

ASIA RUGBY SUSPENDS SRI LANKA RUGBY



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the morning

AVURUDU SALES ARE LOOKING BLEAK

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SENIOR CITIZENS' FORTUNES CHANGING FOR THE WORSE?

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WISHING YOU A PROSPEROUS SINHALA AND TAMIL NEW YEAR



SLFP MPs boycott talks with Prez after protests outside office

- Duminda Dissanayake says decision taken after Shantha Bandara accepted State Ministry
- Protestors demand SLFP not strengthen Rajapaksa-led Government



Protestors outside SLFP headquarters on Darley Road, Colombo 10 yesterday (12)

Following protests staged by people outside the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) headquarters on Darley Road, Colombo 10, the parliamentary group of the SLFP boycotted the second round of discussions with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa scheduled to be held yesterday (12) to discuss the possibility of the formation of an Interim Government.

SLFP National Organiser MP Duminda Dissanayake said that the decision to boycott yesterday's meeting was taken in protest over the issue that two MPs from their group, representing the SLFP, still serve in State Ministerial portfolios in the Government.

Contd. on page 2

Church warns SJB not to align with Maithri

- Plans to rally people against any group led by or supporting Sirisena
- Claims Sirisena among those primarily responsible for Easter attacks



Former President and SLFP Leader Maithripala Sirisena and Opposition and SJB Leader Sajith Premadasa

Claiming that former President and incumbent Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Chairman MP Maithripala Sirisena is among those mainly responsible for the Easter Sunday terror attacks of 21 April 2019, the Catholic Church said it would rally the people, particularly the Catholic community, against any group led by, or supporting, him, with special mention of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB).

Speaking to *The Morning* on 11 April, Archdiocese of Colombo's Social Communications Director Rev. Jude Chrisantha Fernando said: "We have been pointing out for a long time that Sirisena is primarily responsible for the Easter Sunday terror attacks. "If the SJB or any other group is working with him, we cannot expect that justice for the victims of these attacks would be done by any such party. Therefore, we would definitely take to the streets against all those groups," he added.

These comments came after Sirisena's recent meeting with several MPs at which certain MPs representing the main Parliamentary Opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) also attended.

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Sri Lanka makes its first debt default

BY MADHUSHA THAVAPALAKUMAR

The Sri Lankan Government yesterday (12) announced that it is suspending debt servicing of selected debts, amidst what is considered the worst economic crisis the country has ever endured.

With international media reports having mentioned that it is only a matter of time as to whether Sri Lanka will default right before its upcoming International Sovereign Bond (ISB) payment in July or even earlier, the Ministry of Finance, via a five-page release, stated that the suspension is for an interim period, "pending an orderly and consensual restructuring of these debt obligations in a manner consistent with an economic adjustment programme supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)".

Read full story on *The Morning Business*

UNP calls for probe on debt default and floating of rupee

- Notes suspension of external servicing will bring pressure on banks
- Demands Govt. explain to Parliament on 19 April

The United National Party (UNP) has expressed its dismay at the Government's announcement that it would default on all external debt repayments in an "orderly default", and has called for a Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) to be established to investigate the debt default and the Sri Lankan rupee's devaluation.

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Omalpe Sobhitha Thera joins 'Gota-Go-Gama' protestors



Ven. Omalpe Sobhitha Thera and a group of monks standing beside a makeshift signpost with the name of the new community village GotaGoGama yesterday (12)

PHOTO PRADEEP DAMBARAGE

Amarapura Sect Chief Sanghanayake Ven. Omalpe Sobhitha Thera showed his solidarity with protestors at the newly-established village dubbed "Gota-Go-Gama" at the

Agitation Site near Galle Face, by joining the protest being staged against the President and the Government, along with a group of monks.

The group of monks handed over a petition with

their demands to the Police officers deployed on security duty at the entrance of the Presidential Secretariat, as they were denied entrance to the premises.

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Patali, Hakeem, Sumanthiran at conference chaired by CBK

- Committee appointed to help overcome political, economic crisis

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

A conference of representatives of several political parties and civil society organisations, chaired by former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, was held on 11 April, to discuss the steps that need to be taken to overcome the economic and political crisis in the country.

The conference, which was held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference



Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga

Hall (BMICH) in Colombo, was attended by Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) MPs Kumara Welgama, Patali Champika Ranawaka, and Rauff Hakeem (who is the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress Leader), as well as Tamil National Alliance (TNA)...

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NEW YEAR MESSAGE

President calls for unity and understanding to overcome crisis

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, in his Sinhala and Tamil New Year message, called on all citizens to overcome the challenge posed by the current economic and global crises with unity and better understanding.

"The current economic and global crises have become the biggest challenge faced by us Sri Lankans in our recent history. We should overcome this challenge with unity and better understanding. The difficulties you experience in the face of the challenge are many.

Contd. on page 2

Several hospitals running out of drugs, surgical consumables

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

Despite the State Ministry of Production, Supply, and Regulation of Pharmaceuticals having claimed that all pharmaceutical drugs are being received in manageable quantities, several hospitals are running out of many drugs

and surgical consumable items, *The Morning* learnt. According to several hospitals, many drugs and surgical consumable items have been identified to be in deficit or not available at all. Sources also said that several surgical consumable items such as the urethral

catheter (14, 16 and 18 g), 10 cm³ syringes, glucose drips, dialysers, close-wound suction bottles, and respirometers are either in deficit or unavailable at hospitals, adding that they are now in the process of gathering information and preparing a list of such.

Contd. on page 2

CEB looking at reducing fuel dependence with increased rains

- Monitoring possibility of more hydropower generation
- Hopeful of rainfall in upcountry catchment areas

BY PAMODI WARAVITA

The Power Ministry said on 11 April that the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) is monitoring whether the dependence on fuel can be reduced with the increase of rains to generate more electricity using hydropower.

"Although you see rains in these urban areas, it is necessary that the upcountry receives sufficient rains too, so that our catchment areas are properly targeted. Only then will we have to think about reducing our orders for diesel stocks."

Contd. on page 2

Defence Secretary says 735 arrested over Easter attacks

- Rejects claims that investigations not being done properly

Defence Secretary Gen. (Retd.) Kamal Gunaratne said that a total of 735 persons have been taken into custody thus far over the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks on 21 April 2019.

Addressing a media briefing held yesterday (12) concerning the progress of the investigations into the bombings, he added that 27 cases have been filed against 79 of them under 25,653 charges.

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Secretary to the Ministry of Defence Gen. (Retd.) G.D.H. Kamal Gunaratne

'World Bank to provide \$ 10 mn to SL'

- Funds will be used on pharmaceuticals, says Sabry

The World Bank has agreed to provide emergency funding of \$ 10 million to Sri Lanka for the purchase of essential pharmaceuticals by next week.

In an exclusive interview with Ada Derana, Finance Minister Ali Sabry (President's Counsel) said Sri Lanka has additionally sought aid of \$ 500 million from the World Bank, for

the provision of chemical fertiliser and paddy seeds to the farmers with the aim of alleviating the issues they are facing.

Minister Sabry noted that the Government is also looking to provide a monthly allowance for poverty-stricken people, and to find an intermediate solution for the liquefied petroleum gas issue

until the economy of the country is put back on track.

Responding to a question brought up on the Government's plan of action to resolve the fuel and LP gas crises, the Finance Minister said: "It is very challenging. We cannot deceive the people by saying there is no issue at all."

The Government, at present, is



Finance Minister Ali Sabry

trying to extend the Indian credit line and looking into the possibility of debt restructuring, Sabry explained, adding that Sri Lanka does not have

to repay its debts, if attempts for debt restructuring are successful.

In response to a question, Minister Sabry said the Sri Lankan delegation is expected to engage in discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) from 18-23 April, adding that many rounds of talks with the IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and representatives of foreign countries are also expected in the future.

Contd. on page 2

COVID-19 CASES

ACTIVE CASES: 3,657

TOTAL CASES: 662,657

DEATHS: 16,492

RECOVERED: 642,508

SOURCE: HEALTH PROMOTION BUREAU

CEB awaits \$ 34.6 mn to pay for coal shipments

● CBSL yet to disburse sum; torn between medicines and fuel as priority

BY PAMODI WARAVITA

The Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) is yet to receive \$ 34.6 million that is required to pay for two coal shipments to be used to power the Norochcholai Coal Power Plant, as the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) is struggling to prioritise between payments for medicines and fuel.

Official sources at the Ministry of Power told *The Morning* on 11 April that they have informed the relevant authorities, including the CBSL, that \$ 34.6 million is needed to open letters of credit so that the two coal shipments can be unloaded before the expected monsoon begins at the end of April.

“However, we have been informed that the CBSL is trying to prioritise money for a number of things at the moment, especially medicine. We cannot expect them to prioritise coal before medicine,” they added.

The country imports the required coal shipments until August before the monsoon begins in April. The next batch of coal imports begin



again in October. With hydropower reserves declining to record low levels and only picking up very recently, and

the CEB increasingly being unable to obtain fuel for thermal power plants due to the US dollar crisis hampering fuel imports by the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation, the Norochcholai Coal Power Plant has been adding a valuable 900 megawatts of power to the national grid.

Fuel shortages have severely impacted the country's electricity generation, as thermal power plants have faced routine shutdowns due to a lack of fuel. As a result of this, the Sri Lankan public has been forced to endure lengthy power cuts, sometimes lasting even up to 13 hours per day.

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SLFP...

The protestors outside the headquarters expressed their anger and agitation about MP Shantha Bandara accepting the portfolio of State Minister of Promoting the Production and Regulating the Supply of Organic Fertiliser on 11 April from President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, replacing Shasheendra Rajapaksa.

The main demand of the protestors was to not “provide oxygen” to the Rajapaksa family or the Government by joining forces with the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP). Following the protests, addressing a District Representatives’ meeting of the SLFP at the same venue, SLFP Leader and former President Maithripala Sirisena and the party’s General Secretary Dayasiri Jayasekera both stated that it would not support a Government which includes the Rajapaksas, mainly referring to the fact that Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa could not remain as PM in any interim Government. However, there was no insistence on the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, which has been the primary demand of protestors islandwide.

The SLFP MPs recently decided to sit independently in the Parliament. MP Shantha Bandara accepted the portfolio of State Minister of Promoting the Production and Regulating the Supply of Organic Fertiliser on 11 April, replacing Shasheendra Rajapaksa who resigned, despite the SLFP Parliamentary group’s departure from the ruling SLPP, and its decision to sit independently in the Parliament and not accept Ministerial posts. Meanwhile, it is reported that President Rajapaksa has refused to accept the resignation of MP Piyankara Jayaratne as the State Minister of Foreign Employment Promotion and Market Diversification.

Church...

“We would definitely rally the people, including the Catholic community, against any force that comes under his leadership. We will not at all hesitate to ask the people not to vote for such a force,” he added.

A meeting held on 10 April at Sirisena’s official residence in Colombo – during which the no-confidence motion and the impeachment resolution, which are currently being signed against the incumbent Government and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, were discussed – was attended by the SJB’s General Secretary and MP Ranjith Madduma Bandara and MP Eran Wickramaratne.

On 21 April 2019, Easter Sunday, three churches (the St. Sebastian’s Church in Katuwapitiya, the St. Anthony’s Church in Kochchikade, and the Zion Church in Batticaloa) and three luxury hotels in Colombo (the Cinnamon Grand, the Kingsbury, and the Shangri-La) were targeted in a series of coordinated suicide bombings.

Later that day, another two bomb explosions took place at a house in Dematagoda and the Tropical Inn Lodge in Dehiwala. A total of 269 people excluding the bombers were killed in the bombings, including about 45 foreign nationals, while at least 500 were injured.

The Presidential Commission of Inquiry which was appointed by Sirisena himself, who was the President at the time, to look into the Easter Sunday terror attacks, in its final report, has recommended to the Attorney General that criminal proceedings be instituted against Sirisena under provisions of the Penal Code for his failure to appoint an Acting Defence Minister when

he left for Singapore on a private visit on 16 April 2019.

Omalpe...

Ven. Omalpe Sobhitha Thera urged the Government to implement the proposals put forth by the Mahanayake Thera.

Protestors, who have occupied Galle Face and its surroundings since Saturday (9), in a massive protest against the President and the current Government, have set up a camp in the Agitation Site close to the Presidential Secretariat dubbed “Gota-Go-Gama”, with dozens of tents.

“Gota-Go-Gama” offers free food, water, toilets, and a makeshift medical camp for health emergencies, through the support of protestors.

In what may have been the largest crowd witnessed at a protest not organised by a political party or a trade union in recent decades in Sri Lanka, tens of thousands of people converged on Galle Face and its surrounding areas on Saturday (9) to demand the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, increasing the pressure on the Government and the President himself.

Estimates of the attendance ranged from 100,000 to over 500,000, although no official count is available. The protestors were seen still standing outside the Presidential Secretariat yesterday (12), having commenced the protest on Saturday (9) morning. As the day went on, the protestors who had left returned to the site to boost the numbers.

Protestors have vowed to continue their protests until their demands are met. However, Chief Government Whip Johnston Fernando stated in Parliament that the President would not be resigning under any circumstances.

Several...

Among the drugs that are in deficit or unavailable at hospitals are: Filgrastim (medication used to treat low neutrophil count), Paclitaxel (a chemotherapy medication used to treat a number of types of cancer), Anastrozole (used to treat early hormone receptor-positive breast cancer), Imatinib (a type of cancer-growth blocker), Capecitabine (a chemotherapy medication used to treat breast cancer, gastric cancer, and colorectal cancer), Chlorambucil (an anti-cancer chemotherapy drug), Melphalan (a chemotherapy medication), Doxorubicin Hydrochloride (an anti-cancer medicine), Cytarabine (a chemotherapy medication), Etoposide (a chemotherapy medication), Leucovorin (medication is used to treat or prevent serious blood cell disorders caused by certain drugs), Procarbazine (a chemotherapy medication), Irinotecan (a medication used to treat colon cancer and small cell lung cancer), Azathioprine (an immunosuppressive medication), Rituximab (used to treat certain types of cancer), Exemestane (a medication used to treat breast cancer), Abiraterone (a medication used to treat prostate cancer), Mercaptopurine (a medication used for cancer and autoimmune diseases), Goserelin (a medication which is used to suppress the production of the sex hormones, particularly in the treatment of breast and prostate cancer), Lenalidomide (used to treat various types of cancers), Megestrol (medication is used to treat cancer of the breast or uterus) and Sorafenib (used to treat kidney, liver, and thyroid cancer).

However, claiming that several parties are attempting to agitate the public for personal gain by publicising that there is a shortage of pharmaceutical drugs in the country, State

Ministry Secretary Dr. S.K. Rathnayake said on 7 April that all drugs are being received in manageable quantities.

He said: “Certain groups are currently staging a drama saying that there is a shortage of pharmaceutical drugs. They do this for various personal gains. There is no shortage of drugs as such. Even with a delay of a week or two due to issues caused by the prevailing US dollar deficit, all the drugs are being received in manageable quantities.”

He said that there was a shortage of 10 life-saving drugs in the last few days, adding however that nine of them are now available in the country in required quantities while the other is still in short supply. He added that other stocks of drugs are sometimes depleted due to issues in issuing letters of credit, but noted that new stocks continue to arrive.

Meanwhile, the Government Medical Officers’ Association (GMOA) staged a protest in front of the Health Ministry on 6 April, demanding that the Government immediately address the shortage of essential pharmaceutical drugs in the country and provide the necessary financial allocations for the health services on time.

Speaking to the media on the day, GMOA General Secretary Dr. Senal Fernando stated that although the GMOA had, on a number of occasions, requested former Health Minister Keheliya Rambukwella for an opportunity to discuss the shortage of essential drugs in the country, they had not been given an opportunity.

Dr. Fernando also accused the Government of not providing accurate information to the public and the health staff including doctors about the shortage of drugs despite the crisis. He added that in the face of the shortage of drugs, doctors would even have to limit certain treatments as they would have to save on drugs for emergencies.

