

Socialist Revolution or Bourgeois Compromise?

PAGE A7 Persevering with Passion

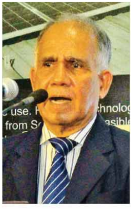


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Following exit of acting GM CEB Chairman quits

By THAMBEENAH RAZEKK

Chairman of the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) M.M.C. Ferdinando has tendered his resignation following the appointment of new GM, Dr. Rohantha Abeyssekera.



Story Continued on PAGE 2

Grenade in Church Suspect doctor makes confidential statement

By HANSI NANAYAKKARA

The retired doctor, currently detained for questioning by the CCD, in connection with the recent recovery of a hand grenade placed at All Saints' Church in Borella, gave a confidential statement to Colombo Additional Magistrate Rajindra Jayasuriya yesterday (26).

The suspect was identified as Shirley Dayananda, a retired doctor. The suspect was arrested by the CCD following information gleaned through interrogation of another 65-year-old suspect...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

Fish exports hit record high USD 192 M made in 2021

By FAADHILA THASSIM

The fisheries sector recorded its highest export value of USD 318 million in 2021. State Minister of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fish and Prawns Farming, Fishery Harbour Development, Multi Day Fishing Activities and Fish Exports, Kanchana Wijesekera said.

Story Continued on PAGE 2

From garbage dump to urban park UDA to resume Meethotamulla project

By NABIYA VAFFOOR

Although Rs 430 million was allocated by the Yabapalana Government to develop Meethotamulla garbage dump into an urban park, no development work had taken place during that tenure. Anura Prasanna, Director, Property Development Division, Urban Development Authority (UDA) claimed.



Story Continued on PAGE 2

Rambukwella reassures No shortage of hospital beds, oxygen cylinders

Despite allegations being made by persons with vested interests that there were not enough hospital beds and oxygen cylinders, the people would be able to get the maximum health service without any shortage. Health Minister Keheloya Rambukwella reassured.

Minister Rambukwella, yesterday (26), said the high commitment of doctors, starting from specialists, nurses and health staff had been a great strength...

Story Continued on PAGE 2



THURSDAY 27 JANUARY 2022 LATEST EDITION VOL: 11/051 | PRICE: Rs 30.00 In Sports Four Uncapped Players in T20 Squad

The national selectors have opted for four novice players in the 20-member Sri Lanka squad which is slated to undertake a five game T-20 series against Australia commencing next month. The four rookies who have caught the national selectors attention are Nuwan Thushara...

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Govt offers Rs 75 per kg of paddy Farmers Refuse to Sell Paddy to Govt

By EUNICE RUTH AND ANURADHA VISHWANATH - POLONNARUWA

Although the Government offered to purchase a kilo of paddy at Rs 75 rate, the farmers have refused to sell paddy at a rate below Rs 120 per kilo, leaders of farmer unions stressed yesterday (26), at a media briefing held near Parakrama Samudra paddy field, Polonnaruwa.

While rejecting the price quoted by the Government, they also queried whether the rice that would be imported is genuinely organic. Jagath Arunakeerthi, President of Parakrama Samudra Scheme Agrarian

Union said that when calculated, the farmers only receive about Rs 50,000 per hectare from the allocated compensation for crop losses by the Government. "However, the farmers have spent about Rs 300,000 per hectare. Therefore, providing compensation of Rs 25 for a kg of paddy to cover that loss due to organic fertiliser is a complete rip-off," he alleged.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the National Agrarian Union, Anuradha Tennakoon said that Minister of Agriculture, Mahindananda Aluthgamage should either resign or be removed and a qualified Minister should be appointed instead.

Story Continued on PAGE 2

High Commission marks India's 73rd Republic Day



The Indian High Commission in Colombo celebrated India's 73rd Republic Day in Colombo yesterday (26). On 26 January 1950, the world's longest written Constitution came into force. A series of ceremonies and events organised by the High Commission marked the occasion.

Story Continued on PAGE 2

Major water shortage in the offing - Vijitha

By EUNICE RUTH

The public will be forced to face major power issues in the future due to the forex, crude and furnace oil crises along with the expected water shortage in the country. JVP Propaganda Secretary, Vijitha Herath said.



He told a media briefing yesterday (26)...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

Haul of heroin at sea Court permits PNB to detain 17 suspects

By HANSI NANAYAKKARA

Colombo Additional Magistrate Chandima Liyanage, yesterday (26), permitted the Police Narcotics Bureau (PNB) to detain 17 suspects, arrested with 330 kilograms of heroin, following a deep sea operation conducted in conjunction with the Sri Lanka Navy and the State Intelligence Service (SIS), till 31 January to conduct further...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

President extends B'day wishes to Ven. Ananda Thera

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa extended birthday wishes to Chief Incumbent of Abhayarama Temple in Narahenpita, Chief Sanghanayake of the Western Province and Chancellor of the University of Colombo Most Ven. Muruthithettuwe Ananda Thera.



The President visited the Abhayarama Temple in Narahenpita yesterday (26) and called on the Nayaka Thera...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

Oil palm ban won't be lifted - CEA

By EUNICE RUTH

Sri Lanka will not lift the ban on oil palm cultivation and oil palm product imports, said the Chairman of the Central Environmental Authority (CEA), Siripala Amarasinghe.

Recently, Solidarity Network Asia launched a book titled Myths and Truths of Oil Palm and requested the Government to review its decision on oil palm cultivation in Sri Lanka.

Amarasinghe said the decision to ban oil palm cultivation and consumption will not be reversed, as it has not met the standards of the CEA...



Story Continued on PAGE 2

CPA challenges PTA regulations SC grants leave to proceed

By FAADHILA THASSIM

The Supreme Court, yesterday (26), granted leave to proceed with the case, filed by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), challenging the constitutionality of regulations made under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

Story Continued on PAGE 2

Members giving statements to media GMOA threatens disciplinary action

By DILANTHI JAYAMANNE

The Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) has threatened to take disciplinary action against members for giving statements to the media, that was detrimental to its membership, Ceylon Today learns.

According to sources, Union Secretary...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

National Hospital plagued by RAT kit shortage

By **DILANTH JAYAMANNE**

The fast dwindling numbers of Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits at the National Hospital of Sri Lanka is a stumbling block in providing its

services optimally, medical sources of the hospital lamented. Sources said yesterday (26) that there is a shortage of test kits at the stores as well as at the hospital and

that very soon they would be unavailable if urgent steps were not taken to replenish them. They lamented that suspected cases of Covid-19 undergo RAT tests at the

Out-Patient Department (OPD) and Emergency Treatment Unit (ETU). In addition, those undergoing medical procedures such as bronchoscopies, angiograms, CT scans, magnetic

resonance imaging (MRI), and those undergoing surgical intervention too were subjected to RATs to prevent hospital staff and other patients from contracting the virus.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Farmers Refuse to...

He alleged that the compensation given and which was promised is a trap to divert the farmers' attention from their real losses and urged the Ministry not to do that.

In general, around Rs 150,000 is needed to cultivate a hectare of land and according to the Ministry of Agriculture a hectare yields 2.58 metric tonnes of paddy, however, due to the

fertiliser issue, the yield has reduced by 40 per cent, which means the farmer will only get 1,148 kg from his harvest. According to the Government, it was said that Rs 25 will be given as compensation for 1 kg of paddy whereas the farmer will be compensated with around only Rs 28,000. "Compensating farmers with Rs 25 for

the loss of 1 kg of paddy is unfair and the Minister of Agriculture should consider all other farmers in the country for compensation," Tennakoon said. Meanwhile, the National Organisation of All Ceylon Farmers' Federation, Namal Karunaratne noted that all paddy, corn, and vegetable, farmers should be compensated with a minimum of Rs 100,000 for an acre of land.

"The Minister of Agriculture ordered to buy 1 kg of paddy for Rs. 75 from the farmer whereas the President already said it should be bought for Rs 95. Farmers won't be able to follow directives from two persons and we need the assurance from one person regarding the price. Selling paddy at Rs 75 will not cover any production expenses of the farmer," he added.

Retired doctor...

... who was arrested from the Panamara area in Embilipitiya. The 65-year-old suspect had also given a confidential statement before Magistrate Jayasuriya on an earlier occasion.

Major water...

... that in the past few days, hydropower plants had to work continuously, and as a result water levels in the reservoirs were drastically reducing. Normally water levels in reservoirs begin to drop in March but this year, it has begun to drop in January itself due to the continuous release of hydropower plants, he said.

The forex crisis has led the country to face many issues and in turn made the Government to unload goods brought in ships. He also said a crude oil ship will arrive in the country on 31 January. However, they will not be able to get the oil without dollars and it will take a maximum of a month to unload and distribute it to power plants.

"Recently, it was said that electricity will not be interrupted till 27 January but further decisions will be taken on this day. The authorities and the CEB are inconsistent in their decisions and have made the people to suffer with confusing statements. Electricity generation at the Sapugaskanda power plant has stopped as it has run out of

fuel. Meanwhile, the Kelanitissa power plant has fuel enough for three-and-a-half days while furnace oil at the Kolonnawa power plant is coming to an end," said Herath.

According to the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka 2016 report, electricity needs were increasing annually by 5.5 per cent. If the Government is aware of this they must take appropriate measures to prevent any shortfall in electricity. However, they have not taken any measures till today and the current situation is the result of the irresponsibility of the Government. He said the Government has no proper plan in place to face the on-going and upcoming issues.

He further said the public expects the Government and the Ministers to resolve issues of the public and not blame anyone for the on-going crises. It is the responsibility of Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpala and Minister of Power Gamini Lokuge to resolve the issues by discussing them with the Government and Cabinet, he said.

Oil palm...

... and it harms the environment and humans severely. In addition, consuming it can lead to severe health complications including cancer. In the past, the CEA has received many complaints regarding oil palm cultivation, and the decision to ban it was taken after considering the negative impact.

He said it is not fit for human consumption, while advising the people to use coconut oil instead of palm oil.

"An expert panel formed by the CEA has submitted a report to the President along with recommendations. After reviewing the report, importing oil palm-related products and oil palm cultivation in Sri Lanka was banned by the President in April 2021. An order was also given to uproot oil palm trees in the country in several stages. Starting new oil palm cultivations within the country is also restricted," said Amarasinghe.

He further said oil palm is a threat to the existence of all traditional plantation crops such as tea, rubber, and coconut. "These traditional crops are more environmentally friendly and people should consider cultivating them for everyone's benefit," he said.

CEB Chairman...

... likely to appoint a new Chairman. His resignation comes in the wake of the Forex crisis and its resultant effect on the shortage of fuel supplies to the CEB.

Meanwhile, *Ceylon Today* learns that the former Actg. GM, Dr. Susantha Perera, was removed without consulting

Ferdinando, which had prompted Ferdinando to tender his resignation upon learning that the Unions that were demanding for the removal of Dr. Perera would also demand his removal. It was also revealed that Ferdinando had met the Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa soon after his resignation.

UDA to resume...

"Following this revelation, PM Mahinda Rajapaksa in his capacity as the Minister in Charge has instructed the Secretary to the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, Sririmal Perera, to expedite the process of transforming the Meethotamulla landfill site for the benefit of Kolonnawa town at no cost to the State. Henceforth, garbage would not be dumped at

this site," said Prasanna. He added a plan to clear the Meethotamulla landfill in 2015 was presented by the then Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. He also alleged that improper planning by the previous regime had resulted in the catastrophic garbage dump collapse in 2017 of the landfill in question.

GMOA threatens...

... Dr. Senal Fernando threatened to take extraordinary action against at least 40 members including medical administrators and former opponents at the 'suspended 2020-2021 election of office bearers' in the event they fail to submit a satisfactory explanation.

The Secretary called for written explanation within 14 days.

Sources said the Union had claimed that the motive behind such statements was to ridicule and bring disrepute to the GMOA in the eyes of the public. Therefore, the General Committee held the view that these members were in violation of the constitution.

Directors of the Lady Ridgeway Hospital and Colombo East Base Hospital, Dr. G. Wijesuriya and Dr. P.G. Karunaratna were among those faulted. The list also includes those who had opted to contest the office bearer posts such as President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Editor against the current Executive Committee at the Union elections scheduled for last year. Doctors, Jayarwan Bandara, Priyantha Athapattu and Dilanka Tillakeraane have all been asked to explain. Sources challenged the validity of the Union's

decision when the current Ex-Co was given the authority to adhere till such time that the Competent Authority for Quarantine Ordinance deemed it conducive to conduct the election. Although the country has opened and adhering to the new normal, the GMOA has so far failed to conduct the election. In June last year, Colombo District Judge, Aruna Aluthge imposed an injunction till 5 July 2021, preventing the holding of an election fixed for 26 June, to appoint new GMOA office bearers for 2020-2021.

The injunction was in consequence of a petition filed by two Branch Secretaries of the Union. Subsequently, the Moratuwa District Court on 23 July 2021 ordered that an Interim Board be appointed and nominations be called again for the GMOA elections. At the time, District Judge Daminda Ramaniyake also ordered that Dr. Jayarwan Bandara be allowed to resubmit nominations which had been rejected earlier. The Judge held that the GMOA's term of office was over.

The GMOA has also locked horns with Medical Administrators Forum of Sri Lanka (MAFSL) on preference given to Qualified Medical Administrators over 'Grade' Medical Officers.

President extends...

... and wished him a long and healthy life. President Rajapaksa participated in an ams-giving ceremony at the temple organised to invoke blessings on the Nayaka Thera and offered alms to the Maha Sangha.

The Maha Sangha including the Chief Prelate of Kotte Sri Kalyani Samagri Dharma Maha Sangha Sabha Ven. Dr. Itapana Dhammalankara Nayaka Thera, the Mahanayaka Thera of Amarapura Sri Dhammarakkitha Nikaya Ven. Thirukunamale Ananda Thera, Deputy Registrar of the Asgiri Chapter, Ven. Narampanawe Ananda Nayaka Thera were present.

No shortage...

... in controlling the Covid pandemic. At a special meeting held at the Health Ministry with State Ministers Dr. Sudarshini Fernando and Prof. Channa Jayasumana, Minister Rambukwella said the vaccination against the virus had also reduced disease spread and the mortality rate.

In addition, a home care system for asymptomatic patients with the virus too had contributed towards the success in disease control. He said although some parties are paving the way for misconceptions and false rumours, the Sri Lankan State health system was able to control any new viral variant that may emerge.

"We have the strength to face any catastrophe, despite a slight misgiving one might feel when considering the global figures of the new Omicron variant of Covid," he said.

(DJ)

Fish exports...

While noting that 2021 was a record breaking year for the local fisheries sector, he said stakeholders and officials have worked together amid several challenges including the Covid-19 pandemic and the MV X-Press Pearl vessel disaster to make this record.

The largest balance of the fish trade of USD 192 million was made in 2021, compared to USD 23 million in 2020, he said adding that the lowest import value and quantity in over a decade was also reported in 2021.

While 2021 saw the highest production of shrimp farming, there has been a comparative increase in exports of ornamental fish and domestic canned fish Wijesekera said.

Court permits...

... investigations into the incident. The PNB informed the Magistrate that the probe had revealed that the suspects besides trafficking drugs had also brought

down firearms and that they were conducting further inquiries. After the suspects were produced in Court, one of the suspects, a boat owner

stated that a person identified as Anju had called him via the telephone and had instructed him to bring down the stock of narcotics.

