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the morning



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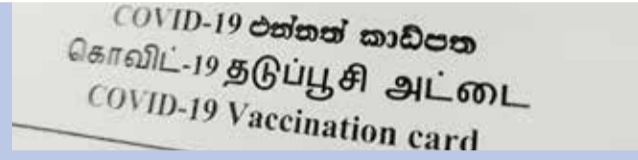
SAINTHAMARUTHU REMAINS TO BE EXHUMED »SEE PAGE 3

Banning public entry of 'not fully vaccinated' scrapped

• Gazette Extraordinary effective from 30 April to not be implemented

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWEEERA
The Gazette Extraordinary preventing persons not fully vaccinated against Covid-19 from entering or being in public places with effect from 30 April will not be implemented, taking into account the prevailing situation in the country, *The Morning* learnt. Speaking to *The Morning*

yesterday (26), a top-level official of the Health Ministry said: "Since the publication of this Gazette that prevents those who have not obtained all three Covid-19 vaccines from entering public places, the country's socio-economic situation has undergone a plethora of changes. In this backdrop, it will not be implemented, and it is not good to even talk about its implementation." *Contd. on page 2*



Karu to make major comeback in Interim Govt?

- Prominent role discussed for ex-Speaker
- Return likely via National List
- Karu 'ready to fulfil any role' to develop SL

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWEEERA
If an Interim Government is formed in the future, considering the critical situation in the country at present, former Speaker and incumbent National Movement for Social Justice (NMSJ) Chairman Karu Jayasuriya is likely to be given a leading position in it, *The Morning* learnt. Our sources indicated that in such a case, several parties, including groups that had recently left the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP)-led Government and since declared



Former Speaker and incumbent National Movement for Social Justice Chairman Karu Jayasuriya

themselves independent in the Parliament, have agreed to facilitate his appointment as a Parliamentarian from the national list. *Contd. on page 2*

'Raise tax rates and tighten your monetary policy'

• IMF prescribes path to debt sustainability for Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka must tighten monetary policy, raise taxes, and adopt flexible exchange rates to address its debt crisis, a senior International Monetary Fund (IMF) official said yesterday (26), *Reuters* reported. *Contd. on page 2*



Acting Director of the IMF's Asia and Pacific Department Anne-Marie Gulde-Wolf

PM to resolve crisis instead of resigning

- Says 'I will not step down'
- Promises to resolve crisis in the days ahead
- PM's residence fortified with metal spikes

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday (26) emphasised that he does not intend to step down from his position, and that he has taken measures to resolve the present crisis in a matter of days. "Don't worry about the current crisis, it will be resolved in the days ahead, and..." *Contd. on page 2*



Metal spikes being fitted on to the parapet wall of PM Mahinda Rajapaksa's Wijerama residence last night (26) PHOTO SAMAN ABESIRIWARDANA

Litro Gas prices increased following Chair's warning

- New Chairman Vijitha Herath said further supply impossible without price hike
- 12.5kg cylinder now Rs. 4,860; 5kg Rs. 1,945

Following a statement by Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. Chairman Vijitha Herath yesterday (26) that the company would be unable to provide liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) to consumers unless there was an increase in LPG prices, Litro announced a price hike in its LPG cylinders with effect from today (27), indicating that the Government granted its

approval to the decision. Accordingly, Litro Gas Lanka, which is the primary LPG supplier in Sri Lanka, has announced an increase in the price of its LPG cylinders. Accordingly, the revised price of a 12.5 kg LPG cylinder will be Rs. 4,860, up by Rs. 2,185 from its previous rate of Rs. 2,675. Meanwhile,...

Govt. plans special welfare programme for policemen



Police officers moving a barricade to a protest site earlier this week PHOTO PRADEEP DAMBARAGE

Public Security Minister Prasanna Ranatunga has instructed the relevant authorities to expedite the implementation of a special welfare programme for police officers and to take immediate action to address issues related to their allowances and facilities. *Contd. on page 2*

Cabinet approves two proposals to formulate 21A

Cabinet Co-Spokesman Dr. Ramesh Pathirana said yesterday (26) that the Cabinet of Ministers has approved two key proposals to prepare the 21st Amendment to the Constitution Bill. "The Cabinet approved the appointment of

a subcommittee to immediately assist the Legal Draftsman's Department to draft an initial Bill for the 21st Amendment to the Constitution. This Amendment is to be brought in as a solution for the economic and political crises by achieving political and social stability. It aims to bring back power to the Parliament and to strengthen democracy," said Dr. Pathirana while addressing the post-Cabinet media briefing held yesterday. *Contd. on page 2*

NPP rejects interim rule with Gotabaya as President

- AKD claims Prez palace fortified with military reinforcements from Monaragala, Dambulla



NPP Leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake

BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE
The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)-led National People's Power (NPP) of the Parliamentary Opposition said that it does not agree with the proposed interim rule in which incumbent President Gotabaya Rajapaksa continues to remain President. *Contd. on page 2*

Select industries to be permitted to import fuel

Legal amendments made for issuance of special licences
The Cabinet of Ministers has approved the amendment of the Petroleum Products (Special Provisions) Act, No. 33 of 2002 to allow for the issuance of special licences for the import of fuel for selected industries. "There have been a number of problems in fuel import and distribution recently. To minimise these problems, the Cabinet has decided to allow special licences for specific parties to import fuel for the electricity, fisheries and export industries,"... *Contd. on page 2*

Public requested to suspend construction work for three months

National Construction Assn. cites hike in raw material prices and lack of price controls
BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWEEERA
The National Construction Association of Sri Lanka (NCASL) has called on the public to suspend all construction work for at least three months, unless the Government finally decides to intervene to control the rising prices of raw... *Contd. on page 2*

WB to provide \$ 600 mn to SL

\$ 400 mn to be released as first tranche: PMD
The World Bank has agreed to provide \$ 600 million in financial assistance to address the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka, the President's Media Division (PMD) said yesterday (26), with \$ 400 million to be released shortly as the first tranche of this assistance. *Contd. on page 2*



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Contd. from page 1

Karu...

In particular, both Opposition and Government groups have reportedly agreed to give him a top post in a future Interim Government, during the discussions that are currently being held on the formation of such.

When contacted by *The Morning* to inquire about this, Jayasuriya said: "I have not applied for any post, but I know that people are talking about such a thing. So let us consider it if such a formal invitation is received. We are ready to fulfil any role to build the country as the NMSJ, which was founded by the late Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha Thera."

When queried as to whether any party had requested him to accept such a post, he said that it was difficult to comment on it at this time.

Jayasuriya had served as the Colombo Mayor from 1997 to 1999 and as a Minister thereafter, helming portfolios such as Power and Energy, Public Administration and Home Affairs, Buddha Sasana, Public Administration, and Democratic Governance. He has also served as the Deputy Leader of the United National Party (UNP), and served as the Speaker of the eighth Parliament of Sri Lanka from 2015 to 2020.

