



COVID-19 cases are rising globally 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.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

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

- 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

The 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 A2 >>>

JABS FOR 18-30-YEAR-OLDS

- 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

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.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

FOREIGN INTEL OPERATING IN SRI LANKA?

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

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

BY EASWARAN RUTNAM

Foreign intelligence agencies from a number of countries are believed to be operating in Sri Lanka to gather information or counter-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.

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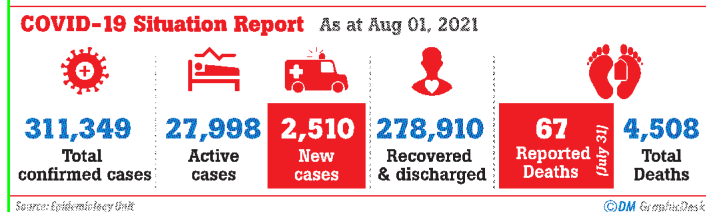
Law in the making to regulate oil exploration for first time

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

BY KELUM BANDARA

The government has drafted a new bill to be enacted into an Act to regulate, among others, oil exploration in Sri Lanka.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

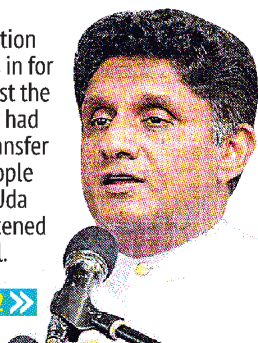


Sajith to sue UDA over alleged attempt to transfer people from Mattala Uda Gammana

- 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

BY YOHAN PERERA

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.



SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

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-year-old girl had worked as domestic aides between 2010 and 2021

BY DARSHANA SANJEEWA BALASURIYA

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 A2 >>>

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

BY 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 A2 >>>

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

BY LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

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 A2 >>>

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 SLFP GENERAL SECRETARY SAGARA KARIYAWASAM ON MINISTER UDAYA GAMMANPILA, WAS A JOKE

BY 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 SLFP who reads statements written by someone else at press conferences.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Seven year old child washed away by a wave

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

BY CHANDRASENA GAMAGE AND ARIYADASA KODITUWANKU

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 while later.

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 "Dharmika 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 "Dharmika 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 A2 >>>



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 begun at several places in the Western Province.

Table with columns: District, Police Area, Vaccination Centre Name. Lists various centers across Colombo, Gampaha, and Kalutara districts.

Data Collaboration - Research and Analysis Wing / State Intelligence Service and Epidemiology Unit / Ministry of Health





# A timely, thoughtful book about the education black hole



By  
**Ganimi  
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.**



Prof. Panduka Karunanayake

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 strategies, and their essence was not non fee 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 part-provider-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 cross-border 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 victims."

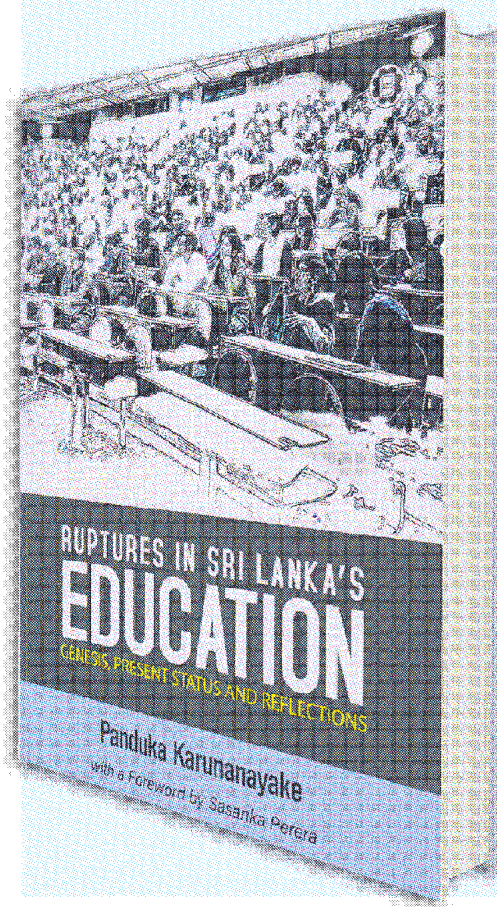
In this chapter, he raises the question 'does privatisation move education in the direction of egalitarianism or of elitism?'

The author does not embrace privatisation of education with a carte blanche, and gives what happened during the J. R. Jayewardene 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.

"To 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.

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To my mind, our subsequent failure as a nation has to do with our own elite's inability to share power with the masses



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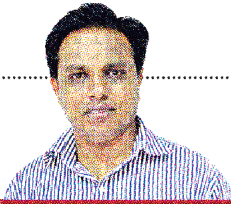
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INTERVIEW

# MONEY PRINTING IS LIKE DRASTIC TREATMENT TO A MAJOR ILLNESS

## Ajith Nivard Cabraal



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:

**Q Now, the opposition politicians talk about a severe foreign exchange crisis. They said the foreign reserves had dropped to US\$ 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 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. 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 International Sovereign Bonds have improved 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.