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Trade Minister meets PM Khan during Pakistan visit

Buddhist Tourism, Trade Discussions Take Centre Stage



Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan said his government has made special allocation for Buddhist tourism and hopes to encourage Sri Lankan Buddhists to visit the country. He also said steps should be taken to encourage businesses

from both countries to hold regular discussions and exchange views in a more expansive manner to maximise benefits of the Sri Lanka-Pakistan Trade Agreement. These concerns were raised when Minister of Trade Dr. Bandula Gunawardena met



PM Khan at his Islamabad office on Tuesday (25). Dr. Gunawardena, who is on an official visit to Pakistan, said his delegation was looking forward to further strengthening friendship between the two nations. According to the Minister,

trade cooperation between Sri Lanka and Pakistan could be expanded in many areas, including education, health, technology, apparel, and tourism. The delegation included State Minister of Regional Cooperation Tharaka Balasuriya among others.

Nanayakkara, UNICEF rep discuss safe drinking water for children

Minister of Water Supply Vasudeva Nanayakkara requested UNICEF to intervene on the importance of providing quality, safe drinking water to children.

The request was made recently when Christian Skoog, the new UNICEF Representative to Sri Lanka, met Nanayakkara. The discussion centred on children's health issues.

According to recent statistics, children in many parts of the world are frequently exposed to a variety of diseases due to a lack of access to safe drinking water. The Minister said this situation still exists in many difficult areas.

He stressed that the Water Supply and Drainage Board and the Department of Community Water have put in place a number of special

programmes to address the issue as soon as possible, adding that, Reverse Osmosis (RO) water filters have already been installed in areas where such diseases are prevalent, and that more RO filters will be installed in other areas in the near future.

According to Skoog, an islandwide survey of water quality has been conducted, and databases on the nature of groundwater will be compiled. In addition to the database, UNICEF will provide all possible assistance to improve the quality of drinking water, particularly in schools.

Advisor to the Minister of Water Supply Sandaka Gunasekera and Media Secretary Sanjeewa Dhammika were also present at the meeting.



Japan can help Sri Lanka's recycling programme

- Ambassador Hideaki



By **THAMEENAH RAZEK**

Japan's Ambassador to Sri Lanka Mizukoshi Hideaki has stated that Japan is willing to provide technical assistance and experience in environmental protection as well as polythene and plastic management in Sri Lanka.

Recently, the Ambassador met Minister of Environment Mahinda Amaraweera and Secretary to the Ministry Dr. Anil Jasinghe.

Amaraweera discussed the Ministry's efforts to reduce carbon emissions, cut plastics and polythene use, and decrease the release of polythene and plastics into the ocean and rivers through activities like the 'Surakimu

Ganga' programme.

The Ambassador also discussed Japan's efforts to protect the environment and reduce its use of polythene and plastics, and elaborated on successful recycling programmes in Japan as well as the new technology used for this purpose.

As a result, the Ambassador informed the Minister that steps will be taken to provide technical assistance and opportunities to exchange recycling expertise with the Government of Japan.

He also noted that a team from Sri Lanka could be sent to Japan to gain technical knowledge and experience.

ACBC officials accused of pilfering funds, property

By **NIPUNI EKANAYAKE**

The Convention for the Protection of National Heritages (CPNH) on 25 January lodged a complaint with the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) charging that a group of officials of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC) had misappropriated funds and even properties.

The complaint has named ACBC President Nimal Wakista as the main culprit

with the latter also continuing to be a member of CIABOC.

This was revealed to *Ceylon Today* by the Convener of the CPNH Janaka Bodinanda who alleged that the Head of the ACBC was directly responsible for the misappropriation of ACBC's funds as well as the theft of its property.

He further charged that serious acts of fraud and corruption are taking place in 17 children's homes under the ACBC's purview.

Parliament Covid cluster grows to 9

By **MEETHALALIE DISSANAYAKE**

Two more MPs tested positive for Covid-19 on 25 January, increasing the Covid cluster in Parliament to nine.

The nine MPs were tested positive within a span of a few days.

According to reports, Ministers Jayantha Samaraweera and Dilum Amunugama have tested positive on Tuesday (25). Samagi Jana Balawegaya

(SJB) MP Rohini Kaviratne, and Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLFP) MPs Amarakertthi Athukorala and Kokila Gunawardena have also contracted the virus.

Last week, Minister of Public Security Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekera and SLFP MPs Nalaka Bandara Kotegoda, Sarathi Dushantha Mithrapala, and ITAK MP Shanakiyan Rasamanickam tested positive for the virus.

Planned GMSB station to monitor regional tremors

By **K.L. SURAWERA - KANDY**

The head of Geological Mines and Survey Bureau (GMSB) Anura Walpola said that a station to effectively monitor tremors in the region will soon be built in the Western Province.

With the new station, the GMSB will keep tabs on

quakes in the South Asian region in a more scientific and coordinated manner unlike in the past, he said.

Walpola was briefing the media at a recent workshop held in Gatanbe, Kandy on projects undertaken by the GMSB. He added that the proposed station will be built with financial aid provided by China.

Arogya - first vegan book launched

Sri Lanka's first-ever Vegan recipe book was launched recently by the 'Dharma Voices for Animals' organisation. This book, titled 'Arogya', contains more than 100 vegan food recipes which not required milk or any other animal product



'Shilpa Abhimani-2021' - encourage artistic creations

The 'Shilpa Abhimani-2021' Presidential Handicraft Awards Ceremony was held at the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Memorial Exhibition Centre under the patronage of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on 25 January.

The Shilpa Abhimani-2021 Presidential Handicraft Awards Ceremony is held each year to preserve, developing and encouraging outstanding

traditional, cultural and artistic creations.

The awards ceremony was organised by the National Crafts Council under the guidance of the State Ministry of Rattan, Brass, Pottery, Furniture and Rural Industrial Promotion. At this Awards ceremony, the creative work of traditional and modern artisans across the country was evaluated at provincial and

national levels.

A panel of judges of university lecturers and professors selected the designs under 21 main categories. Silver awards were presented to winners at provincial level who produced 8,000 creations.

The President Gotabaya Rajapaksa presented Gold Awards to two nationally acclaimed artists in traditional and modern art.

State Minister Prasanna Ranawera presented financial assistance to two artisans, symbolising the provision of lifelong financial assistance to artisans who have made contributions to the handicraft sector.

Minister Ranawera said despite the Covid-19 pandemic, his Ministry took measures to uplift the conditions of traditional industrialists by

providing the necessary infrastructure. He said it was a special achievement for designers to sell local handicraft by using the latest technology, international market and the internet.

Mass Media Minister Dullas Aluhaperttana presented a postage stamp and a first day cover to mark the awards ceremony to the President. President Rajapaksa inspected

the winning creations in the Shilpa Abhimani-2021 competition and congratulated the award-winning artists.

Minister Wimal Weerawansa, Secretaries to Ministries, Chairman of the National Crafts Council Sampath Eshwaripola, government officials, award winning artists and many others were present at the awards ceremony.



105 Indian fishing boats to be auctioned next month

Tamil Nadu CM Tells Modi To Register Protest

By SULOCHANA RAMIAH MOHAN

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. K. Stalin has written to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday (25), expressing his disappointment over the Sri Lankan Government's bid to auction a total of 105 confiscated Indian fishing boats. "The action comes at a time when the Indo-Sri Lankan Joint Working Group on Fisheries is due to meet again soon, and the action has created alarm and distrust among Tamil Nadu fishermen who have come forward with an accusation," he added.

He also urged that the Government of India should register its disapproval in the strongest possible terms at an appropriate level and to prevail upon the Sri Lankan Government to recall the advertisement published to auction TN fishing boats on which they do not have any legal rights.

The Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR) in Sri Lanka is gearing to auction as many as 180 boats that are beyond use idling in various ports in Sri Lanka. A top official attached to the DFAR told Ceylon Today that many of the boats idling were confiscated even before 2018. Some were confiscated and some have been released by court order. However, those released by court order were not retrieved by the Indian fishermen despite it being notified to them.

"These boats were mosquito-breeding sites as the boats are in a dilapidated condition and are mostly scrap material," he said.

He said that those that were confiscated and released were in various venues and were under the Sri Lanka Navy. He also said due to geopolitical intervention for so many years, these boats were not evacuated and this time around they are auctioning and the money would go to the government of Sri Lanka. He said the advertisement on auctioning was published in various local newspapers recently.

There are 105 boats belonging to the fishermen of Tamil Nadu. These boats are in the custody of Sri Lankan authorities and are slated to be auctioned from 2 to 12 February 2022, Stalin told Prime Minister Modi.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister further noted that the Ministry of External Affairs of India had requested the Government of Tamil Nadu through the High Commission of India to send a technical team to finalise the process and modalities for disposal of 125 unsalvageable Tamil Nadu fishing boats berthed in various harbours in Sri Lanka. Accordingly the government of Tamil Nadu had also issued orders for deputing officials and stakeholders from Tamil Nadu to inspect and oversee the disposal of fishing boats and to transfer the sale processed to the owners of these boats back in India. The

schedule of the visit of officials to Sri Lanka for the above purpose was also communicated to the Ministry of External Affairs. "While such positive initiatives are being taken, there are reports from a section of the media in both Sri Lanka in Tamil Nadu that the DFAR has issued advertisements in newspapers calling tenders to auction Tamil Nadu fishing boats," he said.

He said the hurry to conduct an auction without consultation is bound to derail efforts of the Indian High Commission and the government of Tamil Nadu aimed at providing some succour to the poor fishermen who have lost their means of livelihood. It is pertinent to note that these unsalvageable fishing boats were released by various courts in Sri Lanka following due judicial procedures.

Stalin also urged the Government of India to register its disapproval in the strongest possible terms at the appropriate level to prevail upon Sri Lanka to recall the advertisement as they do not have any legal rights.

He also urged the Indian Government to continue the efforts for the transparent disposal of 125 Tamil Nadu boats that were apprehended before 2018. He said to ensure that early release of 75 boats and fishing gears apprehended after 2018 by the Sri Lanka Navy.



Blood donation campaign in Akkaraipattu

A blood donation campaign organised by the trustees of the Thaava Jumma Grand Mosque of Akkaraipattu was held recently. A number of residents participated. The event was held at the Akkaraipattu Mosque premises.

A Medical team from the Blood Bank at the Akkaraipattu Base Hospital headed by Dr. A. Dulkanji assisted the campaign. Arrangements were made by the Chief Trustee of Thaava Jumma Grand Mosque and social worker of the area M. M. M. Riyadh with the support of the Divisional Secretary, Medical Officer of Health and the Pradeshiya Sabha Chairman.

(Pic by M.A.P. Deen - Ampara Correspondent)



Ratmalana Airport access road upgraded

Highways Minister Johnston Fernando has instructed the Director General of Road Development Authority (RDAA) and officials of the RDA Colombo District Chief Engineer's Office to finish upgrading the access road to the Ratmalana Airport within 20 days.

Fernando issued the order to develop the access road, following a request by Tourism Minister Prasanna Ranatunga and Civil Aviation State Minister D.V. Chanaka who explained that the influx and movement of tourists had increased following the reopening of the country, driving the need to make use of Ratmalana Airport at its fullest capacity.

The Ratmalana Airport is currently operated as a domestic airport and is used by both local and foreign tourists and the Air Force.

The 1.6-km long road will be upgraded at a cost of Rs. 99.3 million. A sum of Rs. 20.4 million would be spent on improving sidewalks and Rs. 24.8 million to set up street lights.

10-year RI for raping younger sister of spouse

By HANSI NAMAYAKKARA

Colombo High Court Judge Adithya Patabendige yesterday (26) imposed 10-year RI on an accused who was convicted of raping the younger sister of his spouse. The Judge also imposed a fine of Rs100,000 to be paid to the State as well as another Rs 100,000 to be paid to the victim as compensation.

The prosecution had stated that 10 years ago the convict while accompanying the victim to his house had coaxed her to head to a hotel where he had raped her.

Attorney-at-Law Astha Vipulanayake appearing for the convict stated that his client was presently leading a successful married life with the victim's older sister and that as he is also a father to impose a lenient sentence on him.

Rs 100M for British beauty culture course

By HANSI NAMAYAKKARA

State Minister of Women, Piyal Nishantha said 500 beauticians will be given the opportunity to follow courses conducted by British Universities. The courses would cost Rs 100 million.

Following a request made by the State Minister to the London School of Executive Education related to beauty culture, beauticians in Sri Lanka will be given the opportunity to follow courses in four segments. The State Minister who is currently visiting the UK was speaking in an online discussion with representatives from the beauty culture field of the Cambridge and Oxford Members Club. As the first phase of the programme, 500 beauticians will be offered a six month course with Rs 200,000 being incurred for each participant.

Those who complete the course successfully will be offered an internationally recognised certificate with the courses being conducted by British teachers while they could also seek assistance to follow it via their mother tongue.



Rear Admiral Sajith Gamage assumes duties as Commander Southern Naval Area

Rear Admiral Sajith Gamage assumed duties on 25 January as Commander Southern Naval Area at the Southern Naval Command Headquarters.

He Served as Flag Officer Commanding Naval Fleet prior to being appointed Commander of the Southern Naval Area. The Commander was warmly received by officers of the Command and a guard of

honour was accorded to him according to naval tradition. His predecessor, Rear Admiral Prasanna Hewage, officially handed over duties to the newly-appointed Commander at Command Headquarters.

Meanwhile, the former Commander retired after officers and sailors of the Southern Naval Command bade him a fond farewell followed by a guard of honour.

Labour Acts on website - Boon to working class - Nimal

Minister of Labour Nimal Siripala de Silva said despite the current experiencing a severe economic downturn, the rights enjoyed by the labour force cannot be curtailed under any circumstances.

He said, the move by the State Services Labour Officers Union (SSLOU) to publish Labour Acts in the Internet would go a long way to further strengthen and guarantee the rights of the workforce.

The Minister was speaking while taking part at an event held at the auditorium of

the Labour Department while releasing on the Internet Labour Acts, Regulations, Orders and related Instructions.

Elaborating further he said, "It was praiseworthy for SSLOU to create a website and the decision to publish all Acts, regulations and orders concerning the labour force will be a boon to the working class."

The SSLOU has published the Acts, regulations and orders of the labour field on their website www.gstoa.lk

CIR's CitizensConnect

Mobile journalism-Storytelling platform

"CitizensConnect," a cutting-edge mobile journalism initiative (MOJO) by the Centre for Investigative Reporting (CIR), is looking to expand its pool of citizen journalists to develop stories using mobile and digital technology.

Those interested can now become a part of the CitizensConnect initiative by registering through CIR's official website: www.cir.lk. The stories generated in Sinhala and Tamil under the initiative will be published on the CitizensConnect website - to be launched in February 2022.

The programme is designed to empower individuals becoming impactful digital storytellers through training and upskilling opportunities conducted by media veterans. It is supported by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) and the U.S.

Government's development agency - the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), whose mission is to increase Sri Lankans' demand for and access to balanced, reliable, and objective news and information.

"CitizensConnect offers Sri Lanka's digital journalists, an opportunity to develop high-quality MoJo stories that fail to capture mainstream media attention. The platform is a space for citizen journalists to grow into digital storytellers," said Dilrukshi Handunnett, CIR's Executive Director.

The programme will bring together over 400 individuals, receiving training on the fundamentals of MoJo, ethics, and media law. Out of this, a select cohort of 100 will produce over 600 pieces of high-quality, mobile-based content in Sinhala and Tamil,

prioritising common issues faced by local communities.

The programme was officially launched in December 2021 and has already conducted orientation sessions for over 100 journalists across the country, many of whom are now producing digital-format stories in their communities.

