

DEALING WITH THE STRONG-ARM OF THE LAW



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the morning



FACING CHALLENGES BEYOND THE PANDEMIC
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ISRAELI DIRECTOR FILMING 'ARUGAM BAY' IN SL
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CSE OPENS AFTER 17-DAY HIATUS WITH RESTRICTED TRADING HOURS



The IUSF protest advancing towards its destination at the Galle Face Green
PHOTO KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM

IUSF protest enters Galle Face despite barricades

- Protestors take alternative route
- Police use barricades with hidden spikes
- Criticism from BASL, SJB, TNA
- Slogans written on PM's Wijerama residence wall

Despite several barricades, including those with hidden spikes, along most roads leading to "GotaGoGama" at Galle Face Green, the Inter-University Students' Federation (IUSF) protest march managed to reach the Green by using alternative routes yesterday (24), attracting national attention in the process.

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Nearly half of Medical Supplies Division's stocks over?

- Government Pharmacists make alarming claim
- Say six life-saving drugs and 239 essential drugs in short supply



BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

The Society of Government Pharmacists (SGP) has claimed that about 50% of the stocks of medical supplies in the Medical Supplies Division (MSD) of the Ministry of Health have been exhausted.

Speaking to *The Morning* yesterday (24), SGP President Ajith Thilakarathne said that out of the 1,358 medicines that should be in the MSD, stocks of 525 have been depleted. Among them are six life-saving drugs, 239 essential drugs, and 280 rarely used drugs.

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Prez to improve water-related infrastructure in next three years

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa stated that the Government's national goal is to improve water-related infrastructure, including clean water supply and sanitation for all, in the next three years.

fourth Asia-Pacific Water Summit that commenced in Kumamoto, Japan Saturday (23) via video technology.

This year's summit, titled "Water for Sustainable Development: Best Practices and the Next Generation", will be attended by Heads of State representing 48 countries in the Asia-Pacific region including Japan, as well as international organisations representatives.

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Cardinal and 30 Easter attacks victims to meet Pope today

- Special service at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican in remembrance of attacks

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA



The Archbishop of Colombo Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith and Pope Francis in conversation during the last meeting in February 2022

A group of 60, including Archbishop of Colombo His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith and victims of the Easter Sunday terror attacks of 21 April 2019, who left for Rome, Italy on 22 April, are to meet the Head of the Catholic Church, His Holiness Pope Francis today (25).

Contd. on page 2

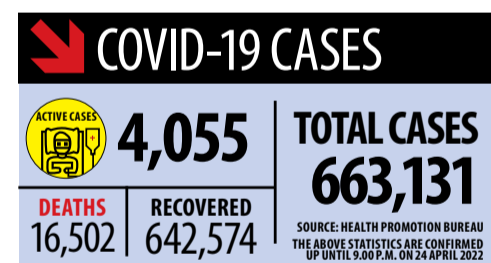
SJB begins obtaining signatures of the 40 independent MPs

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

The Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) said it has commenced the obtaining of signatures of the MPs who recently decided to sit independently in Parliament, for the impeachment motion against incumbent President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, as well as the no-confidence motion (NCM) against the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP)-led Government.

When contacted by *The Morning* yesterday (24), SJB National Organiser MP Tissa Attanayake said: "Both the impeachment motion against the President and the NCM against the Government are still being signed. We have now started obtaining signatures of the nearly 40 MPs who have decided to sit independently in Parliament."

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Prasanna requests Police to maintain public transport amidst protests

Minister of Public Security and Tourism Prasanna Ranatunga has requested the Police to take immediate action to ensure that public transport services are maintained without any hindrance during the ongoing protests and demonstrations in the country.

Contd. on page 2

Charitha joins Dullas in asking Mahinda to quit

- Proposes six steps as way forward

Following former Minister Dullas Alahapperuma's suggestion calling for the resignation of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, as well as the formation of a national government, SLPP MP Prof. Charitha Herath said that he endorses Alahapperuma's suggestion yesterday (24).



MP Prof. Charitha Herath

the National List MP Tweeted. The former Minister of Media last Friday (22) had written a letter to the President stating that the Prime Minister and the Cabinet must step down and let Parliament form a new coalition government. He also urged the President to appoint a smaller Cabinet with a genuine consensus, representing all parties in parliament for a maximum of one year.

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Teachers on islandwide token strike today

BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

Teachers' and principals' unions have decided to go on a one-day token strike islandwide today (25).

Ceylon Teachers' Union General Secretary Joseph Stalin Speaking to *The Morning* said that the strike will be staged in protest of the increase in bus fares and school transport fares in the face of rising fuel prices, as well as the anti-public measures being taken by the Government.

"All teachers, principals, and instructors would report on sick-leave today and we would plan a mass protest after 28 April to show our reluctant over the Government."

Around 240,000 teachers and 16,000 principals islandwide would participate in the token strike.

Contd. on page 2

New control prices for drugs proposed to Health Minister

- Pharmacy owners claim new model could solve drug shortage

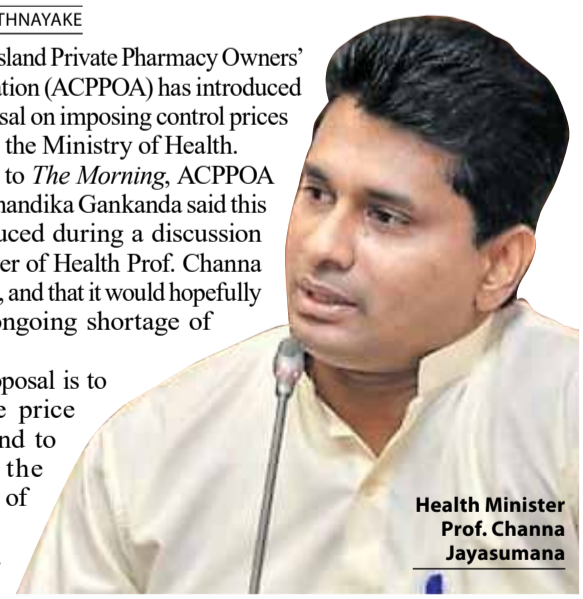
BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

The All-Island Private Pharmacy Owners' Association (ACPPOA) has introduced a new proposal on imposing control prices for drugs to the Ministry of Health.

Speaking to *The Morning*, ACPPOA President Chandika Gankanda said this was introduced during a discussion with Minister of Health Prof. Channa Jayasumana, and that it would hopefully solve the ongoing shortage of drugs.

"This proposal is to control the price of drugs and to increase the availability of drugs."

Contd. on page 2



Health Minister Prof. Channa Jayasumana

IMF calls technical talks with SL 'fruitful'

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Mission Chief for Sri Lanka Masahiro Nozaki stated, in a press release published by the IMF on Saturday (23), that the IMF team had successfully held fruitful technical discussions with the Sri Lankan delegation with regard to Sri Lanka's request for an IMF-supported programme during 18-22 April 2022.

covered recent economic and financial developments in Sri Lanka, the need for implementing a credible and coherent strategy to restore macroeconomic stability, and the importance of stronger social safety nets to mitigate the adverse impact of the current economic crisis on the poor and vulnerable."

Read full story on page 7 Business Section

'No Interim Govt. until President's Executive Powers are reduced'

SJB National Organiser MP Tissa Attanayake



- SJB insists the passage of 21st Amendment non-negotiable
- Slams PM's statement about retaining premiership

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

The main Parliamentary Opposition, the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), has stated that an Interim Government, or any similar solution, could at least be considered only after the reduction of the powers of the Executive President by the

adoption of the 21st Amendment to the Constitution.

Speaking to *The Morning*, SJB National Organiser MP Tissa Attanayake said: "Our primary interest is to reduce the powers of the Executive President through the 21st Amendment."

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{ NEWS }

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Nearly...

“Especially, drugs that are used to treat heart patients and provide the rabies vaccine are out of stock. Most of them are scheduled to be imported under the Indian credit facility, but it will take another six weeks of time,” he said.

Thilakarathne also said that out of the 8,553 surgical items required to be in the MSD, stocks of 5,376, which is 62.9% of the total requirement, have been depleted.

Noting that the above drugs and surgical items may be available in very small quantities in hospitals, he said that the lack of medical supplies in the MSD to be issued to hospitals could lead to a collapse of the hospital system.

“We, the SGP, informed the relevant parties four months ago that this situation was being created, but there was no acceptable intervention for that. As pharmacists, we are still trying to manage this situation as much as possible,” he added.

The MSD is the main organisation responsible for providing all pharmaceuticals, surgical items, laboratory items, radioactive items, printed materials, etc. for government sector healthcare institutions throughout the country, as well as the central organisation where these medical supplies are stored until they are distributed among healthcare institutions. In addition, the MSD is also responsible for supplying dangerous drugs and essential medical items that are not available to the private sector in the open market.

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 some treatments as they would have to save on drugs for emergencies.

IUSF...

Even though the IUSF had originally planned to march to Galle Face from Colombo Fort, the protestors chose to take an alternative route instead of physically engaging with the Police or attempting to push down the barricades.

The alternative route was via Borella to Wijerama Mawatha, where they engaged in a protest outside the residence of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. The student activists managed to hang a black flag from the wall of the residence, and named the wall of the residence the “Protest Wall”, writing a number of slogans on it. Afterwards, the IUSF marched towards “GotaGoGama” through Liberty roundabout to Galle Face Green.

Last Saturday (23), the Colombo Fort

Police requested a prevention order from the Colombo Fort Magistrate against the IUSF protest, which was rejected. However, the Police had requested a Court order under Section 106 (1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure Act (No. 15 of 1979) to bar certain student leaders from entering several roads leading to Galle Face Green.

Therefore, Chaitya Road, Janadhipathi Mawatha from NSA Junction, York Street from Ceramic Junction, G.O.H. Junction to Bank road, Ceramic Junction to NSA, Lotus Avenue from Ceramic Junction, Lower Chatham Street, from GMH Junction to the main road from the junction, and Lady Bastian Mawatha were blocked with barricades yesterday. Several members of the public, outside of the IUSF, who intended to go to Galle Face Green to protest were seen questioning police officers at these barricades.

When contacted, Police Spokesperson Attorney-at-Law (AAL) Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Nihal Thaldudu told *The Morning* yesterday (24) that the Court had not ordered the Police to put up barricades to block the roads, but had ordered it to ensure that no violence occurred due to the protests.

IUSF Convener Wasanththa Mudalige, addressing the protestors outside the PM’s Wijerama residence, said that the protests would continue until their main demand was met.

“These leaders pushed the public from the frying pan into the fire. That is why people are on the streets today, demanding that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa go home. However, he refuses to resign. If he does not go, we know how to send him home.”

Several video reports showed that barriers with hidden spikes were used in some locations to bar the roads. The spikes were covered using polythene to prevent detection. Issuing a statement in this regard, the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) noted that these barricades could cause serious injury to people.

“The attention of the BASL has been drawn by its members and by the public, that certain barricades have been fitted with spikes and covered with black material and that these barricades may well cause serious injuries to persons. We once again call upon the Government, the Inspector General of Police and all police officers and the armed forces to act with utmost restraint in all circumstances.

“They are duty bound to ensure the safety of the protestors and the public and the right of the people to dissent in a peaceful manner and also the freedom of movement of the citizens. Any violence whatsoever from whatever quarter will have serious repercussions for the country,” said BASL President Saliya Pieris PC.

In a Twitter statement published yesterday, Opposition and Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Leader Sajith Premadasa questioned why the roads were blocked and urged that the Government “stop holding back change”.

Furthermore, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) spokesperson M.A. Sumanthiran PC tweeted that “freedom of movement cannot be restricted in this way. This is a clear violation of the fundamental rights of the citizens.”

“All roads leading to Galle Face and the President’s house are blocked by barricades fitted with thorns. As Colombo MPs, [SJB MP] Mujibur Rahuman and I visited the blockades and communicated to the police forces that they are the peoples’ police and not a political police,” tweeted SJB MP Mano Ganesan, who had visited the area yesterday.

The “Occupy Galle Face” movement reached its 16th consecutive day yesterday (24). The rapidly expanding protest area now includes a people’s library, people’s university, people’s forum and various other events throughout the day. The protestors continue the protest by staying overnight in tents erected throughout the area and have named the area “GotaGoGama”. Several trade unions, civil society organisations, rights activists, and religious groups engaged in protest marches throughout the past two weeks, ending at “GotaGoGama” in solidarity.

SJB...

Speaking in Parliament on 8 April, SJB and Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa told Parliament that plans were afoot to submit an NCM against the current Government over the prevailing economic crisis. He also said that the SJB was also contemplating an impeachment motion against the President, if the latter was not willing to step down.

On 5 April, a total of 40 MPs who represented the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Government informed Speaker of the Parliament Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena that they would be functioning independently in Parliament from that day. Among the said MPs were 26 MPs representing the SLPP and 14 MPs representing the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), out of whom Shantha Bandara and Dr. Raghavan accepted State Ministerial posts recently.

Meanwhile, Attanayake, on an earlier occasion, said that they had also initiated discussions with the political parties within the SJB, as well as other political parties, to seek their support for the said motions. He also said that as soon as the relevant number of signatures were received, the two motions would be handed over to Speaker of the Parliament Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena.

A large number of protests were recently held daily throughout the country, demanding reduction in the rising cost of living and a solution to the shortage of goods. As these issues have escalated in recent times, protests are now being held demanding that President Rajapaksa, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and the current Government should resign.

New...

“The Minister promised us that he would discuss the proposal with the National Medicines Regulatory Authority and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and implement it soon.” Gankanda claimed that pharmacies are running out of essential medicines and there is a shortage of 50% in stocks with the Medical Supplies Division of the Ministry of Health. However, he expressed confidence that the proposal would solve most of the ongoing issues.

“Only a few vitamins, as well as pressure and cholesterol tablets are available in the pharmacies at the moment,” he claimed.

Meanwhile, newly-appointed Minister of Health Prof. Channa Jayasuman, has admitted that there is a possibility of a significant shortage of drugs occurring in the next three months. However, he said the Government has taken all steps possible to minimise the effects of this possible shortage.

Speaking in Parliament last week, the Minister stated that he had previously informed the House on 8 February of the dollar shortage resulting in issues with obtaining drugs, which could leave lasting consequences.

He further stated that in particular, former Minister of Health Keheliya Rambukwella and himself had repeatedly sought to take a lead in opening letters of credit for this purpose, but that, for a variety of reasons, there was a delay in opening letters of credit for essential drugs.

“For certain medicines and drugs that we needed to open Letters of Credit in the first week of January, we were only able to do so in the first week of April,” he stated. “I have previously admitted in Parliament that such an issue did arise. But by now we have received the required amount of US dollars to open the Letters of Credit.”

Prof. Jayasuman also pointed out that due to the delay in opening letters of credit, the procurement of certain medications may be delayed by up to 90 days.

Meanwhile, the Society of Government Pharmacists also said that by now, 525 types of medicines and 5,376 types of surgical items are out of stock in the Medical Supply Division in Colombo.

In a statement over the weekend, the Division stated: “There should be 1,358 types of medicines in the medical supply sector, but 525 of them are not available and 38.7% of medicines are out of stock.”

Cardinal...

Speaking to *The Morning* yesterday (24), Colombo Archdiocese Social Communications Director Rev. Jude Chrisantha Fernando, who is also among the said group, said that they would be attending a special service at the St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City today, in remembrance of the said terror attacks.

“A group of Sri Lankans including Cardinal Ranjith, 30 victims of the Easter Sunday terror attacks and their family members arrived in

Rome on 22 April. We will be attending a special service tomorrow. After the service, we are scheduled to meet the Pope. During the discussions with him, several matters pertaining to the terror attacks and related investigations would be discovered,” he added.

A total of 60 persons, including Colombo Archbishop Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, seven Bishops, Catholic priests, the Church’s lawyer, President’s Counsel Shammi Perera, and victims of the Easter Sunday terror attacks left for Rome, Italy to participate in a special prayer service on an invitation extended by Pope Francis. The group had left on board two flights at 5 a.m. and 10.05 a.m. on 22 April.

The Colombo Archbishop met with Pope Francis on 28 February at the Vatican, and the Easter Sunday terror attacks and related investigations were discussed during the said meeting.