**Q 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**

**Q 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.

**Q 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

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.

**Q 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.

**Q 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 track. 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**

**Q 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 a calm fashion. I think the mood has 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 there are sudden changes occur. That occurred. We have to admit it. When the country was closed 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 calm environment.

**Q As you know, once 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**

**Q 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.

**Q 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.

**Q Otherwise, are we looking at new purchasing criteria like government-to-government 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.

**Q 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 people as well. These discussions could lead to very good outcomes. It is too early to talk about them. We are hopeful that those visits will prove fruitful.

**Q 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.

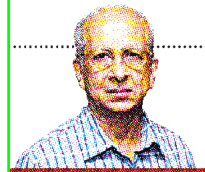
**Q Won't it lead to inflation at the end?**

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.

**Q: Now you have Basil Rajapaksa as the new Finance Minister. What do you think about him?**

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 time, I think a full time finance minister will be helpful from now onwards.





By  
**KKS PERERA**

# A SAPPHIRE CLUSTER AMIDST POLITICO-GURU CLUSTERS & MINISTERS' 'OLYMPIC' CLUSTER

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 pay-hikes 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

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' VBs 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 ICU 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 vaccine centres.

## 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. Even those who have already 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.

kkasperera1@gmail.com

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உள்ளநாட்டு இறைவரித் திணைக்களம்  
**Inland Revenue Department**

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Year of Assessment 2021/2022

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**Inland Revenue Department**

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Year of Assessment 2021/2022

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# EDITORIAL

*"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

COVID-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.

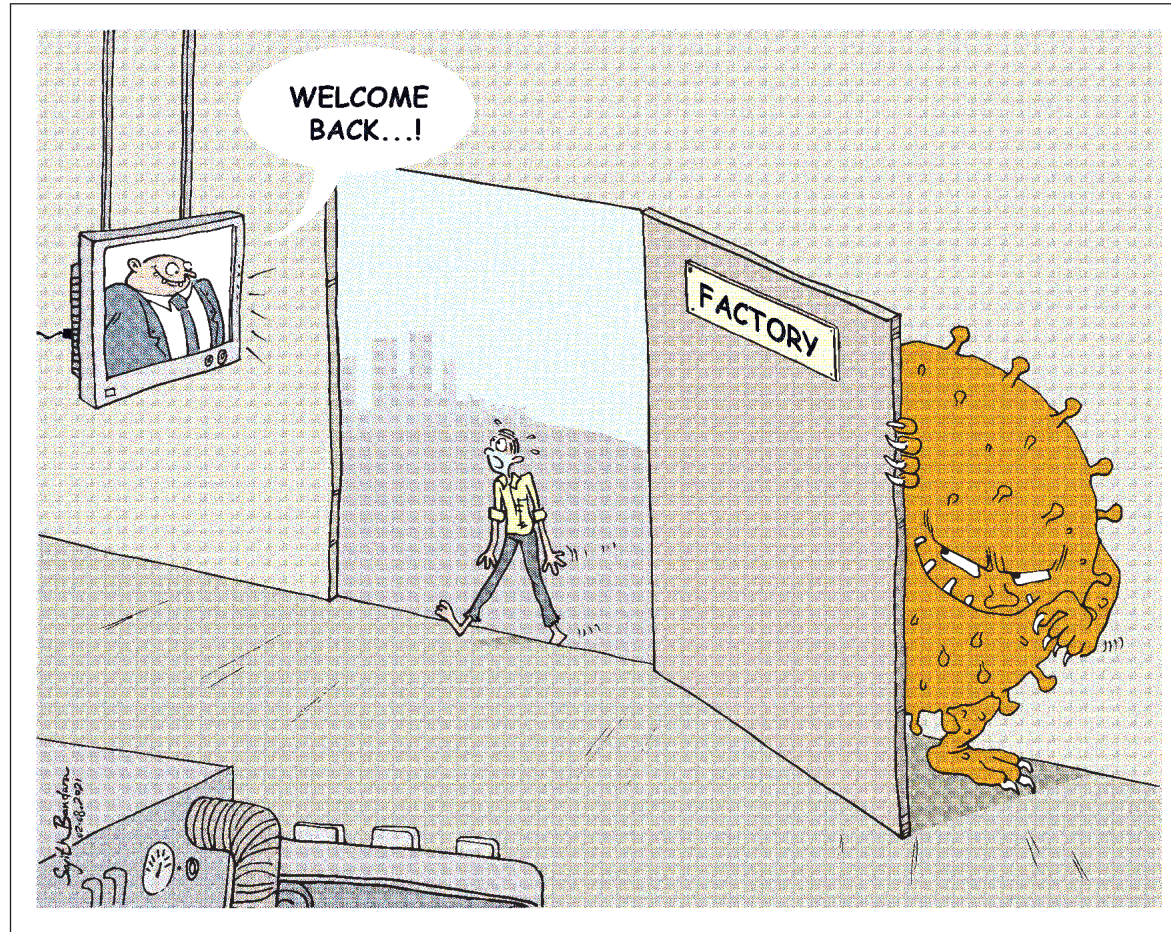
Despite these obvious successes, western-backed propaganda still attempt to paint Chinese (eastern) vaccines as being of low quality, ignoring facts on the ground - these self-same vaccines which neutralized the Covid-19 in China - and are still keeping that country relatively free of the dreaded Delta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

The Beijing-based pharmaceutical company Sinovac produces Coronavac -an inactivated vaccine-which 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

By **Ahilan Kadirgamar**

There 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 above-mentioned 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

# RED Notes

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 want to remind my colleagues in universities 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.