Jean MacKenzie, Chief of Party of IREX's Media Empowerment for a Democratic Sri Lanka (MEND) project, was equally enthusiastic. "We see CitizensConnect as a way of shedding light on issues and problems that often fall under the radar," she said. "Ordinary citizens armed with a mobile phone, some fundamental training in journalism and boundless enthusiasm for their communities can work wonders," she added.



Dr. Ramesh Pathirana, Minister of Plantations and French Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Eric Lavertu visited the Rubber Research Institute (RRI) at Darling Field Estate, Agalawatta on Tuesday (25).

The purpose of this visit was to oversee the progress of the pilot project initiated to strengthen the economy of small rubber plantation owners.

The project is being implemented with financial and technical assistance from the French Ministry of Economy for the benefit of small rubber estate owners in the Ampara and Moneragala Districts. Training was given to 6000 smallholder rubber estate owners in the Moneragala District on the application and use of modern technology in rubber cultivation.

Dr. Pathirana said, the price of rubber in the country has come down in 2021 and as a result many were reluctant to engage in rubber cultivation. However, the situation has since changed with the coming of the present Government, he said, adding that 7.5 metric tons of rubber had been exported in 2020.

The Minister appreciated the support extended by France for the betterment of rubber cultivation and said that he expects the same in the future as well.

The French Ambassador said France is ready to assist at all times, to develop the manufacturing sector.

Recalling the friendly ties between the two countries, the Ambassador said he was pleased to join hands for such an innovative project.

He also said he was happy to note that Sri Lanka had had an opportunity to produce a better product to the world market.

Kanaka Herath, Minister of State for Establishment Rehabilitation, Tea and Rubber Crops Cultivation and Industrial Modernisation and Promotion of Tea and Rubber Exports said, rubber cultivation in the Kalutara District has declined from 1,200 hectares to 1,100 hectares.

Tilakaratne Banda, Secretary, Prof. Sudheera Ranwala, Chairperson, RRI, Dr. Lakshman Rodrigo, Director, RRI, Deputy Director Research (Biology) Dr. Vasana Wijesundera and others were also present.



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SL 102nd in 'Corruption Perception'

On Tuesday, Transparency International, a German based NGO released on their website their annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of the public sector by business and by 'experts', encapsulating 180 countries as at last year (2021).

CPI's point basis ranging from a minimum nought (0) points to a maximum 100 point where '0' is defined as a country which is 'highly corrupt' and '100' as a country free of corruption or a 'very clean' country.

In its latest CPI, Sri Lanka was at the second half of the list with 37 points, ranked 102nd equal together with the Central Asian and former USSR Satellite State, Kazakhstan and Sub-Saharan Guinea. Kazakhstan is going through civil unrest with Russian troops having been called by its government to keep the peace.

The top slot with 88 points each was shared between three Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland and Norway together with New Zealand (NZ). At the bottom (180th position) was Sub-Saharan South Sudan with 11 points.

In 2020, Sri Lanka with 38 points fared better, sharing the 94th position together with Kazakhstan, Peru, Serbia and Suriname. Peru and Suriname are two South American countries while Serbia, a European country in the Balkans, formerly a part of the then Yugoslavia, was wracked with genocide perpetrated against its minority Muslim population in the early 1990s.

Meanwhile, the top 'public sector corrupt free' countries in 2020 were Denmark and NZ with 88 points each while right at the bottom and ranked 179th equal were both Sub-Saharan South Sudan and Somalia with 12 points each.

Vis-à-vis Sri Lanka's 2021 ranking compared with 2020, the country had the dubious distinction of climbing down eight places.

Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) data also furnished on Tuesday showed that foreign direct investments (FDI), including foreign loans taken by such enterprises in the first nine months of last year, year-on-year (YoY) increased by an infinitesimal 4.42 per cent (\$24 million) to \$ 8567 million.

FDI is needed for the dual purpose of shoring up the country's sparse foreign (US dollar) reserves while boosting exports as many overseas companies invest in Sri Lanka to cater to foreign markets, garment manufacture and export to the USA, EU and UK for instance. Sri Lanka's top three export markets in descending order.

But, if there is a perception of corruption, those FDI comprising overseas export manufacturing / service (internationally branded hotels for instance) companies won't invest in Sri Lanka, dealing a knockout blow for the growth of foreign reserves and the free availability of dollars in the country, the non-availability of which is the single largest economic evil bedevilling the island, also virtually dealing a death blow to trading companies employing thousands.

Complementary to these unsavoury developments, CBSL and the government have adopted a closed exchange rate regime to preserve the country's Spartan dollars, thereby 'killing' the interbank foreign exchange (FX) market for the 182nd consecutive market day to yesterday, with no outright transaction of worth taking place, coupled with all trades in the FX market, including bank-client trades too, since midnight 6 September 2021, mandated to be executed under a controlled exchange rate (ER) regime at unrealistic prices of between Rs 202-203 to the dollar, aiding in the spawning of a sprawling black market.

Meanwhile, in the black market the dollar was being traded at Rs 250 a unit, a YoY depreciation of Rs 53.85-54.00 (27.45-27.55 per cent). A weak ER causes cost push inflationary pressure as Sri Lanka is an import-dependent economy.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in his election manifesto concerning corruption, to quote excerpts said, "Today the people of the country expect government officials and politicians to be of moral standing and to provide a public service free from corruption and graft. This is the form of governance that will be carried out by our government."

Since independence, all governments have been accused of corruption. We pledge that under our government, corruption and wasteful expenditure will not be tolerated and part of the monies to be spent by our government for people-centric development will be found through the elimination of wasteful expenditure presently seen in the public sector. A country free of corruption has long been desired by our people. Our intention is to mould not only a corruption-free politician but also a citizen who will not tolerate corruption.

We will ensure that if any of our politicians or senior public officials is found engaging in any form of corrupt practice, they will be expelled from the party and their posts and brought before the law. The Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption will be further strengthened.

We will ensure that the Financial Crimes Investigation Division is regularised and institutionalised in a legal manner and kept independent so that the general public also can lodge complaints against those involved in financial crimes. A special Court to hear cases relating to financial crimes and frauds will also be established.

We will ensure that an online procurement system is in place, including for the awarding of contracts through competitive bidding to eradicate rent seeking.

It's time to put words into action after being more than two years in power.



A Whiff of Munich

By HAROLD JAMES

With the United States and its NATO allies seeking further negotiations to prevent Russia from invading Ukraine, many have been quick to invoke the 1938 appeasement of Hitler. But if the right lessons are taken from that episode, another violent conflict need not be inevitable.

The Cold War ended 30 years ago. But since the 2007-08 financial crisis, it has not only returned but mutated into a hybrid lukewarm war. And with the United States and its European allies now struggling to manage the threat of a Russian attack on Ukraine, the specter of a hot war is looming. The 1938 appeasement of Nazi Germany has become an attractive historical analogy, since that was the moment when the post-World War I cold war mutated decisively, supposedly making a hot conflict inevitable.

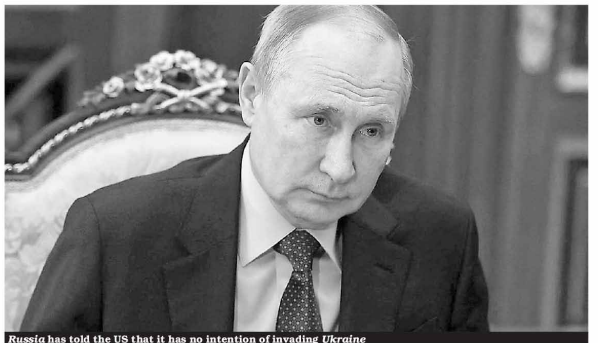
Munich will forever be associated with that moment, because that is where Britain, France, and Italy ceded to Germany substantial territory in Czechoslovakia without consulting either the Czechs or the Soviet Union. This episode has been revisited repeatedly, most recently in Christian Schwochow's brilliant new film *Munich: The Edge of War*, based on the novelist Robert Harris's interesting attempt to rehabilitate British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's reputation.

Another summit

Now that the Biden administration has offered to hold another summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin, following weeks of abortive negotiations, are we witnessing a replay of Chamberlain's efforts in Munich?

A facile dictum emerged from Munich: Never appease dictators. After 1945, this often led to disastrous consequences. In 1956, for example, British Prime Minister Anthony Eden (who had resigned as foreign secretary in 1938, just a few months before Munich) was wrong to treat Egyptian President Gamal Nasser as a new Hitler. Decades later, US Presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush were wrong to apply the same label to Saddam Hussein. The analogy justified a catastrophic mistake that has profoundly altered the shape of world politics.

There is little doubt that Putin is a disturber of the peace who has already accomplished many of his goals. He has destabilised Ukraine and thereby prevented it from serving as a model for opponents of his authoritarian rule. He has split Europe from the US, shone a harsh and



Russia has told the US that it has no intention of invading Ukraine

A hot war is not inevitable in a Munich-like negotiation process. While it is true that the aggressor once again seems to be winning, much remains open to interpretation. If Putin's goal is to expose the West's weaknesses, he can claim an immediate victory. But viewed another way, peace and even democracy also are winning, because the new logic of MAD shows just how little there is to be gained from an escalating conflict.

unflattering spotlight on America's incapacity to respond to Russian initiatives, and highlighted internal divisions within Europe.

In the past, the obvious response to Putin's threats against Ukraine would be massive economic and financial sanctions imposed by the US and its NATO allies, targeting not only Putin and his cronies but also the entire Russian economy. For example, Russian banks could be barred from SWIFT, the international payments-clearing system.

But Russia has systematically built up its reserves and reduced its financial vulnerabilities, which means that losing access to SWIFT might not be all that

painful in the short term (though it would almost certainly cause great hardship in the long run). Worse, weaponising SWIFT could have both far-reaching and immediate implications for the US and its European allies. One obvious risk is if creditors suddenly cannot be repaid, cascading insolvencies could trigger a financial crash and an international credit freeze.

This scenario has echoes not of 1938 but of 2008, when fears about relatively small subprime mortgage losses led to much greater uncertainty about how major financial institutions would be affected. The result was a massive selloff and generalised panic. Today, the uncertainty is being augmented by new factors, such as the rise of digital currencies and payment systems and the weaponisation of energy trading. Would shutting off imports of Russian energy to Europe really be an effective retaliatory measure? Some European countries – notably Germany – would consider such a sanction a greater threat to themselves than to the Russians.

The current menu of financial and economic sanctions thus reprises the Cold War logic of mutual assured destruction (MAD). The ability to deploy systematically threatening financial and currency instruments is the modern equivalent of nuclear warheads. (Chamberlain was driven by a similar logic: only a generation removed from the horror of WWI, he was committed to preventing a further escalation.)

What does the Russian side of the MAD equation look like today? Kremlin strategists certainly know that Russia has a great deal to lose from an open conflict in Ukraine. A Russian invasion would encounter substantial Ukrainian resistance, leading to heavy casualties and a further demoralisation of the Russian

population. Maintaining control would be difficult. The occupying soldiers would be repressing a civilian population that can speak to them in their own language. It is worth recalling that the first Soviet soldiers in Prague in 1968 needed to be withdrawn because they began to sympathize with the Czechs.

Trapped

With limited options all around, both sides feel trapped. The real lesson of Munich is that there are ways to deal with the political psychology of entrapment. Hitler won the contest in Munich, because he gained unrivaled domination over Eastern and Central Europe. But he soon became frustrated, because the opportunities offered by threatening a conflict had disappeared. As Henry Kissinger convincingly demonstrates in *Diplomacy*, Hitler's irrationality led him to throw away his advantage by going to war in 1939.

A hot war is not inevitable in a Munich-like negotiation process. While it is true that the aggressor once again seems to be winning, much remains open to interpretation. If Putin's goal is to expose the West's weaknesses, he can claim an immediate victory. But viewed another way, peace and even democracy also are winning, because the new logic of MAD shows just how little there is to be gained from an escalating conflict.

Harold James is Professor of History and International Affairs at Princeton University. A specialist on German economic history and on globalisation, he is a co-author of *The Euro and The Battle of Ideas*, and the author of *The Creation and Destruction of Value: The Globalisation Cycle*, *Krupp: A History of the Legendary German Firm*, *Making the European Monetary Union*, and *The War of Words*. (Project Syndicate)

Socialist Revolution or Bourgeois Compromise?

By UDITHA DEVAPRIYA

For the oppressed masses of the Third World, the establishment of UNCTAD and the proposal for a New International Economic Order marked the high point of 20th century multilateralism. These coincided with the longest spell of decolonisation recorded in history, in turn fuelled by a spate of bourgeois democratic and Marxist alliances in almost every corner of the developing world.

Though such alliances did not bring about emancipation for the masses, the experience the 1960s suggested that radical transformations, for the Global South and the world in general, were in the offing.

Was the Third World wrong in pinning hopes for a fairer world order on the election of bourgeois democratic elites and the realisation of multilateral initiatives? In Sri Lanka two periods of socialist rule, which oversaw vast strides in North-South Dialogue and South-South cooperation, and enacted ambitious land and labour reforms at home, gave way to an endless succession of neoliberal authoritarian administrations, alternating between centre-right reformism (UNP) and centre-right populism (SLFP).

According to Marxist commentators this situation would not have arisen if the bourgeois national elites who entered into coalition agreements with Marxist parties did not alienate the latter in the longer term. That is more or less what happened in Egypt as well: despite its immensely progressive potential, Nasserism ended up liquidating the Communist Party in Egypt, culminating in the defeat of the Arab-Israeli war and the disgraceful capitulations to the neoliberal right under Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak.

The Sri Lankan experience here is both general and unique, unique because even though the pressures of the contradictions between the Left and the bourgeois centre-left reflected similar contradictions elsewhere in the Third World, they were rooted in the dynamics of Sri Lankan society, specifically rural society. Even today, the staunch critics of the LSSP's and the Communist Party's decision to form alliances with the SLFP contend that such agreements deviated from the imperatives of socialist revolution, and that the Marxist Left could enter into them only at the cost of its very existence.

Fair as this critique is, it ignores three important considerations. Firstly, the Marxist Left in Sri Lanka lacked a rural agrarian base. As Anil Moonesinghe admitted in an interview with Michael Roberts, the LSSP from its inception found itself unable to mobilise rural workers, partly owing to the cultural conditioning of its leadership. The situation was such that by 1956 the Left had the backing of urban workers, while the SLFP had the backing of rural workers. That



The Marxists Left lacks a rural agrarian base and they view bourgeois democratic parties as reactionary

could only lead to reconciliation or an understanding between these two formations. Necessity proved to be the better part of valour here.

Secondly, the LSSP and Communist Party had to reckon with a more powerful and popular movement in the form of the JVP. The JVP took advantage of a powerful, authoritarian, and frustrated rural petty bourgeoisie. Gamini Keerawalla's view that its rise coincided with the growth of a *mudalali* bourgeoisie in the villages is not entirely wrong: it indicates that the Sri Lankan Left could be threatened by an ultra-Left element, and that, if pushed too far, the latter could evolve into an ultra-Right formation. That is what precisely happened during the last few years of the J. R. Jayewardene administration, though by then the Old Left had been submerged and beaten up so much that it could only watch from the sidelines.

Parliamentary democracy

Thirdly, the view that the SLFP was bourgeois democratic and hence incapable of carrying out any revolution, let alone a socialist one, undermined the fact that it was composed of different interest groups and these converged with and diverged from each other on various fronts and issues. More relevantly, unlike Egypt and Indonesia, where bourgeois national elites capitulated to rightwing forces, Sri Lanka was a parliamentary democracy. That may not have meant much in the larger scheme of things, but it did prove useful for any party envisaging a

radical transformation of society.