CEB...

“The CEB is monitoring this carefully,” officials at the Power Ministry told *The Morning* on Monday (11).

“Thus, we still have to receive our diesel stocks although we are hoping to definitely reduce this dependency if we receive the expected rains,” they added.

The Meteorology Department said yesterday (12) that the low-level atmospheric disturbance in the vicinity of Sri Lanka, which has caused the rains, is moving away from the island but that several spells of showers will occur in Western and Sabaragamuwa Provinces and in Galle and Matara districts today.

“Showers or thundershowers will occur at several places elsewhere during the evening or night. Fairly heavy showers above 75 mm can be expected at some places in Eastern, Uva, North-Central, and Northern provinces,” it added.

The CEB said on 10 April that electricity generation using hydropower has increased to about 29% since the heavy rainfall experienced over the weekend.

In a statement made to the media over the weekend, the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL) Chairman Janaka Ratnayake said that the island-wide heavy showers would aid in the generation of electricity using hydropower.

“Islandwide heavy showers which are being experienced at the moment will enhance the capacity to generate more hydropower,” said Ratnayake.

Ada Derana reported on 10 April that the Maussakelle and Castlereagh catchment areas, which provide water to the Wimalasurendra, Laxapana, New Laxapana, and Polpitiya hydropower plants, have been receiving heavy downpours since 8 April afternoon.

Water reserves have drastically reduced during this year’s dry season, thus

hampering the generation of electricity using hydropower. Alongside this, a series of issues has plagued the country’s energy related sector since the beginning of the year.

Since January 2022, the CEB has been struggling to find fuel for its thermal power stations, as the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation, which imports fuel, has been throttled by the foreign exchange shortage in the country. Ultimately, the Sri Lankan public has been forced to endure lengthy power cuts, sometimes lasting even up to 13 hours per day.

The CEB Engineers’ Union President Anil Ranjith, speaking to *The Morning* last month, said that power cuts are likely to continue despite expected rains due to the fuel shortage in the country.

The PUCSL, announcing the power cut schedule for this week, said that there will be no power outages today (13) and tomorrow (14). Power cuts will last two hours and 30 minutes each on 15 and 16 April.

UNP...

The statement issued yesterday (12) by the UNP, led by former Prime Minister and current MP Ranil Wickremesinghe read: “Sri Lanka has had an unblemished record since Independence of honouring our debt repayments. Even during difficult times, we as a nation have tightened our belts and made the payments.

“However, the mismanagement of the Government has resulted in the current economic crisis. The suspension of all external servicing will also bring undue pressure upon the banks that have obtained foreign loans to facilitate letters of credit (LCs) and those who hold International Sovereign Bonds (ISBs).”

The statement further mentioned that since 2020, the UNP had recommended that the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) be sought to help restructure Sri Lanka’s financial obligations, and that the delay by the authorities to act on this advice has resulted in the crisis that is unfolding.

“Had the calls made by the UNP and the others been heeded, this default could have been avoided. The Parliament, under Article 148 of the Constitution, has control over public finance. The Government must therefore present a full explanation to the House on what led to this situation when the Parliament meets on 19 April,” the statement added.

The statement also mentioned that the UNP will be calling for the establishment of a PSC on the matter.

“The PSC will be tasked with inquiring into the decision to devalue the currency prior to securing IMF funding, as well as the Government’s decision to delay the restructuring of the country’s debt, which has led to this default,” the statement concluded.

Patali...

MP M.A. Sumanthiran (President’s Counsel), and Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) MP Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, the latter now sitting independent in Parliament with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP).

During the conference, the appointment of a committee tasked with determining the steps to be taken in order to overcome the current political and economic crisis had been discussed at length. According to sources, the said committee has been appointed following the conference.

Kumaratunga was also instrumental in bringing the previous “Yahapalana” (good governance) United National Front (UNF)-led Government to power in 2015. In November 2014, Kumaratunga formally announced her return to active politics at a press conference held by the country’s

Health non-medical unions threaten strike after 18 April

● Plan to involve postal, railways, CEB unions in anti-Parliament strike

BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

Non-medical workers under the state sector have threatened further strikes if their demands continue to be ignored.

Speaking to *The Morning*, Federation for Health Professionals Convener Ravi Kumudesh said: “We are planning to have a strike action involving all the unions in the country including postal, railways and the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) after 18 April.”

“This strike is to oppose the Government. We also want to show our dissatisfaction over the Opposition and Parliamentarians who failed to address the community’s needs.”

He continued: “Approximately, 140 medicines and 10 life-saving medicines are not available in hospitals at the moment including three anti cancer drugs. Lab reports are not being processed. How can we win international trust without the trust of the citizens in this country?”

Opposition coalition, following weeks of speculation regarding her involvement in the said coalition’s decision making. She endorsed Maithripala Sirisena as the common candidate of the Opposition in the 2015 Presidential Election, who went on to defeat Mahinda Rajapaksa.

However, shortly after his election as President, relations between Sirisena and Kumaratunga soured, and since then Kumaratunga has been an outspoken critic of Sirisena, blaming him for the “destruction” of the SLFP.

‘World...

“We will have to take multiple unprecedented radical decisions in the future, or else we’ll head towards a crash-landing.”

Many important decisions will have to be made to prevent long-term damage to the country’s economy and to protect some of the country’s key locations, and to protect the banking system, Minister Sabry added.

Prez...

The Government is taking measures to secure the normal life of the people from the current complex situation by properly understanding these challenges,” the message further read.

Defence...

He stated that since various individuals were making various statements regarding the Easter Sunday attacks, as responsible public officials, it is their responsibility to inform the public on the true facts, adding that he rejects the claims that the investigations into the attacks are not being carried out properly.

In late October 2021, former Public Security Minister Rear Admiral (Retd.) Sarath Weerasekera told the media that all investigations carried out by the Police regarding the Easter Sunday terror attacks of 21 April 2019 have now been completed.

He said that all the duties of the Police regarding the said investigation have been fulfilled.

“The Police have completed all investigations with regard to the terror attacks and have handed over the findings to the Attorney General (AG). Accordingly, nine lawsuits are currently being heard in five High Courts (HCs) pertaining to the attacks,” he added.

Weerasekera also said that the investigations have been completed in a “very short” period of about two-and-a-half years, and that therefore, no one could charge that the Government or the Police did not conduct a proper investigation into the Easter Sunday terror attacks.

“We had to analyse about 110,000 phone calls in a very short period. Also, 24 accused parties who planned these attacks have been indicted. About 23,700 charges have been filed in this regard. So, no one can say that we are trying to sweep the investigations under the carpet,” he added.

On 21 April 2019, Easter Sunday, three churches (the St. Sebastian’s Church in Katuwapitiya, the St. Anthony’s Church in Kochchikade and the Zion Church in Batticaloa) and three luxury hotels in Colombo (the Cinnamon Grand, the Kingsbury and the Shangri-La) were targeted in a series of coordinated suicide bombings.

Later that day, another two bomb explosions took place at a house in Dematagoda and the Tropical Inn Lodge in Dehiwala. A total of 269 people excluding the bombers were killed in the bombings, including about 45 foreign nationals, while at least 500 were injured.

Sathosa 'Sahana Malla' leads to shortage of essentials

● Trade Secretary cites high demand for pack

BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

The high demand for the "Sathosa Sahana Malla" (Relief Pack) programme, where consumers could purchase essential food items from Sathosa outlets for the reduced price of Rs. 1,950, has caused shortages of essential items.

Speaking to *The Morning*, Trade Ministry Secretary Bhadrani Jayawardhana said that the unexpected and unusual demand for the same is causing shortages of essential items in Sathosa outlets.

"We didn't expect such a response from the public. We have essential food items in our stores in Jaffna, Ratmalana, and Boossa, but we need to distribute them according to the demand, which is a bit difficult."

She said that the Sathosa outlets provide rice and dhal for a reasonable price compared to the current market prices.

"The cost of 1 kg of nadu rice and kekulu rice is around Rs. 200 in the market, but we provide it for a price of Rs. 110. A kilogramme of samba rice in the market is around Rs.

250, but we provide it for Rs. 130. A kilogramme of dhal is around Rs. 400 in Sathosa outlets, whereas outside it is around Rs. 450-500."

She however said that it is impossible to control the prices of certain products such as sugar.

The Sathosa "Sahana Malla" programme is being implemented on a concept introduced by the former Trade Minister to provide consumers with the opportunity to obtain high quality products at the lowest possible prices, avoiding the hassle of purchasing essential items in the face of the then rapidly spreading Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

Last year, the Rs. 1,000 "Sahana Malla" programme offered consumers 1 kg of samba rice, 1 kg of nadu



rice, 1 kg of flour, 1 kg of Australian red dhal, 200 g of Thai sprats, 1 kg of white sugar, 50 mm of disinfectant hand washing liquid manufactured by the Government's Industrial Technology Institute, 100

g of tea certified by the Tea Board, 50 g of soya meat, and 100 g of chilli flakes. However, this year, it only offers 10 kg of nadu rice, a 400 g packet of Highland Milk powder, 100 g of tea and 1 kg of sugar.

SL envoy Kohona confident China will give \$ 2.5 bn

Sri Lanka's Ambassador to China Dr. Palitha Kohona said he is very confident that China will come through on \$ 2.5 billion in financial support, as Sri Lanka's inflation-driven crisis becomes more dire.

Ambassador Dr. Kohona said that he had received reassurances as recently as last week from authorities in China that arrangements for loans and credit lines were progressing.

Sri Lanka is looking to borrow \$ 1 billion from Beijing so that it can repay existing Chinese loans due in July, as well as a \$ 1.5 billion credit line to purchase goods from the world's No. 2 economy, such as textiles needed to support the apparel export industry, he said.

"For us, it can't come any sooner," Dr. Kohona said, adding that it could be a matter of weeks. He was not able to give a precise time frame, and did not disclose the terms of the funding.

"Given the current circumstances, there aren't that many countries that can step out on to the pitch and do

something," he said. "China is one of those countries that can do something very quickly."

Sri Lanka is embroiled in its worst economic crisis in decades, as consumer prices rose the fastest in Asia at about 19% last month.

Soaring costs, widespread power outages, and shortages of food and medicine have fuelled street protests and left President Gotabaya Rajapaksa with a minority in Parliament.

Beijing has long enjoyed warm relations with Colombo but has yet to deliver a much-needed lifeline to Sri Lanka.

Rajapaksa had recently written to Chinese President Xi Jinping directly to seek credit support, Dr. Kohona said, and Sri Lanka officials are still encouraging Beijing to address the issue as soon as possible.

"Our request will be honoured, but they have to go through the Chinese system," he said. "We are very confident that sooner than later, these two facilities will be made

available to us."

Dr. Kohona said that Sri Lanka had also sought China's help to buy items such as fuel that it was struggling to secure because of the nation's foreign-currency shortage. He said he was unsure whether China could provide such support, given that it is a net importer of such goods.

Separately, Sri Lankan officials will meet with counterparts from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) later this week to iron out details of a potential financial package to help it meet \$ 8.6 billion worth of debt payment due this year.

Dr. Kohona said he was hopeful to secure Chinese support that would enhance its chances for closing the deal.

"Given the nature of our relationship - this very close and warm relationship - and Sri Lanka's dire situation, I would say that I am confident that China will respond positively to our request," Dr. Kohona said of his nation's overall efforts to secure funding from Beijing.

(Bloomberg)

State Minister Shantha Bandara stripped of all SLFP posts

● Party ejects Bandara following his acceptance of State Ministerial post

Current State Minister Promoting the Production and Regulating the Supply of Organic Fertiliser, and Paddy and Grains, Organic Foods, Vegetables, Fruits, Chillies, Onion, and Potato Cultivation Promoting, Seed Production, and Advanced Technology Agriculture Shantha Bandara has been removed from all positions he held

within the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), following his acceptance of the said State Ministerial portfolio from Shasheendra Rajapaksa after the latter resigned from the post.

Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Government MPs representing the SLFP, including Bandara, recently announced that they would sit

independently from the Government in the Parliament, and would also not accept any ministerial positions.

SLFP National Organiser MP Duminda Dissanayake told the media that Bandara had, as a result, been removed from all positions he held within the SLFP.

Bandara was sworn in on Monday (11) as the State

Minister of Promoting the Production and Regulating the Supply of Organic Fertiliser, and Paddy and Grains, Organic Foods, Vegetables, Fruits, Chillies, Onion and Potato Cultivation Promoting, Seed Production, and Advanced Technology Agriculture, replacing Sasheendra Rajapaksa, who previously held the position.

Police record statements from CPC employees over threat against Olympian

● Sugath Thilakarathne accuses SLPP Govt. supporters of being behind verbal threat over his opposition to President Gotabaya

BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

The Wellampitiya Police has recorded statements from a group of Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) employees who allegedly threatened former Olympian and Asian Games gold medallist Sugath Thilakarathne at the CPC, over his opposition to President Goatabay Rajapaksa.

Speaking to *The Morning*, Thilakarathne said that while his statement was recorded on 9 April, he had been informed that the Wellampitiya Police would record statements from the persons who threatened him on 11 April.

He had previously lodged a complaint with the Police over a verbal threat he received after attending a protest in Independence Square a



Former Olympian and Asian Games gold medallist Sugath Thilakarathne

few days ago.

"This group who threatened me constitute supporters of the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP). They asked me to not voice opposition

against the Government, and to not be involved in the 'Go Home Gota' campaign. I am not a member of any political party. I am just a citizen of Sri Lanka who is working for a Government institution. But it is my right to voice out against that which is wrong."

He also said that the same group of people had attempted to assault him after he was verbally threatened.

Thilakarathne was a former Sri Lankan athlete who competed in the 400 m events at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, USA and the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games in Australia. He won the 400 m Bronze Medal at the 1995 Asian Championships in Jakarta, Indonesia and produced a repeat performance at the 2002 event held in Colombo.

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A New Year of survivalism and altruism

Last year, the people thought that having to celebrate the Sinhala and Hindu New Year – Sri Lanka’s biggest cultural event – amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, was a tragedy. This year, the citizens are left with no option but to celebrate the New Year amidst a bigger tragedy, i.e. the ongoing economic crisis, which shows strong signs of exacerbating. Not too many people are in a position to actually “celebrate” the New Year.

That is why the people need to be prudent, selfless, and sparing, when it comes to celebrating this New Year.

It is no secret that the economic crisis is getting worse, despite promises by the Government and the authorities that it is going to end soon, which have blunted the people’s faith, and attempts that resulted in merely temporarily alleviating the burden of the economic crisis. Put simply, the people should not rely on the Government’s promises, and wait, but instead push for concrete action.

Therefore, first and foremost, the people should not get blindsided by the joy of the New Year, or the temporary suspension of power cuts, or the temporary availability of essential goods, but should instead look at the past few months or weeks, and be cautious about the coming period.

The main point that the people should take into account is that there is only so much that the Government or the authorities can do to resolve the economic crisis. The uncomfortable truth is that a large part of survival in the current economic crisis is in the hands of the people themselves, and utilising available resources sparingly is key.

The people should certainly celebrate this New Year. However, it should not be a celebration of an affluent season of the year, as the New Year season is originally meant to be. During this New Year season, the people should make it a priority to purchase and store essential goods, and refrain from squandering monetary and other forms of resources.

The New Year is a season of sharing, and it is more important now than it ever has been. The people should remember that not everyone is privileged enough to get their hands on all essential goods, and that there are people who cannot even afford one meal if they do not go to work. Therefore, those who can still afford days’ worth of essential goods should be thankful that they are still luckier than a considerable portion of the population, and be selfless enough to share what they have with the needy whenever possible.

However, using resources sparingly and helping those in need are not practices that should be limited to the New Year season.

It is the best time to practice what has been preached by religious leaders for a long time. The majority of the people who celebrate the New Year are Buddhists, and therefore, helping others in times of crises and uncertainty should not be practices that they have to be taught about, or limited to, the coming New Year season.