“We have exhausted all options within Sri Lanka to find justice. Now we are discussing all avenues through which we can find justice internationally. Our last remaining solution was to seek assistance from the international community. This is not because we do not love our country. The Archbishop is meeting the Pope after two years and he is especially focusing on informing him that we need help from the international community to seek justice for the victims of the Easter Sunday terror attacks.” National Catholic Social Communication Centre Director Rev. Cyril Gamini Fernando said at a press conference held on the same day.

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

It was recently reported that Sri Lankans living in Italy, including the Catholic clergy have organised a series of events to mark the third anniversary of the Easter Sunday terror attacks. Among them is another special service, which is planned to be held on 1 May near St. Anthony’s Church in Padua to demand that the truth behind the terror attacks be revealed.

Charitha...

Prof. Herath also proposed the following steps as the way forward:

1. The present government needs to step down
2. A national caretaker-type small government needs to be formed for a period of 6-8 months
3. The speeding up of the ongoing International Monetary Fund (IMF) discussions and to quickly plan the economic readjustment
4. Obtaining the three draft proposals on the 21st Amendment work on to get an amalgamated version if possible (he said the drafts from the SJB and 40 independent MPs were submitted and the Government’s draft is still pending)
5. Formulation of a plan to pass the 21st Amendment within three months while the presidential system and issues of the present presidency could be addressed
6. The holding of an election after eight months, given that economic hardships will be managed to some extent by that time

Teachers...

Meanwhile, it was reported that Ceylon Teachers’ Service Union General Secretary Mahinda Jayasinghe on behalf of the Teachers’ Principals’ Trade Union Alliance mentioned that 30 teachers’ and principals’ unions will participate in this one-day token strike.

However, Minister of Education Dr. Ramesh Pathirana has requested the teaching community to engage in strike action, so as not to hinder the education of children, according to media reports.

Attempts to reach the Minister and Ministry of Education Secretary Kapila Perera were futile.

Prasanna...

This was stated in a letter sent by Minister Prasanna Ranatunga to the Secretary to the Ministry of Public Security last Friday (22). It further states that the present Government, led by the President, recognises the right to peaceful protests and demonstrations.

He also pointed out that the lives of the people should be maintained as usual during the protests and demonstrations. Protests and demonstrations in the country over the past few days have disrupted normalcy in the country, with ambulances, school vans, tourist vehicles, and vehicles transporting essential goods and services being disrupted.

In such cases, the Minister further directed the Secretary to the Ministry of Public Defence to consult with the relevant protesters and instruct the Police to take necessary steps to ensure that public transport services are provided without any disturbance.

Meanwhile Chief Government Whip Prasanna Ranatunga also said that steps will be taken to inform the Archbishop of Colombo His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith and the Catholic clergy regarding the investigation into the Easter attack.

Speaking during a debate in Parliament on the Easter attack last Friday (22), he said he hoped to get a date from the Cardinal to present the information.

The Minister said that some Opposition members had made false allegations in the Parliamentary debate, counting the Cardinal and the Catholic clergy, and that therefore, if there is any doubt, disbelief, or problem regarding the inquiries into the Easter attack, the Government is ready to make submissions.

The Minister said that some members of the Opposition were making false allegations by revealing the names and addresses of the intelligence officers in connection with the attack, pointing out that this had threatened the lives of the relevant officials as well.

Prez...

The summit will discuss various water-related issues and how to implement the recommendations made in the “Yangon Declaration” adopted at the 3rd Asia-Pacific Summit 2017 in Myanmar.

The results of this summit will be announced at the United Nations Water Conference scheduled to be held in March 2023 as the “Kumamoto Declaration”.

“The Kumamoto Declaration is the compilation of the strong aspirations of the top leaders to solve water-related issues. We are trying to collect our wisdom to solve these issues,” Asia Pacific Water Forum President Yoshiyuki Mori said.

Delivering the keynote speech, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said water issues are deeply related to a range of challenges in a society such as climate change and natural disasters, sanitation, and poverty.

“In recent times, water-related disasters have increased in the world. In the Asia Pacific region, water-related disasters have tripled over the past 30 years. To eradicate poverty, it is essential to improve the local sanitary environment by using water. We will share our expertise with other countries in the Asia Pacific region,” he said.

President Rajapaksa said even during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government was able to increase the number of new water connections to the public by more than 50% compared to what had been achieved annually in previous years.

“Several projects intended towards improving water cycle management were also undertaken,” the President further said.

“These achievements reflect the emphasis we give to inclusivity and to fostering participatory growth for all Sri Lankans, which is at the heart of my Government’s development efforts. Despite considerable resource constraints, made far worse through the pandemic and our ongoing financial crisis, Sri Lanka’s commitment towards such development as well as towards sustaining a progressive agenda on the environment remains unchanged,” the President added.

“Sri Lanka welcomes investments, technology transfers, and financing for our sustainability efforts, as well as broader development assistance and co-operation for debt restructuring to support our economic recovery during this critical time,” President Rajapaksa further said.

Representing the Government, Sri Lankan Ambassador in Japan Sanjiv Gunasekara attended the opening ceremony and the Heads of State Meeting.

‘No...

“Only then can an Interim Government or other similar solution be considered. We do not want to discuss anything without passing it.”

Accordingly, he said that the first step would be to make the powers afforded to the President similar to those under the 19th Amendment, while the second step would be to abolish the Executive Presidency through the 21st Amendment.

He also commented on the recent statement made by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa that there would be no need to form an Interim Government, and that if such a government is, for some reason, to be formed, it should be headed by him.

He asked: “If an Interim Government is formed, the Premier will be appointed with the consent of the parties representing that Government. Therefore, someone coming out and saying that they would lead such a Government is not even something to be talked about. Besides, all these protests are being directed at President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Mahinda Rajapaksa-led Cabinet. In this context, what’s the point of having a Government re-elected under his (Mahinda Rajapaksa) leadership?”

Speaking to the media on 23 April, Premier Rajapaksa had stated: “What is the use of interim governments when people with varying policies don’t come to an agreement? If such a government is to be formed, there has to be an accord, which is not possible. If there is any need for an interim government, that too should happen under my leadership.”

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Prasanna Ranatunga to discuss tourism-related issues with IGP and DIG

BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

Minister of Tourism and Public Security Prasanna Ranatunga is set to hold a discussion with the Inspector General of Police (IGP) C.D. Wickramaratne as well as the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) for tourism-related affairs, concerning the ongoing issues in the tourism industry.

Speaking to *The Morning*, the Ministry of Tourism stated that the discussion would mainly focus on establishing Tourist Police to the mainstream, strengthening the safety and security of tourists, and increasing the Tourist Police presence in the country.

"There is a need to activate the Tourist Police, as several incidents have been reported on the island. A recent incident that was recorded on video occurred in Kandy, where a local had sexually harassed a tourist."

The Ministry of Tourism lodged a complaint to the Kandy Tourism Police and requested an investigation into the said incident.

In 2020 when then-State Minister of Tourism Promotions Arundika Fernando, along with Sri

Lanka Tourism officials, met with then-Acting IGP Chandana Wickramaratne to discuss the situation, several recommendations were tabled.

Increasing Tourist Police presence in popular tourist destinations from Colombo to the South, including Ella, Kandy, and Galle Fort Railway Stations; maintaining a separate Tourist Police unit at the existing police stations, ideally including female officers; providing Tourist Police with body cameras and to sport a jacket and/or a band to distinguish themselves as Tourist Police; increasing the Tourist Police cadre substantially to meet the safety requirements of the tourism industry; establishing a 24-hour hotline (1912) dedicated to



Minister of Tourism and Public Security Prasanna Ranatunga

tourism-related concerns; providing Tourist Police assistance to hotels on request, and to properties willing to provide space for Tourist Police in their premises, were some of the key recommendations.

Furthermore, it was also recommended to make it mandatory for all three-wheeler and taxi drivers, including Uber and PickMe drivers, to display a notice inside the vehicle with the photo of the driver, and

their name, identification number, and QR code including the emergency hotline 119.

It was also suggested that the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority provide details of unregistered travel agents, guides, and other unregistered establishments/services on a monthly basis, so that the Police may take necessary action regarding their activities.

All-Ceylon Tourism Service Providers Association to march in protest today

BY PAMODI WARAVITA

The All-Ceylon Tourism Service Providers Association (ACTSPA) said that they will engage in a protest march today (25), starting from the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), demanding answers to the problems that the industry is presently facing.

"We hope to raise awareness about the main

problems that the industry is facing: the fuel shortage and the electricity crisis. We need answers for these. The country is facing a dollar shortage and the tourism industry can provide answers for that if a suitable environment is created," ACTSPA Chairman Gayan Tissawela told *The Morning* yesterday (24).

He added that the fuel crisis in particular has

caused severe problems as transport services for tourists have to reconsider rates in light of the fuel price hikes.

"The industry was also shut down for about a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. There was no relief provided for us for maintenance," he added.

Protests, ranging across sectors, are a common sight in the country, as

citizens demand answers for the worsening economic crisis, which has especially impacted the energy sector. Fuel queues and power cuts are severely impacting the general public's work and daily activities. The "Go Home Gota" slogan is the centre of most protests, as the calls for the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa continue.

Sirisena's SLFP Chairmanship being challenged

● Central Committee member seeks injunction order against him holding post

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

Former Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Central Committee Member Montegue Sarachchandra has filed an application in the Colombo Additional District Court, seeking an injunction order restraining former President and incumbent SLFP Chairman Maithripala Sirisena from holding the said post.

When contacted by *The Morning*, Sarachchandra said that according to the SLFP constitution, if an SLFP member holds the office of President, they would officially become the patrons of the party upon retirement

from the presidency.

Accordingly, Sirisena, who was an SLFP member and became President, has officially become the party's patron after retiring, he said, adding that the relevant application was filed on the basis that both the posts of patron and chairman of the party could not be held by the same person.

Sarachchandra also said that former President Sirisena, whose presidential term ended in 2019, had convened an Executive Committee meeting of the party and appointed new office bearers only in February, 2021. He said that Sirisena had attended the relevant

meeting as the SLFP Chairman, which was also against the SLFP constitution.

Following the request for an injunction order restraining Sirisena from serving as SLFP Chairman, Colombo Additional District Judge Dulani Weeraratne had ordered SLFP General Secretary Dayasiri Jayasekara, National Organiser Duminda Dissanayake, and SLFP Treasurer Lasantha Alagiyawanna to appear before the Court on 4 May to explain as to why an injunction order should not be issued preventing Sirisena from serving as SLFP Chairman.

18 more Sri Lankans arrive in Tamil Nadu seeking asylum

Eighteen Sri Lankans, fleeing the economic crisis in the country, reached the Indian shores in the early hours of last Friday (22) on three fibre boats, and sought asylum there, *The Hindu* reported.

They belonged to five families, and included children and an octogenarian, reports mentioned. The Indian Police and central agencies interrogated them and handed them over to the marine police.

A senior official said that with the arrival of 18 Sri Lankans on Friday, the total number of those who had reached Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka had risen to 60. They were being accommodated at the rehabilitation camp at Mandapam.

Women and children told reporters that things had turned worse in Sri Lanka.

"We have to wait for essentials for more than half



a day at grocery stores, and sometimes the wait is longer. The prices of wheat and rice are unaffordable. Many of us eat only once a day. Petrol and diesel are selling at several hundreds for just one litre," said Kasturi, 41, of Mannar. With no jobs and life gone for a

toss, they had to either borrow or sell their wares.

As there appeared to be no sign of any relief from the Government in the near future, her family had decided to sell off whatever was available through agents, and with the money thus earned, reached

India, Kasturi said.

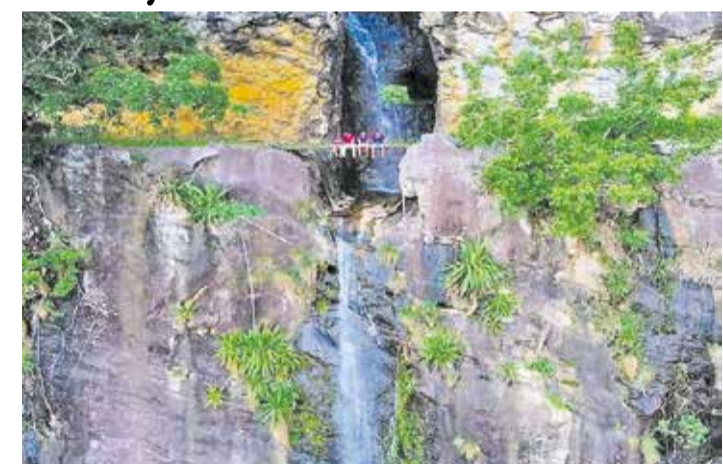
The children had not had proper sleep for over 10 days as there was no electricity, another woman said.

Pradeep from Uvilankulam in Mannar said 13 of them had hired a boat illegally and the boatman demanded India

rupees (INR) 300,000 for a dropoff near Arichalmunai, Dhanushkodi. Even during the civil war, there were internal emergencies in Sri Lanka, yet there was no panic among the citizens. But now, after the Police fired at some protestors, the people are worried about their survival. Many more Tamils who have their relatives in the rehabilitation camps in Tamil Nadu might arrive here as food prices are too high and there is a question mark on security, said Nakuleswaran, 48.

The children, officials said, were given milk and biscuits, while the elders were given variety rice. A revenue official said that they would be given food and shelter in the rehabilitation camp, but remained non-committal on any financial assistance. (*The Hindu*)

Teen suffers fatal fall at Meeyan Ella Waterfall



A teenage boy has fallen to his death at the Meeyan Ella Waterfall in the Mawanella area. Police said the youth and eight other friends were viewing the Meeyan Ella Waterfall near the Mawanella Railway Station, when he had suddenly slipped down the bank of the waterfall.

The student, a 17-year-old from Kundasale, was critically wounded in the fall and was rushed to the Mawanella hospital. However, he had succumbed to his injuries on admission to the hospital.

The Mawanella Police is investigating the incident.

42-year-old shot dead in Beliatta

One person has been killed following a shooting incident in the Nihiluwa area in Beliatta.

Police said the shooting had been carried out by an unidentified individual who had arrived on a motorcycle.

The victim, a 42-year-old resident of Tharaperiya in Nihiluwa, was gunned down in his home, Police said.

Meanwhile, in a separate incident, a person has been stabbed with a sharp object and murdered in the Meethotamulla area in the Wellampitiya Police Division.

According to Police, preliminary inquiries have revealed that an employee of a bakery had been stabbed to death by a former employee of the same bakery.

The deceased is a 37-year-old from Koslanda, Makaldeniya.

The murder suspect has reportedly fled the area following the murder, while Wellampitiya Police are conducting further investigations to apprehend him.

Shanghai authorities fence off Covid-hit areas, sparking outrage

Shanghai authorities have erected fences outside residential buildings in the city to contain a Covid-19 outbreak, sparking renewed outrage over a lockdown that has forced many of the Chinese city's 25 million residents to remain indoors.

China's most populous city and most important economic hub is battling the country's biggest Covid-19 outbreak by closing off areas of the city and forcing all those who test positive into quarantine centres.

The lockdown in Shanghai, which for many residents has lasted more than three weeks, has fuelled frustration among the public over lost wages, family separations, poor conditions in quarantine, and lack of access to medical care and food.

China reported 21,796 new community-transmitted Covid-19 infections yesterday (24),

with the vast majority being asymptomatic cases in Shanghai. Across the country, many cities and provinces have enforced some version of a lockdown in an attempt to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

The latest outbreak in Shanghai, driven by the highly contagious Omicron variant, has seen hundreds of thousands of cases detected in the city, but fewer than 100 deaths, since the outbreak began nearly two months ago.

On social media, images of government workers wearing hazmat suits have gone viral as they sealed off entrances to housing blocks in the city and closed off entire streets with green fencing, prompting questions and complaints from residents.

One video showed residents shouting from balconies at

workers who tried to set up fencing before relenting and taking the barricade away. Other videos showed people trying to pull the fences down.

Many of the fences have been erected around locations designated as "sealed areas", which are residential buildings where at least one person has tested positive for Covid-19, meaning those inside are forbidden from leaving their front doors.

A notice last Saturday (23), reportedly from a local authority and shared online, said "hard quarantine" was being imposed in some areas.

The Shanghai Government did not respond to a request for comment.