It was Sri Lanka's parliamentary democracy and its emphasis on sustained contact between the Government and the people, combined with the socialist credentials of the parties in power, which enabled the United Front administration to implement such far-reaching reforms as Workers' Councils. Yet that did not prevent breakaway factions within the Left, such as the LSSP (R), to denigrate the SLFP as a petty bourgeois formation. The JVP went one step ahead here, calling the SLFP as no different to the capitalist UNP.

Not a generic petty bourgeois party

The LSSP's rejoinder to these claims was the SLFP was not a generic petty bourgeois party, but one situated in a semi-colonial society, with much potential for radical change. As Anil Moonesinghe put it, the SLFP contained a reactionary and revolutionary wing: the former included the C. P. de Silva faction and, much later, the Felix Dias faction. It was only by understanding and coming to terms with these specificities that any socialist programme could be enacted and seen to its end – and not just in Sri Lanka.

The SLFP was the logical heir and successor to the Sinhala Maha Sabha, which S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike chose to make a part of the UNP. Gunadasa Amarasekara is correct when he criticises the view of the Sabha as a chauvinistic outfit as unjust and

The LSSP and Communist Party had to reckon with a more powerful and popular movement in the form of the JVP. The JVP took advantage of a powerful, authoritarian, and frustrated rural petty bourgeoisie. Gamini Keerawalla's view that its rise coincided with the growth of a *mudalali* bourgeoisie in the villages is not entirely wrong: it indicates that the Sri Lankan Left could be threatened by an ultra-Left element

unfair. Both the Sabha and the SLFP gave vent to the cultural aspirations of a community that had been tied to 400 years of colonial rule. Insofar as it spoke to this group, the SLFP possessed an emancipatory potential, which could well have made it a fellow traveller of the Old Left.

To be sure, subsequent events proved that this was not to be. Yes, the SLFP did possess a progressive potential, but then this was not the same as being a progressive party. At its inception it was composed of a myriad of interests, some progressive, others not so, and still others conservative and no different to the comprador elites in the UNP they conspired to be their foes. Not surprisingly, the party's victory in 1956 did not usher in a triumph for all these class elements; only a certain bloc therein.

And yet, to think that the Left was wrong in forging an alliance with the SLFP would be to ignore the three points underlined above. More pertinently, it would be to ignore the strides made by the SLFP-LSSP-CP combination in the international sphere, including its contribution to

the Non-Aligned Movement, its declaration of an Indian Ocean Peace Zone, and its intervention in UNCTAD and the New International Economic Order.

The breakaway Left, including the LSSP (R), had its own views regarding Sri Lanka's foreign policy, tied to either a Stalinist or a Maoist front. As a child of the split between these two fronts, the JVP evolved a foreign policy based on an animus against the regional hegemony, India. The SLFP and its Left partners, by contrast, conceived a more internationalist foreign policy, shaped less by adherence to theory and ideology than by the need to establish links with the world. One can argue that the United Front administration's policies privileged expeditious over principled, but as the 1971 insurrection showed, that approach enabled it to garner support almost everywhere, from Moscow to Washington.

The Left's encounters with the SLFP did not bring about a socialist revolution in Sri Lanka. Here it more or less followed precedents set up elsewhere: throughout much of the Third World, the Left's alliances with the bourgeois centre-left paved the way for a middle class backlash against socialism, which in turn enabled the neoliberal right to come to power. This was very much propelled by developments taking place everywhere, including the fuel crisis and the abandonment of the Gold Standard. The United Front, however, encouraged Western Governments and policymakers to let go of Keynesian prescriptions, leading to a wholesale embrace of neoliberal monetarism.

Viewed this way, the Marxist's view of bourgeois democratic parties as reactionary may be justifiable. Yet it misses well more than a few points. No socialist or radical programme can, or will, be implemented unless it takes into account the concrete and dynamic realities of society, including its political structures. This was the Old Left's primary achievement, as well as the breakaway Left's and the New Left's primary failure.

The LSSP and the Communist Party cannot be absolved for the stances they took, or rather were compelled to take, over the language issue and the National Question. But one should not forget that the Old Left framed and debated these issues from a progressive standpoint, and that when in power, they saw through a series of radical reforms which were accepted wholeheartedly by the masses of the time, though rejected by a growing middle-class. That these reforms did not reach fruition, and that they were abandoned by successive regimes, should not serve as an indictment on those who authored them.

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By MICHAEL GREGSON

Sri Lanka is home to around 29 varieties of bananas, most of them indigenous and unique to the country. Sri Lankan bananas can be divided into three main groups: Mysore, Kollukuttu and Cavendish.

Just under 50,000 hectares are under banana cultivation – about 54 per cent of total fruit cultivation and the annual banana production is around 750,587 tons. Traditionally banana cultivation was limited to home gardens or very small-scale cultivation, but it has become a commercially important export crop.

Bananas are an attractive perennial crop with good economic returns. They can be profitably grown throughout the country, in any season and yield fruit throughout the year. But there is one type of the plant you won't find on the island. Described as 'a banana on steroids', enset may be the superfood you've never heard of, let alone tasted, but scientists say it could be a life saver for a warming world.

The plant, which grows up to 10 metres (39 ft), is a staple for 16 million people in the Ethiopian Highlands who turn it into bread and porridge, construction materials, packaging, cattle feed and medicine. "People are saying this is a new wonder crop," said James Borrell, a scientist at London's Royal Botanic

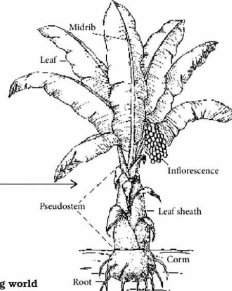
Bananas on steroids



The enset plant a life saver for a warming world

Gardens, Kew, which is researching the plant's potential. "It's amazingly resilient. It's said to be very drought tolerant and we're trying to test that," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Although a close relative of the banana, enset's orange fruit is full of bullet-like seeds and inedible. Instead, the starchy tissue from the



trunk and its giant underground corm – the bulbs can weigh up to 100kg (220lb) – is turned into a pulp and buried in a pit to ferment before being made into a chewy flatbread called kocho.

Yeshak Pantu, who runs an Ethiopian restaurant in London, described kocho as "the fish and chips" of his home region and said

enset had helped stave off hunger during drought.

Borrell said the plant was a "really exciting part of the mix" for food security under climate change because it grows in a huge range of conditions – "from baking to foggy and freezing cold" – and can be harvested any time. This means it could provide back-up in case of seasonal gaps in other crops, pest infestations, disease or erratic weather.

"It's like an insurance policy," he said. "In a lot of the world, you can have enough food for 50 weeks of the year, but imagine you had none for two. That's still a massive problem." Planting enset as a buffer crop for lean times could reduce the potential for conflict and avoid the need for aid, he added.

Although enset grows wild from Ethiopia down to South Africa, it has only been domesticated in the Ethiopian Highlands, which has mystified researchers. Scientists, who are now DNA-sequencing hundreds of varieties, hope enset could boost food security in other countries, such as Zambia and Malawi.

"We are really interested in trying to identify the varieties that grow in the

hottest and driest conditions so that in the future we can help farmers adapt," Borrell said.

The enset could feed more than 100 million people in the future even as climate impacts become more severe. There is growing interest in seeking new plants to feed the world, given our reliance on a few staple crops. Nearly half of the calories we eat come from three species – rice, wheat and maize.

"We need to diversify the plants we use globally as a species because all our eggs are in a very small basket at the moment," said Dr Borrell. "Feeding a growing population at a higher standard of living, whilst weathering the impacts of climate change will test the capacity and resilience of our food systems," the scientists noted. "Although the scale of this challenge is unprecedented, human ingenuity is not."

He points to the examples of potatoes and tomatoes, which originated in South America, but are now grown widely around the world. "Nearly half of the calories we eat come from a relatively small area? The New research team puts the plant's limited availability down to a combination of history, culture and geography. But enset is likely to become a lot more common beyond Ethiopia – and who knows, maybe we will be growing it and eating it before too long.

Global Threat Landscape 2022

By LIU CHUNLIN and ROHAN GUNARATNA

An Afghanistan in turmoil turned to chaos on 15 August 2021. The international community was aware of the likelihood of there being a Taliban-al Qaeda alliance. Governments and their leaders were briefed by their intelligence communities. The United Nations Security Council Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team in its July 2021 report warned of the presence of foreign terrorist fighters and the continuity of the Taliban-al Qaeda alliance. With their return, Afghanistan's neighbourhood especially its immediate neighbourhood will suffer from instability. With the growth of both the Islamic State and al Qaeda in Africa, the continent of Africa will be gravely challenged. While the threats in the Middle East will persist, Asia and Africa will emerge as epicentres of threat.

An enemy and an adversary both of the ISIS and al Qaeda, the Shi'a threat entities have persisted from the Levant to the Gulf and to Asia. The Shi'a entities are supported by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) especially its Quds Force responsible for extraterritorial and clandestine military operations. The IRGC has stepped up their operations after the US assassination of General Qasem Soleimani. While Yemen based Shi'a groups will continue to attack Saudi Arabia, the Iraqi based Shi'a group will grow in strength, size and influence. Likewise, other Shi'a groups in the periphery of Iran, notably in Lebanon as well as in Afghanistan and Pakistan will pose a threat to both Sunni groups and to Governments. The surge in threat in 2021 will escalate and continue into 2022. The dissemination of exclusionary ideologies and the continuation of the vicious cycle of radicalisation and reciprocal radicalisation, attacks and counter attacks will persist.

Background

The security situation in Iraq and Syria is steadily improving after the ISIS was dismantled by multiple coalitions. The vacuum

created has been exploited by al Qaeda affiliates, notably Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham. Although the ISIS attacks have reduced during the last five years, there has been a revival of its mother group al Qaeda and al Qaeda centric threat groups worldwide. In addition to the institutionalisation of the threat of Salafi-Jihadist/Wahabi groups in Afghanistan, its manifestations in the form of global threat entities, Islamic State and al Qaeda persist. Despite efforts to contain, isolate and eliminate these threats, they have displaced and dispersed. The Islamic State and al Qaeda movements will rival and compete in the global south. Although not in all conflict zones, Islamic State and al Qaeda fight each other in some theatres. Rather than weaken each other, these conflicts feed recruits and resources and influence followers and potential followers to join the fight.

With the fight between the Taliban and Islamic State continuing in 2022, Afghanistan is developing as a hub for foreign terrorist fighters. The number of al Qaeda and ISIS foreign fighters are growing in Afghanistan. With the Taliban leadership at its helm in Kabul, the very threat groups including al Qaeda that once harnessed Afghanistan to attack the US on 11 September 2001, have converged in Afghanistan. In the last quarter of 2021, nearly 40 al Qaeda centric threat groups congratulated the return of the Taliban to Kabul. Among them were Palestinian Hamas in Gaza in the Middle East, Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia, and Ansaru of Nigeria in Africa. With the return of the Taliban, diverse al Qaeda aligned threat entities are setting up their offices and basing their representatives in Afghanistan. This includes Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan that threatens both tribal and mainland Pakistan as well. The manifestation of threat is not only in the physical space but in virtual space. Online radicalisation by a myriad of ideological and operational groups inspires and feeds into each other's narratives. Although the Islamic State



Al-Quds, Iran long arm in the region

has physically suffered both in the Middle East and in Asia, the threat has morphed into the cyberspace. The physical Caliphate has been dismantled but the virtual space, especially the deep and dark web, offers many safe havens. The digital Caliphate persists rejuvenating threat remnants and giving life to new threat entities.

Likely Developments in 2022

Insurgency, terrorism, extremism and challenge will continue to challenge many countries in 2022. Although many Governments since 9/11 have built operational capabilities to fight the physical manifestations of threat, they lack the capabilities to prevent and counter the ideological manifestations of threat. Regulating the religious, educational and information domains to mitigate the threat posed by divisive and hateful ideologies remains a key difficulty.

Many threat entities will exploit political pathways, negotiations and dialogue to rise to power the very same way the Taliban harnessed the Doha declaration, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), a religious party in Pakistan proscribed for violence, was delisted after negotiations. Today, the fifth largest political party in Punjab, Pakistan,

TLP's intolerant ideology is spreading both in Pakistan and overseas including among its workers overseas. Unless Pakistan takes decisive steps to curb radicalisation, arrest its directing figures and dismantle its infrastructure, there will be near 50 per cent increase in violent attacks on Pakistan soil in 2022. In 2021, Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies reported a 44 per cent increase in terrorism in Pakistan. The spread of extremism especially the killing in the name of Allah, Islam and Muslims, is driving both violence and Islamophobia.

Since the Afghan Taliban unconstitutionally captured power, the stability and security of Afghanistan is deteriorating. With the rise of poverty, the Taliban regime, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, has not disrupted the cultivation, refining and transportation of the flow of opium. The Afghan Taliban is seeking to build international legitimacy by highlighting its confrontation with the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). Desperate to gain ground, ISKP deride the Afghan Taliban of being a US ally. With flow of resources and fighters, ISKP remains a growing threat. Thus, Afghanistan will remain a source of narcotics and water-borne diseases contributing to global instability.

The diaspora and migrant communities of the west that resist integration and assimilation will be influenced by ideologies emanating from conflict zones. To advance their interests, the threat groups will influence to various degrees these vulnerable communities in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. A grotesque mixture of ideologies of various violent extremist groups including Shi'a notably the Lebanese Hezbollah will persist. In the global north, the threat posed by the Far Right will steadily supplant the threat posed by Political Islam. Although the threat posed by Islamist groups both Sunni and Shi'a streams will persist, the influence of white supremacist groups, including Neo-Nazis, will grow. The Far Right will influence both the core and peripheries of political parties, focusing especially on diaspora and migrant workers and anti-immigration.

The surface, deep and dark web will be sanctuaries to recruit, train and equip threat entities. State and non-state actors - terrorist and criminal entities - will harness technology especially the online space to advance their interests. To keep pace with technology, the threat groups, networks and individuals evolve. In addition to groups and networks operating in the global south of Asia, Africa,

Middle East and Latin America, individuals will harness online content transforming into lone operators. The use of drones by threat groups both for surveillance and strike will become a common feature. A small number of threat groups will explore the CBRN spectrum.

Conclusion

With Afghanistan's emergence as an epicentre for the global alliance of terrorism, a scenario similar to 1996-2001 period is re-emerging. With Afghanistan as its headquarters, material and ideological support with revive and revitalise threat groups in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. With al Qaeda affiliates re-linking with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, their call to enforce the Taliban-al Qaeda version of Islamic law, and no revision of their virulent ideology, the spillover effects will embolden threat entities around the world in 2022. In the coming decade, the capture of state power by an insurgent and a terrorist entity will have a profound impact on the terrorist threat landscape worldwide.

The tectonic development of the Afghan Taliban capturing power in Kabul demonstrates the current and emerging threat governments will face in the 21st century. The US and European security forces, the most powerful armies of the world, lacked the staying power and its leaders the will to remain and fight. After 350,000 Afghan police and military personnel with state-of-the-art equipment surrendered to the Taliban, there is no appetite for external intervention to change the Taliban regime. However, Governments from UAE to Japan should for man intelligence coalition with the Five Eyes to monitor and mitigate the blow back of Taliban's return. Asia, the region hosting the world's single largest Muslim population, should play a frontline role.

Liu Chunlin is CEO, K&C Protective Technologies Pte. Ltd, Singapore; Rohan Gunaratna is Professor of Security Studies at Nanyang Technological University (Singapore)

Women Home Workers' Incomes Dip

By ANURADHA NAGARAJ

Rising heat and heavier rains across South Asia, as the planet warms, are forcing home-based women workers to cut down on hours as their houses get hotter or are flooded often, resulting in a loss of income they cannot afford, researchers said on Thursday.