What is more, at least now, the people should start looking at the big picture, and not succumb to temporary relief measures. Speculation is rife that Sri Lanka may in the near future have to face a famine, and shortages of certain food items in all parts of the country have resulted in people thinking twice about what they have for their next meal. In this context, saving not only during the New Year season, but also even after that, should be the priority of every citizen.

If the people start thinking about their tomorrow, and the wellbeing of others, this New Year season will not be a challenge that the people cannot pull through. With that in mind, we can only wish our countrymen a New Year blessed with the wisdom we so direly need in these trying times.

Ratmalana International Airport, in the emperor’s new clothes

BY CAPTAIN ELMO JAYAWARDENA

A few days ago, I read in the papers that Sri Lanka opened another airport, the Colombo International Airport Ratmalana (CIAR), on 27 March. There was a photograph too – the arrival of the first plane, a Maldivian Airline Dash-8, twin turboprop 50 seater that flew from the Velana International Airport in Hulhule, North Male Atoll, to Ratmalana.



The first plane to land at the Colombo International Airport Ratmalana (CIAR) in Hulhule, North Male Atoll, to Ratmalana being welcomed with arches of water-cannon salutes created by the fire

The aeroplane was welcomed with arches of water-cannon salutes created by the fire engines of the airport fire brigade. There were Kandyan dancers in attendance too, plus a contingent of very, very important persons to celebrate the opulent opening of the new international airport. Of course, the day’s fanfare cost millions, which is what the newspapers said.

The Ratmalana Airport has a remarkable history. It began its life as a cleared grass patch of 600 square feet, which had galvanised roofing sheds on the side, which was the terminal. This was in 1935, when the first plane, a Puss Moth flown by Royal Naval Air Service Force Flight Lieutenant (Flt/Lt) Harold L’Estrange Tyndale-Biscoe landed on levelled grass, making it a soft-opening for the new airport. There was no marked runway, only a black-and-white striped windsock that stood like a sentinel to tell the pilot which direction to land or take off.

The official opening of the Airport was on 28 February 1938, when a Tata Airways mail plane, a Waco, took off from Ratmalana.

In between Tyndale-Biscoe’s Puss Moth and the Tata Airways mail plane, there were people learning to fly on the Ratmalana grass patch, which included expatriates as well as locals. They were the aviators of the Ratmalana Flying Club.

Then came the Royal Air Force, followed by commercial planes, and Ratmalana saw its glory days. Prominent airlines such as Trans World Airlines, British Overseas Airways Corporation, and Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij landed and took off from Ratmalana. They flew their Lockheed Constellations, de Havilland Comets and Douglas DC-4 Skymasters using Ratmalana as a pit stop to operate their long haul flights. Then, in 1948, the National Carrier, Air Ceylon took over Ratmalana as its operating base.

I have seen Ratmalana from the first day I flew a little airplane as a fledgling pilot. I learnt to fly there, taking off and landing on the grass strip. I did my first commercial flight on a DC-3 from Ratmalana and trained a host of student pilots at Ratmalana.

Yes, I have fond memories and cherished moments of flying aeroplanes from this wonderful old airstrip that laid the foundation for my flying career. Remembrance swells

with admiration, not just for me, but for all those who had some connection with this ancient landmark aerodrome.

So, what are they doing to Ratmalana? Bad enough that we have the magnificent mistake in Mattala. Do we need another fiasco of spending to add to our country’s financial woes? Mattala is known as the emptiest airport in the world. Are we making attempts to take the runner-up prize too with Ratmalana?

Ratmalana can definitely prove to be a very good airport to cater to internal flights. It is good to operate Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) planes too, which fly to all the airfields in Sri Lanka. Ratmalana had its day and faithfully served Sri Lanka and now needs to give way to Katunayake and Mattala to handle international arrivals and departures.

The RML has only a 1,400-metre runway, which cannot take even the smallest of passenger jets, a Boeing 737 or an Airbus 320. How are we to fly international, or for that matter, even regional, flights from such a short runway? Extending the length is not financially viable, as you either have to send the Galle Road underground, or go towards the Diyawanna Oya on the other side.

Yes, maybe it can handle a business jet, but one must remember that a business jet does not bring loads of passengers. They are used by the rich and the famous, and to have 50 passengers in the Airport terminal, one would need at least 10 business jets. That brings in a parking problem. Somebody sure did not count his marbles when he decided to play this game.

Yes, I saw the paved great approach road to the new-look RML, almost like the four-lane highway we have in Mattala. Ratmalana too would be another “all hat and no cattle” story. Someone whispered that it cost Rs. 200 million to construct the road and re-furbish the terminal. Maybe, whoever was in charge should have taken that money and done something to improve the navigational facilities of the Ratmalana runway. That is an uncompromisable safety factor that has been totally ignored.

On 27 March 2022, when the first international flight came in to land, there were no landing aids

functioning except for a set of Precision Approach Path Indicators (PAPI) lights on the northeast side of runway 22, and nothing on runway four. The PAPI lights will help a pilot to adjust his final approach path, but it does not assist him/her in any way to make an instrument “let down” to locate the runway in bad weather.

Let us take a look at that business of landing aids. In 2014, on 11 December, a SLAF Antonov aeroplane flew from Katunayake to Ratmalana in the morning. The visibility was marginal with mist and low cloud, and the aeroplane, on the approach phase, hit the ground, 10 miles before the runway threshold, and crashed. Of course, the voices that had power blamed the pilots. No one mentioned that the Ratmalana Airport at that time had no landing aids at all. No instrument landing system, no very high frequency omnidirectional range/distance-measuring equipment, and the non-directional beacon was unserviceable. The crash was said to be a pilot error. But I do not think that it was the correct conclusion. Pilot error may not be the pilot’s error.

There is a mile-long difference between pilot error and the pilot’s error (sorry, I have no space to explain). Squadron Leader Abeywardena and Flt/Lt Jayatunge plus three others died in vain, simply because there were no landing aids at Ratmalana on that fateful December day. If there was at least one good operable landing aid, that unfortunate accident could have been avoided. And today in 2022, we have the same runway rated as an International Airport.

Can you believe that the same landing aids that were not there in 2014 are still not there in 2022? I am not whistling Dixie here. I checked the Notice to Airmen or Notice to Air Missions for Ratmalana on 27 March, 2022. No landing aids for the runway. That sure is tempting providence. Pity, when they were thinking of upgrading Ratmalana to an International Airport, they completely forgot why the SLAF Antonov went down in Hokandara.

Who makes these colossal mistakes of opening new International Airports without evaluating safety or seeking and confirming marketability? Only the Diyawanna Oya would do

that. And the Yahapalanaya (good governance) United National Front-led Government too are totally guilty of the same mortal sin though they do wash their Pontius’ hands, claiming that they are lily white.

Let us not forget that it is the Yahapalana brethren who opened the Jaffna International Airport with a 1,400-metre runway and brought Alliance Air ATR 72-600 twin-turboprop aircrafts, which were to operate a daily Chennai-Jaffna-Chennai service. What happened to those promised flights is the same thing that happened to the hoards that were to come to Mattala.

As for Ratmalana, the Maldivian operator has already executed the first flight with a flamboyant arrival ceremony that cost a few millions. Then they took a U-turn and cancelled the next flights for the lack of passengers. No doubt, there would have been some brilliant planning and marketing done to achieve a fascinating result like that.

Let us be realistic, Diyawanna Oya. We, along with the whole world, got bashed by Covid-19. As we started raising our heads, we had the wicked US dollar pandemic. Today, the people of our beautiful paradise are suffering multiple calamities with not even a mirage in sight. And we open an International Airport that at best will only have a propeller plane arriving from Male. That too, only if they can find passengers.

Of course, business jets would be fighting to come – That is the hope? If wishes were horses, beggars would ride!

We have Katunayake, Mattala, Jaffna, and now Ratmalana designated as International Airports. Do not do the same to Batticaloa too. Leave that to the next lot who will win at the Diyawanna Oya musical chairs and get their seats to serve the nation. Let them open the Batticaloa International Airport. They too might want to get some coins to jingle in their pockets.

As for aviation answers, let me be serious. We are definitely coming to the capacity limits of air traffic in Katunayake. Maybe we have already exceeded that, and are operating on borrowed time and pleaded tolerances. We need a 2,500-metre second parallel runway in Katunayake. That length is adequate for smaller passenger jets such as A320s and Boeing 737s.

If a twin runway concept can be achieved, the authorities can use Katunayake as an international hub, handling all the international flights (including business jets) that will arrive in Sri Lanka. Then, we can use our so called international airports, Ratmalana and Jaffna, plus all the small local airfields such as Ampara, Batticaloa, China Bay, Weerawila, Anuradhapura, Minneriya, Sigiriya, and Katukurunda for twin-engine propeller planes to operate and run an efficient internal flying service.

As for Mattala, for years, the authorities have tried to sell or lease it and have failed to make a transaction. Why not give it to the SLAF? Give it lock, stock and barrel and make them the custodians of Mattala. They sure can take care of any civil aeroplane movements and share with them the aerodrome. There is space for both and more.

Whatever you do, Diyawanna Oya, do not make a mockery of Ratmalana, she deserves better.

(The writer is a pilot. He can be contacted at Elmojay1@gmail.com)

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of this publication.



Changes to senior citizens' FDs: Fortunes changing for the worse

● *Elderly bemoan negative quality of life owing to impact of Govt.'s move*

BY SUMUDU CHAMARA

The economic crisis is not a new phenomenon for Sri Lanka, but it has now become the biggest issue the country is facing. It is a time when every citizen is scrambling to save as much money as possible, even though it is becoming an uphill battle owing to inflation, which has gotten out of the Government's hands.

In this context, saving money is a dream for many, and those who have saved money are trying to get the maximum benefit out of their savings.

Last month, it was reported that the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) had instructed licensed commercial banks to convert senior citizens' fixed deposit accounts that come under the category of the "special high interest rate scheme" into regular fixed deposit accounts. They were allowed to do so in the event that account holders do not appear before the relevant banks and submit a request in writing to extend the scheme by another year.

According to what was reported, this new regulation was applicable to senior citizens' fixed deposits that had reached maturity before 21 March, and the account holders had been required to visit the relevant bank before 31 March, and submit the said request.

The issue attracted attention mainly due to the considerable difference between the interest rates of the two types of fixed deposits. The interest rates offered for normal fixed deposits were around half of the interest rates offered for fixed deposits that fall

under the special high interest rate scheme, which is 15%.

Senior citizens who have completed 60 years of age are eligible to open a fixed deposit account under the special high interest rate scheme, and they are allowed to open only one such account with a maximum deposit of Rs. 1.5 million.

To discuss how senior citizens view this move, *The Morning* spoke to several senior citizens who have fixed deposit accounts.

In this regard, Jayasinghe (name changed on request), a 62-year-old retired public sector employee, said that this move is a completely insensitive one, especially given the health condition of most senior citizens, and that it can easily worsen the impacts of the present economic burden on them.

"I have had a fixed deposit account for years, and this is the first time that such an additional and irrational requirement was imposed by the Government regarding such fixed deposits. This is unacceptable, due to the deteriorating health situation of most senior citizens. I cannot even leave the house without the help of someone else, and having to go to the bank to renew my own account to which I have deposited my own money, just to continue to enjoy the benefits I was promised when I opened that account, is ridiculous."

He expressed concerns that this is not just a matter of the senior citizens' health condition, but is also a matter of the senior citizens' economy at a time when the country is in a deep economic crisis.

"Like me, many retired senior citizens depend largely on the interest they receive from their fixed deposits, because we can no longer work like we did before. Some depend

completely on the interest. Some are living in rented houses or in elders' homes, and it is with this interest that they pay their rent or fees, and cover their basic expenses. If they fail to appear before banks personally and renew their fixed deposit accounts, it directly affects the interest rate that they receive since the type of their fixed deposit changes.

"It is not something that most senior citizens can afford, especially not in the current economic situation. The country is going through an economic crisis it cannot get out of, and we are living in an era where we cannot waste a single rupee. Every rupee is more important now than before, since the value of every rupee has decreased significantly."

He opined that this situation will affect the quality of life of a large number of senior citizens who have deposited all their savings in fixed deposits with the hope of living the latter part of their lives without being a burden to anyone. He opined that this situation will in turn increase the burden of rising inflation on others such as families and the guardians of senior citizens.

Amarapala (name changed on request), a 64-year-old retired businessman who has a fixed deposit account, noted that in a context where Sri Lanka does not have a proper social security mechanism, what the Government should do is further strengthen the available systems through which senior citizens survive in their old age.

He opined: "I understand that the Government as well as the country's banking system are faced with severe economic and financial challenges. However, people, especially senior citizens who cover their expenses with the interest received for the little money that they have saved over a lifetime, are facing worse economic challenges."

Therefore, passing the burden of the deteriorating economy and the consequences of the rulers' wrong



'More support required for senior citizens to be financially independent, remain productive citizens'

decision sets a bad precedent, as it implies that with short notice, the benefits given to senior citizens, or any citizens for that matter, by banks or by the Government, can be controlled or curtailed in unexpected ways.

"Those who have fixed deposits are not people who are waiting for the Government to spend public funds to feed them. They have earned and have saved. They should be given the benefits that they were promised, and should not be subjected to confusing or unfair regulations," he opined.

Adding that Sri Lanka is going through a time where senior citizens should receive easy and more opportunities and benefits, he said:

"When it comes to supporting the elderly population, Sri Lanka has a long way to go. How many banks issue a loan to a senior citizen, how many financial institutions support senior citizens planning to start their own business, and how many Governments have at least talked about introducing a social security system for senior citizens who have no income or someone to support them?"

"Senior citizens are often viewed as people who are waiting for free food or special benefits. But a large segment of senior citizens can still look after themselves, be financially independent, and contribute to the country's economy in some way. However, it requires some support from financial institutions, civil society organisations, and the Government."

Senior citizens are an integral part of any population, and their contribution has helped build the society that exists today. Therefore, as those who spoke with *The Morning* pointed out, decisions that affect their savings of a lifetime should be clearer and should not affect their confidence in the banking system.

decisions, to senior citizens, who have contributed to the country in a plethora of ways, is unacceptable."

He also raised concerns as to whether the said decision was clearly communicated to senior citizens who have fixed deposits that fall under the category of the special interest rate scheme.

"At the same time, there has been no proper discourse or explanation about the reasons that led to the said decision or its objectives. Even if there were such, the relevant information or explanation has not reached us senior citizens who have fixed deposits. I do not even know how many fixed deposit holders got the message about this decision."

"The Government or the banking system must have had a good reason to take this decision, but, educating senior citizens who have fixed deposits is crucial, because, at the end of the day, it is their money. In fact, decisions such as these can easily confuse senior citizens and put an additional burden on them, especially those who do not associate with the outside world much or watch news. Such sudden decisions, which are also unfavourable to the account holders, should be discussed and conveyed in a better manner."

