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LATE CITY EDITION



COVID-19 cases are including in SL: WHO

Says almost 4 million cases globally reported last week

The COVID-19 cases are rising globally, including in Sri Lanka, the World Health Organisation Country Office for Sri Lanka said.

S WARNINGS T

- Renowned virologist Prof. Malik Peiris foresees such an outbreak in the months to come
- Congratulates Govt. on successful vaccination drive
- Says two shots should be administered to have a significant impact

BY KELUM BANDARA

he health authorities have taken note of warnings by world-renowned Sri Lankan born virologist of Hong Kong University Prof. Malik Peiris that Sri Lanka is to face the worst ever COVID-19 outbreak in the coming months.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON $\frac{12}{12}$

- Will commence once the current vaccination process is completed
- Already garment factory workers between 18-30 are being vaccinated
- Govt. currently on an accelerated vaccination drive to ensure all above 30 are vaccinated

COVID-19 Situation Report As at Aug 01, 2021

2,510 278,910

27.998

Active cases

BY EASWARAN RUTNAM

The government is considering vaccinating 18-30-year-olds as the next stage in the vaccination programme

Media Minister and Cabinet co-spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella told Daily Mirror that while the ongoing vaccination process is focused on those above 30-years of age, the next stage will be on 18-30-year-olds.

He said that already, garment factory workers between the ages of 18-30 are being vaccinated

67

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON 🚜 ≫

4,508

Total Deaths

Minister Keheliya says SL is not the only country where intelligence officers of foreign countries are believed to be operating

- Diplomatic passports
- Govt. says cannot detect
- Local intel will act if threat to SL

BY EASWARAN RUTNAM Foreign intelligence

used to enter agencies from a number of countries are believed to be operating in Sri Lanka to gather information or counterall individuals propaganda from countries of concern, Daily Mirror learns. Sources said that the main focus of these intelligence agencies is to keep a close

eye on the activities of some countries, the contacts they establish locally and their military presence, if any. Sri Lanka has been seen as a strategic location in the Indian Ocean, and there have been fears the island could be used by some countries to pose a threat to regional stability.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON 🖊 ≫

Law in the making to regulate oil exploration for first time

- It will provide for the establishment of a Policy Advisory Committee
- The bill will set up the Petroleum Development Authority of Sri Lanka exploration in Sri Lanka

The government has drafted a new bill to be enacted into an Act to regulate, among others, oil

Sajith to sue JDA over alleged attempt to transfer people from Mattala Uda Gammana

Villagers informed Mr.Premadasa that UDA officials had informed them that the 25 acre provided to build houses for the homeless in Mattala was under the Department of Forest Reserves and construction of houses cannot be allowed

YOHAN PERERA

311,349

Total

Leader of Opposition Sajith Premadasa is in for a legal battle against the UDA after the latter had claimed that the transfer of land made to people under the Mattala Uda Gammana (Reawakened villages) was illegal.



Another ex-domestic aide at MP Bathiudeen's house claims she suffered sexual harassment

- Police have recorded statements from eight women to date
- 11 women including the 16-yearold girl had worked as domestic aides between 2010 and 2021

Investigations disclosed that three of the eleven women who had served as domestic workers at MP Rishad Bathiudeen's residence in Colombo since 2010, have died.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON 12 >>

Exorcist arrested for molesting two women during ritual

• THE SUSPECT HAS INFORMED **ALL MALES SHOULD LEAVE** THE HOUSE FOR HIM TO PERFORM A SPECIAL RITUAL **LEAVING ONLY THE WOMEN**

DARSHANA SANJEEWA BALASURIYA

A 41-year-old exorcist was arrested in connection with sexually abusing a 45-year old woman and sexually harassing a 19 year old girl during a special ritual at a residence.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON 🛂 ≫

FAILURE TO REPORT TO WORK WITHOUT ACCEPTABLE EXCUSE WOULD BE A GROUND TO VACATE SERVICE- SC

An employee who fails to report to work without an acceptable excuse for a reasonable period of time would necessarily be a ground which justifies the employer to consider the employee as having vacated service, the Supreme Court held in a recent judgment.

The Supreme Court delivered this judgment pursuant to an appeal petition filed by Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya on behalf of its member, a depot route inspector attached to the Giriulla Bus Depot challenging the termination of service, on the alleged ground of vacation of post

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON 🖊 ≫

VACCINATION CENTRES OPEN on 01.08.2021 to 06.08.2021

AstraZeneca (2nd dose) only

The Ministry of Health says that administering the second dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine has

	District	Police Area	Vaccination Centre Name
Army Manned		Cinnamon Gardens	Viharamahadevi Park
Walk-in			Army Hospital Narahenpita
Vaccination Centres	Colombo	Boralesgamuwa	Kotelawala Defence Hospital (SLAM
7.00 a.m to 6.00 p.m		Panagoda	Bodirajaramaya
		Talangama	Diyatha Uyana
CMC - Air Force		Cinnaman Caudana	DMICH
Time - From	Colombo		BMICH PD Sirisena Ground
9.00 a.m to 5.00 p.m			Sugathadasa Stadium
Only)			
		Moratuwa	District Hospital Moratuwa
		Athurugiriya	District Hospital Athurugiriya
		Nawagamuwa	District Hospital Nawagamuwa
			District Hospital Piliyandala District Hospital Wethara
MOH Office Time - From .00 a.m to 5.00 p.m (SMS Appointment Only) Hospitals Time - From .30 a.m to 5.00 p.m Army Manned Walk-in Vaccination Centres - Time - From .00 a.m to 6.00 p.m		Awissawella	DGH - Awissawella
Time - From	Walk-in cination Centres	Homagama Base Hospital	
8.30 a.m to 5.00 p.m		Kosgama	District Hospital Kosgama
			Base Hospital Thalangama
			District Hospital Padukka
			IDH - Angoda / CEBH - Mulleriyawa CSTH - Kalubowila
			MOH Office - Battaramulla
			MOH Office - Boralesgamuwa
			MOH Office - Dehiwala
			MOH Office - Moratuwa / Egodauyar
		Gothatuwa	MOH Office - Gothatuwa
		Hanwella	MOH Office · Hanwella
			MOH Office - Homagama
	Colombo		MOH Office - Kaduwela MOH Office - Kahathuduwa
8.30 a.m to 5.00 p.m	Colombo		MOH Office - Kesbewa
			MOH Office · Kolonnawa
			MOH Office · Maharagama
		Nugegoda	MOH Office - Nugegoda
			MOH Office - Padukka
			MOH Office - Piliyandala
			MOH Office - Pitakotte MOH Office - Rathmalana
	District	Police Area	Vaccination Centre Name
		Kadawata	Kirillawala Central College
Centres -	Gampaha		Dharmaloka Vidyalaya
Walk-in Vaccination Centres - Time - From		Negombo	Mari Stella College
		Nittambuwa	Wathupitiwala Base Hospital
		Divulapitiya	District Hospital Divulapitiya
		Dompe	District Hospital Dompe
			District Hospital Radawana
Hognitals			District Hospital Biyagama
MOH Office Time - From 3.30 a.m to 5.00 p.m Army Manned Walk-in Vaccination Centres - Time - From 7.00 a.m to 6.00 p.m Hospitals Time - From 8.30 a.m to 5.00 p.m	Gampaha		District Hospital Ja Ela DGH - Gampaha
8.30 a.m to 5.00 p.m			DGH - Negombo
			Kiribathgoda Base Hospital
		Malwathuhiripitiya	District Hospital Malwathuhiripitiya
			District Hospital Udupila
			Base Hospital Minuwangoda
			Ragama Teaching Hospital
			Wijaya Kumarathunga Hospital District Hospital Pamunugama
			MOH Office - Attanagalla
			MOH Office - Biyagama
			MOH Office - Divulapitiya
			MOH Office - Dompe
		Gampaha	MOH Office - Gampaha
MOH Office			MOH Office - Ja Ela
Time - From	Gampaha		MOH Office - Katana
о.эо а.ш tө 5.00 p.m			MOH Office - Mahara MOH Office - Minuwangoda
			MOH Office - Meerigama
			MOH Office - Negombo
			MOH Office - Ragama
			MOH Office - Seeduwa
			LIMOU OCC INCHES
			MOH Office - Wattala
	District	Wattala	Vaccination Centre Name
	District	Wattala Police Area	Vaccination Centre Name
Vaggination	District	Wattala Police Area Agalawatta	Vaccination Centre Name Pimbura Primary College (MOH)
Vaccination Centres Time - From		Wattala Police Area Agalawatta Bandaragama	Vaccination Centre Name Pimbura Primary College (MOH) Pinwaththa Clinic (MOH Bandaragam
		Wattala Police Area Agalawatta Bandaragama Horana	Vaccination Centre Name Pimbura Primary College (MOH) Pinwaththa Clinic (MOH Bandaragam
Time - From		Wattala Police Area Agalawatta Bandaragama Horana	Vaccination Centre Name Pimbura Primary College (MOH) Pinwaththa Clinic (MOH Bandaragam Thalagala Mangalaramaya Viharaya (

SLFP discusses its grievances only with President and PM: Tisara Gunasinghe

- A SECTION OF THE SLFP NOT CONVINCED ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE DISCUSSION HELD BETWEEN PRESIDENT GOTABAYA AND THE TOP **BRASS OF THE PARTY**
- NEGATIVE REMARKS MADE BY SLPP **GENERAL SECRETARY SAGARA** KARIYAWASAM ON MINISTER UDAYA GAMMANPILA, WAS A JOKE

SANDUN A JAYASEKERA

The SLFP discusses its grievances only with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa as the SLFP extended its support to the two leaders at the elections, SLFP youth league member and Habaraduwa

organiser of the party, Tisara Gunasinghe said.

He added that the SLFP does not pay much attention to chit MPs of the SLPP who reads statements written by someone else at press conferences.

Seven year old child washed away by a wave

HER BODY WAS **RECOVERED BY THE POLICE LIFE GUARDS A** LITTLE WHILE LATER

🛚 CHANDRASENA GAMAGE AND ARIYADASA KODITUWAKKU

A seven year old girl walking along the beach last morning had been taken away by a freak wave which lashed the shore in Tangalle.

The victim Senali Gihansa Peiris of Kaludewala in Panadura had been staying in a hotel in at Kapuhenwala in Tangalle and gone to the beach with her parents. Her body was recovered by the police life guards a little

Police said the rough seas experience in the area had resulted in the accident.

Stories on gem clusters fabricated to divert people's attention

- The "Dhammika peniya (Syrup) was another fabricated gimmick
- The COVID-19 pandemic has gone from bad to worse. Some 1600 persons have died of COVID 19 since June

BY YOHAN PERERA

Story on the discovery of a cluster of precious gems appears to be a fabricated story with the aim of diverting people's attention from burning issues in the nation, UNP Deputy Leader Ruwan Wijewardene alleged yesterday.

The "Dhammika peniya (Syrup) was another fabricated gimmick some months ago. Now we see clusters of gems being found in Ratnapura. The Gem story is also a fabricated one.The COVID-19 pandemic has gone from bad to worse.

Some 1600 persons have died of COVID 19 since June 21 2021 to date. I was told that the Delta variant is spreading in the Badulla District as well" he said. The Government has no

funds to import essential goods. Chemical fertilizers were banned in a rush. This was something which should have been done gradually. Some countries have shifted to organic fertilizer as a long term programme SEE REST OF THE STORY ON 12





COVID-19 cases are rising globally including in SL: WHO

We have the tools to stop this virus, but on current trends, we expect the total number of cases to pass 200 million within the next two weeks

WHO cautioned that this was driven by the highly ransmissible Delta variant, increased social mixing/ mobility, inconsistent public health and social measures and inequitable vaccination. "Hard-won gains are in jeopardy and health systems are being overwhelmed," the WHO in Sri Lanka said.

Meanwhile, the WHO said that almost 4 million COVID-19 cases globally were reported to WHO last week, and many of these were driven by the highly transmissible Delta variant. "We have the tools to stop this virus, but on current trends, we expect the total number of cases to pass 200 million within the next two weeks," WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

SL NOTES WARNINGS THAT THE WORST COVID-19 **OUTBREAK IS AHEAD**

WE DON'T LIVE IN DENIAL OF SUCH WARNINGS. WE NEVER SAY THE SITUATION IS BETTER. WE SEE AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CASES. BUT, ANY LOCKDOWN WILL HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

However, Deputy Director-General of Health Services Dr. Hemantha Herath said, but people had a bigger responsibility in driving transmissions down.

Making his remarks during a virtual address to an event organised by Sri Lanka Science Foundation, Prof. Peiris said there is a resurgence in cases due to Delta variant

"There has been a resurgence of cases globally, including in the South Asian region. This is primarily due to the new variant, which is the Delta variant. This, of course, played havoc in India. I am afraid that I have to say that it is going to have a major impact on Sri Lanka in the coming weeks. As a public health professional, I would be remising my duty if I

don't warn that Sri Lanka is going to have the worse COVID-19 outbreak in the months ahead," Prof. Peiris said in his address on video.

He congratulated State Minister, Prof. Channa Jayasumana, and the government for a successful vaccination drive. However, he said people should be administered with two doses significant impact, and it would not happen within the next month or two.

for mass vaccination to have a

Asked for the response in this regard, Deputy Director-General of Health Services Dr. Herath who is authorised to talk to the press on COVID-19-related matters said the health authorities had noted all such warnings, but a lockdown of the country would have disastrous economic consequences.

Admitting that there is an uptick in cases, he said it is important to flatten the curve.

"We don't live in denial of such warnings. We never say the situation is better. We see an increase in the number of cases. But, any lockdown will have a major impact on the economy. People should be more and more responsible in adhering to public health measures. Then only, we can bring the caseload down,' he said.

OPERATING

 Sri Lanka has been șeen as a strategiç location in the Indian Ocean, and there have been fears the island could be used by some countries to pose a threat to regional stability

Well-informed sources said that foreign intelligence officers are believed to have entered Sri Lanka using diplomatic

Foreign intelligence officers are believed to have been operating in Sri Lanka as far back as when the war with the LTTE was at its peak.

One source told Daily Mirror that during the war, there were also concerns raised that meetings held by the local authorities

could be tapped. The source said that measures were taken at the time by local defence authorities to bar tapping of closed-door meetings using

the technology available at the time. When contacted by Daily Mirror, Media Minister and Cabinet co-spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella said that it is hard to detect foreign intelligence officers, especially when they are in the country using diplomatic

passports. He also said that Sri Lanka is not the only country where intelligence officers of foreign countries are believed to be operating.

"We see this happening in other countries as well, where foreign missions are used for intelligence gathering," Rambukwella said.

However, he noted that local intelligence agencies are on alert, and if there is a threat to Sri Lanka as a result of the presence of any foreigner then the local authorities will act.

OBITUARIES

FATHUMA RANDA YUSUF. Beloved wife of Mumtaz Yusuf, beloved mother of Chezy and Imran and mother-in-law of Donnie (Chezy's Fiance), beloved daughter of the late Zain Dean Ismail and Jeniya Ibrahim and beloved stepdaughter of the late Lal Moonesinghe, beloved sister of Nuzath Baba, Rajiha Ismail, Haneezain Dean Ismail, and Shumsdean Ismail, beloved daughterin-law of the late Sithy Huzaima and the late M.J.M. Yusuf, beloved sisterin-law of Rushdie Farouk, Nuzah Yazeed, Fatal Baba, Kamil Ismail and Caren Ismail, passed away in Rancho Palos Verdes, USA. Funeral was held on Saturday, July 31.2021 at 3.30 p.m. at Green Hills Memorial Park 27501 South Western Avenue Rancho Palos

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BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE 2ND AUGUST 2021

In treasured memory of Marhooma

EZMALINE ZUNAIHA JARO



"A wife, a mother, a grandma, a great grandmother and an aunt too We shall cherish the memories we have of you The most wonderful lady Who's heart never grew old Her smile made of sunshine, And warm hands to hold Time may pass and fade away But the memories will always stay"

Sadly missed and affectionately remembered by your loving sons Taj and Reza Daughters-in-law Gita & Needra Son-in-law Rumi Grandchildren Shehan, Stefan, Amreeta & Ayaan Great Grandchildren Essie & Luca and all your loved ones

JABS FOR 18-30-YEAR-OLDS

While the vaccination process is moving forward, steps have also been taken to ensure the State machinery operates smoothly

The Minister said that once the current vaccination process is completed, the next stage will be to vaccinate all those between the ages of 18-30.

The Government is currently on an accelerated vaccination drive to ensure all those above 30 are vaccinated.

Rambukwella said that while the vaccination process is

moving forward, steps have also been taken to ensure the State

machinery operates smoothly. He said that some state institutions have not been functioning smoothly as a result of the work-from-home option. As a result, it was decided

to cancel that option and recall all state employees to work from today.

Sajith to sue UDA over alleged attempt to transfer people from Mattala Uda Gammana

Mr. Premadasa told the recipients of the land over the weekend that he will file a fundamental rights petitions against the move by the UDA to reacquire the land from the Uda Gammana recipients. He came out with this when the recipients requested him to resolve the issue.

The villagers have informed Mr. Premadasa that UDA officials who visited them had informed them that the 25 acre land provided to build houses for the homeless in Mattala is under the Department of Forest Reserves and therefore construction

of houses cannot be allowed. "I will not allow anyone to take over these lands and I will file fundamental rights cases against the UDA to save each plot of land." Take videos of these officers when they visit you again and hand me the clips and I will do the rest," he told the villagers.

"These lands have been provided to you legally from the Housing Ministry and you have obtained loans to construct houses from a state bank. Will a State Bank Provide loans to construct in illegal lands.? he guestioned.

Johnston calls on Opposition to support government

Chief Government Whip Highways Minister Johnston Fernando yesterday called on opposition parties to put aside their differences, ideologies and party politics to extend support the government to make the national vaccination drive a success. Speaking to journalists after a progress review meeting in his ministry, the minister said that the national vaccination drive was progressing fast thanks to guidance of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and due to the dedication of the security force members and health officials. "While the vaccination drive is in progress, we have seen some political parties criticizing it and making unfounded allegations. This is not a political project. Therefore one should not try to score political points. This is a national drive against a virus. There

are some who cannot understand this reality. We have seen some alleging that there would be no AstraZeneca vaccines for those who have got the first dose. We have got a consignment of more than 700,000 AstraZeneca vaccines from Japan. Similarly we will complete vaccinating other brands including Sinopharm, Moderna, Sputnik V and Pfizer. The number of vaccines administered daily has increased to a record 500,000. We will continue that efficiency," the Minister said.