The lockdown in Shanghai has also dragged on China's economy, with factory production disrupted by snarled



A woman takes a Covid-19 test in a residential community under lockdown in Shanghai on 16 April 2022

PHOTO © ALEX PLAVEVSKI/EPA

supply chains and difficulties faced by residents returning to work.

Daily citywide Covid-19 tests are being carried out. In the past week, authorities have also transferred entire communities – including uninfected people – to quarantine centres, saying

they need to disinfect their homes, according to residents and social media posts.

Many residents have turned to the internet to criticise the lockdown, but are using euphemisms and other means to battle government censors, who often remove content critical of

the authorities.

Videos on social media of *Do You Hear the People Sing?*, a protest anthem from the opera *Les Miserables*, have been widely reposted, with the title of the French musical receiving over 90 million mentions on WeChat last Saturday, according to app data.

China largely succeeded in keeping Covid-19 at bay following the initial outbreak in Wuhan in late 2019 with what it termed a "dynamic zero" policy aimed at stamping out chains of infection.

That approach has been challenged by the spread of the highly infectious but less deadly Omicron variant, which has prompted cities to impose various levels of restrictions on movement. (*Al Jazeera*)

Primary schoolchildren in China donate pocket money to help SL students

Pupils from the Caihe No.3 Primary School in Hangzhou, China have donated their pocket money of RMB 100,000 (Rs. 5 million) to 1,000 Sri Lankan students from low-income families for further studies, the Chinese Embassy in Colombo said.

In a video message,

the primary students have also wished Sri Lanka could overcome the pandemic and the current difficulties.

Another video shows the kids from the primary school lining up to offer their help to "Sri Lankan friends" by placing the money inside a donation box that reads "China-Sri

Lanka Friendship".

The Chinese Embassy Tweeted saying that these pupils from China have never visited Sri Lanka, and neither do they know anyone in Sri Lanka. They were only told that Sri Lanka is a good friend of China and the children of the same age need help, it said.

"The donation box is even taller than the kids. But their kindness is much higher," the Twitter message said.

In mid-2020, the students from the Caihe 3rd Primary school, Hangzhou, China had organised an Art Exhibition to show solidarity to Sri Lanka against Covid-19.



SV Primary school kids in China donate pocket money to help SL students



BY KUMAR
KANAGARATNAM



Seven changes for our country's survival

● Suggestions for the 21st Amendment to the Constitution

The first part of this article, published on 22 April 2022, in a manifesto to be put forward for consideration in forming the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, listed four aspects of regulation that cover the terms and benefits afforded to Members of Parliament. This article covers other areas of concern that are identified as needing change.

Increasing the tax net and controlling corruption

As an employee in the private sector, I have been paying taxes in one way or another for over 30 years and I resent every cent I have paid to successive governments. This feeling of resentment is exacerbated when I watch members of the royal Rajapaksa family, including those not directly involved in governance, travel around in expensive vehicles, with a massive security apparatus guarding them.

As salaried employees, we are all taxed automatically by our companies, and whilst this hurts, we are all very stoic about it. What exacerbates my anger is that whilst we, rather stoically, pay these taxes, there are very rich wheeler-dealers, people pretending to be poor, traders who deal in cash, etc. (the list is endless), who just avoid taxes altogether. We cannot continue to be an untaxed population, claiming poverty, when there is tremendous potential for taxation in this country.

An example, in my opinion, would be consultant doctors at private hospitals – I imagine that some doctors rake in over Rs. 500,000 per day in patient fees, but how much of this, if any, is reported for income tax purposes? Why look at the poor, when the rich avoid taxes with much more dexterity and success than you or I?

So I propose the following for everyone's benefit. As such, change will hurt, but it will not kill.

- Effective six months from the time of announcement, all currency notes above Rs. 500 will be demonetised. As such, the highest-value note in Sri Lanka would be Rs. 100 and no more

- All banks must report deposits or withdrawals above Rs. 5,000 to the inland revenue service immediately with the individual's name and other details
- All transactions above Rs. 999 must be performed using a debit/credit card. Sri Lanka has a population where 75% have bank accounts. How difficult is it to increase this to 99%?
- Banks are legally forced to confine their merchant fees to 0.01% of the transaction value. At present, these banks charge 3% with impunity, on a take-it-or-leave-it mentality, especially due to Covid-19 lockdowns, but should be legally forced to bring this down to 0.01% due to the sudden surge in transactions. Credit card fees and interest rates can be left as they are
- Banks will be given six months to import scan machines of varying values, where every small and medium enterprise (SME) can avail themselves of this facility at the lowest cost. As before, this service must be legally controlled to stop banks from profiteering, as they always do. The objective is to ensure that the local "petti kade" is also able to afford these scan machines
- Banks will provide a separate bank account with these scan machines where each SME must debit/credit their transactions via this account. It may be an individual, but they can have an account for this purpose. It need not be a duly registered company

PART II

- Cheque transactions are to be taxed at Rs. 250 per cheque from the issuer. Which means if you pay by cheque, you will pay an additional Rs. 250 per transaction as service charge
- Bouncing a cheque would mean an automatic fine of Rs. 1,000,000 and a six-month stay in prison, with hard labour. This is a summary judgement with no opportunity for appeal
- All bank account services such as withdrawals, deposits, etc., done at any bank branch will be taxed at Rs. 500 per transaction as a service charge. This will hurt, but will push customers to use their cards and/or automated teller machines. However, our pensioners will be badly hurt by this, so a bank may allow pensioner's accounts to be absolved from this tax

By rolling out the above, just imagine the countless untaxed, undeclared transactions that will now happen electronically? Again, this will not affect the overtaxed, overburdened middle class, but rich fat cats that avoid taxes altogether. I can imagine one segment of our country, who are well known for avoiding banks and transacting in cash, who will pay millions to stop any of the above from happening. Again, imagine the impact on our budget deficit if the Inland Revenue Department can easily access bank transactions to find the countless people that avoid taxes.

Increasing state revenue and increasing efficiency

Sri Lankan citizens, excluding the middle class, are typically used to a state-sponsored free ride, may it be in terms of education, health, or any other services. This

trend has continued from the time of Independence, and whilst free education and health services have been an exemplary example of success, the system has continued unchanged for 74 years. The time has come for reassessment, but one thing is certain, we as citizens of Sri Lanka have taken it for granted that many services must be provided free, and we are not liable or responsible for these.

To start with, all services performed by any state institution should be made chargeable. The minimum charge per service would be Rs. 1,000. Each institution will be told to calculate its expenses and charge a fee that is commensurate in covering said cost.

This said fee will also have an added component, maybe 50% of the value, as being an incentive for the state institution. Therefore, the balance component will be equally shared amongst everyone at that institution as an incentive. State sector employees are woefully underpaid, so this will change this, and in the process, cull the corruption that sets in at lower levels.

Finally, charging is fine, but the time limit for providing the service will also be set to 72 hours. If you pay the price, whatever you need done must happen within three days, and no more! At present, people don't pay, but things take a long time to happen, or bribes are sought to make things happen. Let's set a standard of three days and pay for the services required.

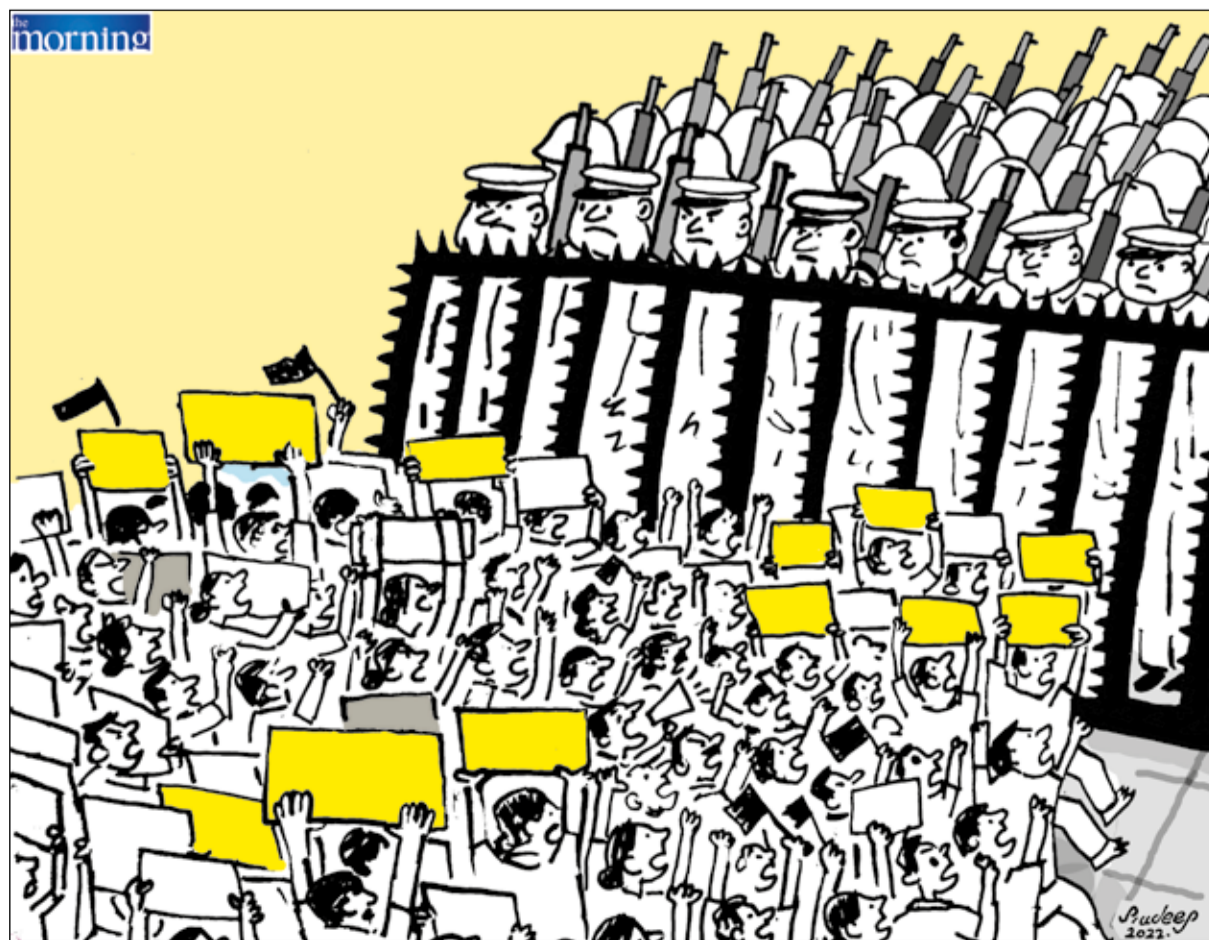
I am certain that many will consider this prose naïve, but this is only one person insisting on a long-term solution to the stupidity of this country that is on the cusp of begging us all. I do not think what I write is naïve, but if a few more million citizens start expressing our requirements in exhaustive detail, those seeking to enter Parliament will either slither away, or will change. Either way, we will have the proper representation that we deserve.

So please write and demand change! We owe this to ourselves and our children, as well the future of this beautiful island. We have nowhere else to go, and having one of the 10 least accepted passports in the world, we know that we literally have nowhere we can go. If we allow this nation to be destroyed, we have nowhere else.

I implore you all to be the change you seek and start by expressing your demands from our elected officials as I have done. Kindly remember that they work for us, and not the other way around.

May we all live long and prosper!
(The writer is a business development professional/trainer who has 25 years of experience in FMCG, advertising, global logistics, automotive, projects, and engineering solutions and has worked with global brands such as Mahindra, Volvo, Herman Miller, and UPS)

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



BY SUMUDU CHAMARA

The citizens have a right to engage in peaceful protests and express their opinions and opposition, even in a manner the authorities may find harsh – and the law enforcement authorities are not authorised to take action unless protestors break the law, or the Police have strong reason to believe they may do so.

Even if the law enforcement authorities decide to take action against protests, there are procedures they have to strictly adhere to, while the law allows the citizens to take action against any unlawful act by law enforcement authorities. In this context, citizens being aware of their rights and the law is crucial.

These matters were explained by Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) President President's Counsel (PC) Saliya Pieris, during a discussion titled "Freedom of Assembly, Police Brutality, and Democracy in Sri Lanka" and held by Hashtag Generation last Saturday (23).

Citizens' rights and lawful assemblies

Speaking of citizens' right to protest, which is guaranteed in the Fundamental Rights (FR) Chapter of the Sri Lankan Constitution, Peiris explained: "The Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly (under 14.b) and also freedom of expression (under 14.a). Together, these provisions give the people the right to protest and dissent. However, the rights are guaranteed within certain limitations. In the interest of public order, freedom of assembly can be curtailed. Similarly, if people commit an offence during an assembly, the said rights do not extend (the same way).

"The Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP) set out limitations and conditions as to when a peaceful assembly is considered an unlawful assembly. For example, if protestors start committing violent acts or destroying property, the assembly will become unlawful and the authorities have the authority to disperse such."

Speaking of the Police's role in dealing with protestors and protests lawfully, while also ensuring the citizens' right to engage in peaceful assembly, Peiris spoke of the 1993 Supreme Court (SC) judgment given in the case of *Amaratunga vs. Sirimal and Others (Jana Gosh Case)*. While noting that in the said case, the Police had arrested a person who had been engaged in a peaceful protest, Peiris added that if there had been an apprehension of violence, the Police had permission to take action against protestors and protest on those grounds.

Speaking of the case, Peiris quoted Justice Mark Fernando, one of the judges who heard the case: "The right to support or to criticise governments and political parties, policies, and programmes is fundamental to the democratic way of life, and the freedom of speech and expression is one which cannot be denied without violating those fundamental principles of liberty and justice, which lie at the base of all civil and political institutions.

"I therefore hold that S.I. Priyadarshana did not, objectively, have 'reason to apprehend any breach of the peace', and did not, subjectively, think that a breach of the peace was likely, at the time the Police party decided to stop the protest, or at any time thereafter (when the Police used tear gas and when they baton-charged). I am satisfied that he acted simply because anti-government slogans were being shouted."

Independent investigative authorities a valuable concept, instead of Police investigating allegations against Police

Peiris pointed out that it is crucial to take into account the fact that by the time the Police took action against the said protest, no breach of peace had occurred, which was not acceptable.

Using force against protests

The BASL President also shed some light on the use of force by the Police, and especially what sort of procedures must be followed when using force against people engaged in a protest.

Explaining the legal background pertaining to managing protests, he said that Sections 95 and 96 of the CCP, which refer to dispersing unlawful



Police officers preparing to crackdown on a protest recently
PHOTO SAMAN ABESIRIWARDANA

Dealing with the strong-arm of the law

BASL President notes how civilians can prevent unlawful action by Police in the context of protests

assemblies, can be used in the event of a violent protest to disperse protestors.

However, he noted: "The question is whether the Police actually understand the grounds of a breach of peace. Sometimes, when people scream anti-government slogans, some police officers might feel irritated. The Police have to understand that the people are entitled to disagree and have different views. However unpleasant the authorities might find those views, they still cannot stop a protest (based on that factor).

"The Police must make a distinction between the people who might be violent and the people who are protesting peacefully. As long as people protest peacefully, they could not be considered part of an unlawful assembly."

When asked about the use of minimum force, which became a topic of discussion after the Rambukkana incident, where one man died during a protest, Peiris said that if the Police reasonably apprehend that there is a breach of peace, there are circulars for the Police to follow.

"For instance, in September 2016, the then-Inspector General of Police (IGP) issued a circular on dispersing unlawful assemblies/riotous groups and responding to instances where public order is violated. Sections 95, 96, and 97 of the CCP can be used by the Police, and also there are instances where the Police can request the support of the military.

"What is allowed is the use of reasonable force to disperse an unlawful assembly. However, the force that is being used has to be proportionate and reasonable. For example, if someone smashed a window during a protest and a police officer holding a gun shot at that person, that is not reasonable force, as the force that was used is disproportionate."

Adding that the Police have set out a process to be followed when using force to manage a protest, Peiris said the Police must first warn the protestors to disperse. If the protestors do not follow such instruction, he said that the Police can use tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets, or even resort to methods such as baton-charging. If all these attempts fail, the Police can then use lethal force, but it is allowed only in extreme circumstances and is not permitted to be used as a first response, according to Peiris.