Following the defeat suffered by the UNP under the leadership of Ranil Wickremesinghe in the August 2020 General Election, Jayasuriya offered to take up the leadership of Sri Lanka's once-biggest party.

"In the backdrop of the current complicated situation, I have carefully considered numerous requests that came from many quarters. I have informed the party leadership and party seniors that I am capable of taking up the challenge to lead the party," Jayasuriya said at the time.

However, the former Deputy Leader of the UNP was never appointed as the leader of the party.

Banning...

He also said that even if the relevant Gazette is to be implemented, the chances of it being successful are very slim, especially in the midst of large crowds gathering across the country these days. However, he added that the implementation of the Gazette would be considered after reviewing the situation in the future, adding that the Director General of Health Services and other relevant agencies would make the relevant notifications in that regard.

Then-Health Minister Keheliya Rambukwella issued a Gazette Extraordinary preventing those who have not obtained the first, second, and third doses of the Covid-19 vaccine from entering or being in public places with effect from 30 April.

In February 2022, Health Ministry Medical Technology Services Director and Co-ordinator in Charge of Covid-19 Operations Dr. Anver Hamdani said that the implementation of this Gazette would be monitored by the Police and security officials at the respective premises.

Further noting that vaccination cards would be considered as proof when this decision is being implemented, he had said that the introduction of digitalised proof was also being considered. However, he had said that the introduction of such a system may take a bit more time, as there was a technical process to be followed.

Litro...

...the price of a 5 kg cylinder will be increased by Rs. 874 to Rs. 1,945, while the 2.3 kg cylinder will undergo a price hike of Rs. 404, with the revised rate at Rs. 910.

Litro previously announced a price hike of its 12.5 kg LPG cylinders last Friday (22), but reversed the move hours later, as the price revision had not received the Government's approval. The company later said the increases in LPG prices would be made only after receiving the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers.

Litro Chairman Herath, at a media briefing held at the Presidential Media Division yesterday (26), said that he hoped that the Government would approve the proposed price increase.

"There has been no price hike yet. But there is a proposed price revision and we hope that the Government decides and increases the gas price. If the company is to acquire LPS for distribution, we have to sell it at the correct price."

He noted that Litro Gas Lanka faces a cost of Rs. 5,500 per 12.5 kg cylinder, despite it being sold at around Rs. 2,500.

"Before last year, the company was a profit-making one. Last year alone, the company faced a loss of Rs. 24 billion. This is because the prices were not increased. Only 25% of families solely depend on gas, while others use firewood, both firewood and gas, or electricity. Yet, all families bear the cost of this loss," noted Herath.

"This price revision is not for the company to profit; but there is no other solution to import gas into the country. One ship came yesterday and another two are expected this week, but there is no money for new imports after that," said Herath.

Furthermore, Herath said that a pricing formula is necessary in order to ensure that prices fluctuate with the way that global prices fluctuate.

He further commented on discussions of aid with the World Bank. "We only need

about US dollars (USD) 40 million per month for the import of LPG. Now, the new economic policies state that mostly essentials can be imported. So we do not anticipate that the dollar shortage will affect the import of gas hugely in the future, if the prices can be fixed. The World Bank has informed us that they will give us money to open letters of credit for the import of gas. We need about \$ 35 million to open an LC for one month," said Herath.

He added that \$ 120 million has been allocated to Litro Gas Lanka through the Indian credit line as well.

Former Litro Gas Lanka Chairman Theshara Jayasinghe resigned on 15 April. In his resignation letter to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Jayasinghe claimed that people were suffering due to the negligence of the authorities who had previously been managing and regulating the country's finances.

He further charged that the support of everyone involved in the overall economic structure of the country is necessary in order to resolve the gas crisis, as it cannot be resolved internally through the company. On 21 April, Herath was appointed the new Chairman, and on 22 April, a price hike to Rs. 5,175 per 12.5kg cylinder was announced by the company. However, as mentioned, this decision was almost immediately reversed by the Government.

Govt....

While addressing Public Security Ministry Secretary (Retd.) Maj. Gen. Jagath Alwis, Inspector General of Police Chandana D. Wickramaratne, and senior Police officials during a meeting held on 25 April, he said that the assistance provided by the Police for the public to maintain a normal life at critical times could never be underestimated.

Speaking further, the Minister said: "The Police Department is working in the midst of many difficulties. Therefore, the problems faced by junior and senior police officers should be identified and resolved expeditiously. I have paid special attention to that. I look forward to further expanding and streamlining the existing welfare programmes. Steps will be taken to address issues related to allowances and facilities, especially of junior officers."

"The Police should never be an institution that oppresses the people. The Police service is a respectable service. There are various misconceptions about the Police in society today. We will work to eradicate those misconceptions in the future. As the Minister, I am involved in policy matters. The Police should always act on the side of the public. The Police should act in accordance with the powers vested in them by the Police Ordinance and per Police orders. Under no circumstances should those powers be violated."

"In order to make it a people-friendly institution, various programmes will be implemented in the future to enhance the friendship between the Police and the people. Regarding the current situation in the country, the Police is the main group. The Police is tasked with maintaining law and order. Therefore, in some cases, various problems can arise. Take action to minimise the disruption to the lives of the people during the protests held these days. Especially ambulances, school vans, public transport, and tourist vehicles should be allowed to travel without hindrance. Talk to the protesters and work towards this," Ranutunga urged.

PM...

"... I will not be stepping down from my position," the Prime Minister said during an audience with the Provincial Council Members' Forum, which also included several Ministers.

The forum passed a unanimous resolution that the Prime Minister should not vacate his position at the moment.

"We are facing a crisis in the country, but I have faith that this will be resolved in the days ahead. You have all placed your trust in me and have requested me to remain as the Prime Minister. Rest assured, I will remain as the Prime Minister and will not be stepping down," reiterated Rajapaksa.

He further added that he is completely aware of the situation in the country and has already taken steps to resolve the matter.

"I have seen the long queues of people standing for milk powder and other essentials. I have also seen how people struggle to obtain fuel for their vehicles. I have also seen the suffering of the people due to the power cuts. But I have also taken steps to resolve these issues immediately, and I can assure you that in the coming days solutions will be found," he concluded.

Meanwhile, workers were seen fitting metal spikes on top of the parapet wall of PM Rajapaksa's Wijerama residence last night (26). This follows an incident on Sunday (24), when members of the Inter-University Students' Federation (IUSF) staged a protest in front of the PM's residence. The protesters hung a black flag from the wall of the residence and wrote a number of slogans on it, calling it the "Protest Wall".

The developments come in the backdrop of Pivithuru Hela Urumaya Leader and

independent MP Udaya Gammanpila claiming on Monday (25) that a small group of people are attempting to forcibly ensure that Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa retains his position despite his willingness to resign, drawing a strong denial from the Prime Minister's office, which claimed that Gammanpila was "lying as usual".