"We act to save the lives of people and ensure all would get their vaccines so that we can open up the country soon. We cannot keep the country locked down and stop the economy from running. We call on the opposition to understand this national urgency and encourage people to get their vaccines rather than getting stage street protests,"

SLFP discusses its grievances only with President and PM: Tisara Gunasinghe He told the media that certain

negative remarks made by SLPP General Secretary Sagara Kariyawasam on the SLFP and Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila, it was a joke when Kariyawasam voted against the No Confidence Motion brought by the opposition against Minister Gammanpila after he asked him to resign from his portfolio accepting the blame on the fuel price hike. "We pay no attention to useless and foolish remarks made by certain nincompoops in Parliament or out of it who don't have an iota of Parliamentary tradition, decorum or participatory democracy,

Gunasinghe said. He admitted that a section of the SLFP were not much convinced about the outcome of the discussion held between President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and the top

brass of the party. However, the SLFP politburo and the Central Committee were to meet this week to assess the outcome of the discussion, he noted. However, Gunasinghe maintained that the discussion with President Rajapaksa centered on how the two parties could go ahead together while strengthening President Rajapaksa's hand and protecting the government.

Law in the making to regulate oil exploration for first time The draft legislation has already development, production and

been announced in the gazette notification. The bill seeks to deal with all aspects of the upstream development of the petroleum sector.

The new piece of legislation, if enacted, will provide for the establishment of a Policy Advisory Committee to advise on formulation of a national policy for the upstream petroleum industry covering the exploration, development, production, and management of all petroleum resources in Sri Lanka.

It will provide the legal framework to regulate all processes of the exploration, development, production and management of petroleum resources in Sri Lanka including the provision of operational guidelines to establish an independent, efficient, and transparent regulatory framework regarding the exploration,

management of petroleum resources in Sri Lanka. Another objective of the bill is to manage the available petroleum resources in an equitable, safe, and environmentally sustainable manner, and to design, implement, monitor and revise fiscal regimes that meet evolving economic needs of the country while providing fiscal stability to contractors. The bill will set up the Petroleum

Development Authority of Sri Lanka. It will be responsible for making recommendations in respect of the national policy on upstream petroleum industry to the Policy Advisory Committee. The authority will have the power to prepare a map dividing the onshore and offshore areas and to demarcate and designate exploration blocks and development blocks.

Another ex-domestic aide at MP Bathiudeen's house claims she suffered sexual harassment

The Police launched investigations following the death of the 16-year-old girl, who recently died of burn injuries while working at the residence last month.

Following the investigations, the police said that 11 women including the 16-year-old girl who had worked as domestic aides at Bathiudeen's residence between 2010 and 2021.

Then, the special investigation teams were deployed to record

statements from the women who had previously worked there. The Police had earlier said the same broker who brought the 16-year-old girl to the MP's house was instrumental in bringing the other women too, to the residence.

It is learnt that in addition to the teenage girl, another woman who had worked there earlier had died due to an ailment (cancer), while

another woman is reported to have committed suicide after she had left the MP's residence. Police said they have recorded statements from eight women to date. Meanwhile. Western Province Senior DIG Deshabandu Tennakoon said following the questioning of those women, a 29-yearold woman who was while working at MP Bathiudeen's house told the police that she too was sexually abused.

Police are conducting further investigations into those incidents. The wife father-in-law of former Minister Bathiudeen, the broker were arrested and remanded in connection with the death of the 16-year-old girl, while the 44-year-old brotherin-law of the former minister was arrested and remanded over the alleged rape of a 22-year-old woman who served as a domestic aide at the MP's

EXORCIST ARRESTED

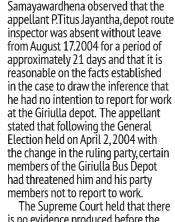
Police Spokesman SDIG Ajith Rohana said the Hali-Ela Police arrested the suspect following a complaint.

According to the complaint, the exorcist was performing the ritual at a house at Landewela in Hali-Ela on Saturday morning. "At that time, the suspect has informed

all males should leave the house for him to perform a special ritual leaving only the women. Then the suspect

raped the woman and molested the girl when the men were away," the spokesman said. The suspect from

the Medirigiriya area was to be produced before the Badulla Magistrate.



The Supreme Court held that there is no evidence produced before the Court to prove that the Appellant was subject to fear of life between the

Supreme Court three-judge-bench comprising Justice S.Thurairaja, Justice

A.H.M.D. Nawaz and Justice Mahinda

Failure to report to work without acceptable excuse would be a ground to vacate service- SC period from 17th August 2004 to the 06th September 2004 in which

period he was absent for work. The Labour Tribunal on May 31, 2011 decided the case in favour of the Appellant. Being dissatisfied with the order of the Labour Tribunal, the SLTB appealed to the Provincial High Court of Kurunegala. The Provincial High Court of Kurunegala on September 03, 2013, allowed the appeal while setting-aside the order of the Labour Tribunal on the basis that the Appellant had voluntarily vacated the post.

Being aggrieved by the judgment of the High Court, the Appellant filed an appeal before the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court decided to dismiss the appeal citing the Appellant had not shown any intention to return to work.

Stories on gem clusters fabricated to divert people's attention

No country has gone into complete Harin Fernando who held a discussion use of organic fertilizer. This rush will result in starvation next year, Mr. Wijewardene said. "Government has not been able to provide online education during the pandemic, It was myself and

with Google to provide free WIFI. We approached Google officials through a Sri Lankan millionaire in the US. However Former President Maithirpala Sirisena would not let us go ahead with it.

It was also former President Sirisena who blocked the program of providing tabs to school children. There would not have been any crisis with regard to education if these projects had gone ahead,'

A timely, thoughtful book about the education black hole

ByGamini Akmeemana

Education could well be one of the most discussed but least researched subjects in Sri Lanka. In that context, Prof. Panduka Karunanayake's 'Ruptures in Sri Lanka's **Education: Genesis. Present Status and** Reflections' fills a void. It is also highly readable because he delights in debunking myths and exposing fallacies that surrounded the controversial, divisive subject that our education system has become over the years.

First, a brief introduction of the author is necessary because, despite his illustrious academic record, Prof. Karunanayake is not someone who revels in the public limelight. He is currently a professor in the department of clinical medicine at the University of Colombo, focusing on infectious disease, postgraduate medical education, medical ethics and medical humanities, as well as a former president of the Ceylon College of Physicians, with specialisation in general (internal) medicine.

He is also a sociologist, and that is why this book is so readable. His language, while not simple, does not get entangled in academic jargon. He begins by offering an invaluable historical perspective of our education system,

going back to its origins in the colonial era.

The author writes self-effacingly in his preface that: "Much of what I have said in these essays is, I am afraid, in the form of poorly supported generalizations or what one might call 'sweeping statements' – especially from the period 1980s onwards."

Happily, these 'sweeping statements' shed much light on the education mess which, in ts extreme manifestations such as the SAITM issue, almost came to terrorism and civil war. Hard truths are beyond popular consumption. Recalling the golden age of our university education, he writes: "Harvard and Oxford were not built in a day. Each generation of scholars did not seek to rebuild them afresh from the start...while Harvard and Oxford have reaped the benefits of centuries of continued existence and gradual growth in their complex environments that were made up of separate, diverse, inter-connected and cross-fertilising entities, our universities seem to stagnate in one place (or even go backwards), reduced to merely celebrating empty, meaning anniversaries and squabbling over each other's webometric rankings at the bottom of the world table."

Prof. Karunanayake sounds not so much an exasperated prophet but a sane voice in the wilderness. His despair at the way things have deteriorated over the decades is obvious in every page, but he doesn't let this overwhelm his task of analysis, and approaches it with the finesse of a surgeon dissecting a moribund case.

Importantly, Prof. Karunanayake meshes his historical perspective with happenings in the UK and Europe, very thoughtful at a time when many Lankans writing on academic subjects simply forget that the outside world exists and that many of our institutions owe their origins to those external sources. For example, when he starts this history with the Colebrooke and Cameron Commission, he gives us its background ranging from the industrial revolution to Charles Dickens.

From the Colombo Academy of 1835 to the University of Ceylon, as the campuses grew in number, they grew in stature, too. Where did we go wrong? The author starts with debunking one deep-rooted fallacy – that Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara's 'free education' reforms' started the rot. Prof. Karnanayake's research goes a long away to expose the myths that cloud the Kannangara reforms. As he puts it:

"The objective of the Kannangara reforms



was not the provision of non fee levying education or the abolition of fees. That was only one of the strategies. We must start by understanding the objective.'

With his characteristic broad-based approach, the author shows that these reforms came at a time when internationally too, the philosophy of education was going through a momentous transformation, 'with John Dewey, Bertrand Russel, Rabindranath Tagore and others discovering the potential of science for the emancipation of humanity...

The author points out that, even before the reforms, 85% of children attended non fee levying schools. For them, this abolition of fees meant nothing. But the latter did not attain English literacy as English-medium instruction was available only to the 15% attending fee levying schools. These got the top government jobs while the latter became, in J. R. Jayawardene's words, "hewers of wood and drawers of water.'

"In 1939," says the author, "only rich, male, clever students had the opportunity to do well in life through education. It was this that Dr. Kannangara wished to change. He wished to redistribute this opportunity amongst all clever students – rich and poor, male and female." But his reforms were not carried through.

The author absolves Dr. Kannangara of blame for the socio-political mayhem post-1956, observing cryptically that as a result Sri Lankan democracy ceased to fit Abraham Lincoln's description of 'government of the people, by the people, for the people' and came to resemble Benjamin Franklin's description: 'Two wolves and a lamb deciding what to have for lunch.'

Dr. Kannangara's reforms had three levying education 'but the unshackling of educational opportunity from elitism.' But the elite undermined these strategies over the next decades by various ploys, such as the underfunding of central colleges (a key factor in the reforms) by denying them science laboratories, and postponing the teaching of English outside of elitist schools. Successive governments exacerbated the damage by chipping away at university autonomy with new legislation.

The author points out other problem areas, such as failing to modify and review national strategies periodically; also, the state failed to metamorphose its role in higher education from being sole provider to being a partprovider-cum regulator, as Japan did in the 1960s. When the elite successfully undermined the first two strategies, the masses responded by hanging onto the third strategy (non fee levying) as it was their only remaining lifeline, compelling Prof. Jayasuriya to conclude that free education was a 'bonanza for the rich.'

The author insists that, in an era of crossborder education with private universities already here in all but name, 'the fundamental choice we must make as a nation is between elitism and egalitarianism (the objective), not between fee levying and non fee levying (the strategy). Mindlessly increasing state university intake without safeguarding quality is useless, because it will not create the knowledge workers we seek to create for today's workforce.

For those passing the University Grants Commission (UCG) building regularly must be familiar with the sight of riot police, barricades, water cannon and baton charges. The author offers an insight chapter into this dilemma in 'Egalitarian access to education.' He starts with a laconic definition of success: "The Holocaust was a success to Hitler, not its

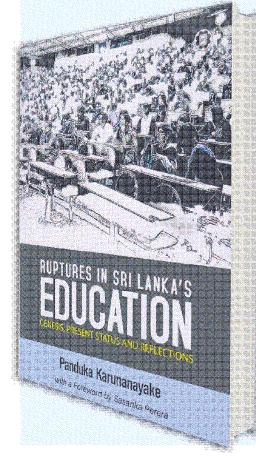
In this chapter, he raises the question 'does privatisation move education in the direction of egalitarianism or of elitism?

The author does not embrace privatisation of education with a carte blanche, and gives what happened during the J. R. Jayewardena era under the stewardship of Dr. Stanley Kalpage as an example. What was achieved then was undone during the R. Premadasa years. The author concludes: "Politicians are not brave: they only hide behind an ephemeral façade of popularity. To the extent that a secretly hatched 'policy' cannot be a technically sound document, a non-consensual political decision forced down the Opposition's throat cannot be a sustainable step. Be warned: We may be repeating history, because we haven't yet learned from it.'

Prof. Karunanayake discusses other related issues, such as academics' incomes, and thorny ones such as if the district quota allocation is still needed. He examines vital issues such as promoting research in our universities, the campus as society's intellectual compass, and argues that Sri Lanka needs university privatisation on the 'indigenous model.' All in all, this is a timely and highly readable book for those who want to understand Sri Lanka's crisis in education, at the heart of the country's development crisis.

The book is published by Sarasavi Publishers and is priced at Rs. 600.00.

my mind, our subsequent failure as a nation has to do with our own elite's inability to share power with the masses. Education is the great leveller. It can transform, imperceptibly and painlessly, a sleeping, feudal society to a dynamic, modern society. The United States is what it is today because President Lincoln boldly implemented the Morrill Act in the 1860s, and we are what we are today because our elite stealthily undermined the Kannangara reforms of the 1940s. Our nation did not have the skills to share."



Politicians are not brave: they only hide behind an ephemeral façade of popularity. To the extent that a secretly hatched 'policy' cannot be a technically sound document, a non-consensual political decision forced down the Opposition's throat cannot be a sustainable step.

All in all, this is a timely and highly readable book for those who want to understand Sri Lanka's crisis in education, at the heart of the country's development crisis

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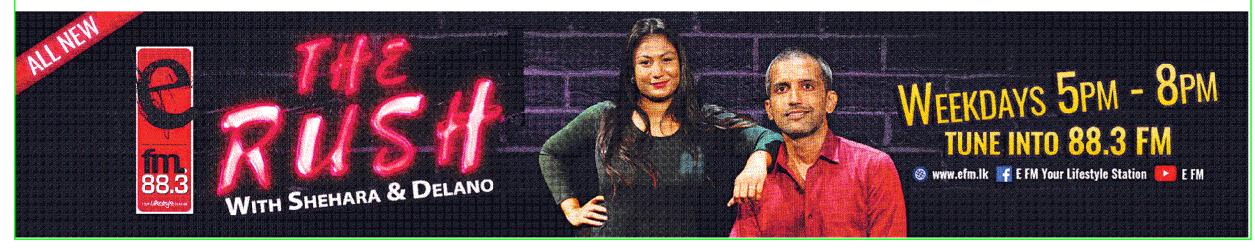
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MONDAY, AUGUST 02, 2021 Daily Mirror

MONEY PRINTING IS LIKE

By Kelum Bandara

State Minister of Money, Capital **Markets and Public Enterprise Reforms Ajith Nivard Cabraal,** in an interview with the Daily Mirror, takes questions regarding the present foreign exchange crisis and allegations about money printing.

Excerpts:

Now, the opposition politicians talk about a severe foreign exchange crisis. They said the foreign reserves had dropped to USS 4 billion, and US\$ 2 billion would be spent for debt servicing soon. What is left is a small amount then. How serious is the crisis?

When we left the government, there were foreign reserves amounting to US\$ 8 billion. The Yahapalana government borrowed a debt of US\$ 12 billion. Then, they should have reserves close to US\$ 20 billion at least. Unfortunately, our reserves were only US\$ 7.5 billion when we took office again. We started off with a fairly difficult position. We thought we would be able to manage with it. But, with Covid-19, we lost the major income streams. Tourism is one. It was an industry providing us with US\$ 4.5 billion. That put some pressure, no doubt. That is why we have to conserve foreign reserves by imposing some import restrictions. That was not an easy decision to take. But, we took that decision. We also started quickly concentrating on getting our exports back. We started work on remittances to be improved, non-debt revenues, incomes and inflows to be enhanced. That is why, even though we have reached somewhat a challenging position, we have been able to manage it without any undue alarm. As you know, once our government came into being, we egotiated US\$ 1.5 billion swap with China. have been successful in getting another swap with Bangladesh- US\$ 250 million. We are getting another swap with India – US\$ 400 million. In addition, we are negotiating with India for another swap of US\$ 1 billion. That is for us to tide over this period. Once we are able to get tourism back as well as other reserves to perform properly, we will be able to manage the situation without any problem. In addition, we are also receiving from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) a further allocation of US\$ 800 million under Special Drawing Rights (SDR). We will have no difficulty at all in servicing our debt. Just a few days ago, we saw that all the Sri Lankan prices of

tremendously. All the negative stories that have been planted as well as propagated by the UNP, SJB and JVP have not worked. We are able to get a much better understanding by the overall global community. Barclays has said Sri Lanka has turned the corner. The same thing was expressed by several other investment banks as well. We are confident of dealing with this situation. Although it is challenging, we will make sure Sri Lanka will not default, and will be able to have a lot more inflows which are not creating debt within the country.

International Sovereign Bonds have improved

At this moment, any downward revision is not possible. If the world market prices come down, we can consider. There is a steep increase in the world market now. That is perhaps because the world is opening up. Then, the demand for fuel is rising. We have to watch this situation quite closely and decide how best we can manage it

The opposition's argument is that the meagre foreign reserves left after debt servicing will suffice for imports sufficient for a couple of months only. What is your view?

That is not correct. I mentioned to you all these swaps, IMF's SDR allocations and the foreign exchanges the Central Bank is buying. We have now made it compulsory for exporters to convert at least 25% of their foreign earnings. All these measures are having an effect. The opposition's dream won't come true.

The government has imposed import restrictions affecting certain economic activities. Are you planning to do away with restrictions now if you are confident of securing sufficient foreign reserves?

Once these measures actually take full effect, we will make sure that we tide over these difficulties. It is like what happens to a person who lost one of his income streams, suppose, he

Ajith Nivard Cabraal

has three income streams. If he loses one, he changes his lifestyle. If he continues the same way otherwise, he will be in trouble. As a responsible government, we change the way we operate. We have to restrict certain imports. Once the situation comes back to normal, with earnings from tourism intact, we will be in a position to get back to normalcy. At that time, we will also have some new streams which we did not have earlier. We are identifying certain key projects in which the government and the private sector can be in partnerships. With that, we can get new investments coming into the country. In addition, of course, we have the Colombo Port City. That will also attract more and more new capital into the country. All these will make sure that Sri Lanka will not have external debt problems.

But, some importers complain about problems in exchanging for US dollars to import even essential items. How true is it?

There are instances of some importers having difficulties. That is changing again. In April and May, there was a bit of a shock as soon as the country slowed down after the closure. Many exporters began to hoard their dollars without converting. When the dollar inflows were interrupted, we found that some of the imports also couldn't get financed. That was actually temporary. Now, we have seen it easing off. Within the next few weeks, it will ease off completely. Then, this complaint will dry up.

How soon will you be able to remove import restrictions?

I don't want to commit myself to a particular date. But, we are in the process. You would have noticed. We have relaxed some of the restrictions. Then, we also relaxed some of the measures such as delayed payments. There has been a staggered process of relaxation. It is in progress. In due course, once the situation improves, we will make those relaxations as well. That is until we get a complete idea after the country opens out. That is why we are very keen on vaccination. All these are inter-connected. Once vaccination is done, we can open out the country. Then, we can get tourism back on tract. Once tourism is back, we will have a lot more inflows coming into the country. The world's reaction is also important.

It won't lead to inflation under special circumstances like this

We will make sure Sri Lanka will not default

No alarming foreign exchange crisis

The opposition's dream will not come true

We have to conserve foreign reserves by imposing import restrictions

How is the response from exporters to surrender part of their income?