He added: "In the circular, the IGP also mentions the importance of having a dialogue with protestors, and encourages the Police to employ such methods before using force. At the same time, if there are people among protestors who are not really willing participants, those people must be given an opportunity to leave."

Respecting, protecting rights

During the discussion, the conduct and competencies of police officers in

dealing with protests and protestors in a lawful and peaceful manner was also discussed.

In response to a question – which also pointed out that police officers have employed violent methods to deal with protestors on many occasions despite the fact that courts have upheld that police officers have to adhere to only lawful orders from their superior officers – Peiris stressed that there are concerns about a lack of training given to police officers (regarding dealing with protests) and them having to work under pressure.

He explained: "One of the greatest weaknesses is some police officers not appreciating the people's right to disagree or express and defend viewpoints. If there is a police officer performing duties in a protest site who has not been trained well in riot-controlling activities, they may confront protestors. In addition, some protestors can be provocative, and police officers may react to them.



BASL President Saliya Pieris PC
PHOTO KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM

"I think what must be done is police officers being made aware of the fact that people have the right to dissent, and creating a culture where they are willing to listen to alternative views, even though they may not like them. It is important for us to learn that people have different views and that we must be able to tolerate those. The Police must also realise that there is freedom to disagree, and that people are entitled to disagree with the Government."

He opined that if both the general public and the Police were educated about this, there would be greater tolerance towards protests.

What is more, Peiris spoke of instances where people were not permitted to carry placards, and also allegations that certain police officers have photographed people who were returning from protests.

"The Police have no right to take away boards, and the people are entitled to express their views (through such ways). As long as it is a form of peaceful expression, even if it was very harsh, the Police have no right to stop it.

Police need to be well-trained to manage protests; people need to be aware of their rights

Police officers taking photos of protestors, taking away placards are unlawful acts

"Taking photographs (of protestors) is an extremely repressible act, and it could cause what we call a chilling effect. What such actions by police officers do is to frighten people from taking part in future demonstrations, and such acts should be reported. This is extremely improper and probably done with the intention of intimidation."

Actions against Police

Another question Peiris was asked was what the public can do within the existing legal framework to take action against police officers.

"When these allegations (against police officers with regard to their conduct during protests) are reported, they are referred to various units within the Police Department, such as the Special Investigations Unit (SIU). Alternatively, relevant authorities within the department can initiate action.

"However, I have rarely heard of police officers being dealt with for unlawful interference protests. But if there is an FR case filed against the Police, and if the Police is found responsible, in such instances, you may see the Police taking action, which may include the responsible police officers losing promotions."

The process of relevant/superior police officers or various units within the Police Department investigating allegations against police officers and taking legal action, and especially how impartial and effective such processes are, was also discussed extensively during the discussion.

When asked about his opinion regarding whether there should be an independent body tasked with looking into allegations against police officers, Peiris responded: "The Police should have an independent investigation unit to look into cases against officers. Losing public confidence when the Police are investigating allegations against officers has been raised before.

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) proposed that there must be a separate, independent investigation unit to probe custodial deaths that are alleged to have been committed by police officers."

Moreover, he noted that in certain countries, there are independent investigation arms (to investigate allegations against police officers), adding that in some foreign jurisdictions, there are instances where non-police officers investigate allegations against the Police.

"That is to restore public confidence," he emphasised, adding that having independent units has a value.

In regards to what the people can do in cases of Police brutality, or even in cases of arrests and intimidation during protests, Peiris recommended Court action, especially through an FR case. He also recommended the people make their views known, adding that earlier, people rarely expressed their opinions and thought that some problems did not concern them. He opined that the people must be vigilant about their rights and should be willing to speak up, and that when everyone does so, the authorities find it difficult to ignore.

Moreover, in the event of an FR petition, a suspected or convicted police officer may have to face various consequences, according to Peiris.

"If an FR is filed under Article 11 of the Constitution (which refers to freedom from torture) and if leave to proceed is granted, the Attorney General (AG) might refuse to appear for the suspect police officer and he will have to obtain services from private lawyers. Sometimes, when a FR is pending, suspect police officers' promotions can be withheld, and if they are found guilty, they can be personally ordered to pay compensation for torture.

"In terms of criminal law, a person who is guilty of torture can be indicted, and if they are indicted, they might be suspended from the job, and will be sentenced to a jail term if found guilty. However, there are sometimes inconsistencies. Sometimes, authorities grant promotions to police officers despite having cases against the latter."

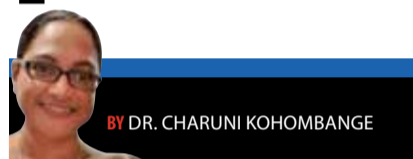
The BASL President discussed these matters in a context where national furor against the Police force is on the rise, owing to how it manages the ongoing protests. The manner in which the Police responded to the death of a protester in Rambukkana is the latest reason.

Regardless of the powers vested in the Police, as the BASL President highlighted, there are many steps the people can take in order to face unlawful action by the Police, the main one being seeking the SC's assistance. In order to fight such unlawful action, however, the people must first be fully aware of their rights.

PHOTO © CHAMINDU PERERA/UNSPASH



Facing Challenges beyond the pandemic



BY DR. CHARUNI KOHOMBANGE

The numbers of recorded Covid-19 cases are decreasing in Sri Lanka with an average of 38 new cases reported per day. This is equivalent to 1% of the highest peak daily average, reported on 4 September 2021. On 18 April, the Government announced relaxation of Covid-19-related health restrictions including the mandatory face masking outdoors, and was subsequently withdrawn considering public suggestions.

As the Covid-19 crisis has left the country in the brink of bankruptcy, supplies of medicines and consumables for the health sector are affected significantly. Lack of papers, increase of fuel prices and cost of living is having drastic

impacts on the education system preventing achieving the pre-pandemic status. Rapid rise of daily expenses, lack of fuel, and scarcity of daily essentials has fuelled up the public unrest to its climax.

Professor in Medical Education and the Secretary General, Asia Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH), who was an active member in the Covid-19 control mission, Prof. Indika Karunathilake, opined about the way forward beyond the pandemic in an interview.

Following are the excerpts of the interview:

Are we out of the Covid-19 risk?

It is quite a tough question to comment on. It is difficult to make an objective comment on the current Covid-19 situation in Sri Lanka, due to the limited numbers of testing. However, the general observation is that the numbers are coming down and the hospital data also depicts a significant reduction in morbidity and mortality.

How has the current economic situation affected the health sector and in this context do we need to continue following the Covid-19 preventive measures?

In the current context, there are many logistical issues adversely affecting the health-seeking behaviour of people. Increased fuel cost and the high cost for transportation has restricted people from attending hospitals and regular clinic visits. This may result in an epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in the near future. If this situation of scarcity of medicines and the increase in transportation costs continue, it would be difficult to control the increase of morbidity and mortality due to NCDs.

In relation to the spread of Covid-19, the fact remains that the risk of spread is comparatively less in open spaces and it is highest in crowded and congested areas. Discussions regarding relaxation of some regulations such as mandatory mask wearing have been there worldwide. However, many countries including China, Israel, France, the UK and the US are now experiencing resurgent problems and found the



Prof. Indika Karunathilake

decision premature. The world is still on alert of emerging new variants of Covid-19 and there is no absolute guarantee that the pandemic will die down now. As the virus is mutating rapidly, the possibility of an emergence of a virulent mutant is always there.

Furthermore, the country's situation has gone from bad to worse during the last few weeks. With the current economic crisis and severe shortages within the health system, Sri Lanka cannot afford another Covid-19 surge.

In Sri Lanka, patient-centric care is deficient and the health seeking behaviours are lacking. Hence, it would be very difficult to persuade people to restart wearing masks in case of a resurgence of the virus. Hence, the relaxation of mandatory face masking could be a premature decision considering the current situation in the country. Considering these facts, it is advisable to continue wearing of masks in all instances as we practiced before, irrespective of vaccination status or history of prior infection.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) also recommends wearing a well-fitting mask that covers the nose and mouth when interacting with individuals who are not members of their household and advice to carry out the following:

In indoor settings where ventilation is known to be poor or cannot be assessed, or the ventilation system is not properly maintained, regardless of whether physical distancing of at least one metre can be maintained;

In indoor settings that have adequate ventilation if physical distancing of at least one metre cannot be maintained; or

In outdoor settings where physical distancing of at least one metre cannot be maintained. Practically, it is not always easy to determine the quality of ventilation at all times. Hence, it is safer to simply wear a mask without taking any risk. While wearing a mask, you should continue to maintain physical distance from others as much as possible as wearing a mask does not mean you can have close contact with people.

The situation is different when engaging in physical exercises. Masks should not be worn during vigorous physical activity because of the risk of reducing your breathing capacity. No matter how

intensely you exercise, keep at least one metre away from others, and if you are exercising indoors, such as in a gymnasium, make sure there is adequate ventilation.

In addition to wearing masks it is always good to continue the practice of good hand hygiene as it can reduce many other infections such as diarrhoea.

As we all know, the majority of Covid-19 infections are asymptomatic. Hence, it is not quite rational to use thermometers to detect infected people. Further, it is good to cut off these kinds of irrational expenses at least during this situation of economic crisis.

Just after the Covid-19 pandemic, we are facing an economic crisis that has led to deficiencies in medicines and medical supplies. Similarly, the education system was at a standstill and never reached normalcy. Can we continue the same practices in respect to health and education or are there any changes to be done in this difficult situation?

Definitely, the healthcare system should adapt with the current situation. However, we cannot take the healthcare system in isolation as it is only a part of the entire governing system. The root causes for the crisis we are facing in the health system are the same causes that have led to the national crisis. Incorrect decision-making, incompetency, lack of transparency, favouritism, corruption and inefficiency are the major factors which have contributed to create this chaos. In order to streamline the system, we should establish meritocracy and transparency at all levels. The health sector as well as all other sectors should adapt and improvise according to evolving challenges with a pragmatic approach.

Similarly, the education system too needs to adapt and improvise to face constraints and challenges. Use of affordable and available technology will play a major role and moving towards education in the new normal will be the effective strategy to go through this difficult period.

Having said that, any move to curtail free health and free education system has to be resisted to ensure the quality of education and continue the health indicators in the highest possible standards. System changes at all levels including move towards essential medicines policy, health promotion, rational use of medicine and primary healthcare is a must if we are to survive this crisis.

India, SL, Nepal join hands for victims of gender-based violence and trafficking

● *Centre for Poverty Analysis conducts study to contribute to regional research by The Asia Foundation*

The Asia Foundation convened a multi-country regional meeting in Delhi on 24 and 25 March, to discuss optimising screening and support services for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Trafficking in Persons (TIP) victims in India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. The regional meeting follows national convenings, discussing the findings of individual country reports on "Optimising Screening and Support Services for Victims of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Trafficking in Persons (TIP)".

Participants from Nepal and Sri Lanka were able to virtually join in the proceedings of the two-day event in Delhi. The event featured experts and officials from India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, who believe that improving screening and identification is critical, amidst rising incidents of trafficking and gender-based violence.

The study revealed that across the three countries of India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, there was limited comprehensive understanding of the interlinkages between TIP and GBV among law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and government and non-government service providers.

Regionally, the research findings highlight that GBV and TIP victims often suffer similar and intersecting forms of abuse. Yet the service delivery system largely compartmentalises the provision of services based on the type of crime, rather than on the common experiences of violence and abuse suffered by both types of victims.

Speaking about the situation with GBV and TIP in Sri Lanka, The Asia Foundation Sri Lanka Programme Director Ramani Jayasundere explained the interplay between TIP and GBV, and how TIP is treated differently from GBV.

She spoke of how GBV is based on gender inequalities in a patriarchal system and unequal power relations between men and women. TIP is also based on unequal power relations but is a complex crime driven by criminal syndicates to earn profit. Dr. Jayasundere added that TIP is

one of the worst forms of GBV, and that GBV is an important driver of human trafficking and a tool to control women, children and men.

Chandima Arambepola from CEPA, speaking at the event, highlighted some crucial findings in Sri Lanka.

"It is very difficult to get people to talk about it," she said in reference to the issue of trafficking in persons in Sri Lanka, adding: "Trafficking is not understood well enough in Sri Lanka as opposed to GBV and because of this not a lot of TIP is reported. When understanding is weak, then identification is compromised. Even among those who understand the context of TIP, women are mostly recognised as victims which excludes potential male victims and members of the LGBTQI community."

On making recommendations on optimising screening and support services for GBV and TIP victims, the Sri Lanka country report broadly recommends a focus on preventative measures/efforts, reaching out to marginalised groups, strengthening understanding among police officers at the District Secretariat level on how to identify GBV and TIP, strengthening capacity of police officers at the local stations,

and sensitising public health officials to identify trafficking as a form of violence.

The national studies on "Optimising Screening and Support Services for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Trafficking in Persons (TIP)" were conducted by FXB India Suraksha (India), Social Science Baha (Nepal), and Centre for Poverty Analysis (Sri Lanka), in partnership with The Asia Foundation and with support from the US State Department Trafficking in Persons Office.

The multi-country study provides an overview of the screening and identification services, and the possibility of integrating services for victims of GBV and TIP. It highlights the gaps in the screening process for victim identification and the resultant service delivery and includes recommendations to improve screening and identification of victims of GBV and TIP.

(The Asia Foundation is a non-profit international development organisation, headquartered in San Francisco, focused on good governance, women's empowerment and gender equality, inclusive economic growth, environment, and climate action, and regional and international relations)

Economic lessons from the US for small nations like Sri Lanka



BY RANEL WJESINHA

The cover story of *The Economist* says that America's Central Bank has made a big mistake. The Federal Reserve has suffered a hair-raising loss of control, with consumer prices 8.5% higher than a year earlier, the fastest annual rise since 1981.

America has released oil from its Strategic Petroleum Reserves – reserves which smaller economies such as ours do not have the capacity to hold and thus, are exposed to the cyclicity of oil prices, whether driven by monopoly pricing of producer or other cartels, or wars readily fought by nations – a luxury we do not enjoy.

The US experienced the worst overheating in a big and rich economy, in the 30-year era of inflation targeting central banks, and its pandemic stimulus of 25% of GDP (gross domestic product), is the highest in the rich world.

Sri Lanka

At home, we are experiencing multiple crises, with irrational, perhaps even reckless vote-getting fiscal/taxation strategies; inherited but part self-inflicted, dollar denominated debt burdens;

imprudent exchange rate management; loss of control over runaway inflation; a two-year-long pandemic – a challenge to any Government or Central Bank anywhere.

The Governor of our Central Bank, the Finance Minister, and a team of economists are presently in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Having interacted with many Resident Representatives of the IMF such as Nadeem Ul Haque, Jeremy Carter, and Koshy Mathai over a 25-year period, and having interviewed their predecessors on national television even before, I've seen the evolution of the thinking, accommodation, intervention, and arrangements of the IMF.

While on assignment for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in countries such as Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan, as well as having seen how the IMF has accommodated countries such as Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina – which I have visited and continue to observe the progress of – I believe that Sri Lanka has considerable potential to emerge out of its current quagmire, even if part self-inflicted.

Against that background, I was happy to see the IMF press release last Saturday (23), particularly the words:

"...the importance of stronger social safety nets, to mitigate adverse impact, of the current economic crisis, on the poor and vulnerable."

I like to see creativity driven by sensitivity on the part of the IMF, and a realisation on the part of our political leaders of all colours, and key public officials at regulatory and supervisory institutions whose abuses, excesses, and recklessness must necessarily be replaced with honesty, integrity, independence, objectivity, discipline, and accountability.

As a Sri Lankan, for whom this country is an only home, with no intention to adopt any other home anywhere, I have an expectation that better sense must prevail on all fronts and soon, whether through structural, extended, emergency, or rapid financing instruments.

(The writer is an Independent International Consultant with the Financial Conduct Authority [FCA], and holds an MBA from the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA)

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

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

IMF technical discussions 'fruitful'



The Sri Lankan delegation at one of the discussions that took place between 18-22 April

- Mission Chief for SL says discussions covered recent economic and financial developments
- Points at importance of 'stronger' social safety nets
- IMF appears positive on granting EFF: Ali Sabry

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Mission Chief for Sri Lanka Masahiro Nozaki stated, in a press release published by the IMF last Saturday (23), that the IMF team had successfully held fruitful technical discussions with the Sri Lankan delegation with regard to Sri Lanka's request for an IMF-supported programme during 18-22 April 2022.