In a survey of 202 women in cities across India, Nepal and Bangladesh, more than 40 per cent said they were spending less time on their informal jobs and earning less, found HomeNet South Asia, a regional network of groups representing home-based workers. Across South Asia,

women home workers make up nearly a quarter of total female employment, as against only 6 per cent for men, HomeNet said in a report, adding 'home (based) work is one of the most vulnerable and lowest-paid types of work'.

Higher summer temperatures have directly impacted afternoon productivity, with some women reporting a 30 per cent drop in what they make, from food to clothing, according to the report.

'Living in a semi-pucca house (hut) with a tin roof, it becomes so hot inside that working in the afternoon is very difficult in summer,' said GomaDarji, a garment worker from Nepal who

was cited in the report.

'If I use the fan, the electricity bill goes up, which I can't afford,' she added.

Mamtaben, an Indian street-food vendor, has also seen her income shrink as heat and unseasonal rains reduce the length of time she can hawk her wares.

'Because the weather is so hot, all the food prepared gets spoilt and wasted if we don't sell it the same day,' Mamtaben was quoted as saying in the report, which examined the impact of climate change on home-based workers.

'In addition, nowadays, there is rainfall at any time of the year and any time of the day. When it rains, people don't come out to

have street food... when we don't meet our expected sales, we have to bear the loss,' she said.

The women - who largely live in urban slums - can ill afford this dip in production and income, with daily earnings for most already below the international poverty threshold of \$1.90 per person per day, the report noted.

It also flagged growing hours of unpaid care-work that have led to a dip in paid work, with increasing cases of heat-stroke and water-borne diseases affecting families.

In the past decade, South Asia has seen more frequent and extreme weather - from droughts and floods to heatwaves and hailstorms - with two-thirds of HomeNet survey respondents believing these were 'acts of God'.

Amid a lack of awareness and measures to help them cope with climate change impacts, most of these 'invisible' women workers are using negative coping strategies, including moving home or giving up their livelihoods, the report noted. Lead researcher Dharmistha Chauhan told the Thomson Reuters

Foundation such women are part of global supply chains and there is an urgent need for companies to start investing in them.

'They need support for re-skilling and help to become climate-resilient,' she said. 'Most assume there is nothing they can do to combat climate change, which they identify by the increase in the number of

heavy rain days or prolonged high temperatures.'

The report proposes using heat-resistant building materials and energy-efficient household appliances, and improving access to drinking water, as well as offering social security and financial assistance to upgrade homes.

(Thomson Reuters Foundation)



Raising the rate of female labour force participation is a policy goal for South Asian Governments

IS Militants Surrender as Kurdish-led Forces Surround Syria Prison

Kurdish-led forces in Syria say another 250 militants have surrendered as they work to clear the last part of a prison seized by the Islamic State (IS) group.

At least 300 handed themselves in on Monday (24), as Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) commandos moved into the facility in the north-eastern city of Hasaka.

Dozens are still thought to be holed up inside, along with guards held as hostages and several hundred children.

IS attacked the prison last Thursday (20), in an attempt to stage a mass breakout.

More than 160 people have been killed in the ensuing fighting, including 114 suspected militants and 45 SDF personnel, according to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The UN says up to 45,000 residents of Hasaka have also fled their homes to escape the clashes.

Before last week, Ghwayran prison held some 4,000 men and boys detained by the SDF, a U.S.-backed militia alliance that controls much of northern and eastern Syria.



The SDF is a US-backed militia alliance that controls much of northern and eastern Syria (BBC)

Dozens of inmates managed to escape after IS launched a series of attacks on the facility on Thursday night, in what was the group's most ambitious military operation since the loss of its self-declared 'caliphate' almost three years ago.

The prison takeover sparked a major battle, during which a U.S.-led

multinational coalition carried out air strikes and deployed armoured vehicles in support of the SDF.

By Monday night, SDF commandos had surrounded the prison and were preparing to retake the northern wing, where hundreds of militants and inmates were holed up with a number of guards who they had

taken hostage.

The militants were also believed to be holding up to 700 boys, some as young as 12, who were previously transferred to Ghwayran after being deemed too old to remain in detention camps for the families of suspected IS militants.

The SDF accused IS of using the

children as 'human shields' and the UN's human rights office said it was extremely concerned for their safety and well-being.

A 17-year-old Australian sent a series of audio messages from the prison, in which he said he had suffered a head injury in an air strike and appealed for medical help.

"I'm very scared, there's a lot of people dead in front of me," he said. "I'm scared I might die at any time because of the bleeding. Please help me."

SDF Spokesman Ferhat Shami said on Tuesday (25), afternoon that the operation to regain full control of the prison was proceeding slowly because the alliance was "more interested in liberating prisoners and protecting our people than eliminating mercenaries".

Rami Abdul Rahman, the director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, told AFP news agency that talks to end the stand-off were under way.

"If there is no deal for a swap, there will be a massacre, hundreds of people will be killed," he warned.

(BBC)



Amsterdam, Netherlands

Covid restrictions to be eased despite rising case numbers



Prime Minister Mark Rutte warned that the country was taking a risk in relaxing restrictions amid rising case numbers (BBC)

The Dutch Government has said it will ease its Covid-19 restrictions, among Europe's toughest, from Wednesday (26).

Dutch hospitality settings, including bars, restaurants and museums, have been shut since 18 December in a bid to curb the spread of the Omicron variant.

But despite the restrictions, Covid-19 cases have continued to increase, with some 60,000 now recorded per day.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte told a news conference that the country was 'taking a risk' in easing the restrictions.

Rutte, who has faced growing calls for a relaxation of restrictions in recent weeks amid falling deaths and admissions to intensive care, added that the new rules will be effective until 8 March.

Cafes, bars and restaurants will be allowed to open until 10 p.m., though patrons will be required to show proof of vaccination or recent recovery from a coronavirus infection to gain entry.

Nightclubs will remain closed, and capacity at sporting and cultural events will be limited to 1,250 people.

The reopening follows a wave of anger from many hospitality sector employees, who were left disappointed by the government's decision to allow shops, gyms, hairdressers and sex workers to resume business on 15 January while their sector was kept in lockdown.

Cafes in several cities opened in defiance of the restrictions the weekend before last, and dozens of museums and theatres opened as beauty salons for a day in protest.

Public support for the strict measures has also waned steadily over the past month and large demonstrations against the rules have become more frequent in the capital, Amsterdam.

Rutte alluded to this anger during his news conference, telling reporters that the Government was "consciously looking for the limits of what is possible, because of the great tensions and cries for help in recent days".

Meanwhile, Health Minister Ernst Kuipers warned that the virus is 'not the flu', but said that relaxing the curbs was important.

"Living for longer with restrictive measures harms our health and our society," he said.

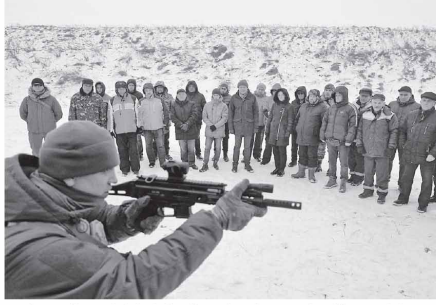
Despite the harsh restrictions, new coronavirus cases have continued to rise. On Tuesday (24), the National Institute for Health (RIVM) reported a record 366,120 cases for the previous week, a rise of 51 per cent.

Nearly 90 per cent of people in the Netherlands have now been vaccinated.

But the country has lagged behind its western European neighbours in the rollout of its booster vaccine programme, with just 57 per cent of people coming forward for their shot.

(BBC)

Ordinary Ukrainians get ready for war



Employees of essential city industries and services attend a military training session outside Lviv, Ukraine, 25 January 2022 (Reuters)

Mumbai, India

Shilpa Shetty cleared of obscenity over Richard Gere kiss



At the time the kiss triggered protests by radical Hindu groups who considered it to be an insult to Indian values (BBC)

An Indian Court has finally cleared Shilpa Shetty of obscenity charges 15 years after the Bollywood star was kissed on stage by actor Richard Gere. Footage from 2007 showed the Hollywood star kissing Shetty's cheek at an AIDS awareness event in Delhi.

The charges have only now been ruled 'groundless', with the Court saying she was the victim of an unwanted advance.

At the time the kiss triggered protests by radical Hindu groups who considered it to be an insult to Indian values. Kissing in public is considered by some in India to be taboo.

Gere hugged and kissed Shetty on a public stage at a charity event in Delhi nearly 15 years ago, a display he later apologised for.

The actor said he had been trying to show that kissing was a safe act that could not lead to the

transmission of HIV. An arrest warrant issued for Gere over the incident was thrown out by India's Supreme Court soon after. It dismissed the claims against the celebrity as being filed for 'cheap publicity'. But it was only last week that the charges against Shetty for the same incident were dismissed in Mumbai, after the case had languished in India's Court system.

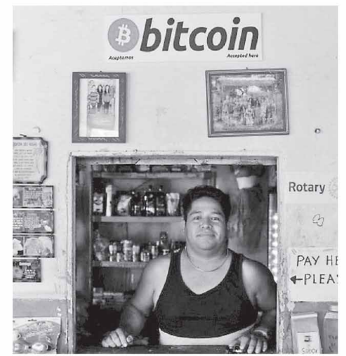
The Bollywood star's legal team argued it was unfair for Shetty to be considered a 'perpetrator' for not protesting enough against the kiss at the time.

Shilpa Shetty shot into the limelight outside India, also in 2007, after appearing in the UK reality television show Celebrity Big Brother, where she was the victim of racist bullying and insults. She went on to win the contest.

(BBC)

Washington, United States

IMF urges El Salvador to remove Bitcoin as legal tender



Bitcoin is accepted everywhere for goods and services in El Salvador, alongside the U.S. dollar (Reuters)

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged El Salvador to reverse its decision to make Bitcoin legal tender.

In September, El Salvador became the first country to allow consumers to use the cryptocurrency in all transactions, alongside the U.S. dollar.

The decision led to large-scale protests over fears it would bring instability and inflation to the impoverished Latin American country.

Bitcoin has lost about half its value since November. The IMF has warned President Nayib Bukele of the risks the cryptocurrency poses to the country, stressing that it would be difficult to get a loan from the institution.

The board's directors have now "urged the authorities to narrow the scope of the Bitcoin law by removing Bitcoin's legal tender status", according to a statement.

They highlighted the "large risks associated with the use of Bitcoin on financial stability, financial integrity and consumer protection" and with issuing Bitcoin-backed bonds.

When El Salvador introduced the virtual currency as a legal tender, the Government released a new digital wallet app, giving away USD 30 in Bitcoin to every citizen. More than 200 new cash machines were also installed across the country.

It presented the measure as a way to boost economic development and jobs, but El Salvador had been divided by the move.

It means that businesses, wherever possible, are now obliged to accept the digital coins as payment.

Bitcoin is a controversial currency in part because its value can fluctuate significantly - it has risen and fallen dramatically over the past year.

Bitcoin was trading at about USD 37,000 on Tuesday (25), having lost about half its value compared to the record of USD 67,734 hit in November.

President Bukele announced in November plans to build a Bitcoin city at the base of a volcano in El Salvador, with the cryptocurrency used to fund the project.

(BBC)



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Acuity Partners appoints new Chairman

Thimal Perera, who presently serves as Director/CEO of DFCC Bank PLC, has been appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors of Acuity Partners (Private) Limited, a full-service investment bank that is an equally owned joint venture between DFCC Bank and Hatton National Bank. Alongside this, the Board of Acuity Partners welcomed two new Independent Non-Executive Directors, Lalith Withana and Sachith N. Perera. These new appointments will help to further strengthen the Board of Acuity Partners, particularly in the areas of Audit and Risk Management. Acuity Partners offers a comprehensive suite of products and services that include Corporate Finance, Equities, Fixed Income Securities, Venture Capital Services and Asset Management.



Thimal Perera Chairman of the Board of Directors of Acuity Partners (Private) Limited

A distinguished banker and Director/CEO of DFCC Bank PLC, Perera assumed duties as Chairman of Acuity Partners on 1 January 2022. Perera has over two decades of experience in the financial services and banking sector, nationally and internationally. He has also served as the Deputy General Manager of Hatton National Bank, where he guided the retail and SME banking sector.

Lalith Withana is a senior and highly respected professional who has held management positions in the corporate sector for over 25 years, including senior management positions in banking, manufacturing and trading.

Sachith N. Perera is a respected professional in the banking industry, having served over 26 years at HSBC, 12 of which were in the capacity of Treasurer and Head of Global Markets for HSBC Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

The new board appointments and the continued support and collaboration of the two key shareholders are helping Acuity Partners to strengthen its position within the industry and continue to expand its footprint within the investment banking sector, helping to position itself among Sri Lanka's leading investment banks. Following the new appointments, the Board of Directors of Acuity Partners comprises Thimal Perera (Chairman), Ray Abeywardena (Managing Director), Rajive Dissanayake, Damith Pallawatte, Sanjay Wijemane, Lalith Withana and Sachith N. Perera.



Rupee Depreciation to Favour Apparel Industry

- Report

Sri Lanka-based textile and apparel export companies with sizable dollar-dominated income are expected to thrive as the booming top-line owing to potential steep Sri Lankan rupee depreciation, the research arm of the First Capital Group said in its latest textile and apparel sector report.

The island's garment and textile industry has an ambitious US\$ 8 billion export target this year amid the stronger demand witnessed in 2021.

After the dip witnessed in 2020 owing to Covid-19, recovery in the global context is expected to favour apparel and fabric manufacturers in Sri Lanka.

With imported raw materials amounting to US\$ 2-3 billion, local textile manufacturers can significantly enhance its contribution, it said.

An opportunity exists for local

fabric manufacturers to capture the market share by enhancing its capacity. It also stated that major fabric and apparel manufacturers are expected to benefit from the relocation strategy by brands out of China to South Asia.

Throughout the years, Sri Lankan apparel manufacturers and suppliers have gained a strong reputation worldwide for ethical manufacturing of high-quality apparels trusted by the iconic global fashion brands.

Sri Lankan apparel manufacturers initiated the cause of ethical labour practices and use of people and environment-friendly factories in the garment sector.

A campaign under the slogan of 'garment without guilt' promoted the need for positive and ethical work conditions among the garment factory workers in the world. The country's ethical

environment and labour practice have also led some leaders in the fashion world including Victoria's Secret, Gap, Nike, Tommy Hilf, Immissl and Next partnering with local garment manufacturers to improve customer confidence.

The global apparel market is projected to grow in value from US\$ 1.5 trillion in 2020 to about US\$ 2.2 trillion by 2025, showing that the demand for clothing and shoes is on the rise across the world. The apparel industry lost an estimated US\$ 342 billion in 2020 revenue compared to 2019 due to Covid-19.

The Asia Pacific region is the largest apparel market in the world, catering to 33% of global demand. Western Europe is second with 28% of the global apparel market, while Africa represents the smallest share of global demand. Although the

fashion industry struggled last year, it seems that activewear and athleisure brands flourished more than ever. With the majority of business meetings taking place in front of a notebook at home, leggings, sweatpants and loungewear have quickly become inherent pieces of our professional wardrobes.

The sportswear industry is clearly a winner in 2021, as consumers continue to spend time at home exercising and seeking comfort in trying times. The global athleisure market was valued at US\$ 248.31 billion in 2020, and it is projected to grow at a CAGR of 6.54% during the forecast period (2021-2026), the First Capital report said.