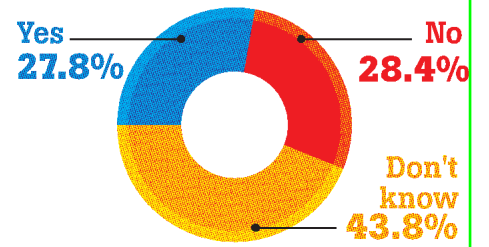
As the possibility of KNDU comes into the limelight there are many unanswered questions; particularly, why is the Government pushing it now amidst such a great crisis of state and society. The analysis above points to cover up of mismanaged public funds. The militarisation of society and commercialisation 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 Jayasundara'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 crisis?



See web poll at [www.DailyMirror.lk](http://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 not 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 misdeeds.

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. may not happen. Act now before it's too late.

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

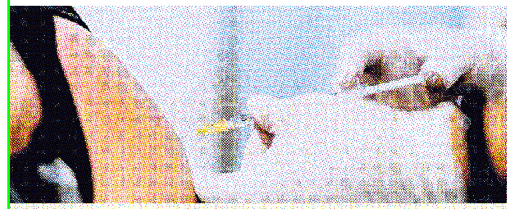
**CONCERNED CITIZEN** - Activities like social gatherings have to be stopped immediately. Without enforcing law it

See more web comments at [www.DailyMirror.lk](http://www.DailyMirror.lk)

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# TOP STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD



## 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. Japan has not yet imposed a lockdown as other countries have done.

Instead, Tokyo and other prefectures are subject to 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.



Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern (REUTERS)

## Ardern apologises for immigration raids on Pacific community

**MELBOURNE, AUG 1 (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.

## Myanmar army ruler takes PM role, again pledges elections



Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar's armed forces, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing (REUTERS)

**BANGKOK, AUG 1 (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 AIRPORT, CLASHES INTENSIFY IN AFGHANISTAN

**T**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 Reuters.

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 province.

In the west, Afghan officials said Taliban commanders were swiftly gaining control of strategic buildings around Herat 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)



Afghan security personnel stand guard on a Humvee vehicle along a road in Kandahar (AFP)

## Turkey evacuates tourists at risk from fires as villages clear out

**ISTANBUL (DPA), 1 AUG, 2021** - Thousands of emergency forces were 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.

One hundred Russian tourists were also brought to safety from an eastern 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 fire-fighting 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 gendarme 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 break.

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

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.

## 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 stay-at-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 million 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



Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett (REUTERS)

**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 Israeli-operated 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."

SPORTS



**BY SHEHAN DANIEL AT THE OLYMPIC STADIUM IN TOKYO, JAPAN**

Italian 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-hundredths 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 line-up, 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

**JACOBS SCOOPS 100M TITLE AS ROJAS SETS TRIPLE JUMP RECORD**

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. Zhamel 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 half-way 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**

The U.S. men's basketball defeated the Czech Republic, 119-84, at Saitama Super Arena on Saturday, improving to 2-1 in Group A play and advancing to the quarter-finals at the Tokyo Olympics.