Nozaki stated: "Discussions covered recent economic and financial developments in Sri Lanka, the need for implementing a credible and coherent strategy to restore macroeconomic stability, and the importance of stronger social safety nets to mitigate the adverse impact of the current economic crisis on the poor and vulnerable. The IMF team

welcomed the authorities' plan to engage in a collaborative dialogue with their creditors." Currently, a Sri Lankan delegation led by Finance Minister Ali Sabry, new Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) Governor Dr. Nandalal Weerasinghe, and new Treasury Secretary Mahinda Weerasinghe is attending... *Contd. on page 8*

CSE opens after 17-day hiatus



- CEO says restricted trading hours will continue
- No decision yet to return to normal trading period
- New trading hours from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

BY SHENAL FERNANDO

Trading on the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) will commence today (25) after a 17-day hiatus since 8 April 2022 due to the Sinhala and Tamil New Year holidays and the subsequent temporary closure of the market for five business days due to the prevalent economic crisis in the country.

Speaking to *The Morning Business* yesterday (24), CSE CEO Rajeeva Bandaranaike

stated that the market would open today, but the restricted trading hours from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30

p.m. implemented from 31 March 2022 will remain in effect until otherwise informed by the CSE. Accordingly, the pre-open session will be from 10 a.m. to 10.30 a.m., with the open auction held at 10.30 a.m. as usual. However, trading, which will commence at 10.30 a.m., after the open auction, will cease at 12.30 p.m.

Bandaranaike further stated that no decision has been made as of yet to revert to the normal hours, adding that in the event such a decision is made, it will be duly disclosed to the public. The 17-day closure of the market has proven a divisive topic among traders and economists. *Contd. on page 8*



Planters urge Govt. to prioritise their industry

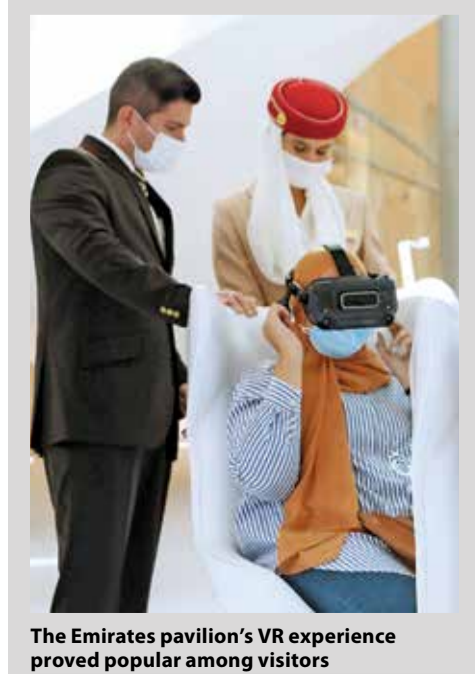
- Say policy failures resulted in cost of tea production rising 30%

The Planters Association of Ceylon (PA) demanded immediate action by the Government to prioritise Sri Lanka's plantation industry, which they noted contributes over \$ 1.5 billion to Sri Lanka's export revenue. Commenting on the dire situation, PA Media Spokesperson Dr. Roshan Rajadurai claimed that the Government's continuing failure to give any priority whatsoever to the needs of Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs) and the

broader industry, together with a series of catastrophic policy blunders, had resulted in severe disruptions to production and transport and rapid escalation of production cost of tea by around 30% from the beginning of 2022. The PA charged that the Government's failure to allocate fuel quotas to the RPCs, together with continuous power disruptions and uninformed policymaking, is bringing Sri Lanka's commercial plantations to a standstill. *Contd. on page 8*

Emirates to launch NFTs in metaverse

Emirates is to launch NFTs (non-fungible tokens) and exciting experiences in the metaverse for its customers and employees. Emirates Airline and Group Chairman/ CEO Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum said: "Dubai and the UAE are blazing the way in the digital economy, having a clear vision supported by practical policies and regulatory frameworks in areas such as virtual assets, artificial intelligence, and data protection." The airline unveiled its plans to build signature brand experiences in the metaverse, alongside both collectible and utility-based NFTs. The first projects are already underway, with launch anticipated in the coming months. *Contd. on page 8*



The Emirates pavilion's VR experience proved popular among visitors



Officials from Singapore Airlines and Sri Lanka Tourism at the signing of the agreement

Singapore Airlines to connect more tourists to Sri Lanka

Singapore Airlines (SIA) along with the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) is to leverage its route network, connecting customers from other countries to Sri Lanka.

Accordingly, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the SIA and SLTPB on 12 April 2022, reaffirming SIA's commitment to Sri Lanka

to support efforts to boost tourism in the country. Under the agreement, SIA and SLTPB will also conduct joint activities to boost the tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

This includes media and agent familiarisation tours initially targeting main source markets to Sri Lanka via SIA, such as Australia and Singapore. *Contd. on page 8*

SriLankan Airlines summoned before COPE today

SriLankan Airlines has been summoned before the Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) to inquire into its current performance, COPE Chairman Prof. Charitha Herath said. Accordingly, SriLankan Airlines was scheduled to appear before the Committee today (25) at 10 a.m. The COPE Chairman stated in Parliament on 19 April that SriLankan Airlines will be summoned before the COPE Committee to inquire into its bidding process for the lease of 21 aircraft.



COPE Chairman Prof. Charitha Herath

GRI expresses solidarity with peaceful protests

GRI, a global company based in Sri Lanka, issued a statement in which it noted that it is committed towards an ethical and socially responsible standpoint in the significance of achieving a common goal in voices being heard. The statement read: "While change may be inevitable, we understand that only a decisive way forward will strengthen our nation's ability to provide all Sri Lankans with hope for the future. It is this determined pursuit of a brighter tomorrow that has triggered Sri Lankans to rise



together and struggle for change. "It is at critical moments like this that every effort must be

made by all parties concerned, to uphold democratic values and respect the lives and liberties this

nation affords to all its citizens, and to enable every voice to be heard equally."

Further, it said that the GRI expressed that the company is sensitive towards the economic stability of the country and lives of Sri Lanka while remaining confident that a firm decision will be achieved peacefully. The company expressed solidarity with all Sri Lankans who are yearning for a better quality of life and support them in every way possible. GRI is a manufacturer of specialty tyres in Sri Lanka with offices in the US, Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Australia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

Sampath Bank partners with Paycorp International

Sampath Bank PLC announced that its connection to UnionPay International (UPI) is now complete and that the Sampath Bank Payment Gateway powered by UnionPay 3DS 2.0 is open for business.

Having thus strengthened its strategic commercial partnership with Paycorp International (Pvt.) Ltd. (Paycorp International), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bancstac (Bancstac), this latest development provides Sampath Bank customers with an unprecedented level of security when they process and accept online payments from American Express, Diners Club and Discover Network Cardmembers through Paycorp International's Internet Payment Gateway (IPG).

Developed by EMVCo – jointly owned by American Express, Visa, Mastercard and other major global payment solution enterprises – 3D Secure 2.0 (3DS 2.0) technology provides a higher level of security with biometric authentication, eliminating the need for static passwords. The 3DS 2.0 protocol lets Sampath Bank customers make authenticated mobile, in-app and digital wallet transactions with ironclad security.

Sampath Bank's commercial customers can already accept Visa, Mastercard and UnionPay International online payments through the Sampath Payment Gateway. What this new development



Bancstac Director Evan Lau (left) and Sampath Bank PLC Assistant General Manager - Card Centre Darshin Pathinayake (right)

means is that Sri Lankan merchants, vendors and other commercial enterprises can transact business while protected by the same enhanced security infrastructure as their counterparts in the financial capitals of the world.

Previously, businesses in Sri Lanka had to cobble together various payment gateways and technologies to process online payments for different groups of issuer networks. The strategic partnership between Sampath Bank and Paycorp International significantly simplified online payment transactions for businesses and government agencies across the island, giving a substantial boost to digital commerce in the country.

This strategic partnership supports Sampath Bank's continued efforts to accelerate the pace of acceptance, adoption and integration of innovative digital payment solutions in line with the Government and the Central Bank of Sri

Lanka's efforts to implement new technologies to streamline the payments and settlements infrastructure.

This new payment technology enables secure payment processing, payment gateway and payment aggregator services with direct connectivity to UPI, becoming the backbone of the bank's transactional infrastructure while protecting businesses and consumers from fraud.

Sampath Bank PLC Assistant General Manager – Card Centre Darshin Pathinayake stated: "We at Sampath Bank have always been committed to leveraging cutting-edge technologies to transform Sri Lanka's financial services landscape by deploying innovative solutions that add more value to the nation. We help Sri Lankan businesses take their first steps in the world of digital commerce and empower our commercial customers with the tools to compete globally on an equal footing. Our

longstanding partnership with Paycorp International has paid rich dividends. We are delighted to take this partnership to the next level, all the better to enhance our customers' payment acceptance capabilities. Sampath Bank business and government customers can now seamlessly accept payments from six of the world's major issuers, a capability that will fuel sales and business growth. We invite businesses of all types and sizes to turbocharge the payment processes on their e-commerce portals."

Bancstac Director Evan Lau noted: "We are very pleased to integrate 3DS 2.0 functionality into the Sampath Bank Payment Gateway and to provide the bank's customers with an additional layer of security. We are committed to modernising Sri Lanka's digital payment economy by making it easier for merchants, the government and the community to make transactions that are fast, safe and friction-free."

SLASSCOM discusses need for retaining employees during the 'Great Resignation'

The search and competition for individuals of skill, creativity, and talent is ongoing worldwide, and is showing no tendency of diminishing. If anything, the search for talent – or key players – for the global knowledge economy is becoming increasingly more fierce. Sri Lanka is of particular interest in this development, as it is at a stage where further economic growth can only be achieved through building a knowledge-based industry.

In line with this vision, the Sri Lanka Association for Software Services Companies (SLASSCOM) recently held a discussion headed by its capacity forum on the topic of "seeking solutions for challenges related to talent management", that was attended by some of the leading personalities in the Tech and IT/BPM industry.

SLASSCOM Board Director Nishan Mendis opened the discussion by bringing to light the key challenges currently faced by employers across the industry, stemming from unprecedented staff resignations, contributing towards the brain drain happening in the country at present.

Several initiatives were looked at being launched, with the intention of creating knowledge-intensive economies at home, to prevent brain drain. This included promoting positive sentiments of Sri Lanka's IT/BPM industry among existing employees and the next generation,



SLASSCOM Vice Chairman Ashique M. Ali (left) and SLASSCOM Board Director Nishan Mendis

and in establishing new working models to improve employee retention, encompassing working-from-anywhere (WFA), working-from-home (WFH), offering flexible hours and the benefit of part time and multiple employment.

Upskilling existing employees and the next generation of talent from millennials to Gen Z's through the creation of a "learning-by-doing environment" was another key point of consideration. Further discussed were attractive and applicable training and mentorship models. This ranged from building industry readiness schools to designing interactive programmes that allow Gen Z employees to develop both technical and interpersonal skills, to using career progression as a key motivational driver of learning.

Utilising alternate talent acquisition models to attract regional talent,

encouraging the return of females who have stopped work due to their responsibilities at home and in building a pipeline of activities at every entry level, as well as recruiting talent from other industries that have seen retrenchment of staff during recent times and in reskilling them to be potential tech innovators and leaders was also discussed.

The Chamber debated the possibilities of offering short-term job opportunities via digital nomad visas to encourage diaspora to return to Sri Lanka to work over short periods of time, and in employing them as credible influencers who have "walked the talk" to be ideal brand ambassadors to promote the concept of returning to the countries of their ancestry to contribute to the local economy and start businesses.

SLASSCOM also launched a code of ethics for HR (Human Resources) best practices

at this event, that sets out the ethical standards that employers are expected to meet. These standards provide principles and details about how those principles should be applied in practice and could be utilised as a comprehensive guideline by companies and businesses in the tech and BPM space.

The objective of this event was to map the supply demand gap in Sri Lanka with respect to the future talent required by the tech and IT/BPM industry in the country. The points discussed will be prioritised and executed with the support of industry volunteers, added SLASSCOM Vice Chairman Ashique M. Ali.

From driving digital talent growth and talent supply to reskilling opportunities, SLASSCOM will work closely with other industry bodies and the government to develop, produce and retain ready-to-deploy talent across the IT-BPM industry.

Contd. from page 7

Singapore...

Other Far East markets will be added in the future, based on their reopening plans for tourism. Print, electronic, and social media activities are also planned in the long run.

The MoU was signed between Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau Chairperson Kimarli Fernando, and Singapore Airlines Regional Vice President – West Asia and Africa David Lau. Singapore Airlines General Manager – Sri Lanka Zachary Liew, Singapore Airlines Regional Sales Planning Manager – West Asia and Africa Rajiv Varma, Aitken Spence Aviation Managing Director Vasantha Kudaliyanage, SLTPB Director – Public Relations Madubhani Perera, and SLTPB Legal Officer Ishani Gunawardane were present at this occasion.

SIA began services to Colombo in 1970. The airline currently operates nine weekly flights between Colombo and Singapore, operated by the Airbus A350-900 aircraft.

Sri Lanka Tourism continues to welcome travelers to the island, and is committed to ensuring that all tourism attractions, hotels and related services continue to operate.

As at 21 April 2022, SIA operates nine times weekly between Colombo and Singapore.

Planters...

"RPCs will no longer be able to continue operations as usual if real and meaningful solutions are not provided immediately," emphasised Dr. Rajadurai.

Moreover, due to the lack of fuel, all leaf and latex transport operations have been severely impacted, and there is insufficient fuel to operate standby generators, said the PA.

"Despite our critical contribution to the industry and the Sri Lankan economy, the authorities have failed to understand our value. Instead they have continuously discriminated against the RPCs even in the past, as compared with other export industry stakeholders and the rest of the plantation sector."

While the Government retracted its decision to ban imports of agricultural inputs such as fertiliser, recommended

weedicides, fungicides, and pesticides, these have not been available since April 2021. The PA also noted that bureaucratic processes required for the bans to be lifted take a long time, and have obstructed imports, creating severe shortages.

Compounding these challenges, the depreciation of the rupee and the global increase in commodity prices have resulted in the price of these essential inputs skyrocketing. For instance, the price of fertiliser used for tea has increased 25-fold from before the ban; from approximately Rs. 30,000 per metric tonne (MT) of urea to Rs. 750,000 per MT, and prices are still increasing.

"Our sector was severely disrupted even before the current domestic economic crisis by uninformed policy making decisions, including the completely irrational ban on import of essential agriculture inputs. The issues we are seeing now across the economy are directly connected to this unplanned, unscientific, and short-sighted approach to policy," Dr. Rajadurai charged.

"While at long last, the Government has publicly accepted the failure of this policy, the once vocal proponents of such unsound claims are nowhere to be seen although the industry continues to pay the price, despite our repeated warnings and admonitions about the ill effects of such policy."

As a result, the cost of production of 1kg of tea has now risen to nearly Rs. 800. However, at the Colombo Tea Auction, the Net Sale Average (NSA) of high-grown tea was only around Rs. 717, up to end March 2022.

In addition, the unavailability of inputs will reduce yields and quality in the long run. Despite better weather compared to last year, the industry has seen a decline in tea and rubber crops this year, compared with the corresponding period of last year, as the lack of agricultural inputs such as fertiliser, weedicides, and fungicides begin to take effect.

With tea and rubber being perennial/long-term crops, such adverse effects on yield could be felt throughout the productive life of the plant. Rubber cultivations too have been impacted by fast-spreading diseases such as pest. In the absence of necessary inputs to arrest their spread the disease has already resulted in a 30-40% crop loss, according to the association.

"Tea estates operate through the 24 hours of the day, and require uninterrupted electricity to do so. If, for instance, the withering operation is disrupted/interrupted for a few hours, bacterial contamination takes place, drastically reducing the quality of the tea produced. Acknowledging this, the authorities have allocated fuel quotas to the rest of the industry value chain for them to continue operations by running their generators during power cuts, but the RPCs have been inexplicably ignored," the association noted in a statement.

Transporting inputs and raw materials such as green leaf and latex to and between large land areas in commercial estates and transporting produce to Colombo have also become extremely difficult due to the lack of fuel. This, the PA warned, will lead to the complete breakdown of estate operations and consequently the RPCs will not be able to operate the estates leading to severe and serious social unrest under these present volatile situations in the country. Over one million people reside within the country's large commercial estate sector and their livelihood is totally dependent on the plantation economy, the PA further noted.