Initially, they were a bit reluctant. But, with a mix of regulations as well as creation of awareness, we begin to see that they have also changed their stance. I had a very good discussion with the key exporters. We find that they have a much greater understanding of the need to work together. That is to make sure that Sri Lanka progresses in

changed quite appreciably. We will not have too much difficulty there Even the black market has eased from the levels it was at one time. It shows that there is change in sentiment as well. Black markets occur when

a calm fashion. I think the mood has

in April and May, it happened. It created a bit of shock. That black market itself propelled certain exporters to retain their dollars and importers to import quickly. Both aspects had a negative impact on the rupee and the way people were doing business. After some time, they realized that the situation that was being talked about was not really happening.

Then, people began to get back to a

our government came into being, we negotiated US\$ 1.5 billion swap with China. We have been successful in getting another swap with Bangladesh- US\$ 250 million. We are getting another swap with India – US\$ 400 million. In addition, we are negotiating with India for another swap of US\$ 1 billion

Our oil import bill is huge. Does the government contemplate alternate plans to overcome it?

When the oil prices rise in the world market, there has to be some corresponding rise in the local market at filling stations. If that does not happen and the demand continues unabated, we will not be able to sustain the oil situation. That is why certain revisions of prices were needed. Then, we can ensure that there is a reduction in demand and the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) does not have mounting losses. That was an important economic decision to some extent. I am glad that it has been done. We are hoping that we can limit the increase to that level. It looks tough now because the fuel price has spiked to US\$ 80 a barrel.

It means you are not in a position to revise prices downward?

At this moment, any downward revision is not possible If the world market prices come down, we can consider. There is a steep increase in the world market now. That is perhaps because the world is opening up. Then, the demand for fuel is rising. We have to watch this situation quite closely and decide how best we can manage it.

Otherwise, are we looking at new purchasing criteria like government-togovernment deals?

That is an option we have to explore – direct purchases. There is concern that unless we take international prices into consideration, we won't be as transparent as it should be. It is a question of ensuring that the degree of transparency is there, and also, we get the best out of the government to government deal. Those will be the decisions which the relevant Ministry and the CPC would like to examine. We would like to see all these measures leading to cheaper prices. That is what we all are interested in ensuring.

You visited some of the Middle Eastern countries recently, such as Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. Have those visits yielded any result now?

Yes, I would see a lot of discussions taking place. There may be a few surprises in store for cople as well. These discussions could lea to very good outcomes. It is too early to talk about them. We are hopeful that those visits will prove fruitful.

Recently, Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) MP Patali Champika Ranawaka accused the government of printing money valued more than Rs.800 billion. Is it true?

Yes, it is true. When you have a major illness, you have to be given some drastic treatment. It has to be given by the doctor concerned, not by the driver who brought the patient to the hospital concerned. Doctor knows the side-effects. When side effect surface, you have to administer counter-drugs as well. Money printing, by itself, can lead to difficulties unless you know at what stage to pull it back. During the financial crisis, the United States increased money printing. Then, they did it again. We have printed money at some stages. It was done when I was the governor. Those who don't know this subject can be screaming and shouting. Champika is a competent engineer, I am told. But, I don't think

he has a clue about these things.

He is going by the drug itself, not knowing its side effects. We know how to manage it. I am happy that he is concerned about it. It means he has studied the first warning in the drug. He does not know that proper doctors can manage it. In future, there will be a time for us to pull it back. Without inflation occurring in the country, we will be able to gently pull it back and ensure that the situation is different. The important point is that all the countries have done that. That is one of the drastic drugs we have to administer to the patients suffering as a result of Covid-19.

Won't it lead to inflation at the end?

That is the normal theory. That is true if the conditions are normal. Right now, there is a contraction of the economy. It is there all over the world, not in Sri Lanka alone. When there is a contraction, the risk of inflation occurring, as a result of additional printing of money, is much less. There is a contraction of economy. In such a situation, flushing the monetary system with additional currency is not creating it. That is the whole idea. Once the economy gets back to normalcy, you have to pull it back.

Now you have Basil Rajapaksa as the new Finance Minister. What do you think

What is important for us to realize is finance is a very important function of any government. Having a full time finance minister is very important. Then, he will pay undivided attention to all the financial issues. I am happy that there is a full time finance minister. While admitting that the prime minister did an amazing job during the most difficult him, I think a full time finance minister will be helpful from now onwards.





KKS PERERA

I refer to the Daily Mirror -28th [online] photo report, captioned, 'Protest dishonouring health guidelines', "... several member groups attached to the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) today staged a protest opposite the Fort Railway Station without adhering to health guidelines and not maintaining social distancing ...The protesters reacted angrily to journalists when asked to wear their masks properly and it was reported that several protesters were intoxicated."

HIRED OVER A BOTTLE?

Is the Sports Minister's presence really necessary at the Tokyo Olympics in midst of a Dollar crisis? Who are the other three State ministers who joined him in the trip with little or no regard for the sufferings of the masses, and who funded them? Isn't it unethical especially under prevailing catastrophic health and economic conditions?.. are pertinent questions.

"If the Opposition brings 100 people we can bring 1,000 to the streets." a 'nato' minister boasts. The showing of power and strength by leading people to the streets seems to be the priority of both the Trade Unionist and Politicians.

The pandemic has taken a turn for the worse. In the light of the day to day life of people in a sinking economy: those who are protesting on the streets to win payhikes and other demands, are denying the rights of "one-square meal-a-day" **category.** They are facilitating the spread of the dangerous Delta virus, which is disrupting every aspect of life. The deadly third wave rages on, the economy and children's education **ruined.** The number of deaths is nearing the 5,000 mark, while over 25,000 active cases are filling the capacity in hospitals. **The fourth** wave of the dangerous Delta is haunting the whole nation. But this shouldn't come as a shock.... Members of 30 teacher-principal trade unions are staging demonstrations

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island- wide ignoring health guidelines. School teachers and principals who are on strike after retreating from the online education, held a protest in Colombo Fort a week ago. This was followed by two massive demonstrations in Tangalle and Embilipitiya, both strong holds of JVP.

A CLUSTER OF A **DIFFERENT NATURE**

Remember the huge Cobra and the 'sacred' relics that appeared from the Naga world on a 'mid-summer night' back in November 2019? [on the eve of the Presidential election]. Some misled 'Buddhists' were delighted over this disclosure, but others strived to achieve shameful political mileage over the incident, where the head Yogi of the Kelaniya Naga Bhavana, Naga Devale believes, that he maintains a close contact with King Maniakkika from the Naga world!

Let's move from mythology to the real gem world. The owner, a third generation gem trader said the stone cluster weighing 510 kilograms [2.5] million carats] was found while digging a well in his compound in the gem-rich area. According to experts who examined the pale blue precious stone named "Serendipity Sapphire" it is worth over \$100--400 **million** as a collectors gem in the world market; certainly, a good-news for a cash strapped nation. Unconfirmed comments appearing in social media say, some of the 225 had a combined [government & opposition] pow-wow at an undisclosed location to discuss the possibility of allocating part of its sales proceeds to revive their plans to import 'urgently needed' V8s to facilitate visits to their constituents!

KDU BILL

Leaving the pros and cons aside, what is the urgency in presenting the Kotelawala Defence University Bill which is not a **national priority**, apart from the provocation of the 'Antare' and FUTA? The country needs to be reopened soon fully for achieving **economic progress.** What ethical rights do the protesting teachers who blatantly violate the quarantine laws have in doing so? The University system is a vitally essential part of a nation's education structure. In recent history all governments endeavored to weaken the independence of non-fee levying higher **education** by introducing [private/state] parallel fee-levying institutions. The unbelievably high number of students applying for registration with foreign universities was revealed when the health authorities announced priority for them in the vaccination programme, purportedly with the universally accepted Pfizer product. It's a gigantic burden on our critically low Dollar reserves. We are puzzled as to why these student unions and some academics are scared of private institutions, is it over losing their privileges? They are wasting their time and energy in spreading the Delta virus further, while adding large volumes of polythene to the environment. **Granting foreign** exchange to children of affluent parents may need to be curbed forthwith, and those funds diverted for setting up semi-fee levying local institutions instead.

COVID 19-DELTA TO LAMDA?

The number of detections, based on limited tests [15-15,000 a day] carried out recorded less than 1,500 in the recent past are escalating

to an average of 2,400. Daily death toll is a more accurate assessment of the looming threat with the number rising over 60 a day during the past week. Commenting on the rise in covid cases, Dr. Hemantha Herath, Deputy Director-General of Health Services said this situation had to be taken seriously. Dr. G. Wijesuriya, Director Lady Ridgeway Hospital for Children, where an average of 5-6 kids are admitted a day, says, his IČU and COVID-19 wards were almost full compelling him to transfer a few infected children to the Neville Fernando Hospital.

Dr Hemantha Herath believes the Delta variant was also contributing to the rise in cases. It is everyone's responsibility to strictly follow health guidelines and practices which are now spelt out with one voice by them without each making contradictory statements as in the recent past. Our national vaccination drive has achieved considerable success with more doses being imported and the health administration. assisted by Army continuing to administer them swiftly. The programme may soon be accelerated further, to ensure beating spread of Delta variant. If the state authorities try to show it is under control, naturally people will tend to ease their day-to-day movements. They must tell the truth to people; it costs **nothing.** Health authorities on the other hand have been very much concerned with the fact that a section of people has stayed away from

REOPENING AND REVIVING OF THE ECONOMY

COVID clusters are being created by the reckless protesters and the Ministers do not appear to be genuinely interested in making rational responses to their long overdue adjustments in salary anomalies. Repercussion of permitting cinemas, spas, increases in weddings limits, liquor outlets, pubs, musical shows [indoors] without proper supervision could all prove disastrous. Évên thôse who have alrêady received the two doses have to comply with the health practices; two prominent figures who belonged to this category, Mr Raja Mahendran, chairman of Maharajah group and Dr Jayaruwan Bandara, the former Health spokesman, [who was removed for telling people the truth?] were infected too, with the former passing away last week. The immunity booster that people have received from the jab would be of no use if they ignore guidelines.

The Government must re-open schools as a priority. As per latest research carried out, online learning has proved not only ineffective but risky and costly, especially with the 5 to 14 year age group. They must interact with their peers and engage in sports activities with their school mates and get over the psychological trauma that they have been forced to undergo for months and months. **There's a** good side to online classes and a bad side too; it has become monotonous, which has led to a rise in hyperactivity and anxiety among children.

Dr Kannan Gireesh, psychiatrist psychotherapist says, "What they are missing is peer-to-peer education. **Collective learning** is not happening as they miss friends to talk to and make new friendships. Building friendships is vital especially in the lower school, which gives them protection and self-esteem that create a sense of belonging'

Sue Atkins, UK-based globally recognised parenting expert thinks, "With the unexpected halt to in-person learning, many students desired to be out of the house, drove their parents crazy." They are finding that many students miss out classes or playing games as an alternative to class-work. **Dr**. Samitha Ginige, Chief Epidemiologist says there is a lack of enthusiasm, especially by people above 60 to receive the jab due to various fears. Like in the US and Australia, the two leading countries among a few others, where the problem currently exist—it is actually a threat not only to local citizens but to the entire human race. They must consider as a priority, the introduction of new laws/regulations making vaccination compulsory for all above a specified age.

kksperera1@gmail.com



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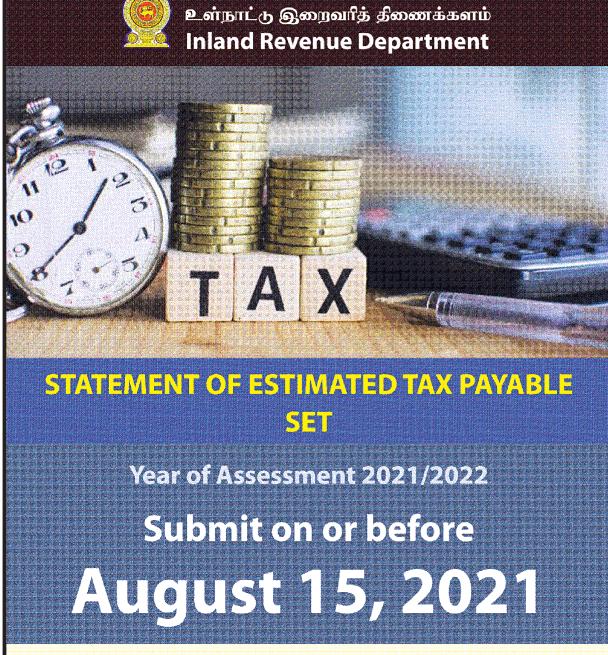
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"Without equity, pandemic battles will fail. Viruses will simply recirculate, and perhaps undergo mutations or changes that render vaccines useless, passing through the unprotected populations of the planet." - LAURIE GARRETT

OUR THOUGHT

COVID-19 AND THE VACCINE WARS

ovid-19 is short-form used to describe the dreaded pandemic, caused by a new strain of coronavirus, 'CO' standing for corona, VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Since it was first recognised in China in November 2019, in a brief 18-month period, the disease has spread like wildfire worldwide. At 31 July, 197,000,000 persons worldwide had contracted the disease.

The World Health Organisation declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

By 29 February 2020 the virus had spread to all corners of the globe.

While the virus was spreading, with no fanfare the first people in the world to receive a COVID-19 vaccine were not part of a clinical trial. On 29 February, virologist Chen Wei, a Major General in China's army, and six military scientists on her team stood in front of a Chinese Communist Party flag and received injections of an experimental COVID-19 vaccine.

In the US, the Trump administration's \$10.8 billion Operation Warp Speed accelerated vaccine R&D faster, specifically for the US population.

An equally massive effort unfolded in China. CanSino and two other Chinese companies - one owned by the government, the other working closely with its regulatory agency - also invested substantial resources, testing four candidates in tens of thousands of volunteers around the world.

The outcome of efficacy trials - just behind the encouraging early results-were announced within a two-month period by Pfizer and BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford, and Russia's Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology.

Russia was the first to announce it had created a vaccine 'Sputnik V' which was successful in combating the coronavirus.

China using strict lockdowns and isolation of areas where the virus was spreading was inoculating its population without fanfare.

Unfortunately, rather than pooling resources to defeat the disease, western pharmaceutical companies and media belittled the efforts Russia and China were making to neutralize the onslaught of Covid-19.

Big Pharma condemned the Russian vaccine on spurious grounds. The west-backed media took over.

Russia's claim of having produced a Covid-19 vaccine were met with scepticism and dismissal. This despite the prestigious 'Lancelot Magazine' confirming the veracity of the Russia's claim.

The pharmaceutical wars were beginning. Not competing to make the best treatment available to victims, but rather, to promote own vaccines even at the expense of truth.

China's efforts to combat the Covid-19 drew harsh criticism, with even the then US president stepping into the debate - attempting to weaponise Chinese methodology of using the lockdown at Wuhan between January 2020 as an example.

At the time, western countries condemned China for the harsh restrictions and rigid enforcement it imposed. From late January until June, the city was effectively sealed off from the rest of the country.

But, the methods proved successful. Today China is held up as one of the virus success stories. It neutralized, to a great extent the onslaught of the virus via enforcement of isolation and its vaccine implementation programmes, using only vaccines developed in China.

Despite these obvious successes, western-backed propaganda still attempt to paint Chinese (eastern) vaccines as being of low quality, ignoring facts on the ground -these self-same vaccines which neutralized the Covid-19 in China - and are still keeping that country relatively free of the dreaded Delta variant which is hitting many countries worldwide.

The Beijing-based pharmaceutical company Sinovac produces Coronavac -an inactivated vaccinewhich works by using killed viral particles to expose the body's immune system to the virus without risking a serious disease response. A method similar to the rabies vaccine.

Associate Prof. Luo Dahai of the Nanyang Technological University in an interview with the BBC described the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines developed in the West as mRNA vaccines. It means part of the coronavirus' genetic code is injected into the body, triggering the body to begin making viral proteins, but not the whole virus, which is enough to train the immune system to attack.

As these vaccines are new the Professor added, there is currently no successful example of them being used in the populations.

This paper does not claim to have the answers to which system provides better and safer method of combating the deadly Covid-19. But one fact stands out. Rather than belittling each others efforts, if Big Pharma could collaborate for the sake of humanity, finding the best cure would not be difficult.



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COMMERCIALISING EDUCATION AND THE GREAT KDU BAILOUT



here is a common myth promoted by the ruling classes backed by finance capitalists that privatisation and commercialisation of state institutions lead to greater efficiency and better services. However, international evidence points to privatisation as the moment when there is great extraction of public wealth by the elite, and when commercialised enterprises fail, governments bail them out. The General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU) is an example of such gross mismanagement of public funds.

Let's hear it from the horse's mouth itself, as the KDU Annual Report for 2017 mentions the following from its Audit Report:

"The University had obtained a foreign currency loan of US\$ 177.33 million equivalent to Rs 23 102 546 177 and a local currency loan of Rs 3,165,821,000 on April 29, 2013 from the National Savings Bank on a Treasury guarantee for the purpose of constructing the Defence University Teaching Hospital. The University was to pay the loan completely by the end of the year 2033 and starting from the year 2018, the University should pay it using the incomes it generates. However, it was observed that the repayment of the abovementioned loan was problematic as there was a deficit in the financial outcome of the University from the year 2013 to the year under review."

The 177 million dollar question is who is going to pay back this massive loan? With recent moves to form the Kotelawala National Defence University (KNDU) as a militarised commercial university creating a parallel system to the University Grants Commission (UGC), or alternatively to bring KDU under the UGC undermining the very ethos of the university system, raise worrying questions.

DRAIN ON FOREIGN **RESERVES**

The Government's argument for private universities claims that students going to universities abroad drain Sri Lanka of foreign exchange. But ironically, it is precisely the KDU hospital built with a US\$ 177 million loan to attract such students that has been a great drain on Sri Lanka's foreign reserves with little to show for the return on that investment. Time and again around the world, commercialising healthcare and education have proven to be failures. In fact, the often repeated scenario is that once such commercialised ventures fail, those enterprises are then privatised for a fraction of the cost of the initial investment allowing financiers close to the rulers to make a killing on the deal.

Let's provide some perspective on the US\$ 177 million investment and the Rs. 36 billion loan that has been guaranteed by the Treasury. The average amount spent over



The 177 million dollar question is who is going to pay back this massive loan? With recent moves to form the KNDU as a militarised commercial university creating a parallel system to the UGC, or alternatively to bring KDU under the UGC undermining the very ethos of the university system, raise worrying questions

the last five years for fertiliser imports was US\$ 196 million, and the fertiliser subsidy in 2020 amounted to Rs. 36 billion (Finance Ministry Annual Report 2020). As millions of farmers are shattered by the fertiliser import ban this year, and where even the country's food security may suffer due to the huge drop in agricultural yields, do our farmers know about how the state manages public funds?

RESCUING KDU

Left to the devices of the so-called efficient market, KDU would be bankrupt by now. However, the Government is painting a rosy picture of KDU's future, while bailing out KDU through annual allocations from the Budget. According to the Budget Estimates for 2021, this year and in future years possibly until 2033, there needs to be an allocation of Rs 5.5 billion for the loan and interest payments, even as the loan is being converted into Sri Lankan rupees.