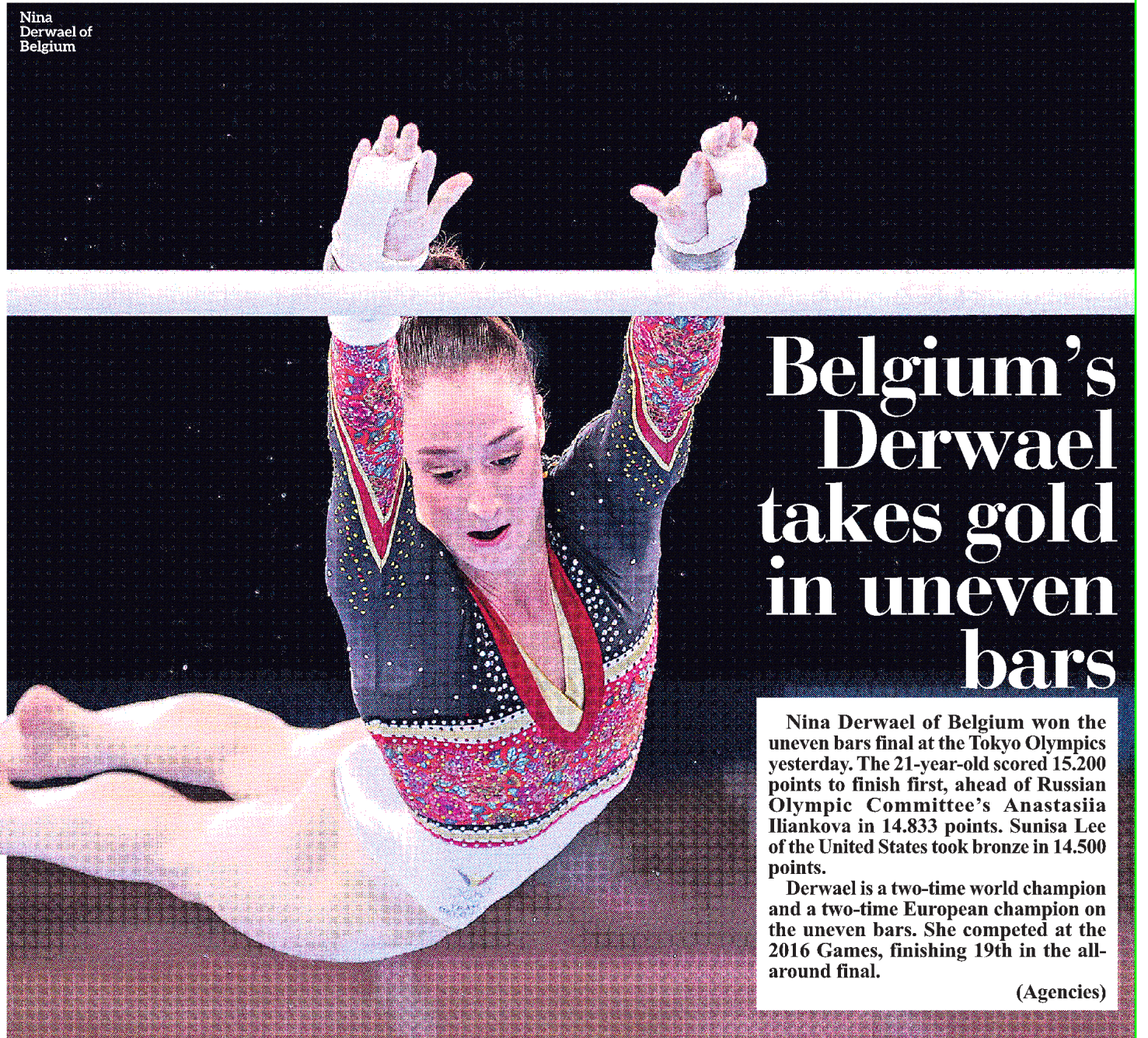
The forceful comeback victory, keyed by Kevin Durant's 23 points, qualified as a big relief for Team USA, which lost two July exhibitions, dropped its Olympic opener against France and trailed the Czech Republic for the entire first quarter.

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 past Carmelo Anthony for the top spot on USA men's basketball's all-time Olympic scoring list. Durant, a two-time gold medalist, 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. (Agencies)



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



**Belgium's Derwael takes gold in uneven bars**

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 points. Sunisa Lee of the United States took bronze in 14.500 points.

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 all-around final. (Agencies)

**Men's Olympic football Hosts Japan, defending champions Brazil into semis**



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 semi-finals. 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.

Matheus Cunha celebrates after scoring Brazil's only goal

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

Samsung Electronics 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 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

**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 at 10 am.

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 half-century 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.

**The Teams:**  
**Pyramid Wilmar:** Lasith Fernando (Captain), Malintha Peiris (WK), Tharuka Jeevantha, 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:** WB. 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





# OLYMPIC DISAPPOINTMENT IS PART OF THE OLYMPIC JOURNEY FOR YUPUN

TOKYO 2020

Yupun Abeykoon (R) during the 100m heats on Saturday

Presenting Partners

BY SHEHAN DANIEL REPORTING FROM TOKYO, JAPAN

At 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 outprinted 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 Sjöstroem 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 60 n.o.)

## 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

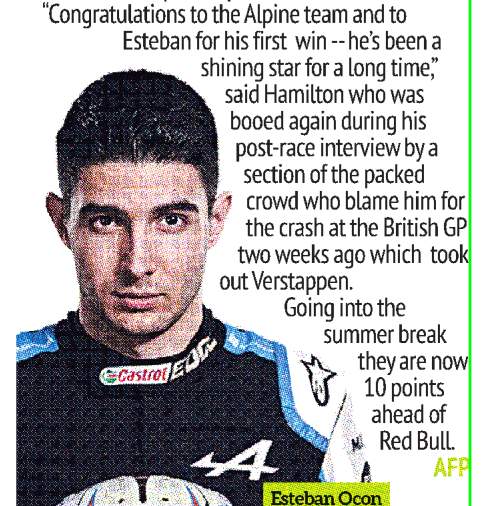
from each side went to the sin-bin. But a stylish Makazole Mapimpi try gave the world champions a narrow two-point lead at the start of the second half. The hosts continued to dominate and Lukhanyo Am's score sealed victory. -BBC