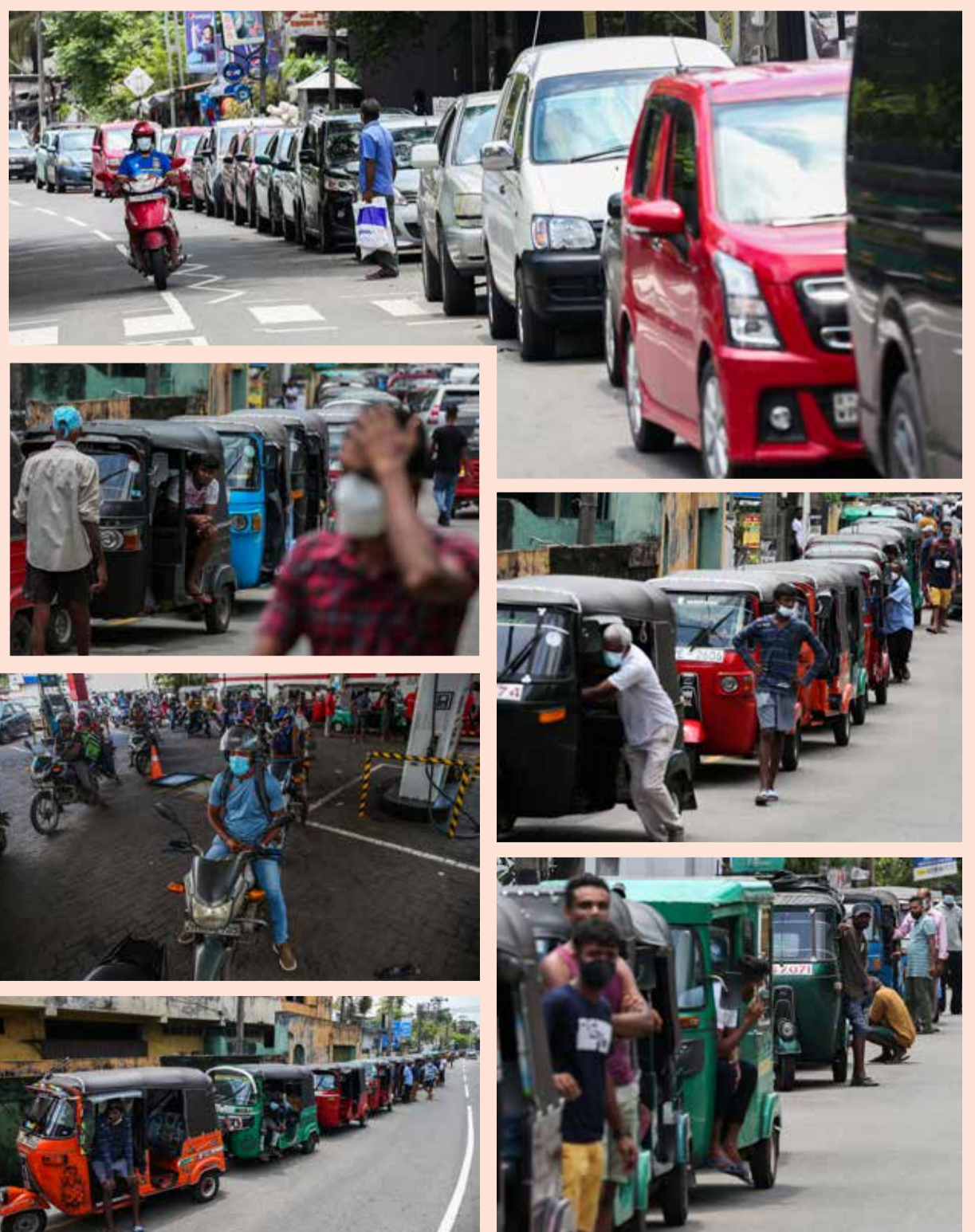
He further noted that the said

'Unfavourable decisions affecting senior citizens' fixed deposits could worsen economic burden on their families, guardians'

THE LAST QUEUE OF THE OLD YEAR?

Vehicles were seen queued up outside a Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) fuel filling station in Ambagaha Junction, Rajagiriya yesterday (12), two days ahead of the dawn of the Sinhala and Tamil New Year

PHOTOS PRADEEP DAMBARAGE



{ FOCUS }

BY RUWAN LAKNATH JAYAKODY

The estimated prevalence of Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) – a disease that carries the risk of transmission from cattle and buffaloes to humans and other susceptible animal species – among cattle in the Central Province is 22.6%.

This finding was made in a research article on the “Prevalence of bTB among cattle and buffaloes in the Central Province” which was authored by Y.H.P.S.N. Kumara, A. Amarasinghe, P.G.A. Pushpakumara, W.M.T.D. Rathnakumara and B. Alexander (all five attached to the Peradeniya University’s Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science Faculty’s Farm Animal Production and Health Department), H.M.S. Wasana (attached to the same University’s Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture) and G.A. Gunawardana (attached to the Gannoruwa Veterinary Research Institute’s Molecular Biology Division) and published in the *Tropical Agricultural Research Journal* 33 (2) in March 2022.

“The dairy industry plays a key role in livestock production. The Government has taken steps to increase milk production by introducing improved exotic cattle such as Holstein Friesian, Jersey, and their crossbreds. However, exposure of these cattle herds to a new tropical environment has posed the threat of attracting animal diseases,” Kumara et al. observed.

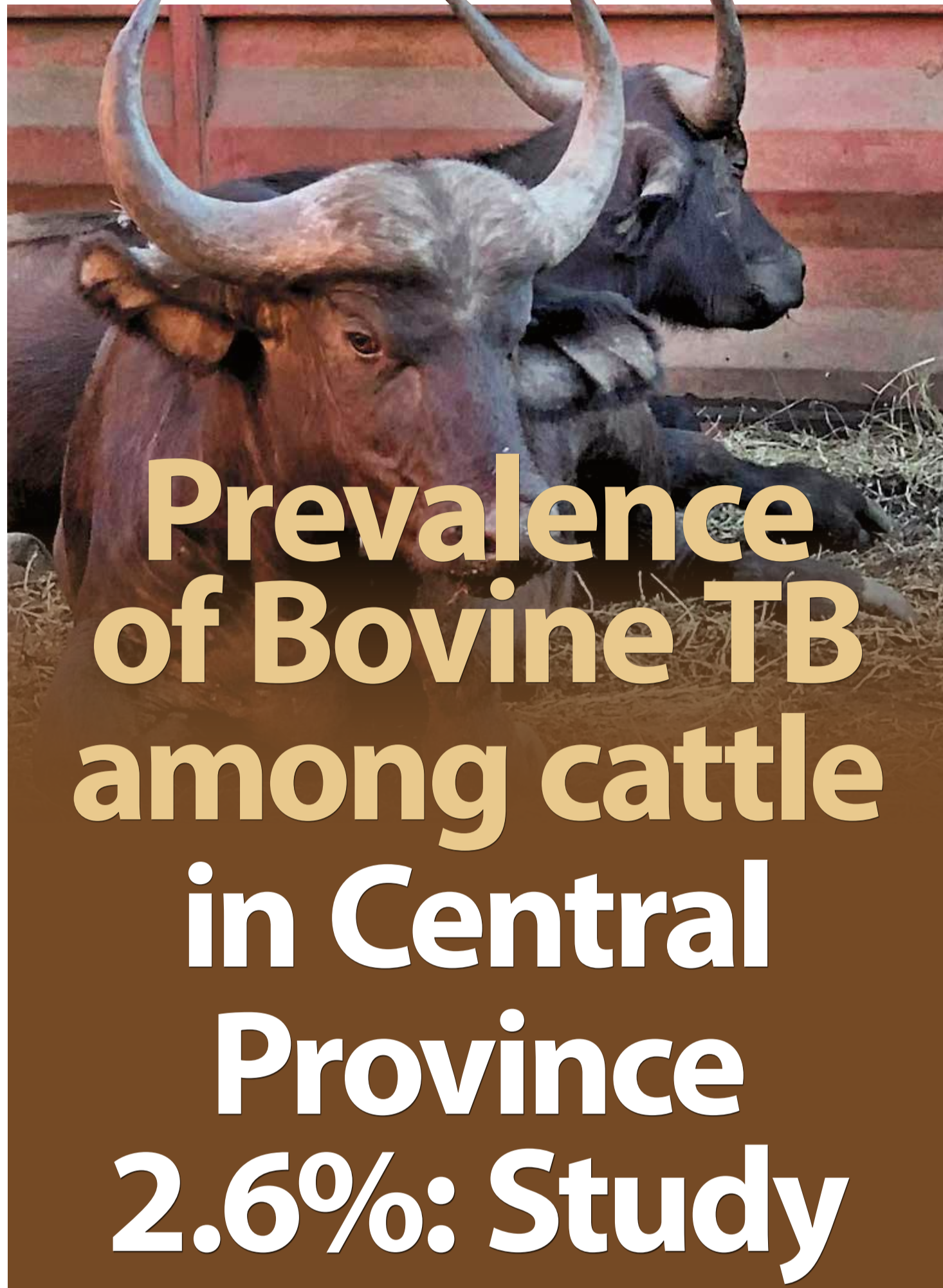
Kumara et al. selected study sites in the Districts of Kandy, Matale and Nuwara Eliya in the Central Province in order to determine the prevalence of bTB. The study spanned from October 2013, to August 2016.

Visible swelling at the injection sites was not observed in cattle with negative results. However, a noticeable swelling at the injection sites was observed in cattle with positive results. These observations were based on 72 hours after injecting Purified Protein Derivative (PPD).

Among the total of 616 cattle tested by injecting PPD, 139/22.6% were identified as reactors for the SICCT test and the majority (77.4%) were negative for the SICCT test.

In the present study, 248 cattle from the Nuwara Eliya District, 286 from the Kandy District and 82 from the Matale District were tested where only 85/34%, 54/19% and zero/0% showed reactions to the SICCT test from the respective Districts.

The highest number of reactors was recorded from a herd in the Nuwara Eliya District, where 57 cattle out of 91 tested (62.6%) were positive to the SICCT test. However, 10 herds which were tested for the SICCT (50%) (one herd from the Nuwara Eliya District, five herds from the Kandy District and four herds from the Matale District), were found to be negative and free from



Prevalence of Bovine TB among cattle in Central Province 2.6%: Study

exposure to bTB within the study area.

A herd level prevalence of 50% (10/20) resulted in the large and medium-scale dairy farms that were tested in the study area. There were no significant associations observed with bTB

prevalence and the tested parameters such as the herd category, the duration of the farm establishment and the type of management practice.

The individual level prevalence of 22.5% was observed (139/616) in the

present study. A significant association of the prevalence of bTB with the body condition score, the breed, the origin of the cattle, and the reproductive status were observed.

A total of 33 cattle (six males and 27

females from eight herds) which showed positive results in the SICCT test were subjected to the rapid antibody (Ab) test. Only seven cattle (two males and five females from four different herds) out of 33 were positive for the rapid bTB Ab test.

Based on this study, a high prevalence of bTB was observed at both the individual and herd levels. The high prevalence (50%) of bTB at the herd level poses a high risk towards future dairy farming.

The findings also revealed that there was a significant association between the prevalence of bTB with breeds of cattle. The highest disease percentage for bTB was observed in the Ayrshire breed (63.6%) indicating five-fold more susceptibility than the other breeds (12.85%). However, a definitive risk factor for the Ayrshire breed has not been identified.

Herd level investigations suggested that cattle and buffaloes managed under intensive and/or semi intensive management systems may carry a high risk of bTB transmission among animals.

“Possible underlying causes for high herd prevalence of bTB could be intensification, stress, and overcrowding due to limited land availability. It is also suggested that these farming systems cannot avoid close contacts among animals and thereby create a favourable environment in the spreading of the disease from one animal to another. Water and feed sources were common for all the animals managed under the semi intensive management system in the study, where animals were herded to a common area in the yard for concentrated feeding every day. Horizontal transmission of the disease is inevitable in such situations,” Kumara et al. pointed out.

The results revealed that the gender of an animal was not significantly associated with the status of bTB. “This could be due to the small number of male animals included in the study due to the low representation of male animals in dairy farming systems,” Kumara et al. added.

Among the individuals who tested positive for the SICCT, the highest percentage (34.7%) was the cattle with poor body condition scores. “This could mainly be due to the fact that animals with poor body condition scores are immune compromised and thus become susceptible to diseases. Animals with good body condition scores were the least (5%) affected by the disease. Hence, maintaining a good body condition score with optimum environmental conditions are of utmost importance in order to prevent the disease,” Kumara et al. emphasised.

The results further indicated that the herd level prevalence of bTB was proportionate to the herd size. Therefore, the tendency of the spread of bTB in large-scale farms was higher than in medium-scale farms.

‘Russian soldiers raped me and killed my husband’

Warning: This report contains graphic descriptions of sexual violence

● *Women caught up in the Ukraine conflict speak up about atrocities*

BY YOGITA LIMAYE

In a quiet, rural neighbourhood 70 km (45 miles) west of Kyiv, we spoke to Anna, who is 50. We have changed her name to protect her identity.

Anna told *BBC* that on 7 March she had been at home with her husband when a foreign soldier barged in.

“At gunpoint, he took me to a house nearby. He ordered me: ‘Take your clothes off or I’ll shoot you.’ He kept threatening to kill me if I didn’t do as he said. Then he started raping me,” she said.

Anna described her attacker as a young, thin, Chechen fighter allied with Russia.

“While he was raping me, four more soldiers entered. I thought that I was done for. But they took him away. I never saw him again,” she said. She believes she was saved by a separate unit of Russian soldiers.

Anna went back home and found her husband. He had been shot in the abdomen.

“He had tried to run after me to save me, but he was hit by a round of bullets,” she said. They both sought shelter in a neighbour’s house. They couldn’t take her husband to hospital because of the fighting. He died of his injuries two days later.

Anna never stopped crying while telling us her story. She showed us where she and her neighbours buried her husband in the backyard of their home. A tall, wooden cross stands at the head of the grave. Anna told us that she is in contact with the local hospital and is receiving psychological support.

The soldiers who saved her stayed in her



Anna has buried her husband in the garden

house for a few days. She says they would point their gun at her and ask her to give them her husband’s belongings.

“When they left, I found drugs and viagra. They would get high and they were often drunk. Most of them are killers, rapists and looters. Only a few are okay,” she said.

Down the road from Anna’s house, we heard another chilling story.

A woman was allegedly raped and killed, and neighbours say it was done by the same man who raped Anna, before he went to Anna’s house. The woman was in her 40s. She was taken out of her home, say neighbours, and held in the bedroom of a house nearby whose occupants had evacuated when the war

began. The well-decorated room, with ornate wallpaper and a bed with a golden headboard, is now a disturbing crime scene. There are large bloodstains on the mattress and duvet.

In a corner is a mirror with a note written in lipstick, appearing to suggest where the victim was buried.

Oksana, a neighbour, told us it had been left there by Russian soldiers who found the woman’s body and buried her. “They (Russian soldiers) told me she had been raped and that her throat was either slit or stabbed, and she bled to death. They said there was a lot of blood.” The woman was buried in a grave in the garden of the house.

A day after we visited, the police exhumed

her body to investigate the case. The body was found without clothes, and with a deep, long, cut across the neck.

Andrii Nebytov, the police chief of the Kyiv region, told us about another case they’re investigating in a village 50 km (30 miles) to the west of Kyiv. A family of three – a couple in their thirties and their young child – lived in a house on the edge of the village.

“On 9 March, several soldiers of the Russian army entered the house. The husband tried to protect his wife and child. So they shot him in the yard,” said Nebytov.

“After that, two soldiers repeatedly raped the wife. They would leave and then come back. They returned three times to rape her. They threatened that if she resisted they would harm her little boy. To protect her child she didn’t resist.”

When the soldiers left, they burnt down the house and shot the family’s dogs.

The woman escaped with her son and then contacted the police. Nebytov says his team has met her and recorded her testimony.

They have been gathering evidence at the family home – only its shell is now left. Just a few signs of a previous peaceful, ordinary life lie in the charred ruins. We saw a child’s bicycle, a stuffed horse, a dog’s leash and a man’s fur lined winter shoe.

The husband was buried in the garden by neighbours. The police have now exhumed his body for examination. They plan to take the case to international courts.

Ukraine’s ombudsman for human rights Lyudmyla Denisova says they’re documenting

several such cases. “About 25 girls and women aged 14 to 24 were systematically raped during the occupation in the basement of one house in Bucha. Nine of them are pregnant,” she said. “Russian soldiers told them they would rape them to the point where they wouldn’t want sexual contact with any man, to prevent them from having Ukrainian children.” She says they are receiving several calls on support hotlines – and also getting information through channels on the Telegram messaging app.

“A 25-year-old woman called to tell us her 16-year-old sister was raped in the street in front of her. She said they were screaming ‘This will happen to every Nazi prostitute’ as they raped her sister,” Denisova said.