Gammanpila, speaking at a press conference held on Monday (25), claimed that the group was filled with individuals who are abusing their power and are seeking to protect their positions.

He claimed that even on that day, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa had told monks, party leaders, and business contacts that he was ready to resign.

"If this group does not stop this ugly game immediately, we will have to name them. Rajapaksa is a man of our age who gave this country huge victories, and is a leader who deserves an honourable farewell, instead of being ousted by the people or MPs," he said.

However, Co-ordinating Secretary to the Prime Minister G. Cassilingham denied this via his Twitter account.

"I am with PM right now. And I read this news out to him and his response was, 'Gammapila is lying as usual' [sic]," the Tweet read.

Gammanpila also said at the press conference that rather than bringing a no-confidence motion against the Government and creating a power struggle amidst this crisis, what needs to be done is to allow the formation of an interim all-party government, and for the present Government to resign in order to make way for such. He posited that if the Prime Minister resigns, the Cabinet of Ministers will automatically dissolve and the interim Government will be given a chance.

Public...

...materials required for the construction industry, including that of cement.

Speaking at a media briefing held yesterday (26), NCASL Chairman Susantha Liyanaarachchi said: "There is currently a huge crisis in the construction industry. The price of a bag of imported cement has increased by Rs. 500 and a bag of locally produced cement has increased by Rs. 450. Importers say that they have to raise cement prices in the face of the current US dollar crisis in the country."

He added that a further rise in cement prices could not be prevented if the Ministers in charge and the Government do not intervene immediately. He further said that the entire construction sector is in a state of crisis, especially against the backdrop of a potential 100% increase in electricity tariffs, as well as sharp increases in diesel prices over the past few months.

"By now, we, as the NCASL, have halted activities of the construction industry. We did not call back the workers who were sent home for the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. In some places, certain construction projects may be in progress, but we as an Association have stopped construction projects. So we ask the people too to stop all their construction work for at least three months."

The prices of imported cement were increased by Rs. 500 per 50 kg bag, while the price of a 50 kg bag of local cement was increased by Rs. 450, with effect from midnight on 25 April. This was the fourth time that the price of cement was increased so far this year.

Meanwhile, the NCASL recently claimed that more than 600,000 workers have lost their livelihoods due to the collapse of the construction industry caused by the rise in prices of cement and other raw materials.

Liyanaarachchi said at the time: "More than 1.2 million workers belonging to the lowest economic strata of society are employed in the construction industry. However, with the collapse of the construction industry by 50% due to the crisis, more than 600,000 of them have lost their livelihoods."

He said that the main reason for the massive collapse of the construction sector was the rising prices of raw materials, including that of cement.

He noted: "A tonne of steel, which was Rs. 288,000, has now risen to Rs. 300,000. Even the steel that had previously been paid for has to be bought at new prices now. In addition, cement prices rose by Rs. 100 in January, Rs. 125 in February, and Rs. 350 this month. Accordingly, the new price of a bag of cement is Rs. 1,900. When the raw material prices are going up in this manner, how can we afford to buy them?"

He also claimed that despite a huge publicity stunt that took place in opening a new cement factory in Hambantota, not a single bag of cement has been released to the market from the said factory so far. Liyanaarachchi further claimed that the main reason for the collapse of the construction industry at a time of great economic crisis in the country was the lack of management by the relevant authorities.

Cabinet...

Cabinet Spokesman Dr. Nalaka Godahewa noted that there are already two private member Bills for constitutional amendments that have been submitted to the Speaker of

the House Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena. "The process for private member Bills, in this case, one by President's Counsel and Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna MP Dr. Wijeyadasa Rajapakse, and the other by the main Parliamentary Opposition, the Samagi Jana Balawageya (SJB), will be a lengthy process, as opposed to an amendment put forth by the Government," he said.

Speaking further, Dr. Pathirana said that the Cabinet has also approved for the initial draft Bill to be discussed together with the aforementioned private member Bills, and for a common agreement to be reached through a Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) before being submitted to Parliament by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa.

"The proposed Bill will take positive points from the 19th and 20th Amendments to the Constitution," he added, echoing the Prime Minister's statement in Parliament last week, where he said that the new constitutional amendment will be a reintroduction of a better 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

"Political, social, and economic stability in the country is important while we look for solutions to the economic crisis. I believe that a practical and quick solution to this is an amendment to the Constitution. As a first step to this, I believe that bringing back the 19th Amendment to the Constitution with necessary and timely amendments to strengthen democracy is a timely decision that can be taken in the short term," said Rajapaksa last week.

The SJB presented its proposed 21st Amendment to the Constitution Bill to the Parliament on 21 April, with the aim of "restoring checks and balances to the three pillars of democracy".

NPP...

At a press conference held yesterday (26), JVP and NPP Leader MP Anura Kumara Dissanayake said that the President has the power to dissolve Parliament.

"Even if a resolution is passed in Parliament, the President has the power to dissolve it. All so-called all-party Governments and interim Governments - all depend on the President," he said.

However, he raised questions as to whether Rajapaksa could be trusted.

He charged: "Can he be trusted? A group of MPs including those from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) recently discussed with Rajapaksa regarding an interim Government. The next day, SLFP Member Shantha Bandara was given a State Ministerial post (he has since been removed from all posts within the SLFP). Dr. Suren Raghavan, also from the SLFP, too was given a State Ministerial post."

"This is a President with such an unbelievably mad and distorted mind. Therefore, we do not agree at all with the interim rule proposed by this President whilst being in this chair. The main demand of the people is the resignation of the President. But no matter how unstable the country is, how much confusion the people have, how much the people have difficulty living, how much the state apparatus collapses, and how much the whole country and the people have been placed in danger, these rulers, including Rajapaksa, are working to protect their power, and he is thinking of maintaining power in his own hands."

"The people of this country must end the rule of these brothers. These rulers continue to prove that they are unable to fulfil the basic needs of the people and to build the country. Therefore, we emphasise that this President and the Government should resign," he said.

He proposed that thereafter they have to build some Parliamentary administration for a very short period of time and to go for the polls very soon. Only by giving a new mandate and an opportunity to build can a new administration provide permanent solutions, he added.

"Within the provisions of the Constitution, if the President is prepared to control the Army inside a bunker in the Presidential palace (the official President's House in Janadhipathi Mawatha, Colombo), it will not be a successful administration at all. As such, Rajapaksa should no longer be trapped within the provisions of the Constitution and should stop trying to consolidate power."

"If the leader of a country is going to rule the country from within a bunker, it should not be allowed. Troops have already been brought to Colombo from the Monaragala and Dambulla areas. Should the country be ruled from within a bunker with various armoured vehicles? This President should step down without causing further confusion."

An islandwide general strike has been called for tomorrow (28), with a series of protests organised in every city across the country.

"The power of the people and the strength of the people should be used for this. Also, the people should be given the opportunity for a new mandate," Dissanayake said.

'Raise...