"For the plantation sector to continue operations, uninterrupted power and fuel – including for internal transport – need to be provided as priority. Since suppliers are also now demanding payments in foreign currency, the RPCs are also strongly urging the authorities to allow tea producers participating at the Colombo Tea Auction to obtain their payments from tea exporters in foreign currency."

A hybrid system that allows exporters to pay tea producers in foreign currency and local buyers of tea to pay in rupees is prudent and fair, considering how other export industries are allowed to obtain payments in foreign currency. Notably, 95% of Ceylon Tea is exported and the industry is a major generator of valuable foreign exchange for the country, according to the association.

Given the sharp increase in the cost of vital agri inputs, the RPCs also urge the Government to include the commercial plantation sector in any beneficial scheme through which such inputs are made available to producers, using funds from multilateral agencies. The RPCs provide a range of services and care for a population of over one million residing in the estates and also support the smallholders by processing their tea leaves and rubber latex, serving as a vital cog in the industry's

supply chain, the PA added.

"In the medium to long-term, the RPCs see stable policymaking made in consultation with industry practitioners as essential for the growth and economic sustainability of the plantation industry."

IMF...

...the 2022 IMF and World Bank (WB) Spring Meetings in Washington, D.C. The primary objective for the Sri Lankan delegation is to engage in initial technical discussions on an IMF-supported programme with the IMF team.

Nozaki further stated: "Going forward, the IMF team will support Sri Lanka's efforts to overcome the current economic crisis by working closely with the authorities on their economic programme, and by engaging with all other stakeholders in support of a timely resolution of the crisis."

The Sri Lankan delegation had held initial discussions with IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and other senior members of the IMF management, where the Finance Minister had requested a Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI) from the IMF. According to the Finance Minister, the IMF appears positive about granting an extended fund facility (EFF) to Sri Lanka.

However, Nozaki, speaking to *Reuters* last week stated that the "IMF staff had determined last month, in an annual economic review, that Sri Lanka's public debt was unsustainable and the country needs to take steps to restore debt sustainability prior to any IMF lending, including the emergency RFI."

Such restoration of debt sustainability typically requires a restructuring or rep profiling of public debts, which in Sri Lanka's case would require co-operation from China, one of its largest bilateral creditors.

The IMF used the low-conditionality RFI loans extensively to assist countries during the Covid-19 pandemic and has provided such loans to ease balance of payments problems after natural disasters, conflicts, and commodity price shocks.

Meanwhile, the WB said last week that it is ready to provide emergency support for essential medicines and health-related supplies, nutrition, and education for Sri Lanka.

Obtaining an IMF-supported programme has emerged as a priority in addressing the current economic crisis for the Government

of Sri Lanka (GoSL) over the past couple of months. This represents a drastic u-turn in the attitude of the Government towards the IMF after rejecting IMF assistance over the past two years in favour of a home-grown solution.

IMF assistance will prove to be pivotal for Sri Lanka to emerge out of the current economic crisis as short-sighted economic policies have resulted in record inflation levels and a foreign exchange liquidity crisis within the country.

CSE...

While certain parties defended the decision of the CSE and the Securities Exchange Commission of Sri Lanka (SEC) to temporarily close the close market for five days last week as a warranted measure due to the current economic situation and power disruptions, others have criticised the decision as harmful due to its long-term effects on foreign investor confidence due to the lack of reliability and certainty. Such parties have pointed out that when faced with a black swan event similar to the current collapse of Sri Lanka's economy, equity markets must remain open to allow for price discovery, taking the risk to investors into effect.

During the last trading day on 8 April 2022, the All-Share Price Index (ASPI) fell by 114.45 points (down 1.39%) to close the market at 8,135.25 points. Similarly, the Standard & Poor's Sri Lanka 20 (S&P SL20) index was down 44.47 points (down 1.67%) to 2,623.9 points.

The trading day was characterised by a low turnover of Rs. 1.2 billion, with over 58.4 million shares traded.

Emirates...

Emirates also announced that its pavilion at the Expo 2020 site will be repurposed into a centre for innovation, bringing talent from all over the globe to bring to life the airline's future-focused projects including those relating to the metaverse, NFTs, and Web3.

"It is fitting that our future-themed Emirates pavilion at Expo is being repurposed as a hub to develop cutting-edge future experiences aligned with the UAE's vision for the digital economy."

Emirates stated it continues to engage with industry partners on its Web3 strategy, and recruit talent for its pipeline projects.

the morning

brunch

Will Smith resurfaces in Mumbai for first time since Oscars slap

Will Smith resurfaced in India for the first time since slapping Chris Rock at the 94th annual Academy Awards, and the Oscar-winning actor was all smiles. The *King Richard* star arrived last Saturday (23) at a private airfield in Mumbai, where a horde of paparazzi awaited his arrival. It's unclear at this time if Smith embarked on this trip for business or pleasure, but the 53-year-old appears to have put the infamous Oscars slap behind him, at least on the surface. (Entertainment Tonight)



'Arugam Bay': An Israeli film director's postcard of Sri Lanka



BY VANESSA ANTHONY

Our island, with its magnificent mountains, pristine beaches, and everything in between, has a lot to offer to any foreign market. The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau recently began focusing on film tourism, and has warmly welcomed Israeli film production house United Channel Movies (UCM) to Sri Lanka to shoot their latest feature film *Arugam Bay* on the East Coast of Sri Lanka.

The filming will take place from 3-22 May, at various locations in Colombo, Ella, and Arugam Bay, as well as in Tel Aviv, Israel, with Arugam Bay obviously in the spotlight. Once complete, *Arugam Bay* is expected to be screened in Israel and over 50 countries across Europe.

The Morning Brunch had the pleasure to speak with Director Marco Camal, who has been travelling to Sri

Lanka for over 15 years and treats it like his second home. Camal told us that the current situation facing Sri Lanka did not stop his return to the island nor the undertaking of this film, saying: "We are happy to be back in Sri Lanka and I'm confident this film *Arugam Bay* will gain great success."

Giving us some insight into what to expect from the film, he shared that the story of the film is about a young Israeli group travelling to Sri Lanka to surf and to experience the life and culture in the country as well.

"The film talks about the warm hospitality of Sri Lankan and the genuine love and care offered to foreigners in general," Camal told us, adding that he incorporated his personal feelings towards our island as well.

Since the movie focuses mostly on a group of boys exploring all the wonders that the eastern coast of our island has to offer, Camal told us that he also made the female characters in the film incredibly strong and powerful

women with their own story to tell. Camal told us that in Israel, not many films highlight femininity, or women in movies, so he took matters into his own hand with *Arugam Bay*.

"The main female lead will be played by a renowned Israeli actress, whose character will be compelling and have a strong voice throughout," he informed us, revealing just a little more on what we can expect to see.

While he was visiting the eastern coast of Sri Lanka, Camal told us he conversed with many locals and beach boys, who shared their stories and spoke of grand adventures that took place in A-Bay, as it is fondly called. He committed the memorable ones to mind and recalled them when putting together the script of the film. He added that he insisted the script be written in Sri Lanka, so both the scriptwriter and himself could be inspired by the beauty that surrounded them when putting their feelings to paper.

While creating a promotional campaign for Sri Lanka as an ideal vacation destination, the film *Arugam Bay* will highlight the Eastern Province – where it will be filmed – as an unforgettable beach destination with many adventure and leisure activities that one can experience. Camal added that this filming project expects to generate foreign revenue for the country's economy.

During the discussion of the film, we spoke to Sri Lanka-based international film production company Frames TV & Film Productions' Producer and Director Shyaman Premasundara, who told us that the company will be joining hands with UCM Productions, the Israel Film Commission, and Sri Lanka Tourism to produce this film in Sri Lanka.

"I have met the representatives of UCM at the joint-destination promotion undertaken in the UK together with Sri Lanka Tourism and a group of established international film producers in Sri Lanka," he explained on how the film came to be, adding that they eventually managed to bring this film



Israeli film production house United Channel Movies upon its arrival in Sri Lanka last week

to Sri Lanka and name it *Arugam Bay*.

Explaining why *Arugam Bay* was chosen as the focal point of this film, Camal explained that it is considered to be a surfers haven in Israel.

"Many young Israelis go to Sri Lanka just to go to Arugam Bay and surf – I myself have come to Sri Lanka several times just to hit the waves in gorgeous Arugam Bay."

Premasundara believes that this is a great opportunity for the Sri Lankan international film industry, as well as for the inbound film tourism industry as the popularity generated via this film will help mitigate the current negative publicity towards Sri Lanka and inspire more international productions to select Sri Lanka as their preferred tropical film destination.

The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau supported

this destination promotional film production as part of its ongoing international film tourism promotion, and expects to further promote the island as one of the leading film location destinations in South Asia.

Talking about their post-production plans, Camal told us that he has a dream of premiering the film in July, right here in Arugam Bay, once it is completed, wanting to do justice to a district he calls his second home.

"I want the locals of the East Coast to watch the movie and see how much they inspire us creators, and understand how valuable their stories are. Although it may seem like just a day in their life; they experience something very few have the opportunity to, everyday," Camal expressed, recalling his days spent basking under the sun and cradled by the waves in Arugam Bay.

IS NETFLIX FALLING LIKE A 'HOUSE OF CARDS'?

BY VANESSA THORPE

An era comes to be defined by its major innovations and, sometimes, just a simple company name does the trick, like the Ford Motor Company more than a century ago, or Virgin in the 1980s. They are the business ideas that sum up a moment of progress. Of course, somewhat less prophetically, there were also the shorter-lived promises offered by DeLorean or Myspace.

Until last week, all of us were enjoying "the Netflix boom", mainly because of what the streaming giant represented, rather than for what it actually was. Netflix stood for easy access to culture, for family sharing, and for turning our backs on the shallow commerce of ad breaks. And it quickly became rather an emotional consumer relationship, especially during the dark lockdowns imposed during the pandemic.

In isolation, the homebound took solace in *The Crown*, *Stranger Things*, *Bridgerton*, *Money Heist*, *Lupin*, *Call My Agent!*, or *Squid Game*. In fact, for 10 years now in the UK, these box-set shows have fed a national conversation that occasionally also intersected with the chatter around the rest of the world.

So when Netflix Chief Executive Reed Hastings admitted last week that 200,000 subscribers had walked away in the first quarter of the year, with more likely to follow, fans of the service were forced to reassess. As a result of the losses, the company's share price dropped more than 35% last Wednesday (20), sliding nearly 8% further the next day. Then billionaire investor Bill Ackman decided to sell his Netflix shares, despite



Squid Game was one of Netflix's biggest recent hits

PHOTO © YOUNGKYU PARK/NETFLIX

incurring a vast loss, because things were suddenly looking so scary.

For many inside the industry, the alarm call from Netflix was the sign they had been waiting for – that, after a vertiginous climb, "peak subscription" had finally been reached. After all, hadn't music lovers already noticed how complicated their love affair with Spotify had become? The freedom to enjoy their favourite tunes was, it turned out, actually a threat to the livelihoods of the musicians that made them.

Among those who claim to have seen the writing on the wall well before the Netflix announcement are two Swedish entrepreneurs who are banking on a return to a simpler deal. Måns Ulvestam and Karl Rosander, the founders of Acast, the podcast platform, have now created a new ebook and audiobook platform called Sesamy – for which customers will only pay what they want, when they want it, on any device. The Swedes believe the public has seen through the

premise of a subscription. In their view, it is not just belittling that has caused Netflix members to leave the fold.

"We are seeing the end of something new that began with the paywall," said Ulvestam. "It is not sustainable, because it does not work for customers or for creatives any more."

Like the gyms that rely on users forgetting about their monthly membership payments, the subscription model, according to Sesamy's creators, verges on being a deception.

"We think all these content subscriptions, with their 'easy on-boarding' and very tricky cancellation, are almost a fraud," said Rosander.

But surely Netflix, a place where so many British viewers still go to enjoy their evenings, cannot be facing disaster? After all, even a show with bad reviews such as *Anatomy of a Scandal* is drawing a lot of viewers, while this weekend the new teen drama *Heartstopper* has been greeted with critical bouquets and hailed by some as the most important British TV show since *It's a Sin*.

Much of the rush to weep

over Netflix's imaginary open grave has been partly motivated by the way the success of the company, which had attracted new subscribers steadily for more than a decade, has been held up as an example to public service broadcasters such as *Channel 4* and *BBC*. When the culture secretary, Nadine Dorries, said earlier this month that she wanted *Channel 4* to be free to compete with Netflix, many programme-makers were quick to point out that the global streamer she so admired had seen great difficulty establishing a viable business model.

And Netflix itself has never liked this rivalry. The company line is that Britain's public service channels are its "creative partners". To substantiate this, it points to investment in hundreds of hours of content, including popular shows such as *The Serpent*, *Giri/Haji*, and *Dracula*. A show such as *The End of the F**king World*, first seen exclusively on *Channel 4* and then shown by Netflix, reaped renewed popularity when it returned to *Channel 4* for a second series.

For those other Netflix sceptics, the cinephiles, news of the drop in subscriptions bore the sweet scent of revenge. Film fans are still smarting at the way the streamer challenged the financial balance of cinema's theatrical distribution model. Once Netflix started to make its own feature-length products, the Cannes film festival tried to take a stand against it by banning films that had not been given a release in French cinemas. Organisers warned of an existential threat to the big-screen experience.

But now Netflix has become a prominent part of the film ecology, with *The Irishman* seducing director Martin

Scorsese into the streaming world and both *The Power of the Dog* and *Don't Look Up* winning Oscar nominations last month.

Like many a good film hero, Netflix had more humble origins. Long before it dominated the entertainment scene, it was an unassuming DVD delivery service, just as Virgin started out as a record label and Amazon once only wanted to sell books. But in 2012, the same year it launched in Britain, Netflix began to produce its own content, including the compelling Washington political drama *House of Cards*. Ten years on, the company has 221.64 million subscribers in more than 190 countries.

Any documentary about Netflix's fortunes, however, could not yet chart a dramatic downward path. For a start, a chunk of its financial instability can be put down to the shutting down of its Russian service following the invasion of Ukraine, and to the fact that most of those in the West who want to join Netflix already have.

British Netflix subscription levels are holding up comparatively well, yet every form of media service is having to think quickly about what subscription overload will mean. And this pondering has become more urgent with the news that the Competition and Markets Authority in Britain is now set to make "subscription traps" illegal.

So perhaps this is all a category error? That's what some analysts argue, anyway. We have wrongly assumed that Netflix is a tech innovator simply because its extraordinary expansion prompted many media empires to copy it, including Disney, Warner Brothers, NBC,

and Paramount, to say nothing of Amazon and Apple. But Netflix is not really founded on tech: it is just an entertainment provider that became a production studio – and that is always a very precarious business.

As the screenwriter William Goldman famously put it, in showbiz "nobody knows anything". It simply is not possible for hit to follow hit, even if you spend \$5 billion on television shows and movies, as Netflix did between 2018 and 2021.