We asked if it was possible to assess the scale of sexual crimes committed by Russian troops during the occupation.

“It is impossible at the moment because not everyone is willing to tell us what happened to them. The majority of them currently call for psychological support, so we cannot record those as crimes unless they give us their testimony,” Denisova said.

She says Ukraine wants a special tribunal to be set up by the United Nations (UN) to try Vladimir Putin personally for allegations of war crimes including rape.

“I want to ask Putin, why is this happening?” said Anna, the woman who told us she was raped. “I don’t understand. We’re not living in the Stone Age, why can’t he negotiate? Why is he occupying and killing?”

(BBC)

the morning

business

ASPI	S&P SL20	Market
8,135.25	2,623.90	Market Closed
-114.45	-44.47	Share Volume
↓ -1.39%	↓ -1.67%	58,447,577
		Turnover
		1,249,846,267.15

Sri Lanka makes its first debt default



- *Suspends external debt servicing for an interim period*
- *Plans to restructure debt, consistent with IMF programme*

SOVEREIGN RATING DOWNGRADES LIKELY, WARN LOCAL ECONOMISTS

With the recent decision by the Ministry of Finance to suspend external debt payments for an interim period and to restructure said suspended debts, downgrades to Sri Lanka's Foreign Currency Issuer Default Rating are likely, according to local economists.

Advocata Institute Chief Operating Officer Dhananath Fernando told The Morning Business that the recent move by the Ministry will certainly lead to a downgrade of Sri Lanka's ratings.

However, he added that it is not a major issue at the moment,

given that Sri Lanka's current ratings are not that great and are already closer to reaching the lowest scale on the Issuer Default Rating. However, he expressed his optimism that the economy may recover once the debt restructuring is processed with the assistance of the IMF.

Meanwhile, Frontier Economic Research Group Economist Chayu Damsinghe in a Tweet yesterday (12), published soon after the announcement by the Ministry of Finance, stated that this move by the Government is better than an economic crash, and has been

communicated "well enough", and added that even an agreed suspension of debts would still lead to a downgrade and would lead to a technical default.

"We are technically in default, and will likely get downgraded to a selective/restricted default setting. But 'default' has become a dirty word, and it is not all that bad," his Tweet added.

According to data compiled by Verité Research, Fitch Ratings has downgraded Sri Lanka five times since December 2015, leading the country's rating to drop to "CC" from "BB-".

Sri Lanka was downgraded to "B+" from "BB-" in February 2016 by Fitch Ratings, and in December 2018 was once again downgraded to "B". The third downgrade was in April 2020 to "B-", while the fourth downgrade was in November 2020 to "CCC". The latest downgrade to "CC" was in December last year.

A little less than a month later, Standard and Poor's (S&P) downgraded Sri Lanka to "CCC" from "CCC+", keeping the outlook at a lower level, triggered by low foreign reserves and upcoming debt obligations.

to engage, in good faith, discussions with representatives of both bilateral and commercial creditors regarding the features of a comprehensive external debt restructuring programme consistent within the parameters of what is endorsed by the IMF. Local and international economists have long been calling for an orderly default and debt restructuring, with the official foreign exchange reserve position failing to reach healthy levels even after two years into the pandemic.

The statement by the Finance Ministry noted that the Government has taken "extraordinary steps" in an effort to avoid resorting to these measures, but it is now apparent that any further delay risks inflicting permanent damage on Sri Lanka's economy and causing potentially irreversible prejudice to the holders of the country's external public debts.

It should be noted that economists and the business community have been calling on the Sri Lankan Government to seek IMF support for months now, however, the CBSL, under immediate past CBSL Governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal and the Treasury under immediate past Secretary S. R. Attygalle, have been hesitant to do so, as they were depending on "home-grown" solutions for the economic crisis.

Tainting its unblemished track record of timely servicing its external financing obligations ever since it gained independence, the Sri Lankan Government yesterday (12) announced that it is suspending debt servicing of selected debts amidst what is considered the worst economic crisis the country has ever endured.

With international media reports having mentioned that it is only a matter of time as to whether Sri Lanka will default right before its upcoming International Sovereign Bond (ISB) payment in July or even earlier, the Ministry of

Finance, via a five-page release, stated that the suspension is for an interim period, "pending an orderly and consensual restructuring of these debt obligations in a manner consistent with an economic adjustment programme supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)".

According to the Ministry of Finance, the suspension would apply to affected debts outstanding as of 12 April (yesterday). The affected debts include, as per the Ministry of

Finance, "all outstanding series of bonds issued in the international capital markets; all bilateral (government-to-government) credits, excluding swap lines between the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) and a foreign central bank; all foreign currency-denominated loan agreements or credit facilities with commercial banks or institutional lenders (including such institutions owned/controlled by foreign governments), for which the Republic or a public sector entity

is the obligor or guarantor; and all amounts payable by the Republic or a public sector entity following a call during the interim period upon a guarantee (or equivalent financial undertaking) issued in respect of the debt of a third party".

However, it added that new credit facilities and amounts disbursed under existing credit facilities after 12 April are not subject to this policy, and will be serviced normally.

The Ministry also expressed its intention

Sampath Bank's cash management solutions record growth over 2021

Sampath Bank, in a press release, announced that it had registered growth in demand for its cash management solutions (CMS) from businesses across the island during 2021.

The bank stated that enterprises of all sizes, from a wide range of industries including automobile spare parts, banking and finance, consumer electronics, courier and transportation services, education (schools and higher education institutions), fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) (manufacturing and distribution), hospitality (food and beverage services), IT, telecommunications, healthcare, insurance, and others, have chosen Sampath Bank as their preferred cash management partner.



This demand is primarily driven by the appeal of Sampath Bank's cash management portfolio, which offers services such as cash and cheque collection, cheque printing and distribution, investment portfolio management, business debit cards, data validation, reconciliation services, integration to

enterprise resource planning (ERPs), and sweeping and pooling of funds, as the bank noted.

Sampath Bank offers cash and cheque collection as a part of its corporate cash management solutions, which, according to the bank, simplifies the clients' operations.

Cheque printing and distribution, another service of the cash management portfolio, allows clients to pre-print cheques and dividend warrants in bulk and fill in the necessary details when required. Sampath Bank is also hopeful that more features will be added to this service in the near future and assures that developments are underway in making it a fully-fledged solution.



Rupee continues to collapse

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) announced the official exchange rates for yesterday (12), with the Sri Lankan rupee further depreciating against the US dollar.

According to Central Bank's official exchange rates for the day, the selling rate of a US dollar now stands at Rs. 319.20, while the

buying rate of the US dollar is listed as Rs. 329.99. On Tuesday (11), the official selling rate of the US dollar exceeded the Rs. 300 mark for the first time in Sri Lankan history. Meanwhile, several leading licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka have declared their selling rate of USD at Rs. 335.00.

Fed expected to increase rates

The Federal Reserve is expected to deliver two back-to-back half-point interest rate hikes in May and June to tackle runaway inflation, according to economists polled by Reuters, who also say the probability of a recession next year is 40%.

With the unemployment rate near a record low, inflation the highest in four decades, and a surge in global commodity prices set to persist, most analysts say the Fed needs to move quickly to keep price pressures under control.

The latest 4-8 April Reuters poll of more than 100 economists forecast two half-point rate rises this year, the first such move since 1994, taking the federal funds rate to 1.25-1.50% by the June meeting.

That brings the end-year prediction from the March Reuters poll at least three months forward, and more in line with interest rate futures pricing.

A strong majority, or 85 of 102 economists, forecast 50 basis points in May, and a still-solid majority of 56 said the Fed would follow up with 50 basis points as well in June.

"Given the shift in official commentary and with inflation pressures visible throughout the economy, we believe the Fed will deliver half-point interest rate increases at the May, June and July policy meetings," said ING Chief International Economist James Knightley.

While the Federal Reserve, chaired by Jerome Powell, is likely to gear down to quarter-point moves in the second half of this year, the federal funds rate is now expected to end 2022 at 2.00-2.25%, 50 basis points higher than the median forecast in a poll taken last month.

Moving so quickly with interest rates, especially in an economy that has become used to very low borrowing costs for many years, comes with risks.

"With the Fed seemingly

feeling the need to 'catch up' to regain control of inflation and inflation expectations, a rapid-fire pace of aggressive interest-rate increases heightens the chances of a policy misstep that could be enough to topple the economy into a recession," added Knightley.

A few economists are already predicting lower rates as soon as the fourth quarter of next year.

Yet despite expectations for an aggressive policy tightening path, inflation was not seen dropping to the Fed's 2% target at least until 2024.

The Russia-Ukraine war, which has sent commodity and energy prices soaring, is also making it harder to predict when inflation will eventually come down.

Inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was predicted to have peaked at 7.9% last quarter, and average 6.8% this year, a significant upgrade from 6.1% in last month's poll.

(Reuters)

Nepal has restricted imports of non-essential goods – including cars, cosmetics and gold – after its foreign currency reserves dropped.

It comes as a fall in tourism spending and money sent home by Nepalis working abroad helped drive up government debt.

Meanwhile, the Governor of the country's Central Bank was removed from his role last week.

Nepal's Finance Minister said he was "surprised" the issue was being compared with the crisis in Sri Lanka.

According to the country's Central Bank, Nepal Rastra Bank, foreign currency reserves fell by more than 16% to Nepali rupees (NPR) 1.17 trillion (\$ 9.59 billion; £ 7.36 billion) in the seven months to the middle of February.

Over the same period, the amount of money sent to Nepal by people working abroad fell by almost 5%.

Narayan Prasad Pokharel, Deputy Spokesperson at the Central Bank, told Reuters that the institution believed the country's foreign currency reserves were "under pressure".



Nepal limits imports as foreign currency reserves slide

"Something must be done to restrict the import of non-essential goods, without affecting the supply of essential goods," Pokharel said.

He added that importers were allowed to bring in 50 "luxurious goods" if they paid for them in full.

"This is not banning the imports but discouraging them," Pokharel said.

Last week, Nepal's Government removed Central Bank Governor Maha Prasad Adhikari from his role, without giving a reason for the decision.

Government debt in Nepal has risen to more than 43% of its

gross domestic product (GDP), as officials increased spending to help cushion the economic impact of the pandemic, Nepal's Finance Ministry said on Monday (11).

The ministry also said indicators of the country's economic health were "normal".

"However, due to some pressures in the external sector, some steps have already been taken to manage imports and increase foreign exchange reserves," it said in a statement.

Earlier in the day, Finance Minister Janardan Sharma said Nepal's debt was lower than

other countries in the region and elsewhere.

Sharma told reporters: "I am surprised why people are comparing with Sri Lanka."

The island nation is facing its most serious economic crisis since Independence from the UK in 1948.

Alex Holmes, an emerging markets economist at research firm Capital Economics also told the BBC that the situation in Nepal appears "much better than in Sri Lanka".

Nepal's foreign currency reserves are double what is considered "a comfortable minimum" and

government debt "is not particularly high", Holmes said.

"Of course, things will eventually regress if the current account deficit does not narrow," he added. "But a crisis does not appear imminent."

Last week, Sri Lanka named a new Central Bank Governor and almost doubled its key interest rate to help tackle soaring prices and shortages of essential goods.

In recent weeks, demonstrators have taken to the streets of the capital Colombo as homes and businesses were hit with long power cuts.

(BBC)

SLID recognises calls for good governance against corruption

The Sri Lanka Institute of Directors (SLID), issuing a statement recently, noted that it recognises the unified and collective voice of the people in their call for good governance and against corruption at every level.

Claiming that corruption has ruined nations, economies, and businesses, it stated: "It takes a giver and a taker for corruption to flourish. Corruption runs against good professional ethics, business ethics, and social ethics."

"As an institution

founded on and bound by the philosophy, principles, and values of good governance, SLID calls upon its membership, all professionals, business leaders, and political leaders to heed the call of the people, swiftly come together, and make a lasting commitment to build, own and operate structures and systems in our businesses, professions, and government that can generate greater social and economic value in our country free of corruption," the statement added.

CICT named Most Efficient Terminal Operator for 2021

Colombo International Container Terminals (CICT) excelled recently at the Global Ports Forum Awards 2021 and was awarded the title of "Most Efficient Terminal Operator" for 2021. The award recognises an international port or terminal operator that has achieved excellence in terminal efficiency by enhancing capacity and productivity through sustainable and consistent growth, while also providing high quality of service and value additions to customers.

Presented to CICT at the Global Ports Forum Awards ceremony held at the Shangri-La, Dubai on 28 March 2022, the award was accepted on behalf of CICT by CICT Senior General Manager – Commercial and Marketing Catriona Jayasundera. CICT received this accolade in recognition of its exceptional performance in 2021.

The award for Most Efficient Terminal Operator 2021 is the second international award received by CICT for its efforts in the immediate post-covid environment. Last



CICT Senior General Manager – Commercial and Marketing Catriona Jayasundera receiving the award at the Global Ports Forum Awards ceremony

year, in November, CICT was recognised as the Best Container Terminal in Asia (under 4 million TEU category), for a record 5th consecutive year at the Asian Freight, Logistics and Supply Chain awards. The Award for Most Efficient Terminal is granted to a terminal that has excelled in terms of efficiency and productivity, and is the result of a rigorous judging process, conducted by an independent panel made up of industry experts and veterans.

ZTE Blade Series now available in SL

ZTE is a global telecommunications giant with a long history in Sri Lanka, and has recently entered the smartphone market with its range of ZTE Blade Series smartphones.

In the ZTE Blade lineup, the A31, A5 2020 and A51, stand out as options across a range of midrange budgets.

With 32GB of storage and 2GB of RAM, the ZTE Blade A31 is among the more affordable smartphones in Sri Lanka. Priced at Rs. 29,999, this device is available in blue and grey, which provides a 5.45-inch 720p display along with an 8MP rear camera and a 5MP front camera, making for a capable all-round package.

Stepping up the ladder is the ZTE Blade A5 2020, offering

32GB of storage and 2GB of RAM, and priced at Rs. 33,999. Available in green, black, and blue, this is a smartphone that features a six-inch 720p display along with a dual camera setup on the rear, a 13MP and a 2MP camera, and an effective 8MP front camera.

Designed for those who love large screens, the ZTE Blade A51 gives you 32GB of storage and 2GB of RAM, all behind a 6.5-inch 720p display, and couples these features with 13MP and 2MP dual cameras, and a 5MP front camera. Priced at Rs. 36,999, the ZTE Blade A51 is excellent for those looking for a large display and a good amount of power under the hood.

ZTE



PayMaster named Most Popular Fintech Payment App in SL

PayMaster won the Gold Award as the Most Popular Fintech Payment App in Sri Lanka 2021 at the recently concluded LankaPay Technovation Awards 2022. This achievement was accomplished within just three years of PayMaster's establishment as a service provider for all bill payment services, reloads, and many other features. The top-ranked app crossed the milestone of 1.5 billion reloads to secure the coveted No. 1 position.

At present, day-to-day payment needs plus other



financial services of Sri Lankans are fulfilled by the PayMaster app, as it recently introduced a wide range of facilities. Customers can transfer money between accounts by maintaining multiple bank accounts in one place; send or receive money to

any bank account by simply using their mobile number; reload their phone in case of emergencies and pay bills via the in-app credit facility; and make PickMe/Uber rider settlements and all insurance premium payments.

Those who invite friends

to start using the app via its latest update, along with the friend invited, will receive free reload points worth Rs. 100.

Having made it convenient for Sri Lankans to complete all their daily activities without hassle, the PayMaster app was voted as the most popular choice amidst stiff competition. Adding to this triumph is the further expansion of the app's customer service, as PayMaster aims to deliver more versatile benefits exclusively to its customers.

from Rs. 1,000 onwards. All prepaid and postpaid mobile customers can seamlessly move from their existing plan to a new Unlimited Dialog Power Plan in a single click via the MyDialog App, or order a new connection online via dialog.lk.