"The requirement for fund lending will be progress toward debt sustainability. Monetary policy has to be tightened to keep inflation in check. We see a need for flexible exchange rates," said IMF Asia and Pacific Department Acting Director Anne-Marie Gulde-Wolf, speaking at an online news conference.

According to *Reuters*, Gulde-Wolf did not reply to a question on the total value for a

prospective IMF package, nor the estimated timing of a conclusion to the negotiations with Sri Lanka. However, she said that the meeting with the Sri Lankan Government had been "fruitful".

"We've had very good, fruitful, technical discussions on preparations for the negotiations with authorities over the past weekend and a couple of days before."

Minister of Finance and Justice Ali Sabry was in Washington last week to talk to the IMF, the World Bank, India, and others about financing help for Sri Lanka, which has suspended payments on portions of its \$ 51 billion in external debt.

Select...

...Cabinet Co-Spokesman Dr. Ramesh Pathirana said yesterday (26), while addressing the post-Cabinet media briefing.

Thus, the Cabinet has approved the amendment of the said Act to allow this.

Fuel shortages have seriously affected many industries this year. The fisheries and agriculture industries remain helpless without fuel to power their boats and machinery, especially with the short-term measure taken earlier this month by the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) to not issue fuel to cans. Export industries also lament the lack of fuel to power generators and machinery necessary for production.

Additionally, the Ceylon Electricity Board has been suffering from a severe lack of fuel throughout the year, thus being forced to routinely shut down its thermal power plants, and in turn interrupt national electricity supply. Last month, the public endured up to 13 hours of power cuts on a daily basis due to this reason.

The Petroleum Products (Special Provisions) Act, No. 33 of 2002 allowed for the amendment of the CPC Act, No. 28 of 1961, which in turn allowed the Lanka Indian Oil Corporation (LIOC) to obtain a licence for a 20-year period to operate in Sri Lanka. The CPC is still the only institution to have sole authority over the distribution, storage, and production of fuel in Sri Lanka, the latter aspect of production being done through the Sapugaskanda Crude Oil Refinery.

Speaking to *The Morning* yesterday, Petroleum Trade Union Confederation Convener Ananda Palitha questioned as to how the proposal to issue special licences will help the struggling industries.

He said: "The usual minimum amount of fuel that can be imported is 10,000 metric tonnes. Which industry in Sri Lanka needs this much of fuel at once? Even the largest Free Trade Zone in Katunayake will not need to import fuel like that. Even if that much fuel is imported by a single party, how can it be stored and distributed safely and properly?"

Furthermore, Palitha claimed that this is just a ploy by the Government to allow India and China to move into the fuel industry in Sri Lanka, threatening its energy security.

Last year, then-Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila sought to amend the CPC Act by introducing provisions which would dissolve the CPC monopoly on refining oil by allowing an investor to enter into the market with an initial investment of \$ 3 billion.

On 31 December 2021, Gammanpila announced the extension of the lease agreement with the LIOC for the Trincomalee oil tanks. Under to the agreement, the current lease on 14 oil tanks under LIOC control was extended by another 50 years and 24 tanks will be independently developed by the CPC, while the additional 61 tanks will be jointly developed by the LIOC and the CPC, under the newly established Trinco Petroleum Terminals Ltd., in which the CPC has majority shares.

WB...

This was communicated by World Bank Country Manager Chiyo Kanda during a meeting between World Bank representatives and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa at the President's House in Colombo yesterday.

This financial assistance will be provided to meet medicinal drugs and health needs, social security, agricultural and food security, and gas needs. The World Bank representatives also stated that they will continue to provide assistance to Sri Lanka in overcoming the current economic crisis.

World Bank in Sri Lanka Advisor Husam Abudagga, Practice Leader for Human Development Rene Solano, Finance Minister Ali Sabry, Trade and Samurdhi Development Minister Shehan Semasinghe, Secretary to the President Gamini Senarath, Finance Ministry Secretary K.M.M. Siriwardena, Labour Ministry Secretary Mapa Pathirana, Deputy Secretary to the Treasury R.M.P. Rathnayake, and National Planning Department Director General R.H.W.A. Kumarasiri were also present at the meeting.

COVID-19 CASES

 584	TOTAL CASES 663,195
DEATHS 16,502	RECOVERED 646,109

SOURCE: HEALTH PROMOTION BUREAU
THE ABOVE STATISTICS ARE CONFIRMED UP UNTIL 5.00 P.M. ON 26 APRIL 2022

Sainthamaruthu remains to be exhumed

- Ampara Magistrate to preside over today's exhumation of those who died at Zahran's house
- JMO, initial investigators, Government Analyst's Department officials to attend
- Exhumation to ascertain presence of Katuwapitiya Church bomber's wife via DNA

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

The Kalmunai Magistrate's Court has granted permission to exhume the remains of those who were killed in the bomb explosions that took place at the residence of National Thowheeth Jama'at (NTJ) organisation Leader Mohamed Zahran Mohamed Cassim alias Zahran Hashim in the Sainthamaruthu area in Ampara on 26 April 2019.

Accordingly, the remains buried at the Ampara cemetery will be unearthed today (27), in the presence of the Ampara Magistrate.

When contacted by *The Morning*, Police Media Spokesman Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Attorney-at-Law Nihal Thaldudu said that the relevant Judicial Medical Officer (JMO), police officers who were involved in the initial investigations and officials of the Government Analyst's Department

will also be attending the exhumation activities.

By re-examining the deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) of the remains, the investigators intend to find out whether the remains of Pulasthini Mahendran alias Sara Jasmine – the wife of Atchchi Muhammadu Muhammadu Hasthun, who carried out the suicide bombing at the St. Sebastian's Church in Katuwapitiya – are among those who died inside Zahran's house in Sainthamaruthu.

On 26 April 2019, five days after the Easter Sunday terror attacks on 21 April 2019, Sri Lankan Security Forces and NTJ militants clashed when the Security Forces raided a house in the town of Sainthamaruthu in Ampara at around 7.30 p.m.

The house had been used by the militants to manufacture explosives and suicide vests. Three suicide bombers, including Zahran's two brothers, blew themselves up, killing nine of their family members, including six children, while four other suspects were shot dead by



Armed forces at the scene after the Sainthamaruthu bomb explosion

the soldiers.

Following the clashes, a total of 15 bodies were recovered from the site of the clash. Security troops also recovered explosives, detonators, gelignite sticks, acid bottles, detonating cords, Islamic State flags, suicide kits, and military uniforms. Zahran's wife, Abdul Cader Fathima Hadiya, and their child, who were injured during the explosions, were taken to the hospital and placed under Police custody, following which Hadiya was remanded.

Pulasthini, who is said to have been at Zahran's house at the time of the bombings, is believed to have fled to India

in September 2019, and a police officer named Abu Bakar who was serving at the Kalawanchikudi Police Station, who is alleged to have helped her, was arrested by the Colombo Crimes Division.