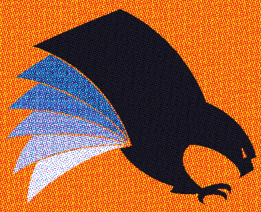
## Ocon wins chaotic Hungarian GP, Hamilton takes championship lead

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. -AFP

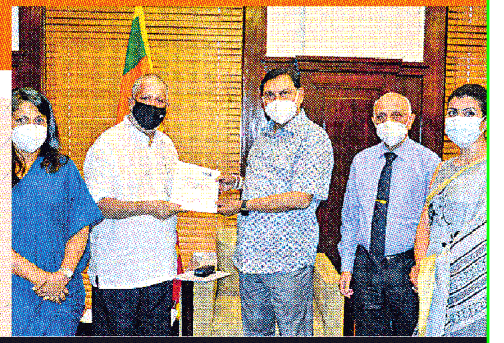


**P11** Union Bank 2Q profit up on ...



**P11** Seylan Bank launches state-of-the-art data centre in...

**P12** 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 left 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

A 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 Jayasinghe, 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 these 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. **MOREON 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 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 long-term, don't constrain to the short-term. COVID-19 will be a thing in the past. **MOREON P12**



Ajith Nivard Cabraal

## 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 virus-related restrictions became more widespread for the first time around the world, disrupting global supply chains. **MOREON P12**



SriLankan Airlines Chairman Ashok Pathirage (fourth from left) together with Outgoing SriLankan Ambassador in Russia Professor M.D. Lamawansa (third from left) at the launch ceremony of the maiden Moscow Colombo direct flight at Domodedovo airport in Moscow on Saturday. Others from left: SriLankan Airlines Head of World Wide Sales Distribution Dimuthu Tennakoon, SriLankan Airlines CEO Vipula Gunathilake, SriLankan Airlines Country Manager in Russia Shermal Perera, SriLankan Airlines Head of Cargo Chamara Ranasinghe

## SriLankan Airlines returns to Moscow with direct flights

SriLankan Airlines, the national carrier of Sri Lanka and a member of the oneworld alliance is delighted to announce the commencement of direct flights between Sri Lanka and Russia. The inaugural flight was ceremonially greeted with a water salute at Domodedovo Airport (DME) in Moscow. **MOREON P12**



Inaugural flight welcomed with water salute

## Bairaha Farms 1Q 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. **MOREON P12**

## Worker remittances decline in June ending 13-month long run

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.

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 pseudo-nationalists 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.

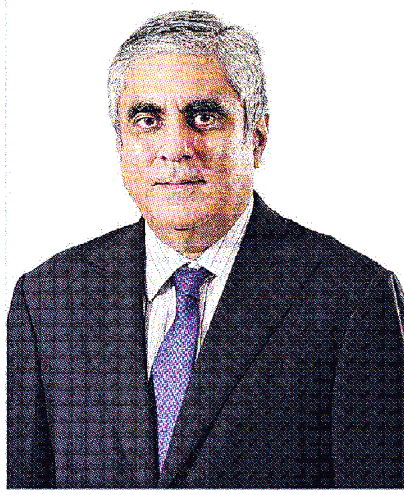
# Union Bank 2Q profit up on expanding margins, fees

Union 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 Matik



CEO Indrajit Wickramasinghe

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.

"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 restrictions.

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

## HSBC Sri Lanka has done it again

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.

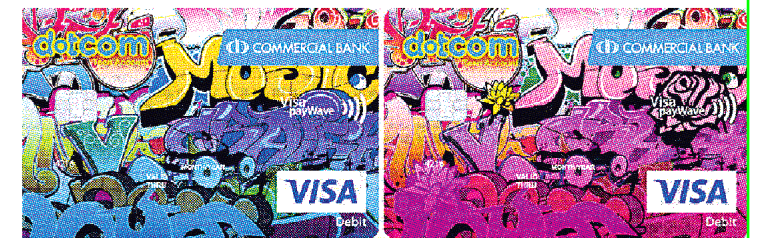
This year, over 140 exceptional banks from 31 countries were recognised for their continuous drive to grow and provide services to customers amidst several uncertainties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Winning banks were judged for their resilience and ability to adapt and leverage digital technology 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

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."

## ComBank offers free debit cards to teens opening new Dotcom savings accounts



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 banking transactions.

The Dotcom account holders can opt to receive either a Visa or Mastercard-branded debit card when they open an account within the promotion period. While the

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

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 Dotcom teen account.

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

With SDB bank set to 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 nationally-critical 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 first-ever digital rights issue by a Colombo Stock Exchange-listed 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

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 countrywide."

## 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, Alhilarpura, Thambala, is fully equipped with ultra-modern technology and offers a comprehensive range of banking facilities.

The event was attended

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 it truly a bank of the people.



People's Bank Chief Executive Officer/General Manager Ranjith Kodituwakku opens new branch and accepts first deposit

## Seylan Bank launches state-of-the-art data centre in Colombo

Seylan Bank recently unveiled its state-of-the-art 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."

The IT team from the 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.