Let's again provide some perspective on this Rs 5.5 billion annual loan and interest payment. The ongoing tremendous protests of underpaid school teachers for higher wages may be a case in point. The budget allocation for the total salaries and allowances of the close to 8,000 primary school teachers in National Schools is Rs 5.4 billion; so in effect their income could have been doubled. Alternatively, for the total number of teachers and principals in Provincial Schools and National Schools totalling 260,000 an allocation of Rs 5.5 billion could have provided an allowance of Rs 21,000 each per year. Many times more is needed in salary increases for teachers, but in these pandemic hit times Rs. 21,000 is more than the relief given to people in the form Rs 5,000 cash grant by the Government.

I focus on school teachers, because I also ant to remind my colleagues in universitie that the really hard work of teaching and the foundation for our country comes from general education rather than university education. We can also take our universities, particularly the non-academic staff that are made invisible, yet form the majority of the existing universities cadres amounting to 13,307. In fact, their salary anomalies and grievances can be addressed many times over with Rs 5.5 billion.

EXPLOITATION AND PROTESTS

All institutions of work are sites of exploitation, and schools and universities are no different. The protests of teachers and non-academic staff are a reaction to such decades of exploitation. When education is commercialised such exploitation of the educational workforce will be intensified. Furthermore, commercialising education exploits students and their parents, indebting them for years if not decades. Therefore, KNDU is about the future of education that spells dangers of militarisation, commercialisation and ultimately intensified exploitation.

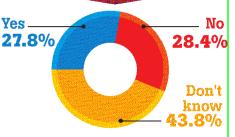
As the possibility of KNDU comes into the limelight there are many unanswered questions; particularly, why is the Government pushing it now amidst such a great crisis of state and society. The analysis above points to cover up of mismanaged public funds. The militarisation of society and commercialisation of education to reap profits might be other reasons. I would argue it is a combination of many such factors that are ultimately about democracy.

Seventy five years ago it was education for a democracy that was the vision of free education, and it is democratic struggle today that can save free education. The student movements, teachers unions, non-academic staff unions and the university teachers associations all have a great task ahead. The battle against KNDU has to be transformed into a struggle for freedom, equality and democratisation of our education system.

Do you agree with the Presidential Secretary PB Javasundara's recent claim that Sri Lanka taking some painful structural adjustments including the shift in fertiliser and fuel price hike under a climate resilience and green economy initiative is for a healthy nation? 1) Yes 2) No 3) Don't know

LAST POLL

Should the Government work with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to restructure debt in restoring international confidence in debt repayment to avoid an economic



See web poll at www. DailyMirror.lk

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Covid mismanagement at Hikkaduwa hospital

A friend of ours, a senior who is allergic to a certain medicine was informed that he has to visit a vaccination Centre in a hospital due to his allergic health condition. He went to Arachchikattuwa hospital in Hikkaduwa in his area on July 31 at 9.30 am as advised on the phone inquiry. There were two queues one for normal persons and other for those who have allergic conditions. After waiting for two hours in the queue, the crowd was asked to go home as forms were over. After a big arguments and protests by the crowd they went home. Our friend waited and asked the hospital staff as to which day he could come and he was advised to come the next day at 9.30 am.

On Sunday, August 1 he went there to be turned away for the second time saying the injection programme was not scheduled. He cannot go to any hospital, but to his area hospital. Hospital authorities told him to check and come again for the vaccine on another day without giving a specific date. These unorganized systems at such centres make people furious, disgusted and stressed especially the seniors with old age ailments. The Hospital should have counted the number of forms they had and should have dispersed others without keeping them in the hot sun for two hours, if the injection was not to be given the next day they should cot have asked him to come being a senior citizen He came all the way from another village away from the hospital in public transport.

This type of mismanagement at Covid centres brings the government's good work and efforts to disrepute making the government unpopular. The best system is to get the system reorganized considering the people's difficulties in a more humanitarian manner. Covid task force please check these

DISGRUNTLED PUBLIC AT HIKKADUWA

ENERGY CONVERSION FUND

Is the above-mentioned Act No.2. of 1985 -Energy Conservation Fund yet in operation, forgotten or cancelled? If not, it is prudent to revive in the wake of the interest shown in introducing Renewable Sources of Energy, as the objectives for which the Fund was established was to finance, promote and initiate activities and projects relating to the improvement of any or all aspects of energy demand management and conservation programmes in Sri Lanka and in particular, identifying available technology for improving efficiency in the use of energy in agriculture, industry, commercial, domestic and transport sectors; and the production of energy, processing, conversion, transportation, storage, co-generation and heat recovery techniques,

If this Act is to be revived, then it would be necessary to amalgamate the present Ministry for Energy with Ministry for Power as these two subjects are inter-connected rather than creating portfolios to please and accommodate politicians. If I remember, the Pattiyapola Research station, at Matara was funded by UNDP and several experiments were successfully carried out. I am not aware whether this station is yet functioning, if not, it is suggested this institution too be resurrected, in view of the new technologies springing up such as Clean Coal, OTEC, etc.

G.A.D.SIRIMAL **BORALESGAMUWA**

COVID clusters among doctors, health workers

WEB COMMENTS

SOKRATES - This happens when western vaccine factories give licenses to Third World Countries.

CONCERNED CITIZEN Activities like social gatherings have to be stopped immediately. Without enforcing law it

NAVARATNAM - Many **European Countries Do** Not Accept AstraZeneca Vaccine, But Sri Lanka **Never Questions And** Simply Allows them in...

may not happen. Act now

before it's too late.

See more web comments at www.DailyMirror.lk

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60 per cent of Italian population fully vaccinated against Covid-19

ROME (DPA), 1 AUG, 2021 - Italy has reached a milestone in its vaccination campaign against the coronavirus with 60 per cent of the population

over 12 years old fully vaccinated.
That means 32.4 million people have received the two jabs, special coronavirus commissioner Francesco Figliuolo said on Sunday.

By the end of September, Italy wants to have reached 80 per cent and thus, according to him, herd immunity.

At the weekend, thousands of people protested again in Italy against forthcoming coronavirus measures due to come into effect to combat the rising number of infections.

From August 6, people who want to eat inside a restaurant or go to a museum, for example, will have to show proof of at least one coronavirus vaccination, recovery from the disease or a negative test.

There were also tumultuous protests in the parliament by right-wing politicians against the measures.

Health experts urge the population to get vaccinated against the viral disease and to adhere to the hygiene rules.



Tokyo registers more than 3,000 Covid-19 cases for fifth day running

TOKYO (DPA), 1 AUG, 2021 - Olympic host city Tokyo has recorded more than 3,000 new coronavirus infections for the fifth day running.

The city registered 3,058 new infections within 24 hours on Sunday, after a peak of 4,058 cases recorded the day before. Numbers are usually lower on Sunday because there is less testing.

The governors of Tokyo as well as other affected prefectures want to ask the government to consider tougher measures such as curfews. lapan has not yet imposed a lockdown as other countries have done.

Instead, Tokyo and other prefectures are subject a state of emergency until August 31, which only provides for loose measures.

Critics point out that the previous appeals by the state are no longer effective. Society must once again "develop a shared sense of crisis" to prevent a collapse of the health system, demanded Omi Shigeru, the government's top coronavirus adviser.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike called on citizens to stay at home despite the summer holidays.

STORIES ROM AROUND IE WORLD



Myanmar army ruler takes PM role, again pledges elections



Myanmar's armed forces, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing (REUTERS)

(REUTERS) - Myanmar's military ruler Min Aung Hlaing has taken on the role of prime minister in a newly formed caretaker government. state media reported on Sunday, six months after the army seized power from a

civilian government. In a speech on Sunday, Min Aung Hlaing repeated a pledge to hold elections by 2023 and said his administration was ready to work with a future regional envoy on Myanmar.

The announcement and speech came exactly six months after the army seized power Feb. 1 from a civilian government following elections that were won by Aung San Suu Kyi's ruling party but that the military said had been fraudulent.

Min Aung Hlaing has chaired the State Administration Council (SAC) that was formed just after the coup and that has run Myanmar since then, and the caretaker government will replace it.

In his speech, Min Aung Hlaing repeated a pledge to restore democracy, saying, "We will accomplish the provisions of the state of emergency by August 2023".

TALIBAN ROCKETS HIT KANDAHAR AIR CLASHES INTENSIFY IN AFGHANISTAN

aliban fighters struck Kandahar airport in southern Afghanistan with at least three rockets overnight, the insurgent group's spokesman said on Sunday, adding that the aim was to thwart air strikes conducted by Afghan government forces.

"Kandahar airport was targeted by us because the enemy were using it as a centre to conduct air strikes against us," Zabiullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesperson, told

Afghan government officials said the rocket attacks forced authorities to suspend all flights and that the runway was partially damaged. There were no immediate reports of casualties, they said.

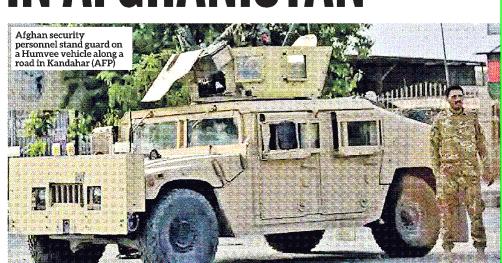
Officials said the Taliban see Kandahar as a major strategic point, which they

seem to be using as a control centre for gaining complete dominance over five other provinces.

Clashes between Afghan forces and Taliban fighters have intensified in the cities of Kandahar and neighbouring Helmand

In the west, Afghan officials said Taliban commanders were swiftly gaining control of strategic buildings around Heraat city, forcing civilians to remain in their homes.

The Taliban have been advancing in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of American and NATO troops from the country and in recent weeks the fundamentalist Islamist group said they have captured over half of all Afghanistan's territory, including border crossings with Iran and Pakistan.
- KABUL, AUG 1 (REUTERS)



Turkey evacuates tourists at risk from fires as villages clear out

ISTANBUL (DPA), 1 AUG, 2021 -

battling severe forest fires in Turkey for a fifth day running on Sunday.

On Saturday night, several villages in the Aegean region of Bodrum, a popular holiday destination, were evacuated, according to Mayor Ahmet Aras.

People were brought to safety, sometimes using boats to cross, he said.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern (REUTERS)



One hundred Russian tourists were

lso brought to safety from an easte suburb of Bodrum, the Russian Consulate General said. They have been relocated to new hotels and were out of danger.

Another village in the province of Antalya also had to be evacuated on Sunday, as the broadcaster NTV reported. Turkey has since Wednesday been battling the worst forest fires in years.

Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Bekir Pakdemirli said on Sunday that five of the original 100 fires were still active. Strong winds kept fuelling the flames and hampering the firefighting efforts.

According to official figures, the fires have claimed at least six lives so far and injured hundreds.

Thousands protest against COVID-19 health pass in France



A protester talks to a gendarmerie officer during a movement against France's restrictions, including a compulsory health pass to fight the COVID-19 outbreak, in Paris (REUTERS)

PARIS, JULY 31 (REUTERS)

 Thousands of people protested in Paris and other French cities on Saturday against a mandatory coronavirus health pass for entry to a wide array of public venues, introduced by the government as it battles a fourth wave of infections.

Protesters injured three police officers in Paris, a police spokesperson said. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on Twitter that 19 demonstrators were arrested, including 10 in Paris.

It was the third weekend in a row that people opposed to President Emmanuel Macron's new COVID-19 measures have taken to the streets, an unusual show of determination at a time of year when many people are focused on taking their summer

An interior ministry official said 204,090 had demonstrated across France, including 14,250 in Paris

Parliament approved a new law this week that will make vaccinations mandatory for health workers and extend the health pass requirement to bars, restaurants, trade shows, trains and hospitals.

About 3,000 police officers were deployed in the capital, with anti-riot officers striving to keep demonstrators on authorised routes.

Ardern apologises for immigration raids on Pacific community

(REUTERS) - New Zealand's

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern issued a sombre state apology on Sunday to the Pacific community for racially targeted immigration raids in the 1970s that resulted in deportations and prosecutions.

The "Dawn Raids", which often occurred early in the morning, took place from 1974 to 1976 when New Zealand's economy was in a downturn and the government clamped down on immigrant workers from the Pacific who overstayed their work visas

Addressing hundreds of people in attendance for the formal apology, Ardern said members of the Pacific communities continue to "suffer and carry the scars" of the raids in which they were specifically targeted and racially profiled.

'Today, I stand on behalf of the New Zealand government to offer a formal and unreserved apology to Pacific communities for the discriminatory implementation of the immigration laws of the 1970s that led to the events of the Dawn Raids." Ardern said

Australia's east coast battles rising COVID-19 cases

MELBOURNE, AUG 1 (REUTERS) -Australia's east coast states of New South

Wales and Queensland faced an escalating battle against the COVID-19 Delta variant on Sunday, with millions under strict lockdown and authorities urging more testing and vaccinations to rein in the outbreaks.

Sydney and its surroundings, under a stayat-home order for five weeks already, reported 239 new locally acquired cases of the highly infectious Delta strain, matching the record

daily number in the current outbreak that was reported on Thursday.

The city's 5 millión residents and those in neighbouring regional centres spanning 200 km (120 miles) of coastline are to stay home until Aug. 28 at least. The total number of cases in the outbreak, which began in mid-June, has reached 3,427.

"I think what is important to know is that there is no roadmap for the Delta variant," NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian said.

Israel has 'proof' Iran behind deadly ship attack off Oman: PM Bennett



RT.COM. 1 AUG. 2021 - Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has claimed there is "proof" that Iran is behind the deadly ship attack off the coast of Oman, adding that the incident is a "reminder of Iranian aggression?

The incident on Thursday, which was widely publicized on Friday after two crew members were confirmed dead, has previously been described by officials as a "drone-style attack." It targeted an Israelioperated merchant vessel in the Arabian Sea.

Bennett claimed in a Sunday press conference that Iranians behind the attack wanted an "Israel target" and had settled on the Mercer Street tanker.

I determine, with absolute certainty - Iran carried out the attack against the ship," he said. "The intelligence evidence for this exists and we expect

the international community will make it clear to the Iranian regime that they have made a serious mistake.

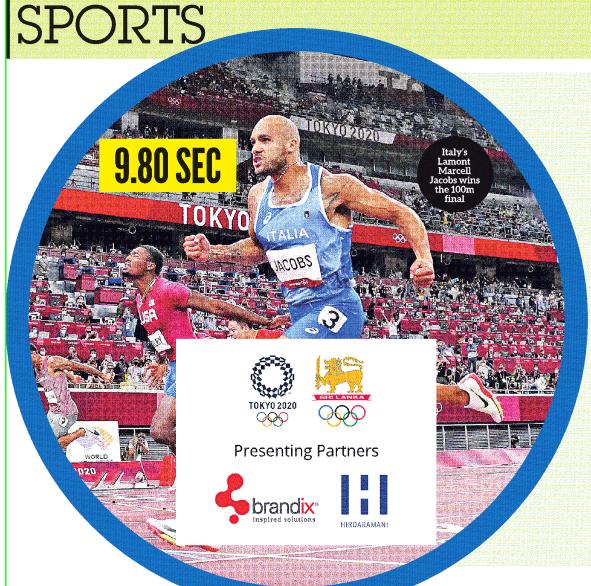
Iran has denied responsibility for the attack, something Bennett labeled "cowardly" while promising a swift response from Israel itself.

"The Zionist regime [Israel] has created insecurity terror and violence ... these accusations about Iran's involvement are condemned by Tehran," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said this week.

"In any case, we know how to send a message to Iran in our own way," Bennett promised in response on Sunday.

The attack, the prime minister added, is a threat to "global interests," including "freedom of navigation" and "international trade."

Daily *Mirror* **MONDAY, AUGUST 2, 2021**



BY SHEHAN DANIEL AT THE OLYMPIC STADIUM IN TOKYO, JAPAN

talian sprinter Lamont Jacobs stormed his way to the first post-Usain Bolt era Olympic 100m title on a record-breaking night at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo yesterday, where the Women's Triple Jump World Record was also bettered.

American-born Jacobs went toe-to-toe with the USA's Fred Kerley in the opening phase of the race before powering through, winning by a margin of four-hundreds of a second.

The final eight, introduced with a light show where the images and names of the athletes were projected on the race track in a darkened stadium – a first at the Olympics – had no clear favourite after American Trayvon Bromnell, who clocked the fastest time this year, bowing out at the semi-final stage.

There were also no Jamaicans in the lineup, the first time that had happened since Sydney 2000, after Bolt's former running partner Yohan Blake also failed to progress beyond the semi-finals.

The 9.80 secs clocked to win the race was a new European record and the second time Jacobs broke that record last night, with his semi-final time of 9.84 secs also a new regional best.

All of the top three ran personal bests, with Canada's Andre de Grasse taking bronze with a time of 9.89 secs, unable to upgrade on the medal he won at Rio 2016.

China's Su Biantian added to the list of records broken last evening, when he bettered

the Asian Record over 100m, with a blistering run of 9.83 secs in the semi-finals, the joint fastest time recorded at that stage of the competition.

Biantian could not however replicate that run in the finals, finishing with a time of 9.98 secs, that pushed him to the back of the pack and last of the six runners who completed the race. Zharnel Hughes of Great Britain was the fourth athlete, and the second from his country, to be disqualified for a false start in the three main rounds of the Men's 100m event, with Nigeria's Enoch Adegoke pulling up hurt halfway through the final.

Celebrating his win, Lamont ran straight into the arms of compatriot Gianmarco Tamberi, who had shortly before tied for Gold with Qatar's Mutaz Essa Barshimboth, in the Men's High Jump event where both athletes were dead level after missing their attempts at 2.39 metres.

The two Gold medalists and Belarus'

Maksim Nedasekau all tied at 2.37 m for their last completed jumps, the Belarusian had one failure to his name, and had to settle for Bronze on count back.

The women's triple jump final was as good as over after the first two jumps of the event with Venezuela's Rojas setting a new Olympic record on her opening attempt of the competition.

She jumped a distance of 15.41m with the next best effort coming from Patricia Mamona of Portugal who leapt 15.01m, a new national record. Ana Peleteiro of Spain won Bronze with an effort of 14.87m.

On her last jump, Gold already secured by then, Rojas comfortably cleared the World Record distance of 15.5m, by Ukraine's Inessa Kravets since 1995, with a leap of 15.67m.

The finals of the Men's Long Jump and 3000m Steeplechase, and the Women's 100m Hurdles, Discus Throw and 5000m will be held today.