Dialog debuts unlimited YouTube streaming plans

To meet the growing demand for YouTube streaming, Dialog is facilitating its postpaid customers with nonstop video streaming via an unlimited YouTube access plan for the whole month, as an additional feature on its Unlimited Power Plans.

At a special rate of Rs. 100 monthly, Dialog customers can now experience unlimited YouTube access by activating it on their "Unlimited Dialog Power Plan".

In addition to this added amenity, Unlimited Dialog Power Plan customers are

also facilitated with 100% Anytime Data, thereby enabling them to receive up to 50GB Anytime Data, along with its customary value propositions of unlimited calls and SMS.

Dialog Power Plan provides a range of Unlimited Plans starting

Sampath Bank wins at Technnovation Awards

Sampath Bank was judged the "Most Innovative Bank" at the LankaPay Technnovation Awards 2022, held recently at the Shangri-La Hotel, Colombo. Winners were picked by a panel of judges with long experience in banking and financial services.

The bank can also thank its customers for a Silver Award, the "Overall Award for Excellence in Inter-bank Digital Payments (Banking Institutions)", plus two more Gold Awards for "Bank of the Year for Excellence in Customer Convenience (Category A)", and for "Best Acquirer on LankaPay Online Payment Platform". Sampath Bank also won the Merit award for "Bank of the Year for Financial Inclusivity (Category A)".



Sampath Bank Senior DGM – Group Marketing, Deposit Mobilisation and Digitalisation Tharaka Ranwala receiving the 'Overall Award for Excellence in Inter-bank Digital Payments (Banking Institutions)', from Technology Ministry Secretary Jayantha De Silva. Also in the picture are (from left) Sampath Bank AGM – IT Pasan Manukith, LankaClear Chairman Dr. Kenneth De Zilwa, CBSL Assistant Governor D. Kumaratunge, Sampath Bank Group Chief Information Officer Ajith Salgado, former ICTA Chairman Oshada Senanayake, and LankaClear GM/CEO Channa de Silva

The LankaPay Technnovation Awards were inaugurated four years ago to recognise and celebrate those members

of the financial sector who have done the most to promote the national transition to digital payments. Aiming to drive

financial inclusivity in the country – a key objective of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka – the Technnovation Awards are meant to encourage widespread adoption of the national payment network.

This year's theme was "Honouring the Digital Superheroes", in a bid to recognise the contributions made by banks, non-banking financial institution (NBFIs), and FinTech companies toward delivering payment technology innovations despite the constraints of a global pandemic.

Despite the contemporary obstacles faced by the banking sector in Sri Lanka, Sampath Bank has successfully maintained all its capital ratios well above regulatory requirements throughout 2021. With a total asset value of Rs. 1.2 trillion, this reflects strongly as an indication of the bank's stability. Meanwhile, its deposit book stood at Rs.978 billion at the end of 2021, and continues to enjoy a year-on-year growth rate of 10.3%.



Winsoft forges partnerships with MSI, Legion, and Gigabyte

Winsoft Technologies, an IT solutions provider in Sri Lanka that began operations in 1998, recently announced its official partnership with a range of world-renowned brands such as MSI, Legion, and Gigabyte.

Winsoft has been a pioneer distributor for MSI gaming laptops in Sri Lanka for a long period of time. MSI is a world-renowned technology brand that is most trusted for its gaming laptops, which are geared towards offering unrivalled gaming experiences.

Winsoft has also been a distributor for Gigabyte components in the country. Gigabyte is also a globally acclaimed technology brand, famous for its AORUS range of high-performance motherboards, graphics cards, laptops, gaming hardware, and systems.

Winsoft's latest Tier I partnership with Legion, the gaming arm of Lenovo, renowned for delivering spectacular gaming performance with its high-end gaming laptops, showcases Winsoft's focus on providing a wide and diverse range of products for its customers.

With these latest partnerships being secured and with a range of reputed brands they have continued to service, Winsoft Technologies stated it has reached a new era in providing its customers with the world's best devices and peripherals.

CA Sri Lanka launches online directory of board-ready female members

In continuing to play a role in helping bridge the gender gap at board level, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka (CA Sri Lanka) recently launched its online directory of "Board-Ready Female Members", under the patronage of Coralie Pietersz, who is an independent non-executive director of several listed companies.

The Board-Ready Female Members Directory, published by CA Sri Lanka, comprises a pool of board-ready female chartered accountants who are

geared to play a dynamic leadership role at board level across Sri Lanka. This directory lists female Chartered Accountants who have been members of CA Sri Lanka for over 10 years and possess the necessary unique management skills and experience to hold board positions.

The website was launched by CA Sri Lanka President Sanjaya Bandara, in the presence of the institute's Vice President Heshana Kuruppu, Women Empowerment and Leadership Development Committee Chairperson

Chamila Cooray, CEO

Dulani Fernando, and members of the committee. Chamila Cooray said that the committee was formed to formulate and implement plans, policies, and programmes for the development of female members of CA Sri Lanka, along with the ultimate objective of creating female leaders.

She stated that in 2019, the Securities and Exchange Commission led an initiative to increase gender representation on the boards of publicly traded

companies, and that the 2019 Budget proposal also stated that a voluntary target of 30% will be imposed immediately, with publicly traded companies required to disclose the percentage of women on boards in their annual reports.

According to Cooray, although the budget proposal had not been enacted, to continue to support this important vision, CA Sri Lanka continued to develop this initiative, and hence decided to release the second edition of the directory as an online version.



The online directory of board-ready female members being launched by CA Sri Lanka President Sanjaya Bandara in the presence of Vice President Heshana Kuruppu, Women Empowerment and Leadership Development Committee Chairperson Chamila Cooray, Alternate Chair Portia Jayamaha, CEO Dulani Fernando, and Anoji De Silva

Swisstek Aluminium among CPM's Top 10 best-managed companies

Swisstek Aluminium Ltd. was recently ranked among Sri Lanka's top 10 best-managed companies in the list compiled by the Institute of Chartered Professional Managers of Sri Lanka (CPM), for the period 2020-2021.

At the CPM's "Best Management Practices Awards 2022", held under the theme "Back to Business in the New Normal", Swisstek Aluminium emerged as a winner of the prestigious Top 10 awards, which evaluated entries from multiple industries in all categories to recognise those that implemented the most exemplary management practices in the country.

The event saw CPM calling for Sri Lankan firms to submit applications showcasing the resilient management practices they implemented during the especially tough years of 2020 and 2021, when the



Swisstek Aluminium CEO Tharindu Atapattu and Assistant General Manager Priyantha Gammaha receiving the award

Covid-19 pandemic was at its peak. To demonstrate how they brought their respective organisations back to business in the new normal, applicants were required to submit a document summarising

the best practices they implemented during the period, as well as a presentation before a panel of judges.

Swisstek Aluminium's submission highlighted the management practices

implemented in the fields of IT, finance, marketing, engineering, and HR.

A key measure taken by the company in this regard was to immediately set up an in-house task force comprising the firm's top talent to efficiently manage projects under direct guidance of the management.

Meanwhile, all operations were reorganised to allow the business to function with a minimal workforce, thus improving efficiency while allowing health safety to be maintained.

These management practices resulted in Swisstek Aluminium surpassing production yields of international firms, while generating cost considerable savings, and ensuring the safety of stakeholders across the board, earning the company its spot among the ten best-managed firms in the nation.

the morning

brunch

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Move out of your comfort zone. You can only grow if you are willing to feel awkward and uncomfortable when you try something new."
— Brian Tracy

First all-private astronaut team arrives at the International Space Station

A SpaceX Crew Dragon safely delivered four private astronauts – not affiliated with any space agency – to the International Space Station (ISS) last Saturday (9). With the Axiom crew now onboard, the first all-private mission to the ISS can get down to business. SpaceX capsule Endeavour reached the ISS at 8.20 a.m. EDT last Saturday following a nearly 21-hour journey. The crew of the Ax-1 mission – Michael López-Alegria, Larry Connor, Eytan Stibbe, and Mark Pathy – launched atop a Falcon 9 rocket last Friday (8) from the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida, USA. The ISS is currently orbiting at a height of 260 miles (418 kilometres (km)) above Earth.

(gizmodo)

AVURUDU SALES ARE LOOKING BLEAK

BY DIMITHRI WIJESINGHE

Tomorrow (14), Sri Lankans will celebrate the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. The festival marks the beginning of the New Year, as per Sinhalese astrology, when the sun moves from Meena Rashiya (the house of Pisces) to Mesha Rashiya (the house of Aries). It also marks the end of the harvest season and of spring.

The past three Avurudu celebrations have been different experiences, where, in 2019, just after the festivities, we experienced the Easter Sunday bombings, and in 2020,

while still reeling from the tragedy we had faced, Avurudu took place amidst a pandemic, and in 2021, things were no better. And now, in 2022, we are faced with an economic crisis and the country in general unrest.

It would seem that for the third year in a row, Sri Lankans will be celebrating Avurudu differently from how they would have liked and hoped.

Considering the state of our nation as we experience price hikes on everyday consumer items, we reached out to a number of vendors who rely on the annual festival to meet their income targets.

We spoke to Lalitha, a Gampaha-based home cook who prepares Avurudu *kavili* and sells them to certain families in her hometown.

She shared that this year she has not received as many orders because many families are not celebrating Avurudu in a grand way and admits that her own prices have risen considerably.

"The reason I have had to raise my prices is because if I continue to sell at my old rates, I will be doing it at a loss. Right now, I am used to buying just a quarter bottle of coconut oil, but to make *kavili* I need much more. Usually, we reuse the oil for other foods, but for *kavili* I can't use used oil, since the oil absorbs the taste of the food. And especially when it comes to making kokis, I absolutely can't use old oil, as it will taste funny.

"So it is so much more expensive," she said, also adding: "We buy the quarter bottle at Rs. 180,

but the coconut oil bottle is Rs. 700. I can't imagine buying multiple bottles to make *kavili*, but I need a lot of oil to prepare it."

Similarly, speaking to Namal, who has a temporary stall at the Pettah private bus stand, he shared that he usually sells firecrackers to people coming to take the bus. "Avurudu season is when I would make the sales, but this year all the vendors had an understanding that there will be less purchases, so we all restocked almost half less than what we usually would," he said.

"In 2020, we thought that people might not buy firecrackers, but we bought our full stocks anyway, just in case, and the people ended up buying everything, because last year people

had money. But this year we know full well that unless you have young kids for whom you want to provide a good Avurudu, people are not going to buy firecrackers."

Several other vendors also shared that foods like mung beans and kithul jaggery are particularly hot items during this season, however, with mung beans, especially, being so expensive and people resorting to buying only 100 g for Rs. 40, sales have been severely affected.

Sadly, when speaking to these vendors, the general sentiment was a far cry from being festive, with many of them simply stating that they have accepted their fate and all they can do is hope that things will turn around soon.

PHOTO PRADEEP DAMBARAGE

BY VENESSA ANTHONY

Yellow – a colour that sings of hope, unity, happiness, and healing; a colour that is fit to represent the struggles and battles Sri Lankans are fighting for, all in the name of democracy.

These are the sentiments Serika Siriwardhana felt when she became the spark that ignited the flame at Independence

Square earlier this month and began the platform known as "Yellow for Democracy".

Telling her story, Siriwardhana shared that Yellow for Democracy happened naturally. At first, it was just Siriwardhana, a few friends, and family hoping to head to Independence Square for a peaceful protest after the curfew was lifted. "After that very blatant expression of the Government curtailing people's rights (with the curfew), we decided to exercise our defiance," she told us, adding that she took to social media with the plans for a peaceful protest at Independence Square on 4 March. Her message was strong and powerful, and so it urged the masses to join her cause, which, over the last weeks, has become our cause, as well. Last Monday (4), there were many youth, who Siriwardhana told us would normally not even be seen at such protests. After seeing the amount of people present, all shouting for their rights and fighting for a better life, she was motivated to create Yellow for Democracy – a platform for the youth to voice out what they want for their future and what they believe is necessary for this country to move forward. Once she launched the Instagram page for the platform, she saw a massive amount of traction within days – in just a week, she amassed over a 1,000 followers.

While they recognise protests as an expression of dissent, Siriwardhana told us that she realised what was most important is educating the youth about why we are on the streets today, the constitution, economics, and politics. "We are using the platform that we created to disseminate information both online as well

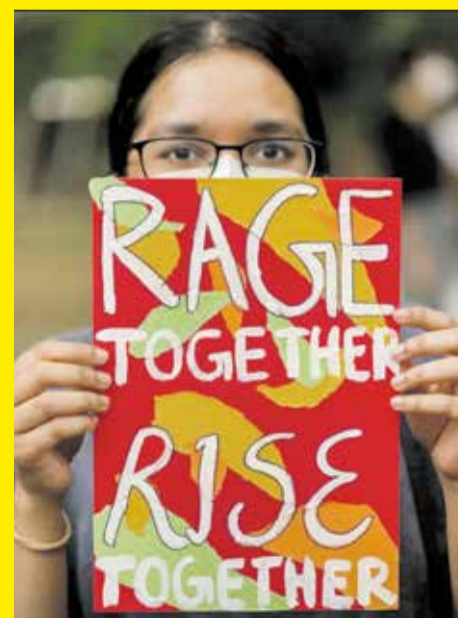
Yellow for Democracy

'A well informed youth is the key to a better political future'

Going into more detail about the name behind the platform, Siriwardhana explained that she chose yellow because the yellow in our national flag is supposed to represent unity amongst Sri Lankans. "It's symbolic of a brighter future – we are the youth, we are the future of this country, and we are calling for a brighter future for us."

Speaking of short-term solutions, she noted that we must understand what exactly we are calling for at protests, how we can move forward, and what the immediate first step should be. "There are a whole bunch of people calling for a bunch of different things right now. It's a messy situation and even the experts don't have a single answer," she told us, adding that Yellow for Democracy is trying to speak to as many legal, political, and economic experts as possible, to figure out what the first step to get out of this crisis is.

Yellow for Democracy is hosting a protest as well as a "teach out" session today (13) at Independence Square and another tomorrow (14). Sharing more about what is being organised for tomorrow, she told us that it will be quite a symbolic event. "We want to come together as a country and join in bringing in the Sinhala and Tamil New Year," she told us, adding that they will be boiling milk at the auspicious time and the setting will be adorned in gold to represent the movement and the New Year. She requested anyone who is able to bring along New Year *kavili* as well, and highlighted that this is not a celebration, but a symbol of unity.



as at protests, because we believe that a well informed youth is the key to a better political future," she explained.

When talking about a key detail that led us to the current crisis, Siriwardhana pointed at political apathy and the lack of political knowledge. "We can blame those in power as much as we want, and while they are abusing their power, it is us, as citizens, who voted them in." She explained that the Sri Lankan political culture is such that one can have inherent political affiliations; one can vote for their family and vote based on promises of immediate, short-term solutions. With her platform, she hopes to motivate the youth to know who they're voting for and what their goals are.

PHOTO © IRANGAA WICKRAMASINGHE

≡ CALIBRE ≡
NOT
CORRUPTION



The Pickle Jar



The Pickle Jar Founder Zulaikha Sheriff

BY DIMITHRI WIJESINGHE

The Pickle Jar founded by Zulaikha Sheriff is a cloud kitchen concept available on Instagram. Having started with Zulaikha's famous lime pickle, just only three years ago right before the pandemic, The Pickle Jar has since grown into a flourishing business expanding on their repertoire and adding new dishes to their menu.

Although, considering the current situation in the country Zulaikha



Tripe Pasthol



However there are some desserts like a stunning Chocolate Biscuit Pudding, and some Mango Achcharu, some Pineapple Chutney and a number of other Sri Lankan classics.

She shared that in addition to her lime pickle, the mango and pineapple chutney have become very popular among customers and another favourite has been the nai miris polos cutlet. She shared that because she is able to make them herself and because she uses natural and fresh ingredients, her customers are really able to tell the difference and truly enjoy something that is rich in flavour.