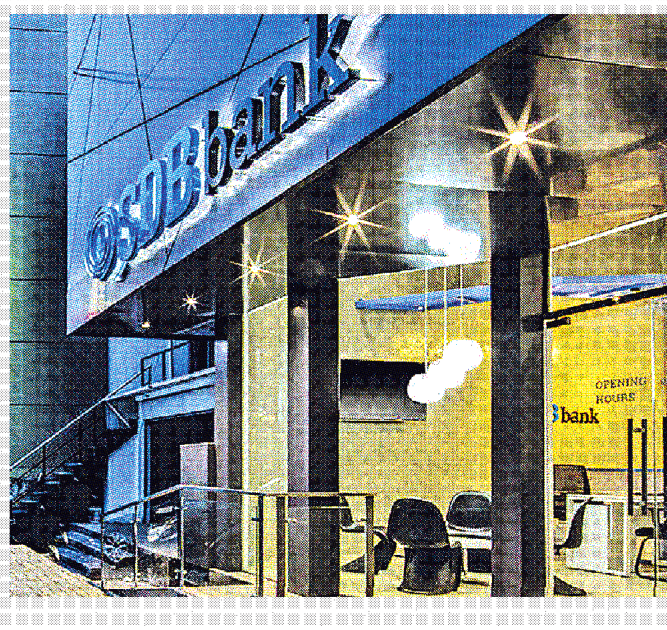
The new Rated (tier) 3 aligned data centre, the first one in Sri Lanka of this nature, will improve operating efficiency and provide better physical security, power, cooling, network connectivity and overall management. It will also enable a greater assurance of

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-in-class customer support," concluded Wanigatunga.



Seylan Bank Chief Information Officer Harsha Wanigatunga



**SRI LANKA INSURANCE**

**GRAND BONUS**

**8600 MILLION**

Sri Lanka Insurance declares an unmatched bonus of

**Rs. 8600 Million**

for life policyholders

0112 357 357

**SLIC**

Sri Lanka Insurance

Like a father Like a mother



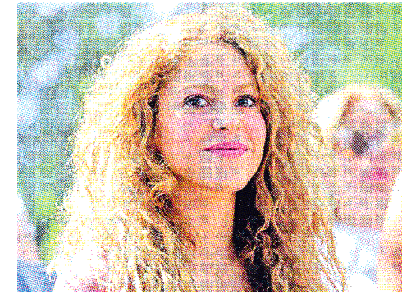


**DISNEY REJECTS SCARLETT JOHANSSON'S COMPLAINT OVER 'BLACK WIDOW' STREAMING RELEASE**

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**

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 step before a trial is set. **Reuters**



**BLESSIE & LLOYD**

**IN THE MORNING**

**WEEKDAYS 6 TO 10 AM**



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

**RALINI FERNANDO**



**BY ANUSHA DAVID**

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

**YOUR COMMUNITY**

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WOMENS CHAMBER OF INDUSTRY & COMMERCE SRI LANKA



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.

**Q 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 leap 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, Butler, Baby Sitters and Caretakers who aid in providing a smooth stay for the guest. It is evident that 4% of Sri Lankans population falls below the average income levels and being able to contribute even in a small way to enrich their livelihood makes any hurdle achievable.

**Q 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. I 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@sri.lankaholidaybungalows.com



Image by Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne

**FOR THE SRI LANKAN ELEPHANT**

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-friendly, and low-cost HEC mitigation



Image by Ranjan Josiah

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

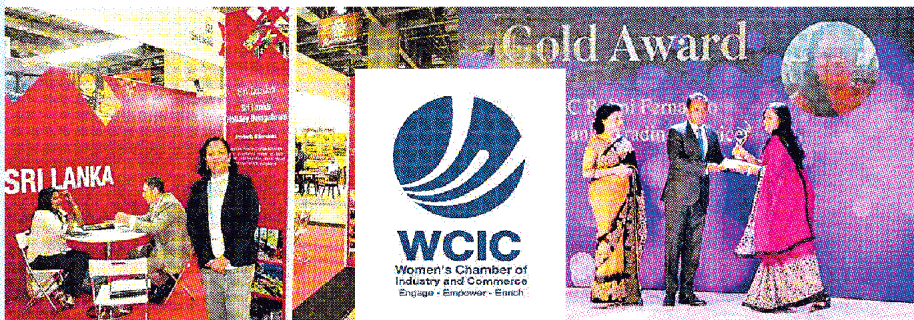
**Junior category (for children under 15 years)**

- The Elephant

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



Image by Rajiv Welikala



**Q TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF?**

I am Ralini Fernando, a mother to 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 always dreamed of putting Sri Lanka on the map. On looking back, the journey has been somewhat of a roller coaster ride, but I have been able to achieve satisfaction with where I have got to. It is a journey and it will continue.

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.

**Q DESCRIBE HOW YOU BUILT YOUR BUSINESS?**

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 nudging me to start something in this space.

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.

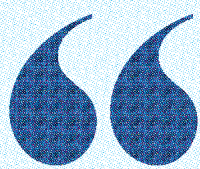
I began to acquire many clients using traditional media for communication. Newspapers were a key channel. I sought constructive feedback from every client and kept updating my book of experience. I was quick to learn that online visibility is not the only aspect sought by clients. They were looking for 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



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."