Durant leads US men's basketball past Czech Republic



exhibitions, dropped its Olympic opener against France and trailed the Czech Republic for the entire first quarter. Durant, who was saddled with foul trouble against France and picked his spots in a win over Iran, helped his team take control against the Czech Republic with back-to-back three-pointers in the second quarter. The first three, a pull-up from the right angle, moved him armelo Anthony for the top spot

JSA men's basketball's all-time Olympic scoring list. Durant, a two-time gold medallist, now has 354 points over three Olympics, surpassing Anthony's 336 over four Olympics. Tomorrow's quarter-final fixtures will be decided in a draw.

Kevin Durant works the ball against Jan Vesely (L) of the Czech Republic (AFP)

Belgium's Derwael takes gold in uneven

Nina Derwael of Belgium won the uneven bars final at the Tokyo Olympics yesterday. The 21-year-old scored 15.200 points to finish first, ahead of Russian Olympic Committee's Anastasiia Iliankova in 14.833 noints. Sunisa Lee of the United States took bronze in 14.500

Derwael is a two-time world champion and a two-time European champion on the uneven bars. She competed at the 2016 Games, finishing 19th in the allaround final.

(Agencies)

Men's Olympic football

Hosts Japan, defending champions Brazil into semis



Matheus Cunha celebrates after scoring Brazil's only goal

Brazil's men moved within two wins of back-to-back Olympic golds by beating Egypt 1-0 at Tokyo 2020 yesterday. A first-half strike from Matheus Cunha put the defending champions through to the semi-finals, where they will face Mexico on Tuesday.

Japan will meet Spain in the other last-four match.

The hosts beat New Zealand 4-2 on penalties after a 0-0 draw, while Spain came from the brink of elimination to beat Ivory Coast 5-2 after extra time.

When Max Gradel put Ivory Coast 2-1 ahead in the first minute of added time at the end of the 90 minutes, they looked to be heading into the semifinals. But Wolves striker Rafa Mir equalised with his first touch off the bench, then scored twice in extra time as Spain stretched away to reach the last four for the first time in 21 years.

While that game produced seven goals, Mexico's match against South Korea featured nine — the former winning 6-3 to set up a semi-final with Japan. The hosts are now one win away from securing a first medal in men's football since claiming bronze at the 1968 Games.

Samsung kicks off mobile-first marketing campaign ahead of Olympic Games Tokyo 2020

Co., Ltd., a Worldwide Olympic and Paralympic Games Partner, is bringing new mobile innovations to Tokyo 2020 to help more consumers and fans experience the Olympics and Paralympic spirit wherever they are in the world. This year will demonstrate how sport can unite sports fans even when they are not physically together. In partnership with the International Olympic Committee and International Paralympic Committee, Samsung will lead this journey with its latest mobile technology and digital-first approach

"Samsung will continue to support the Olympic and Paralympic movements and connect fans with the Games just as we have for over 30 years," said Stephanie Choi, Senior Vice President and Head of Global Marketing Team of Mobile Communications Business, Samsung Electronics. "For Tokyo 2020, we will provide athletes and fans fans

Samsung Electronics opportunities to connect and experience the excitement of the Games through our innovative mobile technologies, such as the latest Galaxy device

with its 5G capabilities." Samsung will extend its Olympic and Paralympic Games initiatives to digital and social platforms to engage with media and global sports fans worldwide, including the Samsung Galaxy Tokyo 2020 Media Center launch. This website will be the destination for all of Samsung's Olympic and Paralympic Games content, where fans and media can visit to learn more about Team Galaxy, read real-time news, watch Team Galaxy activations, and behind-the-scenes download content. The virtual experience will provide an opportunity to

connect with the Games

and come together to

enhance the Olympic and

Paralympic spirit. Digital and social support will continue during Games-Time with the launch of Galaxy House on

Zepeto, a virtual platform that lets users create 3D characters of themselves. In Galaxy House, fans will experience new Samsung Tokyo 2020 marketing content and enjoy a new virtual pin promotion.

Samsung inspires the world and shapes the future with transformative ideas and technologies. The company, which is the 5th best global brand globally and no.1 global TV brand for 15 consecutive years is redefining the worlds of TVs, smartphones, wearable devices, tablets, digital appliances, network systems, and memory LSI, foundry and LED solutions.

In Sri Lanka, Samsung has been recognised as the 'Most Loved Electronics Brand' for three consecutive years by Brand Finance Lanka's review of the country's most valuable brands. As Sri Lanka's no.1 smartphone brand, Samsung's customer base in the country spans across all age groups, particularly the Gen Z and Millennial segments

MCA 'G' Division

MCA Cricket springs back into action

MCA Cricket will return after a lull of three months with the 10th Stafford Motor Co.sponsored Honda Trophy-MCA'G' Division 25-over League Tournament 2020/21 final between Pyramid Wilmar and Abans Group on August 7 at the MCA Grounds, commencing

The final, which was initially scheduled for May 2, was put on hold due to the Covid-19 third wave. The match will be played strictly adhering to health regulations, with only a limited number of spectators allowed into the ground. The two teams may be a little rusty having played their semi-finals all the way back on April 24; Pyramid Wilmar created a huge upset, eliminating the unbeaten and tournament favourites Hayleys Group 'B' by two wickets, while Abans Group comprehensively beat Zillion Systems by 46 runs.

Pyramid Wilmar's top performers have been Lasith Fernando (190 runs, including two half-centuries), Malintha Peiris (163 runs, including two half-centuries), Umedha Madushan (nine wickets), Lakmal Fernando (eight wickets) and Nishan Perera (seven wickets).

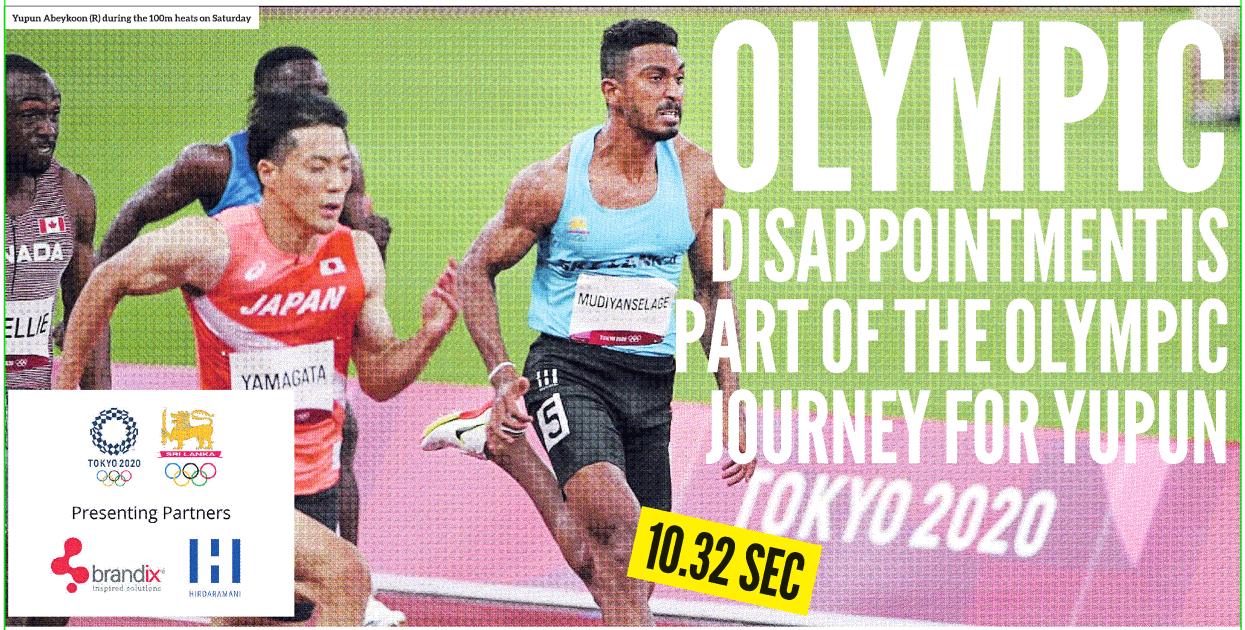
Rangana Kaushalya (173 runs inclusive of a halfcentury and ten wickets), Maduranga Hettiarachchi (173 runs, including a half-century), Isuru Jayaranga (155 runs and ten wickets), Sanjaya Muthuthanthri (nine wickets) and Hasaranga Perera (seven wickets) have excelled for Abans Group.

Pyramid Wilmar: Lasith Fernando (Captain), Malitha Peiris (WK), Tharuka Jeewantha, Suboda Lakmal, Shanaka Fernando, Nalin Tharanga, Udara Attapattu, Udesh Nishan, Dinuka Jayakody, Umeda Madushan, Supun Sandeepa, Asanka Sameera, Chandana Bandara, Upul Anthony and Dilupa Sanjaya

Abans Group: W.B. Dhanushka (Captain), Lakshitha de Silva, Isuru Hashan, O. Nimrodha, Dilan Sanjeeva, Dushan Hettiarachchi, N. Dayabaran, D. Rangana, I. Jayaranga, Nalaka Gunawardena, Harshana Dhahanayake, S.H.

Tyron, Lahiru Perera, T. Ranaweera and G. Chathuranga. The MCA appointed Match Referee-cum-Adjudicator

is Manoj Perera.- BM



BY SHEHAN DANIEL REPORTING FROM TOKYO, JAPAN

t the 30-metre mark of his 100m heat on Saturday, you could sense that Yupun Abeykoon's Olympic debut was probably not going to go as planned.

A bad start, despite a quick reaction to the starting gun, found Abeykoon lingering at the back of the pack, a position he would not

be able to make up over the rest of the race.

He tried, moving up one place as he drove to the finish, but a combination of the sheer pace of the leaders and his own mistake meant that Abeykoon could not put in the performance that he, and those who have been following his meteoric rise, would have expected.

Abeykoon spoke, in the lead up to the

Olympics, about those expectations that have been placed on him, being the first Sri Lankan in 25 years to run in the Men's 100m at the Olympics.

He had, after all, bettered the national 100m record thrice in the last 12 months.

But he also said he was realistic in his expectations – a personal best more attainable than a medal; qualification to a semi-final more achievable than running in today's final.

Ultimately, he was two-tenths of a second slower than the national record which he currently holds, good only for a sixth-place finish in his heat and not good enough to earn him a place in yesterday's semi-finals.

"I was ready to do something great today, but unfortunately I wasn't able to do that," Abeykoon said after the race. "I'm really disappointed about the time I ran. I didn't come here to run that kind of time. I was confident in how I set up my blocks and how it felt."

Abeykoon could not put his finger on what exactly his mistake was, but he was keen to find and fix it.

"I'm disappointed because in a nine-second race like this, if you make a mistake it is difficult to fix. A lot of people back in Sri Lanka were expecting me to do something good. It's difficult to win a medal here, but I wanted to better my own time. I can't say what went wrong, but I made a mistake over the first 30 metres and that was the reason for this result. I will talk to my coach, rewatch the race and see where I can improve," Abeykoon said in his immediate assessment of the race. For his coach, former Italian 400m sprinter

Claudio Licciardello, the underwhelming run in Tokyo is all part of Abeykoon's journey to becoming a world-class athlete.

"It's part of the journey. When you get to the top level, and you don't have enough race in the legs and the experience on the big stage, it is so tough to try to get the best. For the future I am sure it will be easier to compete in the top level, and we shouldn't forget that in January we were with zero points of rankings," Licciardello said. He commended the work that Abeykoon did ahead of the Olympics, sealing a direct qualification spot for the Olympics in just six months.

"He did very hard work out to get to the Olympic, so it was not simple. After one year of workout he goes and competes in the indoor season, he was in top shape in June, it is not so easy to maintain that kind of shape until August. Some tension is part of the growing up of an athlete. I'm sure he will do his best for the next events and in the next year. There are a lot of challenges for us, so we'll be good," Licciardello added.

At 26, Abeykoon's window of opportunity is fast closing, and the three years between now and Paris 2024 will be crucial for the Italy-based athlete.

In between he'll have the World Athletics Championships, the Asian Games and the Commonwealth Games, events where he could leave a mark that no other Sri Lankan has left before.

And if the past is anything to go by, the future looks bright for Abeykoon, even if the present carries a sense of disappointment.



Australian swimmer McKeon sets Olympic medal record

Australia's Emma McKeon became the first female swimmer to win seven medals at a single Olympics with two more golds yesterday.

She outsprinted the field to win the 50m freestyle before helping Australia win the women's 4x100m medley relay on the final day of the swimming competition in Tokyo.

McKeon, 27, will leave Tokyo with four gold medals - two in the individual sprints and two relays. Having already won the 100m freestyle, she added the 50m yesterday, with Swede Sarah Sjoestroem taking silver and defending champion Pernille Blume of Denmark getting the bronze.

She was soon back in the pool for the medley relay, swimming the butterfly leg as veteran Cate Campbell's brilliant final leg pushed the United States into silver.

That gold medal meant McKeon joined Michael Phelps, Mark Spitz and Matt Biondi as the only swimmers to win seven medals at a single Olympics. The only woman to have achieved the feat in any other sport is Soviet gymnast Maria Gorokhovskaya in 1952.

American Phelps holds the swimming record of eight medals won at a single Games, doing so at Athens 2004 and in Beijing four years later. - **BBC**

Army Commander's T20

Northern Warriors, Western Warriors record second wins

BY M. SHAMIL AMIT

The second day's proceedings of the second Army Commander's T20 tournament played at the Army cricket ground in Dombagoda yesterday saw Super Fashion Northern Warriors and Event Tv Western Warriors recording their second successive wins to maintain their unbeaten record.

Super Fashion Northern Warriors led by Seekkuge Prasanna who pulled off a convincing win over defending champions Dimo Southern Warriors led by Dinesh Chandimal on day one defeated Batsman. com Eastern Warriors by five wickets on D/L method in the match played in the morning session while Event Tv Eastern Warriors led by Thisara Perera overcame Dimo Southern Warriors by six wickets in the match played in the evening session.

The morning session match saw Batsman.com
Eastern Warriors taking first lease of the wicket
making a score of 150 for 3 and later the match
after being reduced to 15 overs and Super Fashion
Northern Warriors set a target of 131 runs being
guided by Milinda Siriwardena and Pathum Kumara
who together shared a valuable 73 runs for the fifth
wicket to reach the target.

In the other match an unbeaten knock of 60 in 53 balls inclusive of five boundaries and two sixes by Upul Tharanga paved the way for Event Tv coast to an easy six wicket win as he along with Dilshan

Munaweera laid the foundation with an opening wicket stand of 60 runs to steer the side race to the target of 132 runs in the 19th over.

Today is a rest day and two matches are down for decision tomorrow with Batsman.com Eastern Warriors meeting Dimo Southern Warriors and the clash between unbeaten teams Super Fashion Northern Warriors and Event Tv Western Warriors scheduled to be played in the evening.

Results

At Dombagoda – Super Fashion Northern Warriors won by five wickets on D/L

Batsman.com Eastern Warriors: 150 for 3 in 19 overs (Pathum Dilshan 74, Harshajith Virendra 38)

Super Fashion Northern Warriors: 131 for 5 in 15 overs (Milinda Siriwardena 34, Pathum Kumara 40 n.o.: Rajindra Punchihewa 3 for 25) At Dombagoda – Event Tv Western Warriors

won by six wickets
Dimo Southern Warriors: 131 for 5 in 20 overs
(Suminda Lakshan 44 n.o., Janith Silva 38 n.o.:
Thisara Perera 2 for 9, Ruchira Silva 2 for 12)
Event Tv Western Warriors: 132 for 4 in 19
overs (Dilshan Munaweera 30, Upul Tharanga

Ocon wins chaotic Hungarian GP, Hamilton takes championship lead

Lewis Hamilton missed the chance to chalk up his 100th victory but did take over the lead in the world championship as France's Esteban Ocon steered his way through a chaotic Hungarian Grand Prix yesterday to collect his first ever win.

After a tactical error dropped pole-sitter Hamilton to last place, the Briton picked his way through the field, finally clawing his way past Ocon's Alpine teammate Fernando Alonso, to finish third behind the Frenchman and Sebastian Vettel in the Aston Martin.

For 24-year-old Ocon, who controlled the race from the front, it marked a maiden win in his 78th Grand Prix and a first victory for the new-look Alpine set-up.

"What a moment! It feels so good!," said Ocon.
"It's fantastic, what can I say? Congrats to
Fernando (Alonso) as well, I think the win is also
thanks to him with the fight that he did.

"It's teamwork, it's been a fantastic day!" Max Verstappen's Red Bull was damaged in a first lap crash, which took out five cars, and he eventually finished 10th, leaving Hamilton to take a six-point lead in the championship.

"Congratulations to the Alpine team and to Esteban for his first win -- he's been a

shining star for a long time,"
said Hamilton who was
booed again during his
post-race interview by a
section of the packed
crowd who blame him for
the crash at the British GP
two weeks ago which took
out Verstappen.
Going into the
summer break
they are now
10 points
ahead of

Red Bull.

Springboks level series in fiery encounter

The British and Irish Lions' series with South Africa will go to a decider after the Springboks won a fiery second Test 27-9 at Cape Town Stadium on Saturday.

The Lions led after a cagey first half as Dan Biggar's three penalties trumped Handre Pollard's two, while a player from each side went to the sin-bin. But a stylish Makazole Mapimpi try gave the world champions a narrow two-point lead at the start of the second half. The hosts continued to dominate and Lukhanyo Am's score sealed victory.

60 n.o.)

27
BRITISH AND IRISH LIDNS
09







Mirrorbusines





Seylan Bank launches state-of-the-art data centre in...

Pathfinder Foundation in collaboration with ...



Private sector credit gains momentum in June adding hopes for quick economic revival

June credit expands by Rs.83.4bn, up from Rs.55.6bn in May and Rs.57.7bn in April

Private credit in first half hits Rs.414bn; surpasses private credit in entirety of 2020

The growth in private sector credit continued its robust spell with added vigour in June, broadly reflecting the continuous appetite for low-cost credit in the economy as banks have demonstrated utmost willingness to keep their lending taps wide open. Defying the wider expectations for more

modest growth in private sector credit in June due to a month long lockdown, licensed commercial banks expanded their total outstanding credit to the private sector by a robust Rs.83.4 billion, up from Rs.55.6 billion in May and Rs.57.7 billion in April.

With the credit expansion in June, Sri Lanka's banks have extended Rs.414 billion in private credit in the first half, eclipsing the total amount of private sector credit extended during the entirety of 2020, and surpassing more than half of the target set for the full year.

The Central Bank in May tempered its growth expectations for private sector credit to 12 percent on a year-on-year basis which works out to Rs.750 billion in fresh credit— from an earlier 14 percent (Rs.865 billion), as virus restrictions were biting into the momentum of the economy set off in the first quarter of the year.

However, Central Bank officials were more upbeat by early July from the preliminary credit data seen by them and the positivity returning after the lockdowns that ended on June 21.

The June credit translated into a robust 13.3 percent growth from the same month in 2020.

They at one point in early July suggested fresh private sector credit of around Rs.800 billion for the year as the early data pointed to a strong momentum.