Sharing with us her plans for the future, Zulaikha said that because she has always been promoting online she has been unable to see her customers and interact with them, and so she is hopefully looking forward to taking part in some local markets. She hopes to interact with her customers, to see how they react to her food.

@_thepicklejar

generations and perfected. She shared that because everyone loved it so much she thought it was a good idea to maybe share with others. The Pickle Jar, while it started as a platform to market Zulaikha's pickle, the space has since grown to include a wider variety of food items. Two signature items being her "කොළඹ මළු" and the Nai Miris Polos Cutlets.



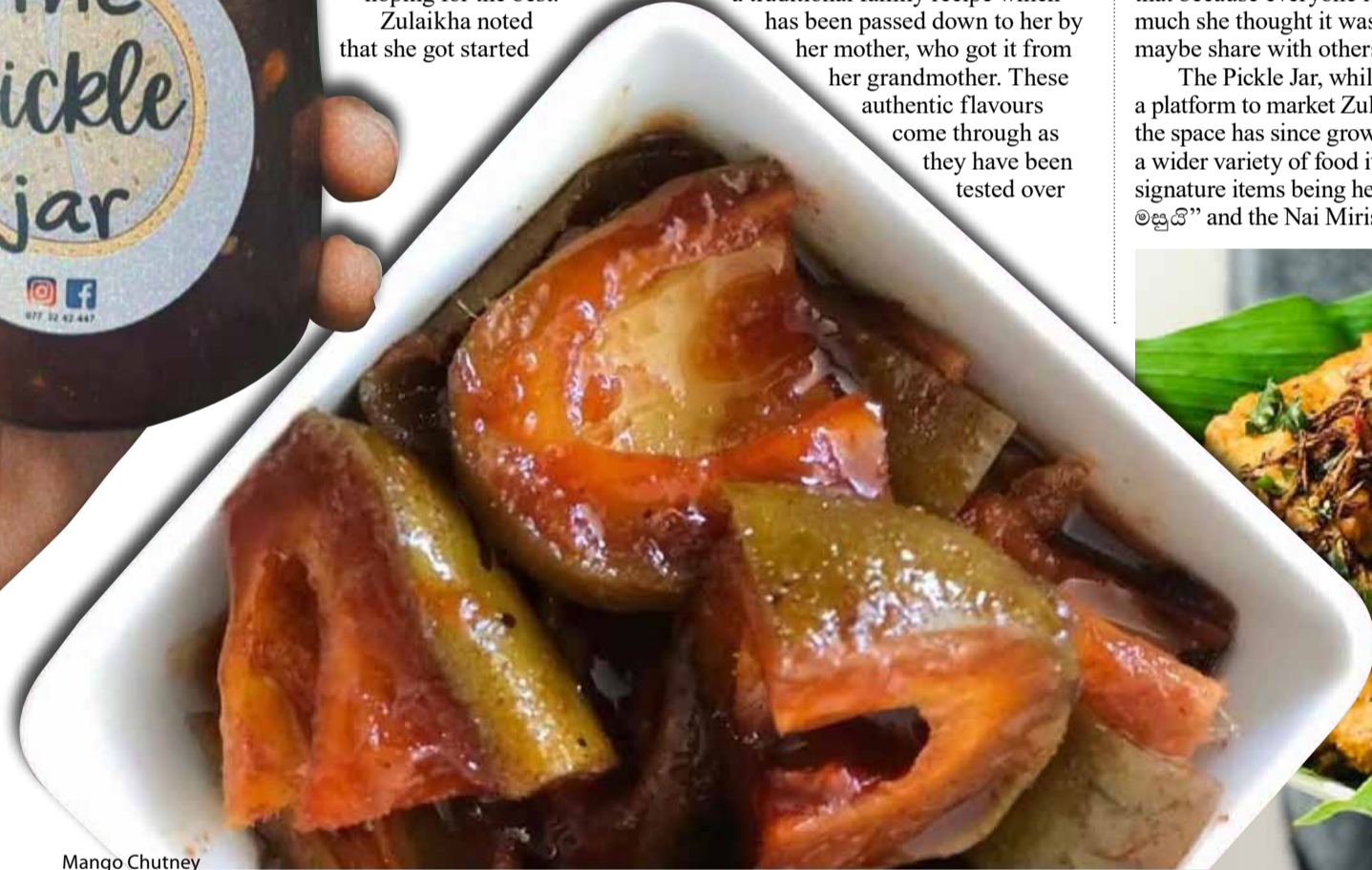
shared that they have not been as active as they once were online. She noted that her business is still very much an ongoing entity, and that she continues to take orders however, just like the many homegrown businesses that have taken some hits thanks to this economic crisis, The Pickle Jar too is simply coasting by hoping for the best. Zulaikha noted that she got started

with The Pickle Jar because her family encouraged her to package her product, saying "they said it was the best pickle they have ever had and encouraged me to package it and sell it". She added that, because her three daughters are grown and they are married she has felt that this venture has given her an exciting new purpose.

She also noted that the recipe which she uses for her lime pickle is a traditional family recipe which has been passed down to her by her mother, who got it from her grandmother. These authentic flavours come through as they have been tested over



Lime Pickle



Mango Chutney



කොළඹ මළු

Quick fixes with just three ingredients

BY VENESSA ANTHONY

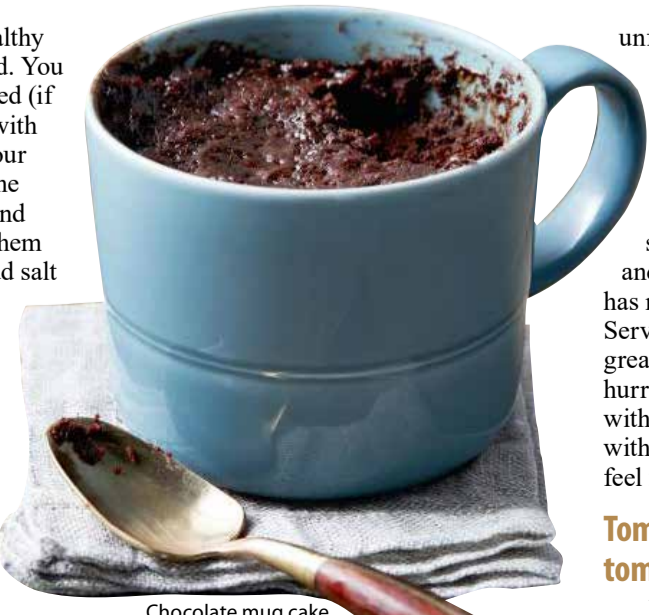
In light of the crisis our country is currently facing, food has been scarce; ingredients are not found easily and cooking has become a game of substitution. With a week of holidays approaching, we decided to let you in on some of our three-ingredient recipes – all made with ingredients that are not too difficult to source. If you're in a pickle, these are super easy to whip up and are bound to satiate your hunger.

Carrots + butter + honey = honey roasted carrots

This is a great way to enjoy a healthy meal that still tastes like comfort food. You will need six whole carrots, or chopped (if you prefer bite-sized pieces), peeled with tips and ends cut off. First, preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Evenly coat the carrots in two tablespoons of butter and two tablespoons of honey and place them in a medium-sized casserole dish. Add salt and pepper to taste. Bake it for 25-30 minutes and you've got your dinner! If you're facing power cuts, this can just as easily be done over a low flame, and it's a great snack that can be kept refrigerated and eaten hot or cold.

Chocolate spread + eggs + flour = mug cakes

Now milk is undoubtedly



Chocolate mug cake

a little hard to come by these days, but just a splash should suffice – you can substitute it with heavy cream or any kind of cream base you have at home. In a medium-sized mixing bowl, whisk together ¾ cup chocolate spread (if you don't have chocolate spread, you can use melted chocolate) and two eggs. Fold in the flour. Evenly distribute the mixture into two mugs. Microwave each mug for two minutes. Let it cool for five minutes. Frost the cakes with the remaining chocolate spread and serve warm. Again, this is super filling and can be kept refrigerated to be consumed at a later date.



Hash browns

you don't have sauce? Here's an easy solution. Put two cups of sliced tomatoes, with the juice, into a saucepan. Add five tablespoons of butter and one medium-sized chopped onion and salt to taste. Cook uncovered at a very slow but steady simmer for about 45 minutes, or until it is thickened to your liking and the fat floats free from the tomato. Stir from time to time, mashing up any large pieces of tomato with the back of a wooden spoon. Taste and correct for salt. This can be served over pasta or even as a dip – it's delicious however it's served.

Tomatoes + butter + onion = fresh tomato sauce

Want to make pasta only to find

you don't have sauce? Here's an easy solution. Put two cups of sliced tomatoes, with the juice, into a saucepan. Add five tablespoons of butter and one medium-sized chopped onion and salt to taste. Cook uncovered at a very slow but steady simmer for about 45 minutes, or until it is thickened to your liking and the fat floats free from the tomato. Stir from time to time, mashing up any large pieces of tomato with the back of a wooden spoon. Taste and correct for salt. This can be served over pasta or even as a dip – it's delicious however it's served.

Potatoes + butter + oil = hash browns

Crispy hash browns are a great breakfast option. With just three ingredients and being freezable, too, they're easy to add to your next fry-up. All you need are three potatoes, 50 grammes (g) of butter, and four tablespoons of an



Teriyaki chicken



Honey roasted carrots

oil of your choice. Cook the potatoes in a saucepan of boiling water for 10 minutes, then drain and set aside until cool enough to handle. Once that's done, coarsely grate the potatoes into a bowl discarding any skin that comes off in your hand as you grate. Season well with salt and pepper and pour over half the butter. Mix well then divide the mix into eight portions and shape into patties with salt and pepper and pour over half the butter. The hash browns can be prepared a day ahead and chilled until ready to cook or be kept frozen for up to a month.

Victoria confirmed as 2026 Commonwealth Games host

● Five cities and regions set to stage minimum of 16 sports

A total of five cities and regions are set to play a role in the 23rd Commonwealth Games 2026 after the Australian state of Victoria was officially confirmed yesterday (12) as the host of the next Games.

The announcement followed a successful and exclusive dialogue period launched in February between the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF), Commonwealth Games Australia, and Victoria, where a proposal to stage the major multi-sport competition across the state was agreed by all parties.

In what will be a first-ever predominantly regional Commonwealth Games, Victoria 2026 will be staged in March of that year in multiple cities including Melbourne, Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat, and Gippsland.

Final programme end of this year

The Opening Ceremony will take place at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), it was confirmed at a launch attended by CGF President Dame Louise Martin and the Premier of Victoria Daniel Andrews, revealed Duncan Mackay of *Inside the Games* yesterday (12).

The approach will showcase the best of what the State has to offer and ensure a uniquely Victorian experience for the athletes and spectators, it is claimed.

An initial 16 sports have been put forward for the Games, including T20 cricket, a figure which could increase by up to seven when the final programme is announced at the end of this year.

Massie relief for CGF

Along with cricket, swimming and diving, athletics, badminton, boxing, beach volleyball, cycling, gymnastics, hockey, lawn bowls, netball, rugby sevens, squash, table tennis, triathlon, and weightlifting are the first group of sports to be confirmed on the programme for Victoria 2026.

Swimming, athletics, lawn bowls, table tennis, and triathlon will host Para sports, while power-lifting will also be included.

Official confirmation that Victoria will follow Birmingham 2022 as the next host will be a massive relief for CGF officials, who had been struggling to find somewhere to stage the Games.

Exciting new blueprint

They have hailed the 2026-30 Strategic



Bendigo has been unveiled as one of the five cities and regions set to play a leading role after Victoria were officially confirmed as hosts of the 2026 Commonwealth Games yesterday (12)

VICTORIA 2026 COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Initial 16 sports named*:

Cricket, swimming and diving, athletics, badminton, boxing, beach volleyball, cycling, gymnastics, hockey, lawn bowls, netball, rugby sevens, squash, table tennis, triathlon, and weightlifting and power-lifting

* The figure can increase by up to seven when the final programme is announced at the end of this year

Sports that each city would host:

Melbourne: 2026 Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony at Melbourne Cricket Grounds (MCG)

Geelong (seven sports): Swimming and diving (at the GMHBA Stadium which includes an open-air swimming pool), beach volleyball, gymnastics, hockey, table



The Commonwealth Games Federation emblem

tennis, triathlon, and T20 cricket

Ballarat (three sports): Athletics, boxing, and T20 cricket

Bendigo (six sports): Lawn bowls, netball, squash, weightlifting and power-lifting, T20 cricket, cycling road race (to start in Gippsland and finish in Bendigo)

Gippsland (three sports): Badminton, rugby sevens, and T20 cricket

Roadmap which provides renewed flexibility to be innovative and creative in delivering the Games after having persuaded Victoria to step in.

“The Commonwealth Games Federation is absolutely delighted to award the 2026 Commonwealth Games to Victoria,” Dame Louise said.

“Commonwealth Games Australia and the Victorian Government have set out a bold and innovative vision that provides an exciting new blueprint for hosting our major multi-sport event. In Victoria, we believe we have found the perfect partner for the next stage of our journey.

‘A Games like no other’

“This is a very special moment for the Commonwealth Sport Family and on behalf of the entire Movement, I would like to congratulate Commonwealth Games Australia and Victoria on their successful Games submission.

“We now look forward to a bright future as we work together to stage a Commonwealth Games like no other.”

Geelong sports

Currently, Melbourne, which hosted the 2006 Commonwealth Games, is scheduled only to stage the Opening Ceremony.

Geelong, Victoria’s second-largest city behind Melbourne, is currently scheduled to host seven sports, including swimming and diving at the GMHBA Stadium, which recently underwent a multi-million-dollar investment, including the open-air swimming pool.

The port city is also due to host beach volleyball, gymnastics, hockey, table tennis, and triathlon.

Cricket too

Geelong is also set to stage T20 cricket along with Ballarat, Bendigo, and Gippsland.

PHOTO © VISIT VICTORIA

It is currently not clear whether cricket will be contested by both genders and, like Birmingham 2022, there will be only a women’s tournament.

Ballarat, Bendigo, and Gippsland

Ballarat, where gold was discovered in 1851, sparking a massive boom in the city’s fortunes, will stage athletics and boxing, as well as cricket.

Bendigo, 100 miles north-west of Melbourne and which hosted the 2004 Commonwealth Youth Games, is currently scheduled to stage lawn bowls, netball, squash, and weightlifting and power-lifting. It will also be the final destination for the cycling road race, which will start in Gippsland.

Gippsland, a rural region that makes up the south-eastern part of the stage, mostly comprising the coastal plains to the southern side of the Victorian Alps, is also due to host badminton and rugby sevens.

The plan fulfils Andrew’s promise for the Games to be spread around Victoria.

‘A privilege’

“It’s a privilege and honour to have Victoria chosen as the host venue for the 2026 Commonwealth Games – we can’t wait to welcome the world to Victoria,” he said.

“Sport is part of the fabric of our state and regional Victoria will provide the ideal hosting environment for the 2026 Commonwealth Games.”

Sixth time in Australia

This will be the sixth time that Australia has staged the Commonwealth Games. Besides Melbourne 2006, they have been staged in Sydney in 1938, Perth in 1962, Brisbane in 1978, and the Gold Coast in 2018.

“The Commonwealth Games is a pinnacle of world sport and Victoria 2026 will bring a comprehensive sports programme to world class stadia across regional Victoria, after an Opening Ceremony on the hallowed turf of the MCG,” Victoria’s Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Martin Pakula said.