Testifying before the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Easter Sunday terror attacks, Pulasthini's mother Kavitha Rajaratnam said that her daughter had been with Zahran's wife Hadiya, from February to 26 April 2019, and that the latter is well aware of what happened to Pulasthini. Therefore, she requested the Security Forces not to release Zahran's wife until exact information about Pulasthini is revealed.

Former Customs DG seeks compensation from CIABOC

- Cites damage to reputation and waste of time
- Former DG Ranjan Kanagasabai acquitted, as CIABOC withdraws case

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

Former Sri Lanka Customs Director General (DG) Ranjan Kanagasabai has sought compensation from the Commission to Investigate into Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) for allegedly damaging his reputation and wasting his time by making false allegations against him.

President's Counsel (PC) Maithri Gunaratne, who appeared for Kanagasabai, made the said request to the Colombo Chief Magistrate



Ranjan Kanagasabai

Nandana Amarasinghe yesterday (26).

Kanagasabai was yesterday acquitted of all charges, following the CIABOC's withdrawal of a case filed against him in 2014 for allegedly failing to submit assets and liabilities for the years 2004-2007. The CIABOC had filed another case in this connection, and had sought permission from

the court to withdraw this case, as the suspect had been acquitted and released in that case.

Gunaratne informed the court that the case had been pending for nearly 10 years. He said that his client had visited the court on 58 occasions, and therefore asked the court to direct the CIABOC to pay appropriate compensation, as the said case has tarnished the reputation of his client.

At this point, Attorney General's Department Senior Deputy Solicitor General (SDSG) Azard Navavi told the court that the case was not filed on the sole opinion of the CIABOC, but was initiated at the request of Customs, adding that the CIABOC is therefore not required to pay compensation.

After considering all the facts, the Chief Magistrate announced that the decision would be given on 26 June.

US Ambassador meets with political party leaders in North

U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka Julie Chung has held discussions with the leaders of Tamil political parties in the Northern Province.

Ambassador Chung, who is currently on a tour of the Jaffna District, had met with the leaders of several Tamil parties for talks yesterday (25) in the city of Jaffna.

Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK) Leader Mavai Senathirajah, Tamil People's National Alliance (TPNA) Leader C.V. Wigneswaran, People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) Leader Dharmalingam Siddharthan, and Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) Leader Selvam Adaikalanathan had participated in the discussion.

The talks had focused on the political and economic problems of the country, as well as the problems of the people of the North and East.

In a Twitter message, the US Ambassador said she met with the TNA, TELO, PLOTE, and TPNA to discuss the current crisis in the



US Ambassador Julie Chung meeting leaders of Tamil parties

country, and its impact on their constituents.

"The only way to solve today's challenges is for everyone to work together – and to ensure the interests of all Sri Lankans are represented in the solution," she said.

Meanwhile, the ambassador had also met with business leaders to explore ways to bring prosperity and investment to the North, and also held talks with Youth Forum members at the American Space to discuss challenges facing today's youth and how they envision building the future of Sri Lanka.

Anti-Govt. protestors allegedly threatened

- Actress-cum-director and former tuition teacher reveal demands to remove FB posts and death threats

BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

Several artistes who protested against the ruling Government have allegedly received threats from anonymous sources and supporters of the Government.

Speaking to *The Morning*, Actress/Director Rukshana Dissanayake said that she had received several calls from anonymous people asking her to remove Facebook (FB) posts that she had shared in support of the ongoing protests.

"This was even before I participated in the protests. The people who called me asked me to remove Facebook posts. This is a democratic country and anyone is free to share their opinion. I think that these types of people support their cause for money and should therefore be ignored," she claimed.

Meanwhile, educator Upul Shantha Sannasgala has claimed that he has received death threats from a person called Ranjan De Silva. According to the post that Sannasgala shared on his Facebook page, De Silva is an owner of a car dealership.

"De Silva threatened to kill me and I also have call recordings to the effect," Sannasgala further claimed. He has sought help from lawyers to assist with the situation.

"New Sinha Le" organisation Head Dan Priyasad also made open threats to Sannasgala. Sannasgala, a former tuition teacher, has been a strong supporter of the #GoHomeGota protest campaign launched by the youth of Sri Lanka.

Priyasad made the said threats while leading a pro-Government Buddhist monk march against the #GoHomeGota protest campaign.

Priyasad said during the march that if Sannasgala came close to the Kelaniya Raja Maha Viharaya, he (Priyasad) would "stop his heart and dump it in the Kelani River". In response to the comment, Sannasgala had said that he was ready to come near the Kelaniya Temple.

Threatening #GoHomeGota protestors, Priyasad said: "Once the protest wave is over, wait and see what will happen to you. We have already collected your names."

TN Government positive towards Lankan refugees

- TN Chief Minister responds to ITAK Vanni MP's letter

BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

The Tamil Nadu (TN) Government has stated it maintains a positive approach to Sri Lankan Tamils who have reached the State in the wake of the ongoing economic crisis in the island nation, said Illankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK) Vanni Electoral District MP Selvam Adaikalanathan.

Speaking to *The Morning*, he said that this had been noted in response to a letter sent by him to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin.

"People from the North started fleeing one month ago to Tamil Nadu due to the economic crisis. They don't have proper jobs and have no way of securing food and essential items. Day by day, prices are increasing."

According to Adaikalanathan, he had written to Stalin urging not to harm Sri Lankan Tamils and not to take legal action against them.

"In my letter, I urged them not to take legal action against the Tamil Sri Lankans and not to put them in jail. They already suffered a lot."

According to reports, over 60 Sri Lankan Tamils have reached Dhanushkodi and Rameswaram to date. Most of them reportedly sold all their belongings to reach the Indian shores in fishing boats, paying large sums.

Tamil Nadu has accommodated these refugees at the Mandapam refugee camp, but the accommodation is temporary, as the State would have to get a green light from the Central Government to provide full-scale refugee status to those who reach Indian shores.



Ali Sabry re-appointed as Justice Minister

Minister of Finance President's Counsel (PC) Ali Sabry, has been sworn in as Minister of Justice, the President's Media Division (PMD) said yesterday (26). His new appointment is in addition to his existing portfolio.

The lawmaker previously served as Minister of Justice in the Cabinet which resigned on 3 April, with the escalation of anti-Government demonstrations across the country.

The following day, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa appointed him as Minister of Finance, along with three other ministers, citing the maintenance of parliamentary affairs and other functions of the country legitimately and stably until a full Cabinet is appointed.

After tabling the International Monetary Fund's report on Sri Lanka to Parliament on 5 April in his capacity as Finance Minister, Sabry tendered his resignation to the President, which was turned down. The lawmaker accordingly continued to serve in his Finance Ministerial portfolio.

Price of cement increased again

The prices of imported cement increased by Rs. 500 per 50 kg bag with effect from Monday (25), according to cement companies.

Accordingly, the new price of a 50 kg cement bag will

be Rs. 2,850.

This is the fourth time that the price of cement has been increased so far this year.