(IG)

Hambantota Port begins MGO fuel bunkering operations

First MGO supply vessel calls at the port

Oil tanker 'Sunny Bay' carrying 15,000 metric tons of Marine Gas Oil (MGO), called at the Hambantota International Port (HIP) on 23 January. The vessel was the first to discharge MGO for storage at the port tank farm, the port officials said.

HIP, with its global partner Sinopec, launched bunkering operations for Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oils (VLSFO) last year. Now, with the tank farm along with its oil jetties fully refurbished and Fire Safety Systems (FSS) certified for safety by the Lloyd's Register, HIP is ready to utilise the storage facility allocated for MGO and MDO (Marine Diesel Oil). The port which received their first MGO shipment is now capable of providing a full complement of bunkering fuels to its customers, positioning as a strategic bunker operator in the region.

Benchmarking international standards, HIP has also set up a state-of-the-art Petroleum Testing Laboratory in partnership with leading global independent inspection service provider Intertek Lanka, to provide



Tanker 'Sunny Bay' discharging Marine Gas Oil at the Hambantota International Port

innovative and bespoke assurance, testing, inspection and certification services for bunker fuels, LPG, LNG and other petrochemical products. The laboratory located within the port premises, is classified as a truly international facility capable of testing IMO 2020 Global Sulphur

Johnsson Liu, CEO of Hambantota International Port Group Pvt. Ltd. (HIPGL), says "With our Lloyd's certified oil storage facility and state-of-the-

port testing capabilities, HIP has the overall capacity to add great value to customers. With our location in the Indian Ocean rim, where 50 per cent of the world's maritime oil is traded, our oil fuel bunker, LPG and future LNG operations, we are securing the Hambantota Port's rightful place as a global maritime location."

The lab testing facility will enable HIP's clients to get their products such as fuel oil, marine diesel and marine gas oils tested efficiently and with ease, at the

bunker terminal site, ensuring that products meet the required international quality standards. The port's dedicated professional team ensures safe operations of the oil tank network, ancillary pipelines, oil berth jetties, and control systems, which are on par with international standards. All supporting facilities for operational safety are in place such as a wholly functional freightling system and wastewater treatment facility.

HIP's location in close proximity to one of the busiest sea routes coupled with the port's partnership with top global player Sinopec to provide IMO 2020 compliant high quality fuel oils, makes Sri Lanka's energy market more competitive while benefiting Sri Lankan players supplying bunkers for vessels. Once commenced HIP will cater to the second highest demand in the maritime industry. The MGO supplied by the port is of very high quality, compliant with ISO 8217 standard and can also be provided to overseas locations such as the Maldives.

NDBIB achieves Rs 75 B in capital raisings in 2021

NDB Investment Bank (NDBIB) celebrated a record breaking year of capital raisings in 2021 and stamped its position once again as one of the market leaders for investment banking in Sri Lanka. NDBIB advised on a record LKR 75 billion in capital market transactions including nearly LKR 50 billion via debt capital markets, LKR 22 billion in public and private equity transactions and a host of M&A transactions valued at LKR 3 billion. Execution of such transactions through adverse environments such as multiple lockdowns, numerous other pandemic related hindrances and volatile macro-economic conditions reiterates NDBIB's dominance and bears further testament to its achievement.

In a year flooded with public equity offerings after a long hiatus, NDBIB acted as Financial Advisor to a five public equity offerings (four IPOs and the only Secondary Public Offering this year) raising nearly LKR 8 billion. Known for its innovation over the years, the same was brought to life in 2021 using tactical placement and distribution strategies to cater to the nuances of each public equity offering, resulting in healthy demand being generated from the target investor segments. These transactions included the IPO of hSent Business Solutions



Darshan Perera - Director/CEO, Kaushil Laksumanage - Chief Operating Officer and Nilendra Weerasinghe - Chief Corporate Advisory Officer

Limited, which witnessed an oversubscription in recent times of 15.5x and three oversubscribed public equity offerings in the Banks and Diversified Financial sectors despite the challenging macro-economic environment. The IPO of hSent was also supported by the launch of an Online Application Portal to facilitate seamless online applications by the investing public.

NDBIB was once again acclaimed for its track record of excellence by securing the award for 'Sri Lanka's Best Investment Bank' by Euromoney Magazine for the 10th consecutive year and the award for 'Best Corporate and

Investment Bank' by the Asiamoney Awards for the 5th consecutive year during the year 2021. NDBIB remains the only investment bank in the country to be recognised by the Euromoney Magazine.

NDBIB also secured Norfund's first equity investment in the country via a dual tranche offering of its ultimate parent, NDB Bank. The Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries which currently stands as the largest shareholder of the Bank holding 9.99 per cent, was part of a mammoth fund raise combining a Rights Issue and a Private Placement amounting to LKR 9.5 billion under the advice of NDBIB.

Luminex Limited seeks CSE listing

Luminex Limited, a multifaceted engineering company which has been in existence for 35 years, announced its plans to list on the CSE, subject to regulatory approval. Navara Capital Limited has been appointed as the financial adviser and manager to the issue.

Established in 1986, the company has an annual turnover of Rs 2.5 billion and aims to scale up and consolidate its local operation, with plans to extend its footprint to the Middle East in the near future. The funding from the IPO is expected to fuel the company's growth trajectory in the medium term.

Luminex Limited has completed over 850 projects during the past 10 years and its pioneering presence in Sri Lanka's Telecommunication infrastructure sphere has enabled the company to serve market leaders. They are also in the forefront of Fiber Network development projects for Sri Lanka's two leading telecom service providers and a Civil Engineering service provider for the National Water Supply and Drainage Board. The Company's operations are backed by a 550-strong technical workforce across 8 operation centres and 29 project offices.

Three non-Executive Directors have been appointed to the Board recently, who bring with them a wealth of business knowledge. Dr. Harsha de Silva - Chairman/Non-Executive Director, counts over 25 years senior and strategic management experience in the corporate sphere locally and internationally. He is a veteran of the Investment Banking industry in Sri Lanka. Asoka Hettigoda - Independent Non-Executive Director counts over 25 years of experience in strategic management and is the Managing Director of the Siddhalapa



Dr. Harsha de Silva - Chairman/Non-Executive Director, Ruwan Fernando - Managing Director of Luminex Limited, Asoka Hettigoda - Independent Executive Director

Group, while Lionel Inbulana - Independent Non-Executive Director is a Chartered Engineer with a wide range of experience in serving Sri Lanka Telecom for more than 35 years, having served as Chief Regional Officer in charge of Sales and Operations of Sri Lanka Telecom PLC.

Commenting on the preparations for the proposed IPO, Ruwan Fernando - Managing Director of Luminex said: "We are looking forward to list Luminex Limited on the Dri Savi Board of the Colombo Stock Exchange as part of our strategy to broad-based ownership and to further enhance our brand equity. Luminex is positioned strongly in the Nation's engineering sector and is geared to expand its operations beyond the shores of Sri Lanka. Luminex is very optimistic against a backdrop of aggressive expansion by telecom and water distribution infrastructure investments which are expected to benefit revenue growth. We are also proud of our consistent track record of generous and timely dividend payments made to shareholders."

Sanjaya Bandara inducted President of CA Sri Lanka



Outgoing President of CA Sri Lanka, Manil Jayasinghe inducting Sanjaya Bandara as the new President of CA Sri Lanka in the presence of Gopal Baglay, High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, Vish Govindasamy, Chairman of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, Heshan Kuruppu, new President of CA Sri Lanka and Dulani Fernando, CEO of CA Sri Lanka.

Sanjaya Bandara was inducted as 26th President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka (CA Sri Lanka) on 24 January 2022 at a gala event held at the Shangri-La Hotel, Colombo. Bandara was formally inducted by outgoing President of CA Sri Lanka, Manil Jayasinghe in the presence of a distinguished gathering including Gopal Baglay, High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, Vish Govindasamy, Chairman of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce as well as business and industry leaders, regulatory heads and high profile accounting personalities.

Bandara is a highly respected Chartered Accountant who has extensively contributed to the accountancy profession both locally and regionally. A fellow member of CA Sri Lanka, he commands over 23 years of experience in practice and at present serves as the Head of Assurance at B. R. De Silva & Co., which is a member firm of Nexia International, apart from serving as a Director of Prime Land Residences PLC.

Bandara served as a Council Member of CA Sri Lanka since 2012 and is also a Board Member of the

Confederation of Asian Pacific Accountants (CAPA), South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA) and the Sri Lanka Accounting and Auditing Standards Monitoring Board (SLAASMB).

He is also a Commissioner of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Sri Lanka (SECI) and a Member of the Financial System Stability Consultative Committee of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accountancy and Financial Management from the University of Sri Jayawardenepura and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Colombo. At present, he also serves as a Member of the Governing Council of the University of Kelaniya and the Association of Accounting Technicians of Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, Heshana Kuruppu was elected Vice President of CA Sri Lanka. He has served as a Council Member of the Institute since 2012 and is the current Group Chief Financial Officer/Director at David Peris Group of Companies. He commands over 22 years of experience.

BMICH Wins BWIO USA Award



Chiran Keerthisinghe of BMICH receiving the award

BMICH, one of the most recognisable and iconic landmarks in the country, recently won the prestigious BWIO Platinum Award of Honour for 'The Most Outstanding Service Excellence Organisation for the Year - 2020' in the 'large venue facilitator's category. The award was presented by Business World International Organization, USA (BWIO) at the awards ceremony, held at the Taj Samudra Hotel, Colombo.

'We are delighted to be recognised for our continuous and steadfast commitment to service-delivery level of excellence.

Our well-coordinated team delivers the highest level of service to our clients, tenants and visitors to our premises for any one of our numerous events' said Sunil Dissanayake - Chief Executive, BMICH.

BWIO -USA is a multinational business consulting and market research firm headquartered in USA which provides consulting to companies interested in increasing profits, sales and revenue or aiming to start consulting. It is the trusted advisor to many of the world's most leading businesses and institutions.

ComBank Named 'Most Sustainable Bank in Bangladesh'

Commercial Bank Bangladesh, Commercial Bank of Ceylon's largest overseas operation, has been adjudged 'Most Sustainable Bank in Bangladesh' at the close of 2021, during which the Bank was named 'Best Foreign Bank in Bangladesh' by two independent bodies and retained its 'AAA' credit rating.

The 'Most Sustainable Bank in Bangladesh' award was presented at the Dubai-based International Business Magazine Awards 2021 that honoured best-in-class achievements of organisations across various spheres related to international business and finance. The title recognises the sustainable and stable growth that Commercial Bank Bangladesh has demonstrated over the years.

In 2021, Commercial Bank Bangladesh was also recognised with top awards by two UK-based institutions - (the Global Business Outlook (GBO) magazine and Global Economics Limited, a financial publication that recognises best performers in various financial sectors, worldwide.

Both these publications crowned Commercial Bank Bangladesh the 'Best Foreign Bank in Bangladesh' - a title that acknowledges the Bank's resilience in the face of competition from local and



The management team of Commercial Bank Bangladesh with the awards won in 2021.

international banks, its service excellence and dedication towards serving customers.

The Bank's prowess in 2021 was also underlined by its 'AAA' (Triple A) credit rating from Credit Rating Information and Services Ltd (CRISL). This was the 11th consecutive year that Commercial Bank Bangladesh was given a 'AAA' long term credit rating, which is the highest credit rating given to a financial institution in Bangladesh by

CRISL. The latest ratings is the outcome of an in-depth analysis of the operational and financial performance of the Bank along with an assessment of relevant quantitative and qualitative factors.

Commenting on the Bangladesh operation's achievements in 2021, Commercial Bank MD and Group CEO, S. Renganathan said: 'Despite the pandemic-caused decline in economic

activity and other challenges, Commercial Bank Bangladesh has proven its mettle and stayed on the course charted for itself. The accolades and accreditations the Bank has received are affirmations of its stability, consistency in performance and service delivery'. We would like to thank our stakeholders and customers in Bangladesh for their support as we celebrate the close of another successful year.'

Ceylinco Life's Annual Report 2020 honoured



Ceylinco Life Director/Chief Financial Officer Palitha Jayawardena and Executive Director/Deputy CFO Rang Abeynayake (fourth and second from left) receive the CMA Excellence in Integrated Reporting award on behalf of the Company, from Central Bank Governor Ajith Nivard Cabral

The 2020 Annual Report of Ceylinco Life has been recognised as one of the 10 Best Integrated Reports of 2021 at the 7th edition of the 'CMA Excellence in Integrated Reporting Awards' presented by the Institute of Certified Management Accountants (CMA) of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's life insurance leader won this accolade for its annual report titled 'Derisking The Future' which offers insights into how the Company created value for its stakeholders in both financial and non-financial terms while adhering to best governance practices during one of the most challenging years on record.

In all, 41 integrated reports that met the CMA criteria were evaluated using guidelines set out in the International Integrated Reporting Framework issued

in December 2013. The evaluation took into account not only accounting and financial information but also non-financial information provided in the integrated reports. The reports were examined by an experienced evaluation panel, comprising eminent international and local judges.

Ceylinco Life has followed the Integrated Reporting Framework since 2015 subsequent to the segregation of Life and General Insurance into separate business entities under Section 53 of the Regulation of Insurance Industry (Amendment) Act No 3 of 2011, which came into effect that year. Integrated Reporting provides a holistic view of how the Company creates sustainable value for its diverse group of stakeholders, a spokesman said.

CMA Excellence in Integrated Reporting Awards 2021

LB Finance Strikes Gold Award as Overall Winner

It was a victorious awards night for LB Finance at the recently concluded CMA Excellence in Integrated Reporting Awards 2021. Organized by the Institute of Certified Management Accountants of Sri Lanka (CMA Sri Lanka) and held at the Hotel Taj Samudra on 11 January 2022, LB Finance beat many reputable corporate companies for the evening's top honors, winning five awards including the Overall Winner - Gold Award.

LB Finance also won the inaugural CMA C20 Excellence Award, awarded for the first time in the competition for outstanding integrated Reporting. In addition, it also took home the trophies for Top Five Excellence Reports Award, Winner Best Integrated Report - Finance and Leasing Sector, Winner Special Award - Best Disclosure on Capitals, and Winner Special Award - Best SDG Reporting.

Organised for the 7th year in succession, the CMA Excellence in Integrated Reporting Awards is supported annually by the Colombo Stock Exchange and encourages Sri Lankan private companies and government institutions, both listed and



unlisted, to follow principles of integrated reporting that benefits investors and stakeholders. Strictly evaluated on guidelines that apply in the International Framework, the integrated reports are judged on Guiding Principles and Content Elements and Fundamental Concepts appearing in the International <R>-Framework issued by the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC). It takes into consideration not only the accounting and financial information but also non-financial information provided with special emphasis given to strategic focus and future orientation, value creation, connectivity of information and reliability and completeness. Upholding these rigorous standards, companies must maintain excellence in their integrated reporting to qualify for these awards.

Targeting Home Broadband customers

SLT-MOBITEL completes first phase of Amazon Alexa integrations

The first phase of fully integrating Amazon Alexa for SLT-MOBITEL Home Broadband customers was successfully concluded recently. Now customers can seek help from Amazon's virtual smart assistant Alexa and obtain a range of information on SLT-MOBITEL services such as Voice Broadband and PEO TV services ensuring subscribers experience exciting new intelligent built digital lifestyles.