**Q TELL US ABOUT SRI LANKA HOLIDAY BUNGALOWS?**

Sri Lanka Holiday Bungalows is your travel agent that seeks to create the best local holiday experience for your family or a group of traveller. Using a travel agent for local travel was an alien concept. Local traveller 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 key to unlock my dream and I take pride in being part of the support network determined to make Sri Lanka the Best Holiday Destination in the World.

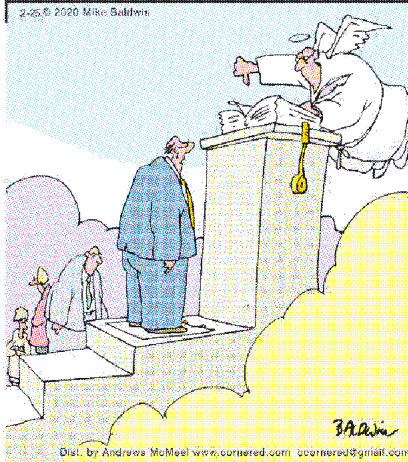
Sri Lanka is a traveller's paradise with its sandy beaches, lush green forests, high mountain ranges and a rich culture of more than 2500 years to be witnessed, within a few hours of travel from one end to the other. The wonders of Sri Lanka need to be felt and experienced by every fellow Sri Lankan 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.

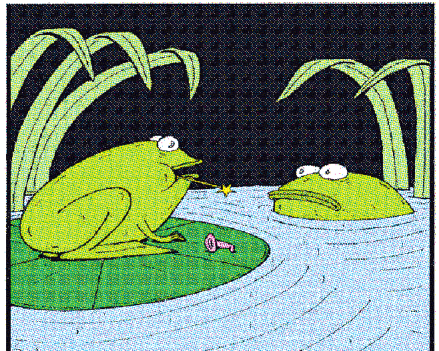
Cornered

by Mike Baldwin



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

RUBES



"Wait a minute. So, you're telling me that in addition to a fairy godmother, I would have gotten three wishes, too?!"

DailyMirror  
CROSSWORD

CLUES FOR CROSSWORD NO. 1360

Solution for No. 1359

1	C	S	B	R	A	T
7	Z	E	P	H	Y	R
9	D	U	A	N	A	U
11	L	E	A	F	V	I
13	A	P	R	I	O	R
15	B	A	N	D	Y	S
17	T	I	S	R	A	T
19	L	I	T	E	R	A
21	N	T	T	N	T	P
23	P	U	R	E	L	Y
25	M	R	R	Y	S	W

Across

- 7 Litigate (6)
- 8 Gas that we inhale (6)
- 9 Be identical to; be someone or something (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 associate who provides assistance (4)
- 23 Dropsy (6)
- 24 Quieten (4,2)

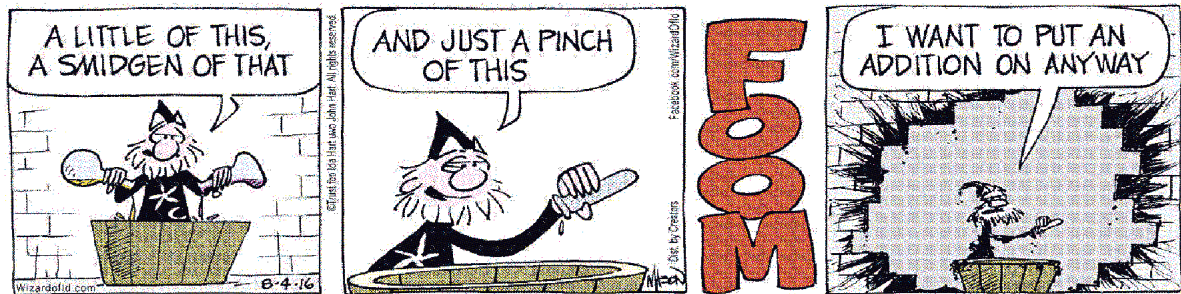
Down

- 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)

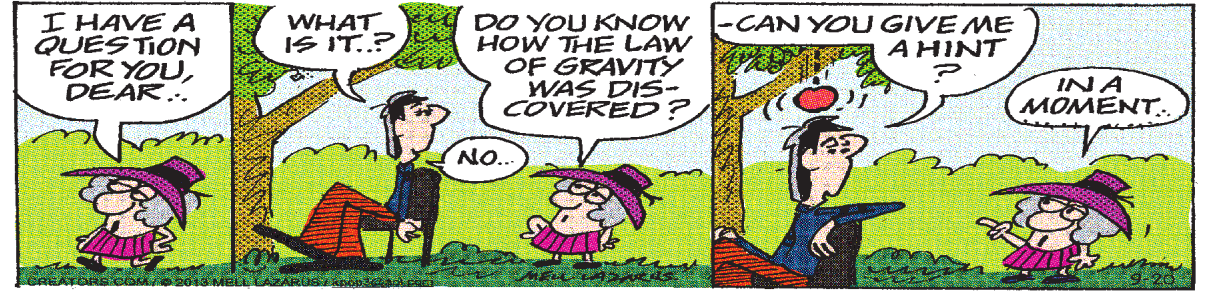
	1		2		3		4		5		6	
7							8					
9					10							
11	12							13				
15			16			17			18			
20									21		22	
23								24				