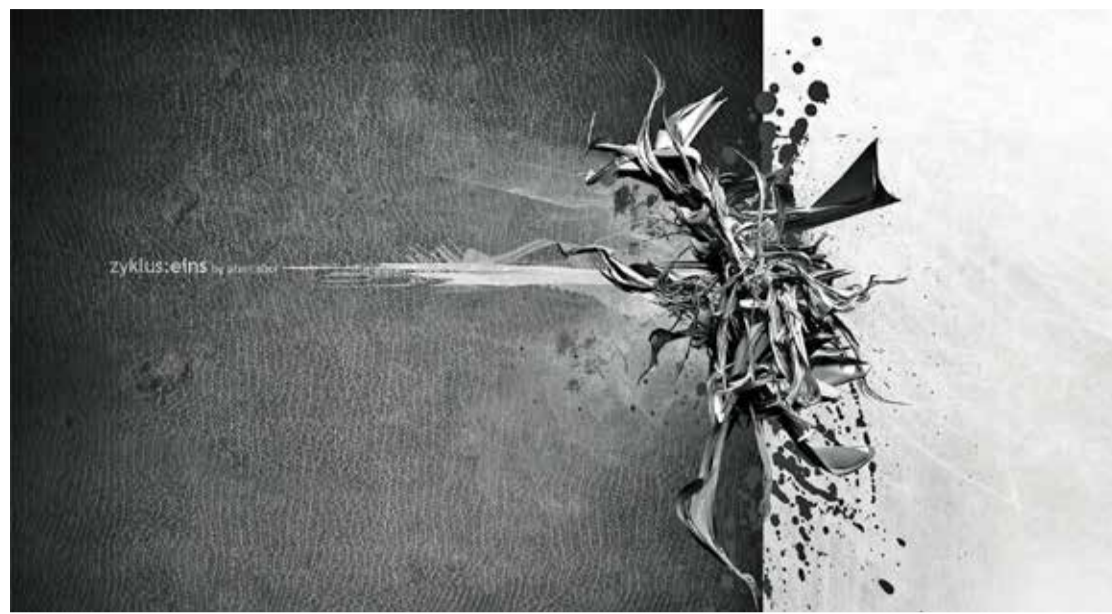
In reaction to the subscriptions slump, Hastings and his team have suggested they will be holding back on their spending, opening their minds to running adverts "in a year or two", and pushing harder on quality by somehow "taking it up a notch" (these three key strategies, of course, are also shared by many of the old-style content providers).

For the average household, the company's change in attitude to the cosy sharing of passwords will come as a bigger shock. Six years ago Hastings said "we love people sharing Netflix". Now, with an estimated 100 million people using each other's accounts, the Chief Executive is not so relaxed.

The truth is that neither consumer markets nor quality entertainment are endlessly expandable. If we all want a supply of good films and television, we have to ensure that it is priced fairly and that the artists are being paid well. Otherwise, as Rosander drily points out, TV culture is in danger of reverting to a Renaissance situation, where only the wealthy can afford the good stuff: "That is why all the paintings back then were of the duke's wife."

(The Guardian)

Hacks of life



BY SURESH DE SILVA

Brushing your teeth every day.
Eating your meals on time.
Getting regular exercise.
Devoting time to and for yourself to study for an hour every day.
Washing your plate after a meal.
Disposing wrappers into waste bins and not contaminating a street you are on.
All of the above are habits.
Consuming alcohol daily.
Needing that smoke every morning in the washroom.
Using public washroom facilities and leaving a mess for whoever uses the facility after you to clean up.
Never finishing your work deadlines, and ready to bust out of office at sharp 5 p.m. each evening no matter what.

The inherent desire to party every weekend, bust a lot of money with a clique of peers who are loud, rude, and violent, and like to vandalise. A bunch that drive while drunk and start fights wherever possible.

All of the above are also habits.
So what are habits?
How do we define what a habit is?
Habits are routine behaviour that are cyclical and repetitive in regular frequency, often happening as part of a natural process, but occurring subconsciously.

Among the myriad psychological definitions of a habit, the following is popular: *context behaviour associations in memory that develop in patterns via repetition. It's a form of habitual behaviour cued directly by*

context and doesn't require conscious intentions and supporting goals.

Wow.
That's a mouthful, isn't it?
Let's narrow it down further.
In a nutshell, any regularly repeated behaviour that requires little or no thought, is learned and not innate is a habit.

Habits involve *routines, reinforcement and repetition.*

Habits are ingrained into our being, a quintessential part and parcel of our daily lives. Habits can be the source to our stimuli, the things that anchor us in life, the behavioural attributes we permeate across our formative and more advanced functions. Habits govern us. Habits motivate and inspire. Habits can work as positive and negative triggers in our lives.

The good habit

Habits are those routines we develop throughout our lives, in certain epochs that inform the rest of our behaviour, thoughts, processes and patterns.

"You have power over your mind – not outside events. Realise this, and you will find strength."

– Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*
So what then are good habits and bad habits? How do we differentiate between them?

Are good habits those patterns and routines we build inherently that we self-consciously hone and develop to enhance our knowledge, skills and talents in order to conceive meaningful experiences? Those behaviour traits that contribute to our well-being and lifestyle, our mental and physical betterment, our lives and livelihoods?

Are good habits those repeated and reinforced routines and formulas that push us to become better? To

reach beyond our comfort zones. To challenge ourselves and grow?

Yes. I would imagine so.

Easier done, easier said

But what if... There is a way to pick up good habits, become familiar with them and reach our goals and destinations in life a whole lot faster, with apparent and attendant ease?

I don't like the word "hack". This term "life hack" perturbs me to no end. Because a hack constitutes a shortcut or an easy substitute to achieve a directive or goal by means of cutting corners. It's an inimitable crash-course of quick temporary solutions that can resolve problems much faster and conveniently.

Okay.
Let me give the coined phrase the benefit of the doubt.

In today's context, "life hacks" are ideally techniques and strategies that are adopted by embedding and emboldening beneficial habits to better manage one's time, duties, responsibilities and daily activities more efficiently and effectively.

"Life hacks" are useful tips and clever techniques for achieving certain goals or accomplishing certain tasks.

It's a faster approach to tackling a predicament. It's efficient methods and tactics to reach an end goal without wasting valuable resources; time, energy and money on something needlessly.

The ideal behind it makes sense. The idea behind it naturally has appeal.

Why take a year to achieve what you can in a few months?

Why would you let your frustrations grow, your dissatisfaction, self denigration and resentment manifest when you can find a quick fix in a shorter span of time, and fulfil your task at hand taking a much quicker route?

To hack or not to hack

Isn't a "life hack" akin to taking a shortcut with less traffic via a PickMe and Uber, as opposed to taking the long traffic-laden road constantly travelled, which will take you longer to reach your destination?

The truth isn't that simple. The reality isn't always that simple either.

There are disciplines in life where you can't just take short cuts. Take for example the difference between an educated person and a person who has education to show but no knowledge to boot. There are people of money and influence who obtain doctorates and degrees, who carry the letters in their name but lack the knowledge, theory, practical acuity and experience to strategise and articulate a structured

and organised plan to solve a crisis.

Take some MPs in third world countries as an example. They cannot offer a substantial and meticulous solution to resolve an economic crisis because they lack the aptitude, ability, capabilities, and competencies to tackle such a dilemma. Sure, they might well be crafty, insidious businessmen and women, but they are not qualified to resolve a national debt crisis or economic emergency. They've risen to positions of power using "life hacks" and bad habits that, when push meets shove, finds many of them lost at sea.

Let's take certain modern-day musicians. They lack the knowledge, skill, and experience to master an instrument, and lack the discipline of craftsmanship in instrumentation. Not caring to invest the effort, time and endless hours it takes to hone one's technique and theory to become seasoned live and studio musicians.

Instead they utilise "life hacks". Such people might have the money and resources to set up a high-quality modern studio facility, quickly learn to use a recording software, develop ill habits in just splicing music, copy-pasting, and depending way too much on autotune to digitally fix audio issues, that such individuals would finally not be able to hold their own, or carry themselves with proficiency in a live setting with confidence, competence and prowess. These are the people who rely on so much backing tracks and lip syncing, it's an embarrassment to artistry.

You see, taking shortcuts and cutting corners in life to finalise and reach a swift solution isn't *always* a good thing.

Take the volume of people at gyms. Some who blindly follow the advice of a fitness industry with a penchant for conditioning and programming people with hacks often promulgate bad habits, getting people hooked on supplements and anabolics to reach faster gains in muscle hypertrophy, or give dietary programmes that don't offer any real short or long-term benefits.

Those trainers focusing on quick promised results don't bring into consideration that every person's body and metabolism is different, and that we all respond to stimulus, recovery and growth in varying degrees because of age, weight, habits, lifestyle choices, medical history, athletic proficiency, meal plans, rest and recovery periods etc. – there are so many factors to consider before loading everyone with the same workout routine and plan to garner quick weight loss and muscle development.

Often, people who try to balance their professional, personal, and social lives with their wellbeing don't research the science and data behind working out. Gyms and social media fitness influencers might fill your heads with baloney, with terms like progressive overload, time under tension, and metabolic stress, but won't bother taking painstaking time to show



someone how to first develop proper form and technique, to avoid injury.

The hack conclusion

Is it not true that we all seek value by means of virtue, hard work, relentless pursuit, finding a balance of combinations of purpose and passion, method and meaning, risk and reason? Don't we traverse those hard and winding paths of existence by facing challenges, willing to live dangerously by accepting our vulnerabilities without subjugating ourselves to weakness?

Don't we all, or most of us in some form, shape or manner seek achievement by rising from the proverbial ashes, by confronting our worst fears and anxieties and challenging every debilitating notion of doubt that we can push beyond our limitations?

Meaning, there are some things that we must see all the way through to the end. But that's not all. We must endure the journey – life's complex storms and cathartic moments of calm. To do this we need to humble ourselves to be willing to learn from our mistakes, errors, missteps and failures.

To learn we must be prepared to live and live fully. To learn we need to experience the gamut of circumstance and consequence. To engrain profound habits that are good for us, we must learn with patience, focus and self-consciousness to be prepared to take those long, hard roads that will bend and try and break us before we see the first smiles of dawn after a particularly morose and hopelessly darker night.

"Everything you value is a product of unimaginably lengthy developmental processes, personal, cultural, biological."

– Jordan Peterson

Don't confuse life lessons with "life hacks". Don't mistake techniques and strategies to grow and evolve, with swift mechanics to reach an objective.

Life isn't about shortcuts. It's about taking those arduous, hard roads less travelled to reach your intended destination, yes, but having learned valuable lessons along the journey.

(The writer is the frontman and lyricist of Stigmata, a creative consultant and brand strategist by profession, a self-published author and poet, thespian, animal rescuer, podcaster, and fitness enthusiast)

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

A short film on unresolved issues in SL's war-torn areas

Nayomi Apsara on her debut film 'The Tea is Cold'

BY VENESSA ANTHONY

Art and activism have always gone hand in hand – several instances around the world show that artistic media have brought about change in the world. A look at the current context right here on our island, would be a relevant example, where several displays of artistic expression highlighted during the ongoing protests send a strong message of resilience and bring several issues into the limelight.

Poet, Screenwriter, and Director Nayomi Apsara, when producing her debut short film *The Tea is Cold*, explored the field of "artivism" and chose to focus on the war-torn areas in the Northern part of our island, bringing the struggle they face to the limelight.

Her story, starring Randika Gunathilake and Sumith Ilango, depicts lighthearted millennial Randika, who, on an official assignment, takes a journey to civil war-affected areas in the north of Sri Lanka. With the help of a local in the area, Vasantham, he explores unresolved issues and various after-effects of war in diverse communities.

The Tea is Cold, written and directed by Apsara, was screened at the Jaffna International Cinema Festival under the themes "Engaging Women and Girls in Film" and "Making films across borders in Sri Lanka today".



Nayomi Apsara

The Morning Brunch spoke to Apsara on her short film, art and activism, and the relevance with the current situation in Sri Lanka.

➔ Tell me about *The Tea is Cold*; what inspired the making of it?

The producers of *The Tea is Cold* – Alliance Development Trust and MinorMatters – approached me in the latter part of last year for this production. After lengthy discussions, we decided to do a movie where we could address the youth, who could be reinforced with the ideas that Sri Lanka is multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multicultural, and therefore, that it is important to respect, accept, and embrace people from different

communities and backgrounds – irrespective of differences, whether it be ethnicity, religion, language, or sexual orientation, among others – and we are all equal as human subjects.

We also wanted to make youth reflect on the various factors that keep us apart as communities, such as identity politics, economic interests, the lack of access to information, and lack of critical thinking about issues in general.

➔ What was it like during the creation of the film? How did you find people to talk to?

We spent half a month in Jaffna looking for locations and stories, as well as actors and actresses. Only three professional actors were from Colombo, while the rest were auditioned and chosen from Jaffna. We improvised the storyline along with some of the artists' real life experiences.

➔ The war is over, but do you think the relevant communities have been served "justice"?

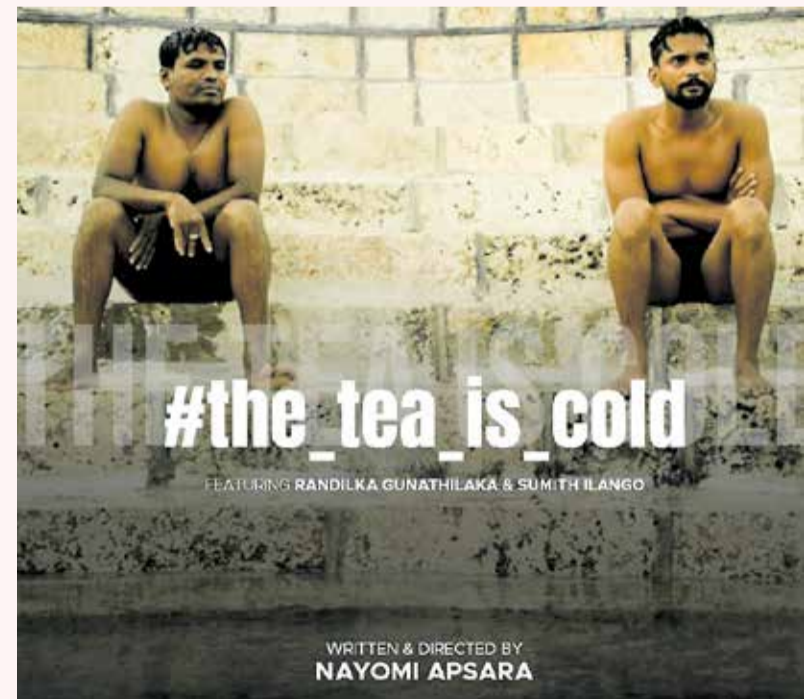
I strongly believe that a transitional justice process should take place along with a structural change. The ending of the war was celebrated in the South, but most of the communities involved in the North do not even have rights for memorials of their loved

ones. These need to be addressed by relevant authorities. This is the whole reason for this movie coming into light. As writers, filmmakers, or artists of any medium, discussing these issues is a social responsibility.

➔ Do you believe performative art methods and resistance go together, and was that the reasoning behind your movie?

Yes. Cinema and other performative art methods could not only be used to highlight parts of the current discourse but it could also be part of bringing out a lasting and substantive change in one's mindset. I used my film to bring post-war issues faced by locals in the northern part of Sri Lanka to the limelight, so other citizens around the country can understand their struggle.

Cinema connects people, and acts as a starter of a conversation. It enhances imagination and shows the entire world multiple perspectives, and broadens our vision and thinking. Most importantly, it connects different cultures and introduces us to the various forms of art and adds unknown information and facts to our lives. So I believe that cinema could be a powerful tool in real activism.



➔ There are a lot of art movements happening at "GotaGoGama" at Galle Face. What do you think of that?

This is a time for us to learn how some winning protests were done around the world with much aesthetic enthusiasm. Performative action and resistance go together. Painting, poetry, theatre, film screening, holding classes, etc., can be taken as performative and solidarity building processes.

The movement at "GotaGoGama" is obviously a long-term protest, which has already achieved several victories. What it needs is performative actions that

would consolidate its presence in the long term.

➔ What else do you have coming up this year?

I am hoping to work on a feature film, of which the script is completed. I am also structuring my debut novel, but there is a lot of research involved. Fingers crossed!

Down the line, I hope to continue down the path of "artivism" during my creative career, but it will not simply be limited to that. I will pursue many other styles of artistic media – not just to do with activism, but interpretive and creative art as well.

Asian Games facing postponement!

● Covid-19 pandemic may put Games on hold

There is growing speculation that the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games will be postponed. The reason is the Covid-19 pandemic.

News agency Agence France-Presse (AFP), citing an unnamed Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) official, reports that the multi-sport event could be moved from 10-25 September to new dates in 2023.

Numerous international sporting events in China have been cancelled during the pandemic due to China implementing strict Covid-19 restrictions, which have included the country's borders largely being closed to foreigners, remembered Michael Houston on *Inside the Games* last Saturday (23).

Closed loop system?

The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games represented a rare exception to this, but was held within a closed loop system which restricted participants from interacting with the general Chinese public.

The latest uncertainty over Hangzhou 2022 comes as China's largest city, Shanghai, battles the nation's worst outbreak of Covid-19 since the pandemic began, with residents facing weeks of restrictions.

Shanghai reported 12 deaths last Friday (22), its highest daily number to date. Hangzhou is 110 miles away from Shanghai.