ON THIS DAY



ACHIEVEMENTS/HISTORIC EVENTS

1974 Glenn Turner became the first New Zealander to score hundreds in both innings in a cricket Test, and in the process guided his team to their first victory over Australia, in Christchurch

1980 U.S.A. and its allies boycotted the Summer Olympics in Moscow in protest against Russia’s invasion of Afghanistan

1996 That memorable cricket World Cup semi-final at Eden Gardens, Calcutta where Sri Lanka beat India by default as part of over 100,000 spectators rioted against the hosts

1997 In the 61st US Masters Golf Tournament in Augusta, Tiger Woods won his first major title

2004 The epic India vs. Pakistan One-Day International (ODI) cricket match after 15 years: India won the last-ball thriller after totalling a mammoth 349

2014 Manny Pacquiao defeated Timothy Bradley to regain his World Boxing Organisation (WBO) welterweight title

2020 The first of three ODIs between Australia and New Zealand was played at an empty Sydney Cricket Grounds as the world entered a dark period of the Covid-19 pandemic

UNUSUAL

1940 American athlete Cornelius “Dutch” Warmerdam, using



New Zealand batter Glenn Turner during the 1974 Test against Australia where he became the first from his country to score centuries in both innings

a bamboo pole, became the first man to pole-vault 15 feet, at University of California, Berkeley

BIRTHS

1963 Birth of Gary Kasparov, Russian chess legend and world champion during 1985-93

1978 Birth of Carles Puyol, the Spanish and Barcelona football supremo

1985 Birth of former West Indies cricket Captain Dinesh Ramdin



Snippets from that historic 1996 World Cup cricket semi-finals in Calcutta



The 21-year-old Tiger Woods during his first major title win, the 61st US Masters Golf Tournament in 1997 in Augusta



Geelong is scheduled to host more sports than any other city when Victoria hosts the 2026 Commonwealth Games



The background

Former Sri Lanka cricket Captain Marvan Atapattu and his wife Neluni joining the ongoing anti-government protest in Colombo in the past week posting a placard that states “‘Kaputas’ go home”, meaning “go home crows” – a direct hit at the present Rajapaksa dispensation which is widely considered corrupt and nepotistic.

What the photo reveals

Marvan Samson Atapattu, 51, is former Mahinda College, Galle and Ananda College, Colombo cricketer who later played for Sri Lanka during 1990-2007. He played in 90 Tests and 28 One-day Internationals (ODIs) scoring 5,504 Test runs at an average of 39.02 and 8,529 runs in ODIs, averaging 37.57.

He is considered one of the most technically sound batsmen. Atapattu notably scored six double centuries in Tests after notoriously registering five ducks (0s) in his first six innings. At Lord’s in London in 1998,



Atapattu scored 132 not out against England, his highest score in ODIs, whilst guiding Sri Lanka to a memorable tri-series triumph in a tournament which also involved South Africa.

Later Atapattu captained Sri Lanka in 18 Tests during 2002-05 winning eight and losing five. He also led the country in 63 ODIs during 2001-06 winning 35 of them. His captaincy period fell between those of Sanath Jayasuriya and Mahela Jayawardene.

After retirement, Atapattu coached the Canada and Singapore national

cricket teams before becoming Sri Lanka Head Coach from April 2014 to September 2015.

Former Sri Lanka Test batsman Marlon Von Hagt is the son of Marvan Atapattu’s mother Diana’s sister Marina – both Marvan and Marlon are cousins. Later, Marvan’s younger sister got married to World Cup-winning Captain Arjuna Ranatunga’s younger brother Nishantha Ranatunga, another former Sri Lanka Test cricketer.

Neluni is reportedly an accountant by profession.

Analysis

An ordinary photo showing an ordinary couple, showing their resentment by holding an ordinary placard, standing on an ordinary roadside. Then, when we “re-read” the photo having assimilated the impressive international career of the man on the left, this photo will give a remarkable impression. Undoubtedly, this adds a lot of leverage to the ongoing public resentment over the

present Government – “even this type of well established and recognised people too are on the street asking the present dispensation to go!”

Photographer

Unknown.

An afterword

It is too early to have any afterthought about this photo and its social effect as the anti-government protests are still going on round the island – with a central protest on at Colombo’s main promenade, the Galle Face Green. The Government is trying its best to come out of the economic rut which it is in at the moment. There is also a growing mass impression that the agitation of the general public is being misdirected and misused, for some selfish political gains, by various interested parties who work with vested interests. Let’s hope that Sri Lanka will survive soon and its cricket will produce more cricketers with the calibre of Atapattu in the future too!

the morning sports

FIA investigates Severiukhin's 'Nazi salute'



The Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), the motorsport's world governing body, is investigating after a 15-year-old Russian karting champion Artem Severiukhin appeared to have made a Nazi salute on a podium. As a result, Severiukhin has been sacked by his racing team too. Severiukhin seemed to perform the offensive gesture after winning the first round of the European Championship in Portugal on Sunday (10). According to PA, he has apologised but denied his gesture was in fact a Nazi salute.



Venues of IPL 2022 play-offs

It is almost decided that the final of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2022 will take place in Ahmedabad. If there is no change in the Covid-19 situation, the Eden Gardens in Calcutta, now Kolkata, will host the Qualifier 1 of the IPL as well as the Eliminator next month. The Qualifier 2

will be hosted in Ahmedabad. The Indian cricket board is to make an official announcement of this year's IPL playoffs soon.
Tentative IPL play-offs schedule: Qualifier 1: Eden Gardens, Kolkata; Eliminator: Eden Gardens, Kolkata; Qualifier 2: Ahmedabad; and IPL 2022 Finals: Ahmedabad

SLSCA U19 DIVISION I 50-OVER TOURNAMENT

New dates fixed for the finals

Sri Lanka Schools Cricket Association (SLSCA) announced new dates and venues for the Tier "A" and Tier "B" finals of the SLSCA U19 Division I Cricket Tournament yesterday (12). Due to the current inclement

weather conditions in the country, the SLSCA decided to postpone the two finals which were supposed to be played before the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. As per the new schedule, the Division I Tier "B" final will be played

on 20 April between Thurstan College, Colombo and St. Peter's College, Colombo. It was supposed to take place on Monday (11) at the Bloomfield Grounds, initially, but the organisers have decided to move the game to the

Army Grounds at Dombagoda instead.

The Division 1 Tier "A" final between St. Joseph's College, Colombo and Richmond College, Galle will take place on 21 April at the same venue.

Asia Rugby suspends Sri Lanka Rugby

● Sports Director General appears clueless about decision

BY RANJIKA PERERA

Sri Lanka Rugby (SLR) is on the headlines once again as Asia Rugby has suspended SLR yesterday (12), in relation to the contradictory positions between the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka (NOC SL).

At a meeting held last Saturday (9) in Phuket, Thailand, the Asia Rugby Executive Committee has decided to suspend the membership of SLR with immediate effect.

Amal Edirisooriya unaware

The statement read: "The Asia Rugby Executive Committee (EXCO) has discussed at length the contrary positions of the Sri Lanka Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Sri Lanka National Olympic Committee in relation to the suspension of SLR."

The *Morning Sports* contacted the Director General of Sports Development Amal Edirisooriya regarding the matter last afternoon. However, he claimed to have no idea of the suspension Asia Rugby had published on their official website by yesterday.

Contradicting action from various governing bodies

As a further explanation for the suspension, Asia Rugby, in its statement, had added: "SLR was suspended by the Sri Lankan Minister of Youth and Sports as announced via an official Government Gazette dated 1 April 2022, whilst the



Director General of Sports Development Amal Edirisooriya



'Former' Sri Lanka Rugby President Rizly Illyas

'We are standing strong': Rizly Illyas

Speaking exclusively to *The Morning Sports* over the recent development last evening (12), Sri Lanka Rugby (SLR) President Rizly Illyas said: "I am aware of the Asia Rugby suspension. I think it's fair to say that both the Ministry of Sports and Asia Rugby don't have good governance. Initially, the Sports Ministry suspended SLR without any inquiry. It is against sports law. You're supposed to have a hearing and give an explanation. But we are yet to receive any explanation from the Ministry."

He further added: "We are speaking to our sources and lawyers. All these actions are only affecting the progress of SLR. We were conducting the tournament smoothly and now all these issues have hampered the sport's progress. Not only does it affect the sport, it affects the clubs, coaches, and players too. In the end, we respect the gazette but we are standing strong."



To LISTEN to our sports page lead story, scan this QR code on your device

National Olympic Committee, via an official letter signed by the Secretary General, recognises SLR as the sole representative of the sport of rugby in Sri Lanka."

SLR's competency in question

In accordance with Asia Rugby Regulation-3, the membership of SLR will now be temporarily suspended from the Regional Association with immediate effect.

That is until further notice on the basis that SLR may no longer be considered fully responsible for the organisation of rugby-related

matters in its jurisdiction, or it is no longer in a position to perform its constitutional and regulatory duties in an appropriate manner.

The Asia Rugby Executive Committee has further added that a visiting delegation from the Regional Association, together with the Olympic Council of Asia, will travel to Sri Lanka on Wednesday (20) to meet with the relevant stakeholders in a committed and transparent effort to attain an ideal resolution to the affair in the best interest of Sri Lankan rugby athletes.

Chaos in administration only affects the sport

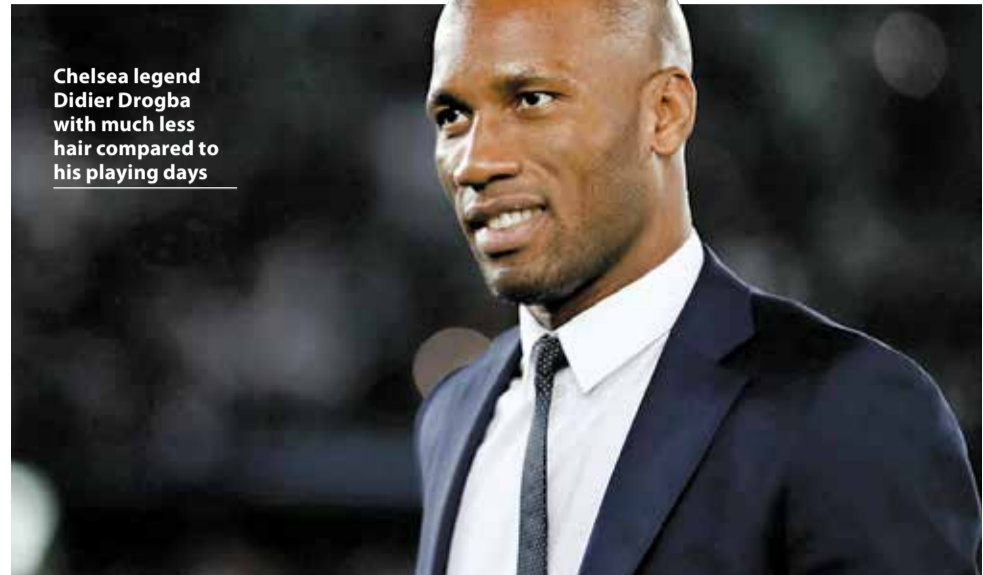
Sri Lanka was deprived of rugby for more than one-and-a-half years due to lockdowns and other Covid-19 restrictions. Just when the sport was starting to lift its head up, the administration gets in the way, and once again the sport is at a standstill.

The year 2022 was supposed to be one of the biggest and most

important calendar years for SLR, with both Commonwealth Games 2022 and Asia Games 2022 scheduled for later this year.

The Commonwealth Games is set to begin on 28 July in England, a little over three months from now, which is also nowhere near the amount of time that is needed for the players to train and prepare for the tournament properly.

However, we can still have some hope of winning a medal at the Asian Games which is to begin on 10 September in China.



Chelsea legend Didier Drogba with much less hair compared to his playing days

WORLD SOCCER NEWS

Chelsea legend Drogba runs for FIF presidency

Chelsea legend Didier Drogba is among six presidential candidates cleared to vie for the Ivorian Football Federation (FIF) top seat in the coming elections. The 44-year-old was among the candidates, who presented their nomination papers to the Normalisation Committee and has been finally given a clean bill of health to contest.

Confirming the news, the committee's President Mariam Dao Gabala told a press conference as quoted by Africanews: "The filing of candidacies for the presidency of the Ivorian Football Federation is closed. Six candidates have been registered. They are: Yatte Ellele Jean-Baptiste, Arnaud Aka, Laurent Kouakou, Idriss Diallo, Sory Diabate, and Didier Drogba."

Drogba is best known for his career at Chelsea, where he scored more goals than any other foreign player and is currently the club's fourth-highest goalscorer of all time.

He was named "African Footballer of the Year" twice, winning the accolade in 2006 and 2009. An Ivory Coast international between 2002 and 2014, becoming the nation's all-time top goalscorer with 65 goals from 105 appearances.

He led Ivory Coast to the 2006 FIFA World Cup, their first appearance in the tournament, and also scored their first goal.



Last Sunday, Sergio Ramos completed full 90-minutes since January



Former Colombian skipper Freddy Rincón

Former Colombian skipper Freddy Rincón suffer traumatic brain damage

Former Colombia captain Freddy Rincón is in critical condition after a car crash in Cali, Colombia. The 55-year-old was driving a car when it was involved in a crash with a bus. The former Real Madrid player, his four passengers, and the driver of the bus all suffered injuries, according to reports.

"Freddy Eusebio Rincón arrived in hospital this morning with a traumatic brain injury," said the Imbanaco Clinic in a statement. His condition is very serious, taking into consideration the findings in the surgery," added Laureano Quintero, a director at the Cali hospital.

Rincón played for Colombia 84 times and scored 17 goals, representing his nation at three World Cups in 1990, 1994, and 1998. He played with distinction for Napoli and Real Madrid in Europe and also won the FIFA Club World Cup in 2000 with Corinthians.

'I would like to play between four and five more years': Ramos

Sergio Ramos hopes to continue playing at football's top level for up to five more years. The 35-year-old joined Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) from Real Madrid last summer after his contract with the Spanish giants expired.

But the Spain international's time in France has been plagued by injury, limiting him to just seven appearances in all competitions this season.

"I would like to play between four and five more years at the top level and then live another experience," the centre-back told Amazon Prime. "I have two years at PSG; we will try to do three and then we'll see. As long as my physical condition holds up, I think I can keep my mind focused."

LOCAL NEWS IN BRIEF

100th National Athletic Championship to continue on 23 April



Yeti Director Dr. Dilshan Balasuriya (fifth from left) presenting a pack of Yeti products to a member of the Triathlon Club, Colombo

W.U.L. Sugandhi, representing Sri Lanka Army, won first place in the 100-metre (m) women's hurdles with a timing of 13.70 seconds at the 100th National Athletic

Championship 2022 which was held from last Friday to Sunday (8-10) at the Diyagama Stadium in Homagama. Hurdlers Dhanuka Darshana and Amesha Hettiarachchi, and



Sebastianites after their semi-final victory against Colts in the emerging teams' inter-club cricket tournament on Sunday (10) at P. Sara Stadium, Colombo

sprinter Tharushi Karunaratne, all from the Central Province, stole the show at this event. Many events of the championship, though, had to be postponed to Saturday, 23 April, due to bad weather. In the 400 m hurdles heats, Dhanuka Darshana clocked sub 52 seconds, a remarkable feat. Hettiarachchi created a new Sri Lanka junior record when she clocked 60.23 seconds to win the silver medal in the women's 400 m hurdles.

Other sporting headlines

Emerging teams' inter-club cricket final from 22-24 April at SSC

Sebastianites will take on Tamil Union in the finals of this year's Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC)-organised Emerging three-day cricket league at the Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC), Colombo from 22-24 April.

Yeti partners with Colombo's biggest triathlon community

The Triathlon Club, Colombo recently partnered with isotonic sports product brand Yeti, in their attempt to reach excellence at this year's upcoming international events. As part of the partnership, the triathlon community will have access to the elite Yeti portfolios. The Triathlon Club had been formed by a group of passionate triathletes having raced together since 2016. They have been racing in all parts of the world, having left an impressive footprint on the international stage.



Amesha Hettiarachchi (right) created a new Sri Lankan junior record when she clocked 60.23 seconds in winning second place in the women's 400 m hurdles at the 100th National Athletic Championship at Diyagama over the last weekend. Pictured centre is the winner E.K. Madushani who clocked 58.73 seconds and on the left is third-placed N.D.G.N. Lakmal

PHOTO ISHAN WANNIARACHCHI