Local cement companies had decided to increase the price of local cement by Rs. 100 with effect from

1 January. On 13 March, the price of a 50 kg bag of cement had been increased by Rs. 350 while on 1 April, the price of locally-manufactured and imported cement was increased by Rs. 500 per 50 kg bag.

EC calls for interim plan of action to resolve economic crisis

The Election Commission says a specific, interim plan of action should be implemented by a Cabinet of Ministers representing all political parties in the parliament or a similar structure in order to resolve the current economic situation the country is facing.

In a media release issued yesterday (26), the election body noted that the time has come to work concertedly to rebuild the country.

Presenting an eight-point proposal to be implemented in a timely manner to overcome the present crisis situation, the Election Commission said a consensus needs to be reached to do away with the adverse provisions in the Constitution.

It also pointed out that the privileges given to public representatives need



to be limited, and that the public service should be restructured.

The commission also suggested several amendments to be made to the election law, prior to

calling an election, such as putting restrictions on the exorbitant expenditures by political parties and election candidates for campaigns and strengthening the youth and female representation in polls.

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Shedding party politics for true meritocracy

Stressing that he would support the no-confidence motion (NCM) submitted by the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) against the Government in the event the Government does not resign this week, Pivithuru Hela Urumaya Leader, and former Energy Minister in the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP)-led Government who sits independent in Parliament at present, MP Udaya Gammanpila stated that the new Prime Minister for an interim rule will be a SLPP MP who is approved by all parties in an interim Government.

Even though Gammanpila has come off as an independent and straightforward politician during the past few months, especially after leaving the Government and resigning from his Ministerial portfolio, his statement shows strong signs of supporting the kind of party politics that Sri Lankans have grown tired of, as well as the anti-people policies nurtured by politicians. It is also noteworthy that his statement comes in the context where an audio clip was circulated in the media last week, including on social media platforms, that is said to be a statement issued by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, which says that Rajapaksa should be the Prime Minister in an interim Government.

What Sri Lanka is facing is a national crisis that affects both pro-Government and anti-Government groups alike. Even though there is an extremely strong and direct connection between politics and the prevailing economic crisis, this is not a crisis of one party, one politician, one policy, or one decision. Therefore, first and foremost, it is important that all politicians acknowledge, and the general public understand, that this crisis has created a situation that calls for the disregard of differences and biases, and that this crisis should be viewed as a national issue that requires unity.

This is a time that the country needs a national leader to guide the country out of the economic crisis, and what party they represent or what political ideologies that they support should not matter. This is actually the last chance to save the nation, and therefore, this is the time to choose a leader that can actually help lead the process of addressing and hopefully remedying this crisis. In this context, whoever makes decisions about appointments in an interim Government should see the importance of the competencies, character, and qualifications of the Prime Minister of the interim Government – not where they come from.

As a matter of fact, paying more attention to parties and political beliefs is one of the factors that has put Sri Lanka in the prevailing situation, because for decades, voters were so blinded by party politics that they could not discern individual competencies. Owing to party politics, during the past two decades, there were instances where party members were defended by political leaders, while new governments rescinded plans made by previous governments, resulting in losses of millions of US dollars.

Even though party politics has always been an integral part of Sri Lanka's political culture, it is time for politicians to see themselves as public representatives whose political career depends largely on public support, not members of political parties. They need to remember that the powers they exercise were granted by the people. To serve the people, changing faces is not sufficient, and Sri Lanka has learned this lesson the hard way during the past few decades.

To uphold the people's rights, whoever becomes the next leader – whether a President or a Prime Minister – should have a plan, genuine willingness, and the ability to revive a collapsed country. It is high time for Sri Lanka to embrace the values of the concept of meritocracy; failure to do so will push Sri Lanka further towards an economic crisis, a social crisis, and a weak rule of law and democracy. To change this situation, politicians should stop blindly following political parties that have no regard for their duties for the country and for the people that elected them.

IMF spring meetings amidst Sri Lanka's Arab Spring

The need for debt cancellation over asset-stripping

BY DR. DARINI RAJASINGHAM-SENANAYAKE
In the glare of the global media, Sri Lanka became the poster child of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) spring meetings this week in cherry blossom-lined Washington, D.C. This strategic Indian Ocean island's pathetic plight, featured on major global media and television channels, with images of people in queues amid food, fuel, and medicine shortages due to its crashing currency, soaring cost of living, and Arab Spring-style protests.

Despite being one of the wealthier nations in the South Asian region and listed as a lower middle-income country (MIC), the media imaging of Sri Lanka, served to affirm the relevance of the Washington Consensus and the IMF albeit as the lender of last resort.

For the first time in its history, Sri Lanka, with a population of 22 million people had just defaulted on debt payments. The timing of the Sri Lankan rupee's crash against the "exorbitantly privileged" US dollar (USD) was as conspicuous as the Easter Sunday attacks that were mysteriously claimed by the Islamic State, which targeted the Chinese-owned Shangri La and other luxury oceanfront hotels and the island's tourism-dependent economy, three years ago.

Meanwhile, Oxfam called on the IMF to "abandon demands for austerity as a cost of living crisis drives up hunger and poverty worldwide". Its spokesperson noted that "87% of the IMF's Covid-19 loans require developing countries facing some of the world's worst humanitarian crises to adopt tough, new austerity measures that will further exacerbate poverty and inequality".

In its report, titled "Inequality Kills", the organisation noted that "the wealth of the world's 10 richest men doubled since the pandemic began, while the incomes of 99% of humanity are worse off because of Covid-19. A total of 263 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty in 2022, due to the combined impact of Covid-19, inequality, and food and energy price inflation – accelerated by the war in Ukraine."

Sri Lanka's total debt is \$ 51 billion and the country must pay \$ 7 billion this year to international sovereign bond (ISB) traders based in New York, as noted by senior economist and Institute for Policy Studies Head Dr. Dushni Weerakoon.

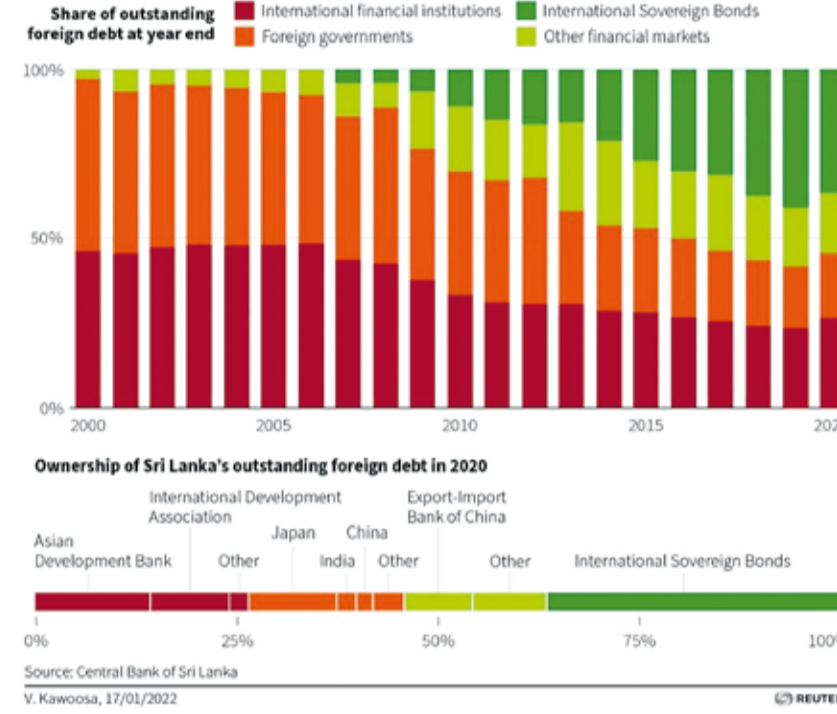
For a comparative perspective, entrepreneur, investor, and business magnate Elon Musk offered to buy Twitter for \$ 43 billion, in the same week! The greatest transfer of wealth in human history transpired over the past two years while much of the world