Two Games already postponed

Inside the Games has contacted the OCA and Hangzhou 2022 for comment on the status of the Asian Games.

The OCA has previously had to delay events in China due to the pandemic,



The Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games could be postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions, it is reported. Here is an aerial view of the Hangzhou Sports Park, the main venue of this year's Asian Games

with the Shantou 2021 Asian Youth Games now not due to take place until December of this year and the Sanya 2020 Asian Beach Games pushed back until at least 2023.

Consecutive postponements have also moved the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in Thailand from 2021 to 2023.

Organisers confident

This month, Hangzhou 2022 organisers said all 56 competition venues for

the Games have been completed and promised to publish a Covid-19 protocol for the Asian Games similar to what was made available before Beijing 2022.

Hangzhou is due to be the third Chinese city to host the Asian Games, following Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010.

The Chengdu 2021 World University Games are still scheduled to go ahead from 26 June to 7 July, but this event also looks under serious threat due to the Covid-19 situation.

HANGZHOU 2022 19th ASIAN GAMES

Host city: Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China
Motto: Heart to Heart, @Future
Events: 482 in 40 sports (consist of 61 disciplines)
Opening ceremony: 10 September, expected to be opened by President Xi Jinping
Closing ceremony: 25 September
Main venue: Hangzhou Sports Park
Website: hangzhou2022.cn



Luke Witte is stomped in the face during a brawl during the Ohio State vs. Minnesota basketball match in 1972

ON THIS DAY



ACHIEVEMENTS/HISTORIC EVENTS

- 1894** James J. Corbett knocked out Charley Mitchell in three rounds for the world heavyweight boxing title
- 1929** Donald Bradman scored an unbeaten 340 runs for New South Wales against Victoria in 488 minutes, including 38 fours, in an Australia first-class cricket match
- 1952** Test cricket debut of Australian legend Richie Benaud, versus West Indies in Sydney
- 1976** India batter Surinder Amarnath scored 124 on his Test debut, against New Zealand at Auckland
- 1985** Test debut of Pakistan bowling great Wasim Akram, versus New Zealand at Auckland. He took 2/105



Test debut of Wasim Akram in 1985 at Auckland

- 1987** Stefan Edberg beat Pat Cash in the 75th Australian Open men's tennis 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 5-7, 6-3
- 1989** Michael Jordan scored his 10,000th National Basketball Association (NBA) point in his fifth season
- 1991** Mark Waugh scored a century in his first Test cricket innings, against England in Adelaide

UNUSUAL

- 1910** First stumping in Test cricket by a 12th man, N.C. Tufnell, for South Africa against England

TRAGEDIES/ACCIDENTS

- 1955** Jill Kinmont hit a tree and broke her back in the Snow Cup Ski Race
- 1972** A seven-foot-tall Ohio State basketball centre Luke Witte was stomped in the face during a brawl in a game against Minnesota, USA

2002 Thomas Junta assassinated junior coach Michael Costin during a fight at a junior hockey game in Massachusetts, USA

BIRTHS

- 1969** Sanjeeva Ranatunga, younger brother of Dammika, Arjuna, and Nishantha – all Sri Lanka players – was born. Sanjeeva played in nine Tests and 13 One-Day Internationals for Sri Lanka during 1994-97
- 1980** Birth of Spanish soccer great Xavier Hernández Creus, better known as Xavi



Happy birthday to Sanjeeva Ranatunga!

LOCAL SPORTS NEWS IN BRIEF

Rs. 1 mn prize pool for Dialog-SLESA All-Island Free Fire E-sports Championship



Dialog-SLESA All-Island Free Fire Championship commences in May

The Sri Lanka Esports Association (SLESA) has announced the Dialog-SLESA All-Island Free Fire Championship, a district-wise e-sports tournament organised to discover the next generation of e-sports talents across the island. With the support of its main sponsor Dialog and strategic partner Gamer.LK, the championship will feature a prize pool of Rs. 1 million and will be organised

around one of Sri Lanka's most popular e-sports platforms, Free Fire. The tournament commences in May with all matches being played online due to the continued pandemic situation.

"The digital nature of electronic sports allows athletes, regardless of where they live, to connect remotely and compete with thousands of others across the country. With the Dialog-SLESA All-Island Free Fire event, we're able to take structured and healthy e-sports to youth all across the island. This will produce the next generation of e-sports athletes that will represent the nation on the global stage," said SLESA President Raveen Wijayatilake.

Other local sports highlights

New Sports Minister meets National Sports Council



New Sports Minister Thenuka Vidanagamage met with the present National Sports Council last Friday (22) in Colombo

Newly-appointed Youth and Sports Minister Thenuka Vidanagamage last Friday (22) met with some of the members of the National Sports Council (NSC), which had been appointed by the outgoing Sports Minister Namal Rajapaksa. As a formality,

the tenure of the NSC automatically ends, it is reported, once the Sports Minister who appointed it vacates his ministerial position. "I decided to meet you today (Friday) not either to remove the existing NSC or to appoint a new one. I plan to get ready to the future sporting events with your assistance and guidance," Vidanagamage had told the NSC members who were present on the occasion, such as Rohan Fernando, Yaswanth Muttetuwegama, Maj. Gen. Rajitha Ampemohotti, Ruwan Keragala, and Rowena Samarasinghe, along with Sports Ministry Secretary Anuradha Wijekoon and Director General of Sports Development Amal Edirisooriya. Earlier it was reported that the Mahela Jayawardene-led NSC, appointed by Rajapaksa in August 2020, became defunct after Rajapaksa stepped down in the first week of April amidst the country's ongoing economic and political turmoil.

Men's javelin-throw champion Sumedha Ranasinghe one main attraction at Centenary National Athletics

Men's and women's javelin throws and the 100m and 400 m sprints were the main attractions when the earlier postponed disciplines of the Centenary National Athletics Championships were held at Diyagama on Saturday (23). Sri Lanka Athletics postponed as many as 12 disciplines of the Nationals to 23 April after almost the entire final day of the event was affected by rain at Diyagama on 10 April. Olympian men's javelin thrower Sumedha Ranasinghe is the only athlete to have achieved the locally-set qualifying standards for the Asian Games. His 81.79 m in March is the third-best throw in the whole of Asia this year.



The men's javelin-throw Olympian Sumedha Ranasinghe

Quote from a legend

"I believe in my race, colour. I never felt inferior to anyone. Maybe that's why the folks who made me feel that way may think Vivian Richards is the most arrogant guy on earth, but no. I bat for human beings, equal rights."

– Viv Richards

"I bat for human beings" – phew, what a statement. Sir Isaac Vivian Alexander Richards, or simply Viv Richards, is more than a cricketer, the original "Master Blaster" of batting and the batting icon of the West Indies cricket's golden era of 1975-90. He is also considered a mouthpiece of politics in cricket – perhaps the most authoritative West Indies cricket personage who is speaking for black rights, the underprivileged, and humanity in common.

He was born on 7 March 1952 at St. John's, British Leeward Islands, or Antigua and Barbuda now, where Sri Lanka is currently playing a month-long all-format cricket series. In fact, Sri Lanka will play their next three One-day Internationals (ODIs) and the two Tests at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, North Sound, Antigua, established in 2007.

Playing for the West Indies from 1974 to 1991, Richards played in 121 Tests scoring 8,540 runs at 50.23. He scored 6,721 runs in 187 ODIs averaging 47.00, helping his team win two World Cups (1975 and 1979).

In the photo is Richards, 22 then, scoring his first Test hundred (194 not



The 22-year-old Richards facing Bishan Bedi in his second Test in Delhi in 1974. The wicket-keeper is Farokh Engineer. Richards scored an unbeaten 192 to set up victory for the Windies

out), coming into bat at No. 5, in Delhi in December 1974, only in his second Test. West Indies, under Clive Lloyd, beat Srinivas Venkataraghavan's India by an innings and 17 runs.

In a "baptism of fire" in his debut series in the subcontinent, young Richards contributed to the Windies sealing the gruelling five-Test rubber 3-2 in the decider at the famous Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai in January 1975, in a Test that went on till mid-afternoon of an extended sixth day!

When Richards retired from international cricket in August 1991, he had led the Caribbeans, following Lloyd, to the pinnacle of world cricket hierarchy, entrusting upon the fellow black islanders, who have had a painful ancestry on slavery and colonialism, with a sense of self-identity, honour, and dignity through cricket.

Later, an "OBE", the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire or a British order of chivalry was bestowed on Richards along with a "KNH", the Most Exalted Order of the National Hero, an Antiguan and Barbudan order of chivalry, to recognise the distinguished services to their country or to humanity at large.

On a special note, Richards will always be remembered for his refusal of a "blank cheque" which was offered to him in the early 1980s to be part of a rebel West Indies tour of South Africa, when South Africa was under anti-black, oppressive, apartheid rule. What a lesson for the youngsters nowadays who go after various money-oriented franchise leagues by giving up their duty to their country and the nation as a sportsman?



the morning sports



Top women's national hurdler Kaushalya no more

Kaushalya Madushani who was among the top three in the national women's 400-metre (m) hurdles had passed away yesterday (24). Reports said Madushani had committed suicide after writing a letter explaining the reasons for her action. She lived at Dummalasuriya, Kurunegala. Only the previous day, Saturday (23), she was taking part in the final day's action of the Centenary National Athletics Championships that was held at Diyagama, near Colombo. In this photo is Kaushalya at the Diyagama National Championships awards ceremony last Saturday, just a day before her tragic death.

St. John's beat Jaffna Central to win Battle of the North

BY RAVI VARMA IN JAFFNA

The 115th annual cricket encounter, the Battle of the North, between Jaffna Central College and St. John's College, Jaffna, was worked off from last Thursday (21) to Saturday (23) at the Jaffna Central College grounds. There St. John's, who shone in all three departments of the game, won the match by 99 runs.

St. John's Vice Captain Kamalapan Sabesan scored a century and their spin-bowling duo, Vithusan and Ashnath, shared 18 wickets between them.

Match summary:

115th Battle of the North from 21-23 April at Jaffna Central College grounds:

Toss: Jaffna Central

St. John's, Jaffna 1st innings 167 all out in 84.1 overs (Kuganeswaran Karisan 41, Anton Abishek 40; Kavitharsan 3/13, Vithusan 3/41)

Jaffna Central 1st innings 125 all out in 45 overs (Sriharan Sarangan 41; Yogadas Vithushan 6/48, Jeyachandran Ashnath 4/46)

St. John's, Jaffna 2nd innings 220/7 in 67 overs (Kamalapan Sabesan 105, Ebanezer Jazial 35, Anton Sukethan 34; Rajithkumar Newton 3/64, Thileepkumar Gowthem 2/36, Aanathan Kajan 2/37)

Jaffna Central 2nd innings (target 263) 163 all out in 62.3 overs (Aanathan Kajan 53, Sriharan Sarangan 33; Jeyachandran Ashnath 6/70, Kirupanathan Kajakarnan 2/5, Yogadas Vithushan 2/57)

Result: St. John's win by 99 runs

Individual awards:

Man of the Match – Kamalapan Sabesan (St. John's)



Kamalapan Sabesan, the match-winning centurion for St. John's, Jaffna

Best Batsman – Kamalapan Sabesan (St. John's)

Best Bowler – Jeyachandran Ashnath (St. John's)

Best Fielder – Matheeswaran Sansajan (Jaffna Central)

Best All-rounder – Aanathan Kajan (Jaffna Central)

Best Wicketkeeper – Sriharan Sarangan (Jaffna Central)



Jaffna: St. John's College, Jaffna won the 115th annual cricket encounter, the Battle of the North, beating Jaffna Central College by 99 runs at the Jaffna Central College grounds last Saturday (23)

PHOTO © MURUGIAH SARAVANAN



Indo cricketer Wriddhiman Saha (right) vs. journalist: BCCI all set to impose a two-year ban on Boria Majumdar (left) as probe finds him guilty of 'intimidating Saha'

BCCI to ban Indian journalist Majumdar for two years

● Co-author of Sachin's biography faces sanctions for 'intimidating Saha'

Indian journalist Boria Majumdar will most likely be prohibited from interviewing or contacting any Indian cricketer for two years. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) was to take the entire episode of Wriddhiman Saha vs. Boria Majumdar seriously and impose a two-year ban on the veteran journalist, reports said yesterday (24).

The BCCI's three-member committee has found Majumdar, 46, guilty of intimidating Saha after the veteran cricketer had not responded to his request for an interview.

"We will be informing all State units of the Indian cricket board to not allow him (Majumdar) inside stadiums. He won't be given media accreditation for home matches and we will also be writing to the International Cricket Council (ICC) to blacklist him. Players will be asked not to engage with him," a BCCI official had told *The Indian Express* yesterday.

A solid academic background

Boria Majumdar, from Kolkata in the State of West Bengal, is an Indian sports journalist, academician, and author.

After completing his Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree

What are the likely sanctions on Boria Majumdar?

- Two-year suspension from stadiums in India
- The BCCI is to write to all Indo State Associations to ban him from their cricket stadiums
- His existing BCCI accreditation will be cancelled
- The BCCI will also inform the ICC of the incident and request them to suspend him from attending any ICC events in the future
- Indian cricketers will not be allowed to give interviews to Majumdar

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'Respected' journalists

In the said WhatsApp chat, the then-unnamed journalist had said that he would never interview Saha as the latter had not responded to a request for an interview. The incident had taken place at a time when

Saha had been dropped from the Indian Test team.

"After all of my contributions to Indian cricket... this is what I face from a so-called 'respected' journalist! This is where journalism has gone (to)," Saha had said in a Tweet then.

Bullying and intimidating

In the screenshots, Majumdar had said: "You did not call. Never again will I interview you. I don't take insults kindly. And I will remember this."

After Saha's revelation, the BCCI formed a three-member committee to probe into the matter. BCCI Vice President Rajeev Shukla, Treasurer Arun Dhimal, and Prabtej Bhatia, who is a BCCI Apex council member, interviewed both Saha and Majumdar on the allegations. The committee found Majumdar guilty of bullying and intimidating Saha and proposed a ban.

The committee found Majumdar guilty of bullying and intimidating Saha and proposed a ban.

Saha doctored the message?

However, Majumdar, in a Twitter post, said Saha had

doctored the WhatsApp chat and claimed he had the evidence to prove it. But as it stands, the BCCI has decided to stand by its centrally-contracted player.

"I had been deeply anguished by what has transpired in the last few weeks and that's because Wriddhiman Saha has fabricated, doctored, and manipulated screenshots and has put it out in the public domain trying to implicate me and garner public sympathy in the process," said Majumdar in a video.

Co-authoring Tendulkar's biography

Majumdar had completed his doctorate in March 2004 and his thesis was subsequently nominated for publication in the Oxford monographs series. It was later published in India by Penguin-Viking as the much-acclaimed *Twenty-Two Yards to Freedom: A Social History of Indian Cricket* in December 2004.

He also co-authored *Playing It My Way*, the autobiography of Indian cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar, along with the former player. In 2018, he published another book titled *Eleven Gods and a Billion Indians: The On and Off the Field Story of Cricket in India and Beyond*.

Later, in 2019, Majumdar became senior research fellow in the School of Sport and Wellbeing at the University of Central Lancashire.



Dilum Sudeera (extreme left) took a match-haul of 12/126 to spearhead Tamil Union to a title win over Sebastianites at the SSC, Colombo yesterday (24) in the Major Club Emerging Three-day Cricket Tournament 2022

Dilum Sudeera guides Tamil Union to title win

Dilum Sudeera, the 21-year-old slow left-arm orthodox spinner from Karadeniya Central College, took a match haul of 12 wickets for 126 runs to spearhead Tamil Union's victory march in the crunch game. Twenty-six teams took part in the tournament.

Major Club Emerging Three-day Cricket Tournament 2022 from Friday (22) to Sunday (24) at SSC, Colombo:

Sebastianites vs. Tamil Union

Tamil Union 254 all out (Ravindu Fernando 76; Tharindu Ratnayake 5/113)

and 123 all out (Dilum Sudeera 36; Manelkar de Silva 5/27)

Sebastianites 167 all out (Vimud Sapnaka 46; Dilum Sudeera 7/65) and (target 211) 166 (Vimud Sapnaka 52; Dilum Sudeera 5/61)

Result: Tamil Union win by 44 runs