Banks have also shown ample evidence for their readiness to unleash excess liquidity by way of loans to everything from big projects to small businesses, housing and consumption, as they built an enormous deposit pile last year, which had largely been a drag on their net interest incomes.

Meanwhile, banks were also seen adding more heft into their capital buffers by way of equity, debt and hybrid instruments in both the rupee market as well as the dollar market to ward off potential pressure on their regulatory capital adequacy levels, which could stem their aggressive growth plans.

The interim results of banks for the June quarter, which are slowly coming out, already have demonstrated this phenomenon as they have broadly stayed the course for growth as seen from their little impacted balance sheet growths.

Strong private sector credit is an important economic gauge as it reflects dynamism of a country's economic activities from new investments to production and consumption.

Workable plan backed by durable analysis urged for avoiding default

- Verité Research **Executive Director** says such would allow build back confidence on Sri Lanka and allow access to financial markets
- Identifies crisis of confidence on the country as underlying factor for current state
- Criticises fixation on IMF programme to solve current crisis; says SL should go to IMF with a plan

By Nishel Fernando

workable plan backed by a durable analysis presents Sri Lanka with the best chance to overcome the current



From left: Fitch Ratings Lanka Managing Director Maninda Wickramasinghe, Verité Research Executive Director, Dr. Nishan de Mel, CA Sri Lanka President Manil Jayesinghe, Central Bank Governor Prof.W.D. Lakshman and Ceylon Chamber of Commerce Chairman Vish Govindasamy

external debt crisis and a potential foreign exchange reserve crisis by rebuilding the confidence on the country among local and foreign investors, while averting a default

scenario, according to a top economist. "Path to no default has to begin with a plan that is sensible, robust and with a durable analysis behind

which you rebuild confidence to gain access to international financial markets. When you have workable plan with a durable analysis, you can build confidence. Then, it makes the plan more workable. When the government doesn't have a plan that is working out, people tend to keep their foreign exchange out

of the country and they hold off their investment decisions," Verité Research Executive Director, Dr. Nishan de Mel asserted. He shared thee remarks taking part in a panel discussion organised by CA Sri Lanka titled 'Debt situation of Sri Lanka: What is ahead of us?" last Friday. MORE ON P12

Cabraal assures biz community that good years will come!

While reassuring the commitment to maintain policy consistency, State Minister of Money & Capital Market and State

Ajith Nivard Cabraal

Enterprise Reforms, Ajith Nivard Cabraal appealed investors and businesses community to stay on course without losing vigour and giving into short-term constraints of the on-going 'consolidation period' as better years are ahead.

"This is a consolidation period. I see this as a holding period. This time is to ensure that we stay on course without losing our vigour. Make decisions, looking at the longterm, don't constrain to the short-term. COVID-19 will be a thing in the past.

MORE ON P12

Expolanka profits surge in June amid higher airfreight volumes

Expolanka Holdings PLC delivered yet another solid quarter in June (1Q22) with massive jump in revenues and soaring profits as the company continued to benefit from the increased share of air freight amid persistent disruptions to the ocean freight industry due to shortage of containers, port congestions and fresh challenges from the Suez Canal blockage.

The logistics juggernaut reported revenues of Rs.95.7 billion for the three months under review, logging a 165 percent jump from the same quarter a year ago, as global trade was picking up specially in the North American trade line generating business for both ocean and air freight. This is because the United States economy reached pre-pandemic levels in the second quarter resulting in a

robust demand for goods from all over the world.

The company recorded nearly four-fold increase in its earnings during the quarter as it reported earnings of Rs.3.22 a share or Rs.6.29 billion compared to earnings of 90 cents a share or Rs.1.75 billion in the corresponding period last year.

The company's share, which became an investor favourite since the virus broke out last year, further added 30 cents or 0.45 percent last Friday to end at Rs.67.0 giving the company a market capitalisation of Rs.130.9 billion. The company's stock was trading at just Rs.2.00 a piece on March 31, 2020 when the virusrelated restrictions became more widespread for the first time around the world, disrupting global supply chains.

MORE ON P12



Colombo inflation up as higher fuel prices take root

Food prices ease but still stay at double-digit levels

Core inflation accelerates to 3.2% from 2.5% in June

Prices in the Colombo district were pushed further higher in July as people were seeing venturing out after a month long shelteringin-place, spending on everything from travel to clothing to restaurant dining, while the food prices eased, though staying stubbornly at double-digit levels.

Inflation measured by the Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI), rose by 5.7 percent in the twelve months to June 2021, accelerating from 5.2 percent in June, marking it the third consecutive month of rising prices.

Colombo inflation slowed down to 3.9 percent year-on-year in April in spite it being a high-spending festive month, and since then prices escalated every month.

Consumer prices also rose by 0.5 percent from June levels, predominantly due to non-food items such as transport, clothing and restaurant dining as the economy was gradually being unshackled from the jobs and production killing virus-MOREON P12 related restrictions.

Bairaha Farms 10 earnings reflect higher demand and prices for chicken

Bairaha Farms PLC, a leading chicken processor in the country reported strong financial performance for the quarter ended in June (1Q22), as demand for chicken recovered from the pandemic-induced slowdown while prices also remained elevated, supporting the company's margins.

The company engaged in the complete poultry supply chain reported sales of Rs.1.38 billion for the quarter under review, up 20 percent from a year ago, as a result of the lower base that prevailed last year due to lockdowns which hampered the sales to a larger extent.

Despite the strong growth in the top line, the poultry group maintained its direct costs at the same level to that of last year's as prices of chicken and day-old-chicks rose substantially.

For instance, the retail price of a kilogram of fresh chicken hovered between Rs.667.50 and 673.75 from April through June from Rs.542.67 and Rs.625.68 a kilogram during the same period last year, the retail prices published by the Census and Statistics Department showed. MORE ON P12

Worker remittances decline in June ending 13-month long run

between Sri Lanka and Russia. The inaugural flight was ceremonially greeted

with a water salute at Domodedovo Airport (DME) in Moscow. MOREON P12

June remittance income down to US\$ 478.4mn from US\$ 572.5mn a year ago

But remittance income in first half still up 11.6% to US\$ 3.32bn

SL revised down its remittance target to US\$ 7.5bn for this year from US\$ 8bn

Remittance income hit four-year high to reach US\$ 7.1bn in 2020

Earnings from worker remittances declined in June from a year ago levels ending a thirteen-month long spell of continuous climb seen from May last year, but the income for the first six months of 2021 is still higher than

what the country received a year ago. The Sri Lankans working abroad sent back US\$ 478.4 million during June 2021, compared to US\$ 572.5 million repatriated in the same month in 2020.

June worker remittance numbers ended the longest spell of continued increases in monthly repatriations recorded year-on-year after it began in May last year. With June data, Sri Lanka had received US\$

3.32 billion in cumulative remittance income for the first six months, up 11.6 percent from the same period in 2020.

Worker remittances remain the only bright spot in Sri Lanka's external sector as virus related restrictions decimated the US\$ 4.5 billion plus tourism trade and blunted the merchandise exports earnings momentum during the last couple of months.

As officials grew cautious of the ability of remittance inflow to continue its strong

momentum given the increasing number of returnees, low departures and virus flare ups in host countries, they recently settled for an annual target of US\$ 7.5 billion from such income, down from an earlier target of US\$ 8.0 billion.

Inaugural flight welcomed with water salute

Sri Lanka received 5.8 percent more from worker remittances to US\$ 7.1 billion in 2020, reaching a four-year high.

With its domestic production policy-tilt and the need for multi-skilled workforce to power industries, Sri Lanka is increasingly facing a conundrum between retaining its workforce home and encouraging migration to buttress

its near to medium term external sector woes.

While employers have long been calling for more liberal labour immigration to fill skill shortages in almost every sector, labour migration remains a hot issue in Sri Lanka, specially with the country's pseudonationalists and trade unions.

But they have no doubt about closer to two million Sri Lankans working around the world in multitude of disciplines, which is made possible by the free labour market and benign immigration policies in those countries are in place to attract best talent from elsewhere.

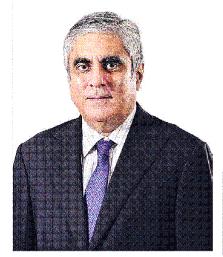
Union Bank 2Q profit up on expanding margins, fees

nion Bank of Colombo PLC got off to a robust start to the year in the first quarter, with growth in loans and solid profits but the virus-related restrictions reimposed from mid-April threw a wrench into that growth, as the bank recorded a degrowth in loans and assets, although profits were higher in the quarter ended in June from a low base a year ago.

The bank reported Rs.1.29 billion in net interest income, despite a reversal in loan growth in the April-June quarter, as the interest expense fell sharply than the decline in the corresponding interest income, as deposits got repriced at lower rates, which helped the lender to stretch its margins.

As a result, the net interest margin rose to 3.44 percent by end-June, from 3.16 percent at the start of the year.

The loans fell by Rs.0.8 billion in the three months, from a Rs.4.4 billion growth registered in the March quarter, as the virus-controlling task force put restrictions on wide swaths of the economy for nearly three months, doing a bigger damage than the virus itself, as seen from the corporate earnings being released by the companies for the June quarter.



Chairman Atul Malik

The bank had a loan book of Rs.73.5 billion by June-end and a deposit base of Rs.85.1 billion, up Rs.2.7 billion in the first two fiscal quarters.

"Union Bank stood resilient despite the economic setbacks resulting from the pandemic in 2020 and realigned its strategy for recovery and growth, reporting a strong performance during the first quarter of 2021, with favourable returns and increased revenue," the bank said in an earnings release.



CEO Indrajit Wickramasinghe

"However, challenges continued with a third wave hitting in April 2021, adding further limitations to the business growth momentum," it added.

The bank provided Rs.310.5 million for possible bad loans in the quarter, up 25 percent from the same period a year ago, as the bank applied the similar policies to that of December 2020, exercising more prudence when measuring expected credit losses due to the soured conditions.

Despite the contraction seen in the loan book, the bank managed to gradually improve its asset quality as its reported gross non-performing loans ratio ended down at 5.83 percent, from 6.05 percent at the start of the year.

Despite the fee waivers afforded to the pandemic-affected borrowers since May this year, the bank reported a fee income of Rs.219.7 million, up by a robust 106 percent from a year ago period, as the relief on fees were less extensive this time than a year ago.

The bank reported earnings of 17 cents a share or Rs.186.7 million in the April-June quarter, compared to 14 cents a share or Rs.149.9 million in the corresponding period last year, recording a 25 percent growth in the bottom line.

The bank with assets of Rs.121.2 billion operates with liquidity and capital buffers well in excess of the regulatory minimums, which are waiting to be unleashed to propel its growth momentum in the remainder of the year, if the virus-controlling authorities do not spoil the recovery in the economy once again with

Culture Financial Holdings Limited holds a 70.84 percent stake in Union Bank.

HSBC Sri Lanka has done it again

ComBank offers free debit

cards to teens opening new

Dotcom savings accounts

On the backdrop of completing 129 years of operation in the country, HSBC Sri Lanka continued its leadership position as the best International Retail Bank of the year, at Asian Banking & Finance Retail Banking Awards 2021, for the fifth time, since 2016.

This year, over 140 exceptional banks from 31 countries were recognised for their continuous drive to grow and provide services to customers amidst several uncertainties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Winning banks were judged for their resilience and ability to adapt and leverage digital technology amidst the crisis and cater to the ever-changing customer preferences and increased comfort with digital products and services, to benchmark themselves against market competition.

HSBC Country Head Wealth and Personal Banking

Teenagers and pre-teens who

open new Dotcom teen savings

accounts with Commercial Bank

of Ceylon will be offered a debit

card, free of charge, until the end

of August, the bank has announced.

These Near Field Communication (NFC)-enabled

Dotcom debit cards can be

used by these teen savings

account holders for point-of-sale

(POS) transactions or to make

online, contactless or QR-based

payments through the ComBank

Q+ Payment App, enjoying

convenience and safety when

managing their own finances and

experiencing financial freedom

while keeping track of their

The Dotcom account holders

can opt to receive either a Visa or

Mastercard-branded debit card

when they open an account within

banking transactions.

Nadeesha Senaratne said, "We are truly humbled to be recognised as Sri Lanka's best International Retail Bank of the year, given the challenging environment faced by many businesses and the impacts of the pandemic on local communities. This award is a testament to the dedication and commitment of our wealth and personal banking team in Sri Lanka and the customer confidence in HSBC. It further proves that our strategy to invest in technology and help customers adapt to the new normal with digital banking products and services and making banking fast, easy to

use and secure, is paying off."
He further said, "I take this opportunity to thank all our customers for the trust placed in us and to our staff for their continued commitment to supporting our customers and the wider community that we serve.'

daily debit card withdrawal limit is

set at Rs.10,000 for those between

the ages of 10 and 16, the limit for

older account holders up to the age

Launched to promote the

saving habit and financial

discipline among the teens, the

ComBank Dotcom account

can be opened with a minimum

deposit of Rs.1000. The account

pays a higher interest rate over

the prevailing savings rate and

enables account holders to enjoy

online banking and mobile

banking facilities free of charge

and even a mobile reload facility.

Parents or legal guardians of

the Dotcom account holders are

entitled to obtain loan facilities

for the educational purposes of

the teenager. Any Sri Lankan

between 10 and 18 years can

open a Commercial Bank

of 18 is Rs.20,000, the bank said.

SDB bank geared for **Rs.4.5bn SPO on August 5**

host its Secondary Public Offering (SPO) in early August, investor forums both locally and globally continue to discuss the differentiated investment potential the bank's strategic SME growth focus carries.

A cornerstone of its historic growth journey, it will afford customers, shareholders, other stakeholders and the public a unique opportunity to share in growth across the nationallycritical SME segment.

SDB bank's upcoming SPO on August 5, 2021, represents the second phase of its capital raising plan, which commenced last year. The first phase involved its phenomenally successful rights issue in FY 2020, which gained recognition as the firstever digital rights issue by a Colombo Stock Exchangelisted entity plus the first local digital share subscription to be oversubscribed. Distinct from an IPO, SPO is a capital raising effort by a firm that is already listed on its respective stock exchange and it involves the sale of new shares to the public through a secondary offering.

The bank will offer 68 million new ordinary voting shares to the public as part of the SPO, at a share price of Rs.51.50, with provision for an additional 20 million shares in the event of an oversubscription.

Considered industry-wide to be the rural growth engine of Sri Lanka, SDB bank's latest capital raising effort will entail manifold benefits for the bank, its shareholders and diverse customer base, while positively impacting the national economy.

Firstly, it will allow SDB bank to continue its strategic growth plan for the next three to four years uninterrupted, further extending the growth phase it has enjoyed on the back of its focus on SMEs, female entrepreneurship, emphasis on digitalisation and taking of digital banking countrywide."

services to the masses, including the island's rural most parts.

Equally, the raising of capital affords the bank added financial strength in continuing its historic and strategic support of SMEs, who form the backbone of the Sri Lankan economy and account for 52 percent of national GDP. The SPO-raised funds will support the bank's expected loan portfolio growth across this segment and others for the period 2021-2022, ensuring entrepreneurship is nurtured, allowing for greater participation and contribution to the economy.

Also, the capital raising exercise will ensure SDB bank can maintain a stronger capital base, by strengthening its equity base and thereby its capital adequacy ratios in line with the BASEL III guidelines of the Central Bank. This will allow SDB bank greater resiliency in comfortably absorbing external economic shocks arising from unexpected events.

NDB Investment Bank Limited (NDBIB) will perform the role of financial advisor and manager to the SPO that is to be conducted on the Colombo Stock Exchange. The two parties share a long history of cooperation involving investments, with NDBIB previously advising SDB bank on its initial listing on the Colombo Stock Exchange in 2012, the successful rights issue in 2020, as well as numerous other fundraising transactions for close to a decade.

SDB bank CEO Thilak Piyadigama stated, 'We're extremely proud and energised by the extent of the progress we've made over the years together, with our focus on sustainable growth in key national segments and I confidently invite the existing and new shareholders to join hands with SDB bank as we continue to fuel growth

People's Bank relocates Thambala branch

The opening ceremony of the newly relocated Thambala branch of People's Bank was held on July 26, 2021, under the auspices of People's Bank Chief Executive Officer/General Manager Ranjith Kodituwakku.

The new branch, which is located at No.110, Alhilalpura, Thambala, is fully equipped with ultramodern technology and offers a comprehensive range of banking facilities.

by People's Bank Deputy General Manager Channel Management Mahinda Premanath, People's Bank Head of Marketing Nalaka Wijayawardana, People's Bank Polonnaruwa Regional Manager Indumini Rathnayake, Assistant Regional Manager H.G.N. Aarohana, Thambala Branch Manager A.H.T.G. Bandara

and several customers. Cementing its role in providing unmatched financial services to the nation, The Banker Magazine in the UK has recognised People's Bank for four consecutive years as one of the Top 1000 Banks in the World. A testament to the wide reach of the bank is its 741 branches and service centres located islandwide, which happens to be Sri Lanka's largest. With a workforce of more than 8,000 staff, People's Bank provides financial services to more than 14 million customers and boasts of 19 million account relationships making



People's Bank Chief Executive Officer/General Manager Ranjith Kodituwakku opens new branch

Seylan Bank launches state-ofthe-art data centre in Colombo

Seylan Bank recently unveiled its state-of-theart data centre located at Seylan Towers, No. 90, Galle Road, Colombo 3.

The consolidated data centre was designed by TIA-942-Certified Data Centre Design Consultant and Auditor Tharindu Meepegama and built by V S Information Systems in collaboration with leading IT infrastructure providers such as Panduit, Vertiv and Starline.

The new data centre hosts the core application servers, storage, network and security and connectivity infrastructure for the bank. This will help Seylan lower its operational cost, improve security and above all ensure high availability of applications for our customers.

"There was a need to centralise our data centre infrastructure operations for effective management, high availability, safety and cost reduction, said Seylan Bank Chief Information Officer Harsha Wanigatunga.

"Our move to invest in a state-of-the-art data centre is a continuation of another first by Seylan Bank in Sri Lanka, as we will now move towards serving our customers better by ensuring high accessibility to our advanced digital infrastructure to provide even more customised and innovative solutions."

bank, along with the specialist consultant, carried out a comprehensive assessment and evaluation of solutions available in the market. After an intense evaluation, Seylan selected the solution offered by V S Information Systems featuring Panduit Data Centre infrastructure for its data centre.

The new Rated (tier) 3 aligned data centre, the first one in Sri Lanka of this nature, will improve operating efficiency and provide better physical security, power, cooling, network connectivity and overall management. It will also enable a greater assurance of

The IT team from the systems availability and service level assurance. Moreover, the data centre meets statutory audit and regulatory compliance requirements and provides scalability for future enhancements.

"Our continuous strategic focus on technology advancement and digitisation is enabling us to overcome the many challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The foundation of our data centre is based on making digital banking for our customers seamless, by offering reliable, secure and energy-efficient solutions, combined with best-inclass customer support," concluded Wanigatunga.



