaka 3/44)
Onslaught CC: 51 in 20.4 overs (K. R. Karunatilake 4/10, A. B. Ketakumbura 4/15).

Shivarajan, Krishanthini win NSF marathon

DHAMMIKA RATNAWEERA
M. Shivarajan and W. E. L. Krishanthini both from the Central Province won the Men's and Women's title respectively at the 46th National Sports Festival (NSF) marathon event worked off at Kataragama yesterday.
There were 50 runners in the Men's marathon and 22 in the Women's race.
Shivarajan finished with two hours and 29.29s to win first place, while Central Province athlete Krishanthini finished the 42km race with a time of two hours and 55.30s.
Sports Ministry Director Gen-

eral Amal Edirisuriya, Nestle Corporate Affairs Vice-President Bandula Egodage and Monaragala District Secretary Gunadasa Samarasinghe distributed the awards.
RESULTS:
Men's marathon: 1. M. Shivarajan (Central) 2:29.29s, 2. G. K. K. S. T. Gunasekara (Western) 2:32.14s, 3. W. M. S. Kumara (North Western) 2:33.45s.
Women's marathon: 1. W. E.



M. Shivarajan in action

Basketball community mourns death of Ranil

Sri Lanka's basketball community is in shock following the sudden death of international basketball referee Ranil Suranga Fernando. He was only 37.
A product of St. Anne's College, Kurunegala, Ranil took to refereeing at a young age and made tremendous progress becoming one of the leading referees in the country.
He handled high pressure games smoothly and was loved by the basketball community. He was set to officiate in the Masters Tournament at the Sugathadasa Stadium this weekend but passed away on Wednesday night.
His remains lie at the Western Funeral Home, 109, Negombo - Colombo Main Road, Negombo and will be taken for burial at Negombo General Cemetery, today at 3.00 p.m.



Ranil Fernando

Blues and Wattala BC record victories at MBSL Tourney

ALTHAF NAWAZ
Wattala BC and the Blues team each claimed victory over SL Navy and Colombo Spartans, respectively, in the over-35 Men's preliminary rounds, on day one of the Masters Basketball Tournament conducted by Masters Basketball Sri Lanka (MBSL) at the Sugathadasa Indoor Stadium, yesterday. The Blues team won against Colombo Spartans 28-18, while Wattala had it easy finishing with 32 points over SL Navy, who only scored 20.
In the over-50 Men's preliminary rounds matches, Old Bens pulled off a nerve-tugging 23-22 win over Old Sokiens, Ambalangoda after leading 11-10 at the breather, while

Police pulled off a 16-10 victory against Carltons Moratuwa, after a 6-all score at half time.
With the participation of 31 teams in the Men's and Women's category in the over 35, 40, 45, and 50 age groups are competing in this year's tournament, which is held after a lapse of one year due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. It was great to witness some of the yesteryear players who dominated the game during their era competing in this tournament, which was confronted under strict health guidelines. The tournament will be the kick-start for the other stakeholder of the game to resume their respective tournaments. The



Hayaz Haroon (10) of Colombo Spartans attempts to dribble through Anushka Vishwanath of Blues team in the over-35 Men's Masters Basketball Sri Lanka League Tournament at the Sugathadasa Indoor Stadium yesterday.
tournament is sponsored by Gaja Sports.
Results:
Over 35 Men's - Wattala BC bt. SL Navy 32-20, Blues bt. Colombo Spartans 28-18
Over 40 Men's - 76ers bt. Untouchable Police bt. Wattala BC 20-16
Over 50 Men's - Police bt. Carlton Moratuwa 16-10, Old Bens bt. Old Sokiens 23-22.

SLC dispute with Vaas amicably resolved

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) yesterday announced that the matters which led to the resignation of Fast Bowling Consultant Chaminda Vaas were amicably resolved following a meeting between Vaas and the Management Team of SLC.
Vaas withdrew his submitted Letter of Resignation and agreed to continue as the Fast Bowling Consultant to SLC, the position which he held before his resignation.
"Sri Lanka Cricket acknowledges the valuable services rendered by Vaas to SLC and the significant contribution he has made to the sport as an iconic player," a media release stated yesterday.