Dilshan Botella, CEO of The Connection Workshop, handing over the report on the project to Prabhath Dahanayake, Chief Marketing Officer SLT. Also present were Lathika Weerasinghe, Administrative Coordinator Anup Silva, Lead Developer Alexaprogammo of The Connection Workshop, Ayoma Wickramarachchi, Dep.GM, Product Development and Management of SLT, RuwanRekogama, Engineer-Product Development and Management of SLT

CMA Excellence in Integrated Reporting Award 2021

Bank of Ceylon bags three awards

Bank of Ceylon (BOC) emerged victorious at the 'CMA Excellence in Integrated Reporting Awards 2021' by capturing three important awards. The Annual Awards ceremony was organised with an aim of encouraging Private Companies and Government institutions, both listed and unlisted, to follow principles of integrated reporting that benefits investors and stakeholders. BOC was awarded with Best Disclosure on Value Creation and Best Integrated Report - State Owned Enterprises / Companies awards. Further, the Bank was



Additional General Manager/ CFO Russell Fonseka, DGM Finance and Planning Ruwan Kumara, AGM Budget, Strategic Planning and Investment, Zeena Ruwals, Centre for three trophies (Chief Manager R.A.R. Priyadarshani and other officers of the Finance and Planning Division with trophies and certificates received at the CMA Awards Ceremony, also recognised among Ten Best Integrated Reports for the year. 'The award emphasises the Bank's commitment on upholding good governance and integrity in all its operations. Being a responsible State bank, BOC believes its success for over eight decades as one of the leading Banks in the country, is strongly linked to these values.'

LOOK

www.ceylontoday.lk



Team Azur

Persevering with Passion

In conversation with Team Azur

By SHANUKA KADUPITTIYAGE
CEYLON TODAY FEATURES

The world of geek culture and comic book fans in general changed thanks to the Marvel Cinematic Universe and its early movies. For the first time ever, fictional characters, heroes were mainstream and everyone was interested to know more about them.

The same can be said about fans of superheroes and comic books in Sri Lanka as well. And it is during this period of time where a small spark of an idea bubbles in the mind of a few like-minded Sri Lankan youth, who all wondered among themselves, "Why don't we have stories about our superheroes of our own?"

This was exactly the thought that ran in the mind of a few like-minded geeks, including Harsha Mallawa Arachechi, who shared his question on the internet, which later became the spark that created a group of lifelong friends on a journey to tell their own tales of heroes.

Here was the birthplace of Azur Entertainment. What once began as a group of strangers on the internet wanting to tell their own stories, now has grown to become an ambitious project that includes a number of already published work and a number of ongoing creations as well.

Ceylon Today had the opportunity to speak with the creative team behind Azur, who have persevered in making their passion a reality.

Beginnings

Consisting of a group of writers and artists, Azur Entertainment is the result of these newfound friends organising themselves and working together to create content and tell new stories, ever since their humble beginnings in late 2017.

The name Azur was a result of the group rebranding themselves after experimenting with different names and trying to create their own unique identity.

Besides Harsha, the team consisted of Pasan Karunathilaka, Udith Rajapakse, Dimuthu Rames and Sandun Kanishla along with



Shehan Ranasinghe

Shehan Ranasinghe. All came from different walks of life, from different parts of the country but were united in the love they had for telling stories.

"It really was an uphill struggle at first," they shared. "We did everything online through social media while balancing our school education, with little to no experience on what we were doing. I think we more often failed than succeeded in the things we have attempted."

However, their efforts did shine through with a handful of successes, one being the science fiction novel *Akramanaya* (*Invasion*) as well as a few other comic series published online.

"We've also been working on a new comic book project which we aim to publish and release for local readers around the time the September book fair comes

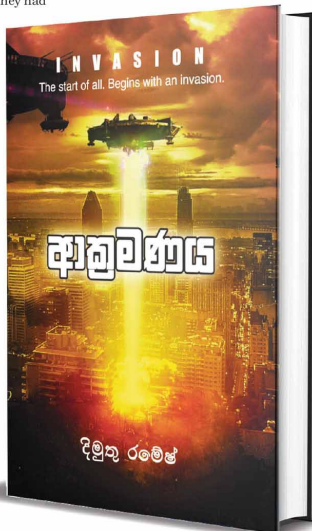
around," they added.

Creating through collaborating

Starting out, the team had to pool in their creative capabilities together with some being talented at art while others at creating stories. For years, the group of friends made time for each other and created stories while balancing their busy schedules as either nine-to-five employees and undergraduates at universities.

Reading through some of the creations by the group, it was evident that a lot of their creations were inspired by either local folklore or historical figures.

"We wanted to create stories that had something unique to Sri Lanka in them," they explained when we brought up the observation.



"We wanted to create new spins on characters and tales that were already familiar to a Sri Lankan audience."

This is especially true in a number of ongoing narratives created and posted by AZUR, including their latest project, *Dushta Gambi*, their own creative spin on the historical Dutugemunu and Dasa Maha Yodha story we all know.

Answering raised eyebrows

It would go without saying, Azur's use of historical figures and characters as well as their creative interpretations have caused a few eyebrows to be raised, which they are well aware of.

"It's true that by doing our own creative interpretation on historical characters, we've been accused of somehow devaluing the historical integrity of these stories," they commented.

"But you have to understand that a number of popular comic book characters are inspired by myths and legends. What we are trying to do is no different from what other comic book creators have done when using characters such as Thor, Odin and Wonder Woman."

A long journey

Around four years since that fateful post on Facebook gathered these friends together, Azur is taking steps forward and constantly improving itself.

"After years of trying, succeeding and failing, we've come to a point where we are now confident in the projects we are doing at the moment. It has been a long journey and now we are more experienced, seasoned and ready to do more," they shared.

The team at Azur hinted at a few interesting projects that they are planning to unveil in the future. To find out more, follow Azur Entertainment on social media to stay updated.



Glam Gal!

Paris Hilton leaves for *The Tonight Show* with Jimmy Fallon in NYC



Super Chic!

Laverne Cox stuns during an appearance at Paris Fashion Week



Bundled Beauty!

Selena Gomez stays warm with lots of layers and a long puffer coat in NYC



Spitting Image!

Elizabeth Debicki dresses as Princess Diana in all white while filming *The Crown* in London

Singer Mega Turns 24



Singer Mega celebrated its 24th anniversary on the 23 January. As part of its celebrations, Singer Mega Showrooms Island wide had special anniversary offers across all categories and a host of special activities for both existing and new customers, from 21-27 January.

Since its first store in 1998, Singer Mega has long since established itself as the best place for household goods and electronics. Sales Director of Singer Mega,

Vajira Tennakoon, shared his thoughts on this momentous occasion. "It is with great pride that we celebrate 24 amazing years as Sri Lanka's leading consumer durable retailer. Our valued customers will have a chance to celebrate this amazing occasion with fantastic offers and activities available for their enjoyment. We look forward to providing our customers with an even larger portfolio of brands and enhanced service levels in the future."

Recently, Singer Mega showrooms have been revamped with a brand-new look and vision for the future. The new showrooms have been designed to be more spacious and to offer customers a more interactive and

fulfilling shopping experience than ever before. Singer has also partnered with a host of new technology brands like ZTE, TCL, DAIWA and DELL just to name a few, which will be available under one roof for all customers to enjoy.

Business Development Manager of Singer Mega, Manjula Silva, also shared his comments "We are taking tremendous steps towards the future with a bold new look and all-new vision. Now, we look forward to celebrating the 24th anniversary of Singer Mega with our customers, as Singer continues to grow from strength to strength to enrich and elevate lives of Sri Lankans.

Going forward, every Singer Mega showroom across the island

will share both the new look and an all-new curated customer experience, which includes a diverse multi-verse product portfolio from around the world, across all categories. Staff at every showroom with in-depth knowledge of all brands and products, and interactive kiosks will further enhance the customers shopping experience.

From humble beginnings in 1877, Singer (Sri Lanka) PLC has evolved into one of Sri Lanka's largest and most diversified companies with an unmatched presence island wide. Singer boasts a global multi-brand product portfolio including their own, across household products, industrial and financial categories.



Ananda College OBA Holds its 37th AGM

Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Old Anandians 75 - 80 group to elect the new 37th Executive Committee members was held on 21 January at All Ceylon Buddhist Congress auditorium. Under the Presidency of Udaya De Silva and the executive committee of the past year re-elected unopposed for the current year of 2021-2022.

Re-elected Executive office bearers are as follows:

President - Udaya de Silva
Immediate Past President - Amal Perusingha

Vice President - Ajith Jayasuriya
Vice President - Janaka Kurukulasuriya

Vice President - Ajit Gunasekara
Vice President - Lakshana Hewapathage

Co-Secretary - Sahadewa Senanayake

Co-Secretary - Saliya Kodituwakku

Treasurer - Sunil Mudalige
Assistant Treasurer - Aruna Weerakoon

Co-Editor - Ajith Premaratne
Co-Editor - Moditha Dayaratne

Welfare Secretary - Jagath Chandrasiri

The 37th Annual General Meeting was followed by a fellowship at Burgher Recreation Club, Colombo.



PUZZLES

1800

DAILY SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SUDOKU

1879 SOLUTION

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

UP & DOWN Words™

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt

1. GOOD

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

AVENUE

CLUES

- Luck
- Treat with a message
- "Sesame Street" character
- "King Kong," for example
- Type of preview
- Area for mobile homes
- NVC thoroughfare

Yesterday's Answer

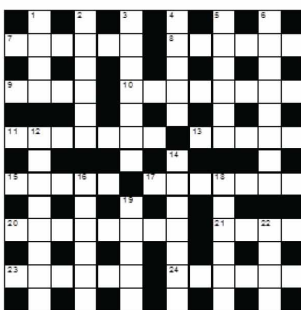
1. STUART	LITTLE	LITTLE
2. RICHARD	RICHARD	RICHARD
3. RICHARD	PETTY	PETTY
4. PETTY	CASH	CASH
5. CASH	GROUP	GROUP
6. CROP	CIRCLE	CIRCLE
7. CIRCLE	AROUND	AROUND

Crossword

Puzzle 1980

CLUES

Across	Down
7 A long chair; for reclining (6)	1 Thyself (4)
8 Sleep in (4,2)	2 A soft wool fabric; made from the fleece of the vicuna (8)
9 Religious leader (4)	3 Containing ten or ten parts (7)
10 A provocative Spanish courtship dance (8)	4 Jet (5)
11 Normally (7)	5 Building where birds are kept (6)
13 Blinding (5)	6 Having an oblique or slanted direction (8)
15 Perhaps (5)	12 Water containing salts (8)
17 The whorl of petals of a flower (7)	14 nation's ruler or head of state (7)
20 Headscarf worn by Russian peasant women (8)	16 The property of copious abundance (6)
21 Young deer (4)	18 That which is cut off from a larger piece (6)
23 Sentinal (6)	19 Expressing a demand or assertion (5)
24 Child of your aunt or uncle (6)	22 Sound of something in rapid motion (4)



SOLUTION FOR CROSSWORD 1979

A	E	D	E	D	B						
A	L	U	M	N	I	T	I	C	L	E	
O	B	U	G	W	A	R	E				
L	E	E	R	R	E	H	E	A	R	S	E
T	O	Y	M	A	N	T	V	L	S		
N	A	P	P	Y	I	N	I	N	I	L	
R	P	L	I	B	I	O	M				
N	R	P	L	E							
S	Q	U	I	R	R	E	L	A	S	H	Y
U	S	I	O	D	A						
D	I	S	O	W	N	W	A	L	N	U	T
L	I	N	T	Y	E	L					



Iga Swiatek

Swiatek Sets Up Semi-final Date with Collins

French Open winner Iga Swiatek managed to temper her frustrations and rally from a set and a break down in brutal heat to overpower Estonian Kaia Kanepi 4-6 7-6(2) 6-3 on Wednesday to reach her first Australian Open semi-final.

Poland's Swiatek will next meet 27th-seeded American Danielle Collins, who earlier defeated Frenchwoman Alize Cornet 7-5 6-1, for a place in Saturday's final at Melbourne Park.

In their first career meeting, Swiatek wasted breakpoint chances in each of Kanepi's first three service games and it was the Estonian who converted her first chance in the seventh game to nose ahead.

Swiatek saved four set-points in the ninth game that lasted 16 minutes, but could not stop

Kanepi from taking the opener on her ninth opportunity after another lengthy game.

"In the first set I had so many breakpoints. I felt like I missed my chances because she broke me on her first breakpoint," Swiatek said on court.

"I was pretty annoyed. That was a mistake because I should have been focused on the future, on the next ball."

Kanepi, 36, appeared set to progress beyond the last eight at a Grand Slam for the first time when she broke early in the second, with a frustrated Swiatek slapping herself and slamming her racket on court.

The Estonian did most of the damage with her powerful double-handed backhand, leaving Swiatek rooted to the spot and watching helplessly as the

winners screamed past.

But the 2020 Roland Garros champion, who committed 12 double faults in the match, regained her composure and raised her level in a second set tiebreaker to level the contest at 1-1.

Swiatek suffered two more breaks in the decider, but managed to break 115th-ranked Kanepi four times, sealing the three-hour contest on her second match point when the Estonian sent a backhand wide for her 62nd unforced error.

"I'm really glad that I have my voice because I was shouting so loud," Swiatek said.

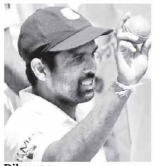
"This match was crazy and without the energy in the stadium, I think it would've been really hard to win it."



Danielle Collins

(Reuters)

Dilruwan Perera retires from International Cricket



Dilruwan

Former Sri Lanka off-spinner Dilruwan Perera has announced his retirement from all forms of international cricket.

In a letter to Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), Perera (39) said the time is now right for him to retire from his international cricket journey. However, he said he will continue playing domestic cricket for a while longer.

He last played for Sri Lanka in January 2021 against England in Galle.

The off-spinner represented the country across all international formats (43 Tests, 13 ODIs and 3 T20s). He has taken 161 Test wickets, 15 ODI wickets and 3 T20 wickets.

Australian players nervous about Pakistan tour

Australian cricketers are on edge barely a month before their first tour of Pakistan in 24 years amid an uptick in terror attacks in the Asian nation, the Sydney Morning Herald reported on Wednesday.

"We're all tsey about it," a source close to the team told the newspaper, using an informal Australian term for being anxious or worried.

Australia are scheduled to play three Tests, three one-day internationals and one Twenty20 match in Pakistan starting 3 March.

Selector George Bailey told reporters on Wednesday that security arrangements would be "very, very robust and very, very thorough".

"I believe the Boards are still working through some of the minor details around that tour, so once that gets the formal tick of approval then we'll announce the squad post that, but we're reasonably well down the track," he added.

Australia has not toured Pakistan since 1998 due to security concerns, instead playing its away matches in the United Arab Emirates.

Though some international touring sides have returned to Pakistan in recent years, New Zealand abruptly halted a tour there in September citing security issues and England shortly afterwards cancelled a planned tour.

An increase in attacks since

the Taliban regained control of neighbouring Afghanistan in August has not helped to bolster confidence either.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid said terrorist incidents had increased by more than a third since the United States withdrew from Afghanistan, local media reported.

A bomb blast ripped through a crowded market in eastern Pakistan on Thursday, killing three people and wounding over 20, Police said.

A newly formed separatist group based in southwestern Balochistan province claimed responsibility for the attack in a text message sent to a Reuters reporter.

SLAF Women's Team wins National Wrestling Championship

The Women's Team of Sri Lanka Air Force won the National Wrestling Championship for the year 2022, while the SLAF Men's Team ended as runners-up.

The Championship was held at National Youth Services Council Indoor Stadium - Maharagama on 22 and 23 January.

The Women's Team won 5 Gold, 5 Silver and 1 Bronze medal, while the Men's Team earned 4 Gold, 2 Silver and 4 Bronze medals. SLAF Wrestler Corporal Maduranga TKC clinched the Trophy for Best Technical Wrestler.