Seylan Bank Chief Information Officer Harsha Wanigatunga



OREL IT appoints Dr. Upendra Pieris as CEO

REL IT, a well-reputed name synonymous with distinctive groundbreaking technology and innovation both in Sri Lanka and globally, recently appointed Dr. Upendra Pieris as its Chief Executive Officer, who has been at the forefront of the company's accelerated growth in his previous capacity as Vice President to the organisation.

In his new role, Dr. Pieris will continue to share his visionary leadership, knowledge and direction across the company and steer it to be a global technology partner for industrial and commercial challenges and innovation, enabling endless possibilities through industry 4.0 whilst impacting and enriching lives and communities.

With decades of experience in the global T industry, Dr. Pieris is the inspiration behind Orel IT's incredible success within a short span of time. He is a renowned professional in various fields to include AI



OREL IT CEO Dr. Upendra Pieris

vision solutions, IT services management, business analysis, project planning and management, and software process management among others.

OREL IT has grown exponentially from a two-person fraternity to a 4,500 plus strong company in just over a decade. It is a fully-owned subsidiary of Orel Corporation, which has today evolved into a highly sought-after multi-vertical player with core interests in building infrastructure, digital infrastructure, digital commerce, education, IoT, transportation, healthcare, with presence in six continents.

Recently, Dr. Upendra was also inducted as Member of the prestigious Forbes Technology Council, an invitation-only organisation that brings together some of the world's leading and emerging CIOs, CTOs and technology executives and entrepreneurs.

Dr. Pieris has contributed immensely to the IT industry of Sri Lanka, encouraging and inspiring young professionals to be confident, aspiring and innovative leaders with a strategic, conscious mindset. He actively takes part as a speaker in many industry forums and discussions. He is presently an Executive Committee Member for AI Centre of Excellence and Entrepreneurship Forum at the Sri Lanka Association for Software and Services Companies (SLASSCOM) and Digital Chapter and Software Chapter of the Federation of Information Technology Industry Sri Lanka (FITIS).

He is also a Board Director of the ICT Industry Skills Council and an Advisory Committee Member for the IT/BPM Sector at the Sri Lanka Export Development Board. Last year, he obtained a doctorate in information technology from the European International University in Paris. Dr. Pieris continues his dedication and commitment to help bridge the gaps to increase digital literacy in Sri Lanka and indulges in various socially responsible causes and initiatives.

Chamber Academy discussion and overview on **Data Protection Bill today**











Thanusshi Dissanavake

Chiranthi Balapatabendi Jehan Perinpanayagal

The expert panel will include ICTA General Counsel Javantha Fernando. Dialog Axiata PLC Manager

The webinar sponsored by Hutchison Telecommunications Lanka (Pvt.) Ltd and London Stock

The discussion will be

Draftsman's Department.

The Chamber Academy, the knowledge arm of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Information and Communication Agency (ICTA), will be hosting a timely webinar on the Data Protection Bill today, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon, via Zoom.

Exchange Group – Sri Lanka.

based on the proposed personal data protection bill, defining measures to protect personal data of individuals held by banks, telecom operators, hospitals and other personal data aggregating and processing entities formulated by the Legal

Regulatory, Group Legal and Regulatory Shenuka Jayalath, Attorney-at-Law and privacy professional, Drafting Committee Member Sanduni Wickramasinghe, SLASSCOM CEO and Board Member Jehan Perinpanayagal and ICTA Director

Chiranthi Balapatabendi. The session will be moderated by ICTA Legal Officer Thanusshi Dissanayake.

Industry Development

The discussion will be followed by an interactive question and answer session.

For registrations email events@chamber.lk.

Pathfinder Foundation in collaboration with Visa hands over report to Finance Minister

Pathfinder Foundation Senior Visiting Fellow Rajendra Theagarajah led a small work group to examine the implications of the April 2019 terror attacks and subsequent COVID-19 pandemic on the micro and small and medium enterprise (SME) segment and tourism/inbound leisure sectorrelated supply chains.

The study also took the opportunity to examine the current state of the 'start-up' ecosystem, specifically the fintec and agritec players and the opportunities for this sector to energise the MSME/SME segment in contributing meaningfully towards the economic revival of Sri Lanka.

Visa, the global leader in digital payments, joined the Pathfinder as a strategic partner in bringing



From left: Visa Country Manager Sri Lanka and the Maldives Avanthi Colombage, Pathfinder Foundation Senior Visiting Fellow Rajendra Theagarajah, Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa, MMBL-Pathfinder Director/CEO K. Balasundaram and Pathfinder Foundation Executive Director Mamta Ameera Arooz

local and global insights relating to the role of 'digitalisation' in the above conversation. Knowledgeable

and experienced persons ranging from policymakers, private sector and business chambers were invited as panellists at the three workshops moderated by Theagarajah as a part of the study.

The Pathfinder Foundation earlier submitted a comprehensive list of recommendations for consideration by the Government of Sri Lanka in July of 2020, which was captured under 'Beyond the Box: A New Economic Vision for Post-COVID-19 Sri Lanka'.

This report, which was handed over to the newly appointed Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa, at his ministry, focuses on identifying essential elements and "pain points" for micro/SME enterprises, new generation of emerging fintec and agritec entrepreneurs and businesses involved in tourism/inbound

can contribute towards energising these businesses and fostering Sri Lanka's future economic revival. The knowledge and expertise of a global leader such as Visa in the area of digital payments further strengthens the recommendations identified. The report also takes cognisance

travel-related ventures. It suggests

ways and means of how digitalisation

of some of the macro strategic recommendations made in the Pathfinder's July 2020 submission. The six key recommendations identified in the report are categorised as short-term operational interventions and medium/ long-term policy interventions.

A copy of the report can be accessed at https://www.facebook. com/pathfinderfoundation.

Contd. from Page 10

by a durable analysis.

Workable plan...
The other panelists were; State Finance Minister Ajith Nivard Cabraal,
Finance Ministry Secretary Sajith Attygalle, Central Bank Governor Prof. W.D. Lakshman and Ceylon Chamber of Commerce Chairman Vish Govindasamy and Fitch Ratings Lanka Managing Director Maninda Wickramasinghe. He reasoned that crisis of confidence on the country as the

underlying factor for the current state of the country.

"It's in December 2019 when rating agencies downgraded the country's rating by another notch. Not financing some of external debt servicing obligations from ISBs is not a choice that the government is making, because the markets have already shut the doors to Sri Lanka, so effectively the country cannot borrow at single digits. That's loss of confidence resulting from rating downgrades based on how international rating agencies analyse Sri Lanka," Dr. de Mel elaborated.

While welcoming pledges made by the government to maintain consistent policies, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, Chairman, Vish Govindasamy also echoed Dr. de Mel's sentiments.

"Business community needs serious level of confidence from the government to say this is the plan and go ahead with this plan," he said. Meanwhile, Dr. de Mel was also critical of the fixation on an International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme to solve the current crisis instead of coming up with a workable plan backed

To go to IMF or not to go to IMF is not the right question. Rather, the right question to ask is, would Sri Lanka have a workable time to steer repayment of debt in a way inflows match outflows.... That can be done without the IMF, if you are smart enough. You can come up with a plan that builds confidence. Sometimes, you can also get IMF to help for it. It's important that we go to IMF with a plan, which has garnered confidence across the board. We need to convince IMF, instead of expecting IMF to write our plan as happened in the past," he elaborated.

In particular, he emphasised that the Central Bank should spearhead such an exercise as it posses required resources in terms of experience and knowledge.

Responding to Dr.de Mel, Central Bank Governor, Prof. W. D. Lakshman assured that the government would not allow the country to fall into any form of default.

"We will not allow a disorderly default. We don't expect to go into any form of default. Plan for action will be ready in a short period of time. By the end of this year, we will have the same levels of forex reserves that we had at the beginning of the year, or likely even more," he assured.

Although, the government aims to finish the year with around US\$ 7 billion foreign exchange reserves, Dr.de Mel projected that the country is likely to finish the year with US\$ 2.5-3 billion in reserves (baseline scenario), while the external debt servicing obligations remain above US\$ 4 billion for the upcoming year.

If the country continues on the current path without a workable plan, he warned that Sri Lanka could face a crisis in foreign exchange reserves in 2022 or 2023 leading to an orderly default or even worse, a disorderly default.

Therefore, he urged the government to realign its ambitious targets in the current context.

"There's a liquidity problem. The solvency problem can be avoided. Trying to achieve a large reduction in foreign debt stock too could fast lead to a crash as If you run too fast in the beginning of a marathon, you could burn out fast. We are not too late to realign and get out of this problem." he stressed.

Cabraal assures...

Good years will come. You will have to hold on. During war, we have to prepare for peace and during peace, you prepare for war. In this COVID period, we need to prepare for the post COVID-19 era," said Cabraal, who was the guest speaker at the CEO Forum titled 'Debt Situation of Sri Lanka: What is ahead of us', organised by CA Sri Lanka.

He highlighted that the government is holding on to the belief that

private sector's role is the engine of growth in the country as reflected by the prevailing low-interest rate regime, efforts to stabiles the rupee as well as maintaining the current tax regime.

"We are still keeping the hope that private sector, and SMEs will drive the economy to a higher level. You must help us to help you," he stressed.

"Can we tax the people more? I don't think so. At this stage when you once again try to make growth to happen, do you want to put a damper? Whether we tighten our policy rates or not, it's a call that the CB has to make. However, if we go on like this, the growth will occur. We have to maintain policy consistency," he elaborated.

The State Minister expects the second quarter GDP growth to it by double digits mainly due to the low-base effect.

In order to address current shortcomings in the external account, he noted that the government is taking steps to ensure new nondebt creating foreign exchange inflows into the country as well as preparations to restart the tourism industry.

In particular, he emphasised that where and how such inflows are going to make sustainable inflows would be a key factor in addressing external account issues.

Commenting on the efforts to restart the tourism industry battered by the pandemic, he was optimistic that the current vaccination drive would enable the country to restart tourism shortly.

in procuring and administering vaccines. It's not an easy task, there's huge amount of work going into that," he added. Speaking on the government's debt management strategy, he was confident that the country would be able to manage external debt

"These are all-inter connected. That's why you see a sense of urgency

servicing commitments without the assistance of an IMF programme. "I know what it is to go to the IMF. This time around, people

are asking IMF to restructure our loans, although, we have been honouring our debt servicing commitments on time with our foreign exchange inflows," he said.

Further, he ruled out borrowings from foreign capital markets until the country's GDP reaches US\$100 billion. "I think we shouldn't borrow more from foreign sources. We might

have to change within. The total debt stock shouldn't increase until we increase our GDP to debt to US\$100 billion," he added. Moving ahead, he urged the private sector in particular has to play its

role in supporting the economy. "Everyone is talking about what someone else should do. We are

told what to do. But if you are put on the hotseat, I'm sure you won't do things much differently. Importers need to import what's necessary and shouldn't make import decisions based on speculations on future rupee exchange rates," he added.

Colombo inflation...

However, this recent bout of price increase was caused by the burst in demand for services, is largely expected to be short-lived, provided healthcare sector bureaucrats do not hit the economy with any more restrictions.

The food inflation however appears a bit more persistent phenomenon as the prices were rising by around 10 percent since March this year, although some easing was seen in July.

The prices of food rose by 11 percent in the twelve months to July 2021, decelerating from 11.3 percent in June, while such prices had declined by 0.2 percent when the change was measured on a Month-on-Month basis. It is yet to be seen if this is the beginning of an unwinding cycle of food prices, which until now have been soaring.

However, the International Monetary Fund Chief Economist Gita Gopinath last week in a blog post warned of persistent inflation in emerging and developing markets through 2022, triggered by continuously high food prices and their weaker currencies, which make imported goods expensive.

The commodities, which managed to de-escalate food prices in July were, rice, green gram, sea fish, coconuts, coconut oil and vegetables among few others.

The government and the rice millers recently reached an

agreement not to exceed the guaranteed prices for paddy when purchasing at the farm gate by the latter, in a bid to stem the

soaring rice prices seen during last four months. Supply chain bottlenecks created by virus related restrictions are also getting eased gradually, potentially softening the prices in the rest of the food value chain.

Meanwhile, non-food prices rose by 3.2 percent in the year to July, accelerating from 2.5 percent in June while the month-on-month (MoM) prices jumped 0.8 percent reflecting the pass-through effects of the fuel price increase in June and the re-opening of the out-of home economy, though certain restrictions on the number of patrons inside certain settings still out a damner on them.

Under the non-food basket, the price increases were seen in transport, restaurants and hotels, and clothing and footwear, reminding a deja-vu moment a year ago when the economy was reopened from a two-month long lockdown.

Meanwhile, the so-called core inflation measured barring the oftenvolatile items such as food, energy and transport, rose by 3.7 percent in the twelve months to June 2021, accelerating from 3.2 percent in June.

Expolanka became one of the early beneficiaries of the

pandemic-induced logistical challenges, as the company was well-

poised to handle the situation, while business shifted towards the

"The air freight product delivered significant volume growth

during the quarter, where the main thrust of this growth was

the increased business from several strategic customers," said

more expensive air freight segment since the pandemic strained the

"The disruptions experienced in the ocean freight industry, further

However the company continued to grow its ocean freight segment

Yusoof said while the outlook for the North American market remains

positive for the next several months, the European and the Asian makers

are also seeing a gradual re-opening, boding well for the company's key

Meanwhile, Expolanka's leisure business generated revenues of

Rs.151.7 million, up significantly from Rs.27.8 million a year ago, while

the investment segment generated revenues of Rs.641.3 million, up 17

Japan-based, SG Holdings Global Pvt. Ltd held 75.62 percent stake in

Expolanka by June-end, while Yusoof held 7.52 percent stake being the

The prices which were higher by as much as 23 percent at the

This sharp increase in retail prices for fresh chicken helped the

company and the broader industry to offset the pressures coming from

feed costs, the largest cost component of poultry rearing, accounting for

joint venture and subsidiary companies as it does chicken processing,

parent breeding, broiler day-old chicks production, broiler farming, and

The demand for chicken parts has also increased due to the

affordability and the added choice offered to the price sensitive

consumer, which further supports the margins of the large poultry

producers, a brief note issued by Capital Alliance Research on the

While these developments bode well for the large scale-poultry

Bairaha Farms is engaged in the complete poultry supply chain via its

beginning of April eased towards the end of June, due to the higher base

percent from a year ago, although both segments are still in red.

by penetrating into new customers and growing its partner network.

Expolanka profits...

strengthened the air freight segment," he added.

logistics business in the ensuing period.

company's second largest shareholder.

Bairaha Farms...

two thirds of total cost of poultry rearing.

that prevailed in June last year.

value-added meat manufacturing.

industry said in April this year.

widely used ocean freight segment.

Expolanka CEO Hanif Yusoof.

scale farmers in the Kurunegala district. Bairaha Farms is a 50 percent joint venture partner of Fortune Agro Industries (Pvt) Limited which runs a feed mill, established in June 2016 to minimise undue volatility in the supply caused by the sporadic issuance of permits for corn import.

producers such as Bairaha Farms, which has the scale and the financial

business as already seen from the exit of considerable number of small

muscle to withstand higher costs, the research firm warned that

escalating feed costs could force small scale poultry farmers out of

The company along with its other joint venture entity, Windsor Real Estate Limited in 2019 completed the acquisition of lands, buildings and silos of CIC Grain Private Limited for Rs.340 million for the purpose of storage and drying of maize.

The company reported earnings of Rs.6.17 a share or Rs.98.8 million for the quarter under review compared to a loss per share of Rs.8.49 a share or a total loss of Rs.135.8 million in the same period last year.

The company's share gained Rs.1.50 or 0.88 percent on Friday to close at Rs.171.75.

SriLankan Airlines returns...

The airline is resuming flights to the Russian capital after a break of 6 years, between Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) and Moscow's Domodedovo Airport (DME).

Accordingly, SriLankan would operate its flights to Russia every Friday using an Airbus A330 configured for 269 economy and 28 business class seats.

The frequency of operation will be once a week, having a flight time of around 08 hours and 25 minutes. Flight UL533 will depart Colombo at 22:20 hrs., landing at Moscow Domodedovo Airport at 04:30 hrs., with the return leg UL534 leaving Moscow at 19:15 hrs. the next day and landing back into Colombo at 06:05 hrs. on Sunday.

SriLankan Airlines Chairman Ashok Pathirage added, "Sri Lanka has a long-standing relationship with Russia which dates back to many centuries, as we have kept an undiminished friendship propagating trade, tourism, culture, and education. SriLankan Airlines resumes flights to Moscow providing a significant air link that opens to the gateway of the South Asian region. We hope that our flights between the two countries build a window of opportunity for both countries in terms of trade and tourism."

Our frequent flyer programme FlySmiLes provides travellers with a wide range of rewards to its members through a host of partners. Platinum and Gold Members are entitled to a range of privileges such as complimentary lounge access across the oneworld network, priority Business Class check-in and boarding and additional baggage allowances. FlySmiLes' top tier members can earn and redeem miles on any oneworld member carriers. These privileges have been tailored to create a smooth and hassle-free journey filled with luxury.

"We are delighted to return to Russia as we add Moscow to our growing route network. Passengers can now transfer or travel to Sri Lanka as restrictions in the country gradually ease for international business and leisure visitors. In time to come we look forward to increasing our cargo and passenger frequencies", stated SriLankan Airlines CEO Vipula Gunatilleka.

SriLankan Airlines became the first carrier in the South Asian region to receive the 'Diamond' rating from the Airline Passengers Experience Association (APEX) and SimpliFlying, a standard received for the extra safety measures and comprehensive hygiene precautions adhered to since the onset of the global pandemic. SriLankan Airlines is an awardwinning airline with a firm reputation as a global leader in service, comfort, safety, reliability, and punctuality.

Head of Worldwide Sales and Distribution, Dimuthu Tennakoon said, "Recommencing flights between Russia and Sri Lanka is important to us at a time when the global travel industry is seeing a gradual revival, we are extremely confident that these flights will indeed fulfill aspirations of the travelers who want to see the world and would boost travel between both countries."

Passengers intending to travel with SriLankan Airlines could book their tickets from the Airline's ticket offices in Colombo, Galle, and Kandy or through their preferred travel agent.