The International Monetary Fund spring meeting

Sri Lanka's foreign debt

Repeated cycles of borrowing from capital markets, including the International Sovereign Bonds, have made them the largest source of foreign funding for Sri Lanka.



was in Covid-19 lockdowns and global trade was disrupted, also resulting in speculation in commodities futures, which were also partly responsible for the spike in global food and fuel, as noted by economist Jayati Ghosh. Has the USD been weaponised against the poor and emerging economies as some have suggested?

Staged dollar shortage, downgrades, and Arab Spring protests

Back on Colombo's Galle Face seafront, Arab Spring playbook-style protests by youth enjoying their freedom after two years of Covid-19 lockdowns unfolded as part of the push to propel the Colombo regime's pivot to Washington, D.C.

Usually, anti-Government protests happen at the iconic Independence Square, but the current protests were staged close to South Asia's busiest sea port – the Colombo Harbour – and notably near the Chinese-built Colombo Port City.

While the protests, anonymously organised via social media, called on the Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to go home, they did not say "Gota go home to America". The President after all was a US citizen until 2019. Nor was debt cancellation or a debt jubilee on the agenda of the protestors, some of whom held posters calling on the Government to go to the IMF in the hope of better financial management. The IMF had been painted as a savior by various economists and local think-tanks, as the drum beat to default intensified!

But the protestors had other creative solutions to the island's crisis of corruption and economic mismanagement, such as a "buy local products" campaign to encourage citizens to support local manufacturing and industry and stop consuming expensive, imported, luxury goods.

Some suggested a permanent halt of the practice of providing duty-free car permits to politicians, doctors, university lecturers, and

privileged "professional" class, as well as abolishing various special health insurance schemes. Other protestors wanted to reverse the privatisation of the national healthcare and education systems and the sale of the Yugadavani Power Plant to a dubious American company called New Fortress. The latter had compromised Sri Lanka's energy security.

Several protestors suggested marching to the US Embassy to call on the US Government to return all the assets of the dual US citizen and former Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa in Los Angeles to pay off the national debt. Others called for accountability for those responsible for the Central Bank bond scams. Long-term suggestions to grow the economy and develop the country were setting up research and development working groups on energy security, and ocean and mineral resources.

Some academics supporting the protests suggested debt cancellation and cited the debt jubilee project that had earlier called on the IMF and the World Bank to offer an immediate cancellation of all principal interest and charges due to the deadly economic toll of the World Health Organisation's Covid-19 lockdowns in poor countries.

The jubilee project had also recommended that the Group of 20 support moves by any country to stop making payments on debt to private external lenders, and that new IMF and World Bank finance should be in the form of grants, not loans, and require other lenders to re-profile the debt where sustainability is uncertain, or restructure their debt where it is unsustainable, to help ensure that money is used to support public policy priorities in response to the Covid-19 crisis, rather than to repay other lenders.

One of South Asia's wealthiest nations in an ISB debt trap

Like Lebanon, once known as the Paris of the Middle East, Sri Lanka is a relatively wealthy country in South Asia and listed as a lower MIC. The strategic island is ahead of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Afghanistan on the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) regional poverty count.

The country had always paid its debts, and had no previous history of default. Likewise, its debt-to-GDP (gross domestic product) ratio, another metric to determine the solvency of a country, at 110% was not off the map. Indeed, the top 10 countries with the highest debt-to-GDP ratio, according to the world population review, include Japan, Singapore, Italy, Portugal, Bahrain, and the US.

But the drum beat and narrative of and for Sri Lanka's default was in the air for some time, and at least since the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact was rejected in 2019: As Prof. Howard Nicholas of the Institute of Social Studies recently suggested in a lecture organised by the Economic Students Association of the Colombo University, alluding to geopolitics and the recent visit by US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland, the Colombo regime's default seemed to followed a systematic, deliberate, and planned route to deliver Sri Lanka into the clutches of the IMF and Washington D.C.



BY SUMUDU CHAMARA

At a time when the present Government has expressed some support for a 21st Amendment to the Constitution, there should be a discussion on what is intended to be achieved through this measure, especially as far as the changes that need to be done to the present Constitution are concerned.

Among the most necessary changes are the establishment of a system that gives more powers to the Parliament or public representatives, strengthening and establishing independent commissions, and making public institutions more accountable.

Edinburgh University, Scotland Lecturer in Public Law Dr. Asanga Welikala, Attorney-at-Law (AAL) Dr. Gehan Gunatilleke, and University of Colombo Senior Lecturer in Law Dr. Dinesha Samararatne extensively discussed these matters on 25 April, during an online discussion titled “21st Amendment to the Constitution” organised by the Centenary Movement.

The Constitution and the economic crisis

During the discussion, Dr. Welikala discussed the importance of why Sri Lanka needs constitutional reform in the middle of an economic crisis, and what a Constitution can do for good economic governance in Sri Lanka.

Adding that every economy has an institutional dimension, he said that it is the political and constitutional decision-making system that leads to various economic outcomes. Also, he noted that no economy exists in an institutional vacuum, and that an economic crisis has an institutional aspect as well.

Constitutional Council a crucial topic when going for the 21st Amendment to the Constitution: Dr. Dinesha Samararatne

He added: “The current economic crisis has a very strong, very visible, institutional aspect. The current Government made a relatively unaccountable Presidential model under the 20th Amendment to the Constitution.

“From the very beginning, even before they were elected, they were making a point that the framework introduced under the United National Front-led Government, i.e. the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, provided for a very ineffective system of governance because it is a power-sharing model between the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers on the one hand, and the President on the other, and that it is Executive action that is needed,” he said.

“In terms of economic policy, they made a strong argument that the centralisation of the political power of the Executive Presidency was a necessary institutional dimension of implementing their economic vision. Their political model has led to the current economic crisis.”

He further opined that despite what was promised, Sri Lanka has ended up where it is, in the most unprecedented and serious economic doldrums the country has ever been in as an independent nation since 1948.