Women Gold Medalists
59kg - Corporal Priyanga Kumari MWBM
76 Kg - Leading Aircraftwoman Weerasinghe WECKR
68 Kg - Leading Aircraftwoman Cheethana RMS
72 Kg - Leading Aircraftwoman Lakmal WGW
65 Kg - Leading Aircraftwoman Perera CNN

Silver Medalists
72 Kg - Leading Aircraftwoman Wickramapala RKDP
57 Kg - Leading Aircraftwoman Weasinghe WWHH
68 Kg - Leading Aircraftwoman Rupasinghe RAMN



Skipper of the SLAF Women's wrestling team receiving the championship trophy

Under 15 Division I St. Thomas Kotte stun S. Thomas

St. Thomas' Kotte created a major upset when they beat S Thomas' Mt. Lavinia by 6 wickets in Mt. Lavinia on Tuesday.

In other matches, Sri Dharmaloka Kelaniya and P. De S. Kularatne MV Ambalagoda registered big wins over St. Peter's Negombo and Karadeniya CC.

In Girulla (Sri Dharmaloka won by 192 runs)
Sri Dharmaloka: 340/8 (50) (Omal Vihanga 86, Nanidu Sasmita 46, Gavina Kalhan 45, Tharun Kawa 37, Tharusha Chandipa 32, Rdmaka Fernando 2/49, Sathiv Masitha 2/56, Gimhan Perera 2/65)

St. Peter's Negombo: 148 (32.1) (Yohan Alwis 38, Primash Roshan 23 n.o., Mandil Maliyarathna 23, Sevin Pelpola 3/25, Gavina Kalhan 3/27)

In Karadeniya (P. De S. Kularatne MV won by 284 runs)
P. De S. Kularatne: 367/4 (50) (Pasindu Mhiran 118, Nethuja Basika 78 n.o., Sasindu Kausan 71, Janidu Chamika 44)

Karadeniya Central: 83 (29.1) (Kulindu Sewmika 24, Gimhana Nimsara 3/19, Janidu Chamika 3/12, Nethuja Basika 2/06, Dasindu Kashal 2/12)

In Mt. Lavinia (St. Thomas Kotte won by 6 wickets)
S. Thomas': 207 (44.2) (Avinash Fernando 70, Yasindu Gunarathna 23, Sajith Gunasinghe 23, Thiruna Abisheka 4/06, Ridesha Rasmika 3/49) St. Thomas Kotte: 209/4 (32.1) (Matthew Solomon 67, Dinula Abishek 37 n.o., Dinula Isuru 28, Kavindu Dias 3/52)

(IR)

Under-17 Division 1 Denuwan 106* helps St. Servatius beat Debarawewa NS

Denuwan Pramod of St. Servatius College Matara scored an unbeaten century against Debarawewa National School in their first round fixture on Tuesday.

St. Servatius Matara, D. S. Senanayake Colombo, Royal Colombo and St. Sebastian's Moratuwa recorded wins.

In Matara (St. Servatius won by 74 runs)
St. Servatius: 251/4 (50) (Denuwan Pramod 106 n.o., Bagya de Silva 81 n.o.)

Debarawewa NS: 177 (44.4) (Adisha Abilasha 76, Sithum Sandeepa 31, Tharush Gamidu 4/18, Tharun Sevinda 2/18, Disan Dewmith 2/30)

In Beddagana (DSS Colombo won by 157 runs)
D. S. Senanayake: 316/6 (50) (Deshan Hettige 77, Chenul Pinsara 58 n.o., Poorna Sulakshana 54, Gaviru Senchas 33, Viran Navodya 2/27)

Ananda Shasthralaya Kotte: 159 (44.5) (Janitha Chathuranga 44, Lakshitha Lakindu 24, Adisha Bandaranayake 3/15 Rasin Perera 2/21, Akinu Weerasuriya 2/25)

At Reid Avenue (Royal Colombo won by 7 wickets)
St. Joseph's Wattala: 105/8 (50) (Vidun Gunasekara 45 n.o., Abishek Iddawela 3/23, Dumeth Oshana 2/10)

Royal: 106/3 (16.4) (Hivin Caldera 38, Sineeth Jayawardana 22)

In Moratuwa (St. Sebastian's won by 2 wickets)
Thurston Colombo: 111 (37.1) (Shanika Deshapriya 27, Tyrel Baskaran 4/30, Agitha Kudaligama 2/09, Shehan Mithendra 2/13)

St. Sebastian's: 112/8 (29.1) (Krishen Bandara 33, Thenuka Dewapriya 3/21, Nimantha Hansaka 3/49)

(IR)

Sri Lanka Tour of Australia 2022

Four Uncapped Players in T20 Squad

Kusal Mendis, Danushka Gunathilaka return

By **WICHTHERA WEERASINGHE**

The national selectors have opted for four novice players in the 20-member Sri Lanka squad which is slated to undertake a five game T-20 series against Australia commencing next month.

The four rookies who have caught the national selectors attention are Nuwan Thushara, Kamil Mishara, Janith Liyanage and Shiran Fernando.

Of the said quartet, Thushara, Mishara and Liyanage had impressed during the LPL staged late last year, but all of them are yet to win their ODI caps. The selectors have also recalled Dhanushka Gunathilaka, Kusal Mendis and Jeffrey Vandersary for national duty. The trio missed out on last year's ICC T-20 World Cup. However, pacer Nuwan Pradeep and Kusal Janith Perera who were part of the national team which contested the ICC T-20 World Cup in 2021, have been sidelined, with rising star Charith Asalanka being promoted as vice captain of the side.

Meanwhile, informed sources said that dynamic batter Dhanushka Rajapaksa who had recently announced his retirement from

international cricket before rescinding his decision due to intervention of the Sports Minister, has also been overlooked from the 20-member squad. According to sources, Rajapaksa has not been drafted due to his not having completed his physical fitness tests. The five-match T-20 series between hosts Australia and Sri Lanka is slated to kick off on 11 February in Sydney, while the second game is set to take place at the same venue two days later.

The third match is scheduled for 15 February at the Manuka Oval with the fourth and fifth games slated for 18 and 20 February.

The first four matches are set to kick off at 1.30 p.m. (SL time), with the series finale scheduled to kick off at 11.30 a.m. (SL time).

Rumesh Ratnayake appointed interim coach

Rumesh Ratnayake was appointed as the interim coach of the National Team for the upcoming Sri Lanka Tour of Australia.

He was appointed by the Executive Committee of Sri Lanka Cricket in consultation with the Technical Advisory Committee.

Ratnayake will not travel to Australia with the team but will join them before the 1st T20I game, as he is currently in self-isolation having tested positive for COVID-19.

Malinga appointed Bowling Strategy Coach

In a media release, SLC announced they have appointed Lasith Malinga as 'Bowling Strategy Coach' which will be effective from 1 to 20 February 2022.

SL Squad: Dasun Shanaka (Captain), Charith Asalanka (Vice-Captain), Avishka Fernando, Pathum Nissanka, Danushka Gunathilaka, Kusal Mendis, Dinesh Chandimal, Chamika Karunaratne, Janith Liyanage, Kamil Mishara, Rumesh Mendis, Wanindu Hasaranga, Lahiru Kumara, Nuwan Thushara, Dushmantha Chameera, Binura Fernando, Maheesh Theekshana, Jeffrey Vandersary, Praveen Jayawickrama and Shiran Fernando (Subject to Ministerial Approval)



ICC Under-19 World Cup

Unbeaten Sri Lanka eye slot in semis

Take on Afghanistan today in quarters

Unbeaten Sri Lanka will face Afghanistan in the Quarter Final of the Under-19 World Cup today in West Indies. The game is set to commence at 6.30 p.m. (SL time).

Sri Lanka entered the fray from Group 'D' and qualified for the last eight being undefeated. Furthermore, it is also after a lapse of six years Sri Lanka has made it to the last eight, the previous occasion being in 2016 under the captaincy Charith Asalanka.

Commenting on his team's chances via online head coach Avishka Gunawardene expressed confidence his

charges are capable of making it to the last four of the competition.

He said teamwork had been crucial to Sri Lanka's unbeaten run thus far, and also commended the input of consultant Mahela Jayawardene.

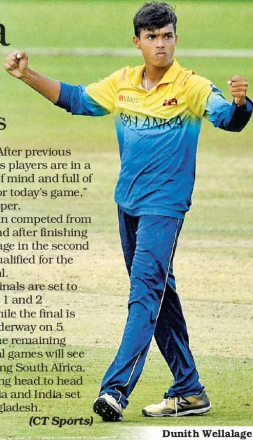
Gunawardene added they will treat all opponents on merit, and remarked the best possible side will be selected after an inspection of the pitches.

Skipper Dunith Wellalage also agreed with the sentiments expressed by his head coach, and asserted they will play to the best of their ability to qualify for the

semi-final. "After previous performances players are in a good frame of mind and full of confidence for today's game," said the skipper.

Afghanistan competed from Group 'C', and after finishing the group stage in the second place they qualified for the Quarter Final.

The semi-finals are set to be staged on 1 and 2 February, while the final is set to get underway on 5 February. The remaining Quarter Final games will see England facing South Africa, Pakistan going head to head with Australia and India set to meet Bangladesh.



Under-17 Division 1

Akash to the fore again for Thomians

Left arm medium pacer Akash Fernando of S. Thomas' College Mt. Lavinia again showed his bowling prowess when he claimed 5 wickets for 21 runs to bowl out against St. Benedict's Kotahena for a meagre 37 runs and lead his school to a comfortable 240 runs victory in Mt. Lavinia in their first round fixture yesterday. Nathan Caldera took 4/15 to complete the rout.

In other matches, St. Joseph's Colombo and Trinity recorded wins.

In Mt. Lavinia (S. Thomas' won by 240 runs)

S. Thomas': 277/8 (50) (Rumesh Mendis 64, Charuka Peris 61, Mahith Perera 59, Akash Fernando 26, Kojitha Himsara 4/49, Shenel Samarathunga 2/59)

St. Benedict's: 37 (14.4) (Akash Fernando 5/21, Nathan Caldera 4/15)

At Darley Road (St.



Joseph's won by 112 runs)

St. Joseph's: 260/5 (50) (Hirun Matthesha 79, Hiran Jayasundara 73, Muditha Lakshana 31 n.o., Lahiru Amarasekara 30, Naren Muralidaran 23)

Henegama Central: 148 (37) (Mandeepa Nissara 80, Tharindu Pramod 23, Hiran Jayasundara 2/17, Lahiru Amarasekara 2/19, Oshada Gunasinghe 2/28)

In Matala (Trinity won by 164 runs)

Trinity: 280/9 (50) (Yevan Hulangama 55, Gethima Kularathna 78, Kusil Wijethunga 36, Vibavith Ehelepola 28, Jayavi Liyanagana 28, Dinitka Thennakoon 25, Anuradha Ranasinghe 3/47, Shehan Rupasinghe 2/30, Sithum Jayarathna 2/40)

St. Thomas Matala: 116 (30) (Oshada Jayasundara 3/27, Supun Waduge 2/17, Jayavi Liyanagana 2/33) (IR)

Under-15 Division 1

Sharith's 6 wicket haul steers Christ King

Sharith Sudeen's 6 wicket steered to Christ King College Ja Ela to win their first round fixture against Galahitiyawa Central College by 6 wickets in Godigama yesterday.

Other schools to register wins were D.S. Senayanayake Colombo, Revatha Balapattira and St. Servatius Matara.

In Godigama (Christ King won by 6 wickets)

Galahitiyawa CC: 104 (32.1) (Sharith Sudeen 6/29)

Christ King: 105/4 (13.3) (Sharith Sudeen 32, Avishka Nirmal 21 n.o., Kaveesha Nethsara 2/50, Rasith Nissara 2/55)

At Wijerama Mawatha (DSS Colombo won by 9 wickets)

Sri Chandrajothi Yakkala: 57 (20.2) (Nisal Mihiranga 22, Roshanisha Bandaranayake 4/06, Paktiyaraj Varshan 3/13, Dilash

Kumaranyake 2/25)

D.S. Senayanayake: 60/1 (3.3) (Chanul Athale 37 n.o.)

In Kalutara (Revatha won by 5 wickets)

Kalutara Vidyalaya: 153/8 (50) (Liviru Fernando 34, Sachin Nenuka 24, Sethika Nuhanthi 2/12, Malith Mihiranga 2/19, Gayan Sandaruwan 2/28)

Revatha: 156/5 (36.2) (Shehan Madusanka 38, Maneesha Thathsara 34, Arosh Niyomal 31*, Nilhika de Fonseka 3/48, Lahiru Fernando 2/22)

In Matara (St. Servatius won by 5 wickets)

Balula Matara: 182/8 (50) (Sandeep Rithmika 53 n.o., Devindu Imeth 44, Viran Chamuditha 3/33, Sanuka Dammindu 2/37)

St. Servatius: 184/5 (45.5) (Nidula Minsara 73, Vishva Supun 27, Sasinu Dulman 2/36) (IR)

Dialog SLC National Super League 2022

Kusal Mendis guides Colombo to comfortable win



Kusal Mendis led from the front to guide Colombo to a comfortable 7 wicket win over Dambulla in the 4th match of the Dialog SLC National Super League 2022 played at P. Sara Oval yesterday.

After winning the toss and electing to bat, Dambulla were eventually bowled out for just 143 runs, and Colombo reached the target in just 20.4 overs.

Dambulla hitting line ups were seen struggling very early in the innings, and were ultimately restricted to a low score. Wicket keeper Lasith Abeyratne was the only batter to make a decent score (41), while the other batters failed to make a significant contribution.

Prabath Jayasuriya was the pick of the bowlers claiming three wickets, while Kalana Perera and Charith Asalanka picked up two wickets each.

Kusal Mendis led from the front in the chase, as he hammered 67 off 44 deliveries which included 4 boundaries and 4 sixes. Dhanushka Gunathilaka, who was earlier named in the 17-member squad for the Australia series, opened the batting along with

Mendis, but the pair failed to give a good start as Gunathilaka was sent back to the pavilion for just 6 runs.

Skipper Charith Asalanka then came to the crease, and along with Mendis added 71 run partnership for the second wicket. Asalanka playing a magnificent innings brought up his half century in 46 deliveries to take his team over the line comfortably.

Kandy outplay Jaffna by 6 wickets

Meanwhile, in the third match at SSC, Kandy outplayed Jaffna by 6 wickets. Niroshan Dickwella was the hero with the bat for Kandy as he scored 69 runs to chase down the 247 run target set by Jaffna.

At SSC

At P. Sara Oval
Dambulla: 143 (40) (L. Abeyratne 41, P. Jayasuriya 3/35)

Colombo: 144/3 (20.4) K Mendis 67, N Thushara 1/19

At SSC
Jaffna: 246/8 (50) (L. Thirimanne 56, N Ranshika 3/41)

Kandy: 247/4 (39.4) (N Dickwella 69, Kamindu Mendis 57, S Fernando 2/33)

ITF Junior Circuit 2022 (Week 2)

Chathurya, Kiran and Anjalika in quarters



Chathurya Nilawera and Kiran Vairavanathan booked their berths in the quarter-final of the boys' singles after their second round match worked off yesterday at SLTA clay courts.

Chathurya beat Caymus Hel Tung Choi (Hong Kong) 6/4 6/0 and Kiran beat Sergiy Rafice (GBR) 6/4 6/2.

In girls singles, Anjalika Kurera beat Marina Omarova (Kazakhstan) 6/2