@dmlife lk

life lk

Scarlett Johansson, star of the Marvel superhero movie "Black Widow," sued the Walt Disney Co on Thursday, alleging that the company breached her contract when it offered the movie on streaming at the same time it played in theaters. REUTERS

SPANISH JUDGE SEEKS TAX FRAUD TRIAL FOR POP SINGER SHAKIRA

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A Spanish judge has seen "sufficient evidence" for Colombian singer Shakira to face trial for tax fraud, a court document released on Thursday said. Judge Marco Jesus Juberias has wrapped up a pre-trial investigation of allegations by prosecutors that the singer failed to pay up to 14.5 million euros (\$17.2 million) in tax on income earned between 2012 and 2014. It is a preliminary





LifeOnlineTv

Iife II

HAVE A VISION, A PLAN. BUT BE READY TO SHIFT GEAR WHEN NEEDED

RALINI FERNANDO



BY ANUSHA DAVID

our Community' is a series that hopes to bring recognition and business to the amazing entrepreneurs living in villages from far flung regions of our country, to appreciate the wealth of talent and sheer resilience of spirit that exists among our people. If corporates are struggling in these Covid-19 times, imagine how much more difficult it is for these

small businesses who may have no recourse to the day-to-day conveniences that corporates enjoy - internet, ease of transport, online banking, and digital visibility for their products.

'Your Community' hopes to give some inspirational women entrepreneurs this all too important break - whether it's an order from an individual, a shop, an overseas client, or just the satisfaction and comfort of knowing they are not forgotten. That someone in the heart of the city can now hear their voice and link with them to help expand their reach.



TELL ME ABOUT

I am Ralini Fernando, a mother to always dreamed of putting Sri Lanka on where I have got to. It is a journey and it will continue.

Q DESCRIBE HOW YOU

After completing my schooling, I joined the workforce as a Trainee Secretary, simultaneously pursuing a Diploma in Early Childhood Learning. Knowledge related to IT was emerging and many felt threatened by it. I had a burning desire to learn more about the wonder of the World Wide Web and computing software. My instinct was

Time progressed, I got married and shortly afterwards I became a mother. My son was my pride and joy and it was a tough call for me to return to fulltime work even though I knew I had to support the family income. I came to the realization in less than three months of returning to work, that fulltime work was not logical for me. I explored Working from Home (WFH) for part time job opportunities. WFH was a relatively unknown concept then, but I managed to secure a position at the Premier Online real estate business, engaged in marketing properties for sale/rent on behalf of their clients. My role was complex as it included marketing as well as operations - understanding customer requirements, designing marketing material to enhance the properties marketability, sourcing potential buyers and making a convincing sale

Within 12 months, I had mastered the process, was getting restless and was ready to start something on my own. I knew the marketing and sales aspects, and was in possession of the technical skills to do web developments. I registered my business as MRM Trading Lanka. The business was focused on buying/selling and renting properties.

I began to acquire many clients using traditional media for communication. Newspapers were a key channel. I sought constructive feedback from every client and kept updating my book of experience. I was quick to learn that online visibility is not the only aspect sought by clients. They were looking for reliability throughout the process. Therefore, I started advertising on free classified sections online that led to a higher hit rate, greater conversions and more closures. Business was progressing and I felt so proud of my achievements.

But I had to change gear and focus, when a competitor offered free advertising opportunities to all my existing and future

customers. I was soon out of business. When one door shuts another opens; you should stop just staring at the door that closed. One of my clients owned a holiday guest bungalow in

We feature this week an entrepreneur who has been supported by the WCIC in her journey.



Nuwara Eliya, a beautiful property but unexplored by local traveller. I

saw a window of opportunity and

marketing Rose Garden Nuwara

Eliya, as a holiday bungalow. My

client welcomed my proposition

with the trust and confidence they

had in me. I offered him start to end

support, taking charge of the whole

departures. I was excited and the

birth of my next venture began just like that - Sri

Lanka Holiday Bungalows was launched in 2012

My ambition is to grow

the holiday bungalow

portfolio to 1,000 bungalows

by 2022, which will give

greater access and choice

to the local traveller."

TELL US ABOUT SRI LANKA

HOLIDAY BUNGALOWS?

wanted to take up the challenge of

YOURSELF?

three loving children, an entrepreneur and owner of Sri Lanka Holiday Bungalows. SL Holiday Bungalows, is a digital media platform that offers holiday seekers great places to stay. I the map. On looking back, the journey has been somewhat of a roller coaster ride, but I have been able to achieve satisfaction with

I believe the key ingredient for success as an entrepreneur is to develop a resilient personality, with the will to move ahead, sometimes making mistakes but learning from them. I am a risk taker and enjoy the rush of adrenaline when I am confronted with a challenging situation. I stand at cross roads with a positive attitude and a determined mindset Achieving a positive tangible outcome is not the ultimate plateau, the journey teaches you a lot. So, my stance is - evaluate the journey, analyse your victories as well as your failures and uplift your personality. I use this simple model to create success as an individual and an entrepreneur.

BUILT YOUR BUSINESS?

Sri Lanka Holiday Bungalows is your travel agent that seeks to create the best local holiday experience for nudging me to start something in this space. your family or a group of traveller. Using a travel agent for local travel was an alien concept. Local travelle are used to designing their holiday by themselves. Fully appreciating the sentiments of Sri Lankan holiday makers, Sri Lanka Holiday Bungalows provides a customized holiday package after understanding the mood, taste, holiday preference, group size and budgetary constraints. This provides us the opportunity to offer an assortment of holiday bungalows within our 400+ portfolio of Luxury Bungalows, Honeymoon Suites Estate Bungalows and Family Friendly Bungalows all around Sri Lanka to suit the discerning traveller. Whilst designing my strategic plan for Sri Lanka Holiday Bungalows, I rekindled my dream, of taking Sri Lanka to the international stage. I had found the

> part of the support network determined to make Sri Lanka the Best Holiday Destination in the World. Sri Lanka is a traveller's paradise with its sandy beaches, luscious green forests, high mountain ranges and a rich culture of more than 2500 years to be witnessed, within a few hours

key to unlock my dream and I take pride in being

of travel from one end to the other. The wonders of Sri Lanka need to be felt and experienced by every fellow Sri Lankan young and old before we take the message to the international stage. Our mission is to have the guest enjoy the

experience; therefore, we take time to understand their needs and expectations first. We then create a plan to meet them. Ruth Mathew one of our clients, very recently stated "Ralini and her team have always listened to what I wanted and made it their top priority to make our holiday enjoyable". My ambition is to grow the holiday bungalow

portfolio to 1,000 bungalows by 2022, which will give greater access and choice to the local traveller. I invite all those busy business professionals, owning a holiday home in and around Sri Lanka, to engage Sri Lanka Holiday Bungalows as your Holiday Bungalow Manager, providing a comprehensive service from Reservation Management to Guest Departure without the hassle of being directly involved in the process.



I am a firm believer that any dream will only become a reality if you work hard towards achieving it. Sri Lanka Holiday Bungalows is the best example I can give.

HOW DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE CONTRIBUTED TOWARDS SOCIETY?

We are all responsible in elevating fellow Sri Lankans living standards not just by thought but by action. Upholding this pledge, Sri Lanka Holiday Bungalows empowers local society by

providing an array of employment opportunities.

My initial contribution was made by the recruitment of women and mothers who felt the need to contribute towards the family household income, yet who didn't feel comfortable entering traditional forms of full-time employment. It is rewarding to think that these women are now enjoying financial freedom, contributing towards family income and stimulated by the challenges of being employed, whilst striking the perfect balance of

work and family. I guess this was a leaf off my book. Sri Lanka Holiday Bungalows contributes towards providing employment opportunities to the local community in an indirect manner as well by providing opportunities to Cooks, Butlers, Baby Sitters and Caretakers who aid in providing a smooth stay for the guest. It is evident that 4% of Sri Lankas population falls below the average income levels and being able to contribute even in a small way to enrich their livelihood makes anv hurdle achievable

TELL ME ABOUT THE SUPPORT THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED?

I believe that behind every success story there should be a support network.

Everyone knew I owned a business but I had no brick-and-mortar store and anything tangible to prove so. I didn't feel recognized as an entrepreneur or as a business personality. However my story changed after I won the Bronze Award for the Small Business Category (2013) organized by The Women's Chamber of Commerce & Industry (WCIC).

I am proud of myself and my achievements Once I attended the award ceremony, I opened my mind to towards achieving greater heights. was enthralled by the calibre and diversification of female entrepreneurs across Sri Lanka. There was just one thing in common - the commitment and passion to their business ventures. I understood where I was and where I needed to be and made a pledge to achieve the Gold award in the future. With hard work and determination, I won the Gold Award in the Small Business Category in 2015 and I pledged to secure an award in the Large Business Category in the future. The endorsement given by WCIC added stature to my profile both personally and professionally in every possible way, even during negotiations

with financial institutions or business partners. Winning these awards opened many doors for me such as obtaining membership at "She Trades" – a United Nations Initiative to empower female entrepreneurs. Thereafter I was invited to participate in the PATA Travel Conference in 2017.

I consider WCIC as a stakeholder of my business - a stakeholder who has a genuine interest to uplift me personally and professionally. Even during the pandemic, WCIC encouraged us to continuously learn by initiating Online Business Management Programmes funded by the IFC. The programme, opened my mind to new dimensions of digital marketing and modern finance techniques.

WCIC is a great organization for both entrepreneurs and professionals to sharpen their skills.



Women's Chamber of Industry and Commerce (WCIC) is the premier organization supporting entrepreneurs and professional business-women. The membership is open to women who believe they can contribute to society as well as benefit from the many facilities the organization creates.

Contact Ms Ralini Fernando email info@srilankaholidaybungalows.com



FOR THE SRI LANKAN

A photography competition by WNPS & Spa Ceylon focused on the urgent need to protect Sri Lanka's elephants

Asian elephants are said to be even more endangered than their African relatives, not due to poaching but the rapidly escalating threat of habitat loss. Sri Lanka is one of the 13 Asian Elephant Range States, which still hosts a significant wild Asian elephant population (estimated at approximately 6,000).

In Sri Lanka, elephants have held a pivotal position in the country's history and culture from ancient times. Elephants are a 'keystone species' meaning they play a crucial role in their natural habitats, in keeping the balance and protecting the overall health of the forest ecosystem. Not only this they are also a hugely valuable economic asset. Tourism is Sri Lanka's third largest foreign exchange-revenue earner and elephants are one of the country's biggest attractions, as evidenced by the upward trajectory in visitor numbers to wildlife parks such as Minneriya, Kaudulla and Udawalawe. According to a recent study undertaken by Mr. Srilal Miththapala, former President of the Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL) and ardent wildlife lover, the overall economic value of a single wild elephant to Sri Lanka's tourism industry is close to Rs. 4 million or US\$ 21,400. ("The economic value of elephants in Sri Lanka for tourism" by Srilal Miththapala, Daily FT, 25 December 2020)

Sadly, Sri Lanka is also the country which has the highest human-elephant conflict (HEC) in the world. Habitat loss from deforestation and encroachment into wildlife habitats for development and agricultural projects, have led to a steep rise in HEC incidents in the past decade. Approximately 100 people and 300 elephants lose their lives annually to the HEC, an alarming trend that is set to continue this year too. In the last 10 years alone over 2,953 elephants have lost their lives to the HEC, highlighting the gravity of the issue.

Wildlife and Nature Protection Society's (WNPS) Human Elephant Coexistence Subcommittee works exclusively on initiatives to ensure no more lives are lost to the Human Elephant Conflict by implementing reliable, secure, eco-



methods, which create maximum deterrence from elephants, whilst ensuring the safety of wild elephants,

people, and their properties. To celebrate World Elephant Day on 12 August 2021 and to celebrate this majestic species we are privileged to share our land with, the Human-Elephant Coexistence Subcommittee of the WNPS together with Spa Ceylon will be running a photography competition from 10 July - 5 August 2021.

Titled 'For the Sri Lankan Elephant', the competition will focus on celebrating this unique species while using the platform to draw attention to the unique challenges of the Human-Elephant Conflict.

The entry categories of the competition are

Open categories

(no age limit)

The Elephant

· Human Elephant Conflict

Junior category

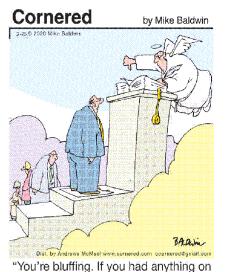
(for children under 15 years)

• The Elephant

If you would like to find out more about the competition, please contact WNPS at info@wnpssl.org or visit the WNPS Facebook Page or their website www.wnpssl.org







"You're bluffing. If you had anything on me, you would've pulled the lever by now."

RUBES



Daily*Mirror*

CLUES FOR CROSSWORD NO. 1360

Solution for No. 1359

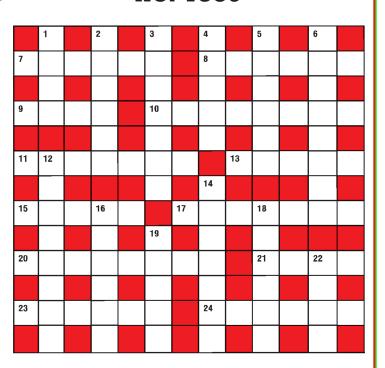
	¹c		² S		³ B		⁴ R		5 A		6 T	
⁷ Z	E	P	Н	γ	R		⁸ I	N	V	E	R	Т
	D		U		A		N		A		U	
⁹ L	Ε	Α	F		10 V	ı	s	1	т	A	N	Τ
			T		Ε		Ε		Α		С	
11 A	12 P	R	1	0	R	1		13 <i>T</i>	R	ı	Α	L
	L				Υ		14 S				Т	
15 B	A	N	16 D	Υ		17 S	т	A	18 S	н	E	s
	τ		1		19 S		R		т			
20 L	1	Т	Ε	R	Α	Т	1		21 A	L	22 S	0
	N		7		T		N		T		P	
23 P	U	R	Ε	L	Υ		24 G	L	U	т	Ε	N
	М		R		R		Y		s		w	

Across

- 7 Litigate (6)
- 8 Gas that we inhale (6)
- 9 Be identical to; be someone or somthing (4)
- 10 Conformity (8)
- 11 Diplomatic building where
- ambassadors live or work (7)
- 13 Young owl (5) 15 Muscle (5)
- 17 Lottery (7)
- 20 A very dark black (3-5)
- 21 An associste who provides assistance (4)
- 23 Dropsy (6) 24 Quieten (4,2)

Down

- 1 Highest level or degree attainable (4)
- 2 Theatre where films are shown (6)
- 3 Examine (7)
- 4 Informal term for money (5)
- 5 Illegitimate offspring of unmarried parents (2-4)
- 6 Short film and commentary about current events (8)
- 12 Manslayer (8)
- 14 Disinclined to work (4-3)
- 16 Having open interstices or resembling a web (6)
- 18 Barefaced (6)
- 19 Conspiracy (5) 22 An awkward stupid person (4)



Due to the prevailing situation in the country there will be no crossword competition. The publication of the crossword is purely for your enjoyment.

WIZARD OF ID







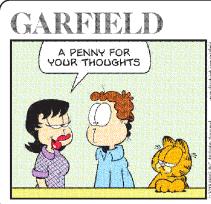
















CALVIN & HOBBES



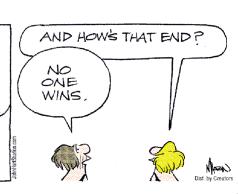


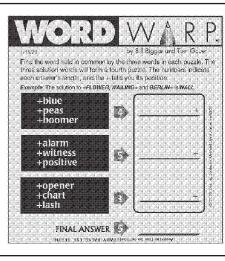


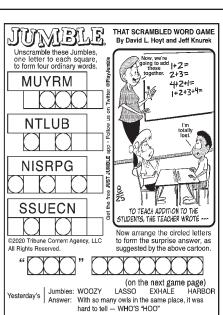














(TUNGSTEN:TUNG-sten: An element used in electrical components.) Average mark 14 words Time limit 25 minutes Can you find 17 or more words in TUNGSTEN? The list will be published

next game page.

leer	eery	slue	resel
leerv	else	slur	resile
leisure	eyrie	slyer	reuse
lieu	isle	suer	rile
lily	seer	sully	rill
lire	sell	sure	rise
lisle	seller	surely	rule
lues	sere	surly	ruse
lure	sill	user	yell
lyre	silly	reel	yellei
eely	sire	relies	yule
eerily	slier	rely	

RULES OF THE GAME:

Do you find any words not on the list?

1. Words must be of four or more letters. 2. Words that acquire four letters by the addition of "s," such as "bats" or "dies," are not allowed. 3. Additional words made by adding a "d" or an "s" may not be used. For example, if "bake" is used, "baked" or "bakes" are not allowed, but "bake" and "baking" are admissible.

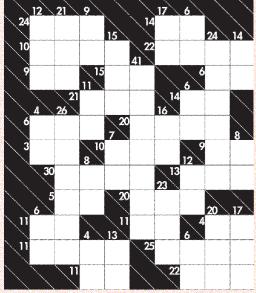
4. Proper nouns, slang words, or words, or sex vulgar or sexually explicit words are not allowed. To contact Word Game creator Kathleen Saxe, write to Word Game, Kathleen Saxe, Universal Uclick, 1130 Walnut St., Kansas City, MO 64106. (EDITORS: For editorial questions, please contact Alan McDermott at

amcdermott@amuniversal.com.) COPYRIGHT 2012

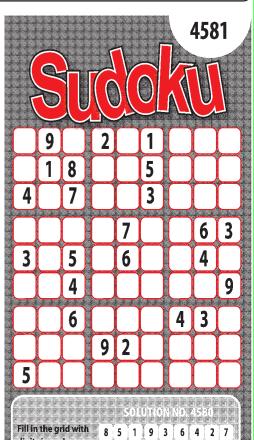
			140.	2990
	M		L	
E		R		E
	R		N	
Т		M		R
	Т		R	

	PREVIOUS SOLUTION									
	S	Р	0	Т	S					
	С	A	R	0	L					
	A	G		Т	E					
1000 1000 1000 1000 1000 1000 1000 100	М	E	Т	E	D					
	P	R	E S		S					

Insert the missing letters to complete ten words five across the grid and five down.



HOW TO PLAY		No.	14	9				6	23	
Fill in the blank squares, using 1 to		11	9	7	19		10	4	8	A
9, without repeating	20	9	4	2	5	17 21	7	2	9	3
any number in any run line. The lines	3	2	1	11	8	9	2	11/	6	1
must be filled in with		M	28	9	6	8	1	5	14	77
numbers that add	8	5	1	2	31	15	22 17	6	3	8
up to the total in the shaded box at the	12	9	3	12 9	1	6	2	7 18	7	9
top or beginning of		41	5	2	7	9	8	4	6	1
each line. A number in the bottom half of		, m	21/2	1	3		1	2	E M	22
the shaded box is the	26	3	8	9	6	12	5	1	2	8
downward total: in the top half, it's the	5	1	4	20	9	7	4	1	1	6
horizontal total.	15	٨	9	14	5	6	3	14	5	9



digits in such a 3 7 6 5 4 2 1 9 8 manner that every 4 2 9 7 1 8 5 6 3 and every 3x3 box 6 3 2 4 9 1 8 7 5 accommodates the 1 8 7 3 2 5 6 4 9 digits 1 to 9, 5 9 4 8 6 7 3 1 2 without repeating any. The solution will be published 2 4 5 1 8 9 7 3 6 on next game page. 7 6 3 2 5 4 9 8 1