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



MOM



BEAU PEEP



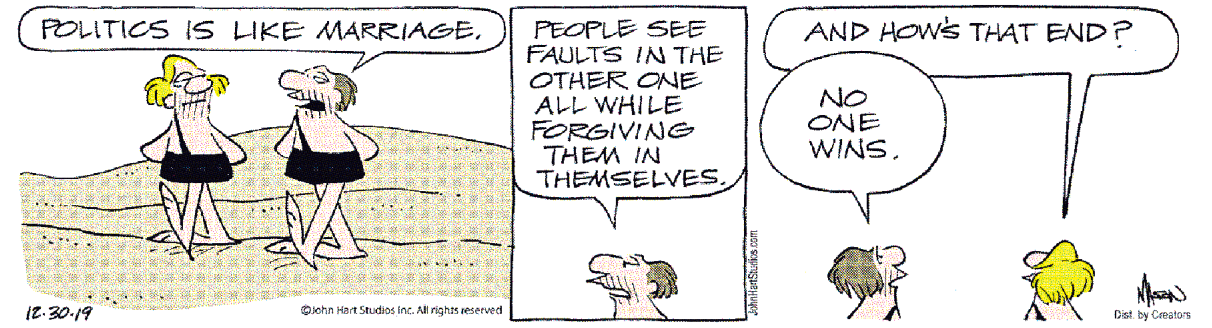
GARFIELD



CALVIN & HOBBS



BC



**WORD WARP**

Find the word hidden in common by the three words in each puzzle. The first solution words will form a fourth puzzle. The numbers indicate which answer's length, and the + indicates the position.

Example: The solution is FLOWER, WALKING, and BENTON - is WALL.

+blue  
+peas  
+boomer

+alarm  
+witless  
+positive

+opener  
+chart  
+fast

FINAL ANSWER

Kathleen Saxe

**WORD GAME**

**TODAY'S WORD - TUNGSTEN**  
(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.

**YESTERDAY'S WORD - LEISURELY**

leery eery slue resile  
leary else slur resilie  
leisure eyrie slyer reuse  
lieu isle suer rite  
lily seer sully rill  
lire sell sure rise  
liste seller surely rule  
lues sere surly ruse  
lure sill user yell  
lyre silty reel yellor  
eely sire reiles yeller  
eerly slier rely yute

**RULES OF THE GAME:**

Do you find any words not on the list?

- Words must be of four or more letters.
- Words that acquire four letters by the addition of "s," such as "bats" or "dies," are not allowed.
- 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.
- Proper nouns, slang words, or vulgar or sexually explicit words are not allowed. To contact Word Game creator Kathleen Saxe, write to Word Game, Kathleen Saxe, Universal Jclick, 1130 Walnut St., Kansas City, MO 64108. (EDITORS: For editorial questions, please contact Alan McDermott at amcdermott@amuniversal.com.) COPYRIGHT 2012

**5x5**

No. 3996

	M		L	
E		R		E
	R		N	
T		M		R
	T		R	

**PREVIOUS SOLUTION**

S	P	O	T	S
C	A	R	O	L
A	G	A	T	E
M	E	T	E	D
P	R	E	S	S

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

**KAKURO**

	12	21	9		17	6			
24				15			22		24
10					41				
9				15			6		
				21			14		
4	26				20		16		
6				7					8
3				10				9	
				8				12	
				20					
5									
11	6							20	17
				11				4	
				4	13			6	
11									22

**HOW TO PLAY**

Fill in the blank squares, using 1 to 9, without repeating any number in any run line. The lines must be filled in with numbers that add up to the total in the shaded box at the top or beginning of each line. A number in the bottom half of the shaded box is the downward total; in the top half, it's the horizontal total.

4581

**Sudoku**

	9	2	1					
	1	8		5				
4	7		3					
			7			6	3	
3	5		6			4		
	4						9	
		6				4	3	
			9	2				
5								

**SOLUTION NO. 4580**

Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3x3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any. The solution will be published on next game page.

8	5	1	9	3	6	4	2	7
3	7	6	5	4	2	1	9	8
4	2	9	7	1	8	5	6	3
6	3	2	4	9	1	8	7	5
1	8	7	3	2	5	6	4	9
5	9	4	8	6	7	3	1	2
9	1	8	6	7	3	2	5	4
2	4	5	1	8	9	7	3	6
7	6	3	2	5	4	9	8	1

**JUMBLE**

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

MUYRM

NTLUB

NISRPG

SSUECN

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Yesterday's Jumbles: WOZZY LASSO EXHALE HARBOR  
Answer: With so many ovals in the same place, it was hard to tell - WHO'S "HO"?