According to Dr. Welikala, institutions and economic governance are related in three very specific ways. Establishing a framework of fundamental law, minimising agency costs, and maximising public goods, are the three dimensions, he said, across which Sri Lanka has to understand what constitutions do for a well-managed economy or good economic governance.

He explained: “The Constitution is the

The role of Constitutional Amendments in the economic crisis and its resolution

Legal experts highlight crucial aspects of checks and balances to power to be addressed via 21st Amendment

fundamental law of the State, the society, and the market. A market creates wealth in a legitimate way with a functioning State. There cannot be a functioning State without a strong Constitution. The conditional State balances the interests of the public with the wealth-creating market.

“This balancing act is performed through a regime of separation which may include the separation of powers within the State, the separating of the State and the society, the separation of the public and private spheres, and also the separation of the State from the market.”

“What a Constitution provides is a fundamental framework in a functioning polity to provide for a functioning economy,” Dr. Welikala opined.

“The second point is minimising agency costs. Agency costs are an economic concept. Under that concept, the principal is the people, and the agent is the Government. The overall aim is to ensure that the agent acts in the principal’s best interests in the context of two things. The first is that there are competing interests between the agent and the principal. When there is a relationship between two entities, there is always competing interests between the two.

“Without control, the agent will always tend to act on its own, rather than the principal’s interests. Dealing with that is one aspect of minimising agency costs. When it comes to the second point, in this particular relationship between the agent and the principal, or the Government and the people, there is an asymmetry of information between the two. The agent, i.e. the Government, usually has far more information to pursue its own economic interests than what is available to the principal.

“To ameliorate this asymmetry of information in the business of economic decision making is one of the tasks of a Constitution in relation to the economy. The central premise of a Constitution in a democracy is that the Government acts for and on behalf of the people rather than itself, or for those who control the Government at the time.”

In regard to maximising public goods, he noted the importance of efficient institutions that deliver transparent and accountable decision making, and added that it is a major public good that a well-defined Constitution ought to be delivering for good economic management. He noted that the key point here is that the lower the agency costs of the constitutional system, the higher its propensity to produce public goods like efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

A Constitutional Council

Meanwhile, Dr. Samararatne spoke of the importance of a Constitutional Council (CC), and how the 21st Amendment to the Constitution should strengthen and re-establish it. She noted that the economic



Dr. Asanga Welikala
Lecturer in Public Law
University of Edinburgh



Dr. Gehan Gunatilleke
Attorney-at-Law
Partner, LexAG



Dr. Dinesha Samararatne
Senior Lecturer in Law
University of Colombo

crisis Sri Lanka is facing is a result of a political crisis that has been latent in the country, and that it is quite literally a man-made crisis, given the low female representation and inclusion in governance.

She noted that as far as reforms to the CC are concerned, there are three institutions that have to be looked at. They are the CC, high offices such as the Attorney General’s (AG) Department, and independent commissions. She also noted the changes that the 19th Amendment to the Constitution made, and how it contributed to the devolution of power.

She added: “The proposal by the main Parliamentary Opposition, the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), is more in line with best practices in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. The CC does two things – approving names proposed for high offices, and recommending names for appointments to independent commissions.”

During her presentation, she further highlighted some of these appointments and offices, including of the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court (SC) Judges, the Court of Appeal President and the Court of Appeal Judges, the Judicial Service Commission, the AG, the Auditor General, the Inspector General of Police, the Ombudsman, and the Secretary General of Parliament.

She further said that the SJB’s proposal has recommended that the posts of Central Bank of Sri Lanka Governor and Monetary Board Members be considered high offices that should come under the CC. She also noted that including the said two groups reflects best practices.

She added: “The Audit Service and National Procurement Commissions were introduced as new entities under the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. The SJB’s proposals seek to also include the Right to Information Commission and the Colombo Port City Economic Commission in the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, which were not included in proposals

Constitution has a direct connection to economy: Dr. Asanga Welikala

submitted by the independent groups.

“When the CC was introduced under the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, we had a semi-Presidential system. Under the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, we had a Prime Ministerial Presidential system, and that was because the Premier could not be removed by the President. The composition of the CC was weighted towards Parliament, and it was very much about bringing Executive powers back to Parliament.”

What is more, she added that the SJB proposal seeks to restore Parliamentary democracy, and that in this situation, the CC will act as a counterpoint to the powers that will be exercised by Parliament.

Speaking of the necessity of having a CC, she said: “When we have a CC either to approve names or to make recommendations, we are trying to avoid a situation where appointments are made on a partisan basis to public offices, because public powers should be exercised according to the stipulations of the Constitutional mandate, and for the public’s benefit. It also helps to restore and preserve the independence of the Judiciary and other significant offices such as the Auditor General and the AG.

“In addition, it also helps ensure that expertise is brought into complement the work of the Parliament, the Executive, and the Judiciary. Fourthly, there has been what can be described as state capture in Sri Lanka. Having a CC will help to address its current manifestation and can also help to prevent state capture in the future.”

According to Dr. Samararatne, state capture can be explained as a state of affairs in which the captors have altered public functions at a scale and at a duration that prevents public institutions from acting in the public interest. It, she added, benefits the captor, and neutralises internal and external checks.

21st Amendment to the Constitution

Meanwhile, Dr. Gunatilleke talked about several necessary changes in the proposed 21st Amendment to the Constitution.

He added: “It is very clear that the people are drawing a connection between their economic conditions and the prevalence of corruption. Economic injustice has been connected to the very ability of the leaders to make decisions without checks, and to their powers.

“The idea of constitutional reform is the next logical step. It is not just about replacing the current leadership with other leaders. We have to make sure that no leader in the future ever has that ability to take us to this crisis point again. Abolition of the Executive Presidency is where to start the system change. In addition to that, there are other features of the 21st Amendment to the Constitution proposal.

“There is palpable public frustration over the tendency of MPs to cross over, particularly during crucial junctures, such as the discussions on the 18th Amendment to the Consultation and the 20th Amendment to the Constitution. This is applicable when a MP violates the trust kept in them by the voters. When it comes to the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, there is no prohibition of defection altogether, and it is going to be a very difficult piece of reform to get through amidst various political coalitions and actors.

“When it comes to the 21st Amendment to the Constitution proposal, what it does is disincentivise defection in a notable way. First of all, a MP who defects from the original party would not be able to hold a Ministerial position for the remainder of the term. That is one aspect that gives the parties greater space. To institute dispensary action and eventually expel MPs through the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, there is SC jurisdiction to review the expulsion of a MP, which is sort of limited to questions on merits rather than on disciplinary procedure, because in the past, many expulsions have been deemed unlawful by the SC purely on procedural grounds, which weaken the parties’ ability to expel someone due to defection.

“Another feature is minimising the number of Cabinet Ministers to 25, while also having a limit to non-Cabinet Ministers, such as State Ministers. I think that the public has been extremely frustrated about peculiar and illogical ways in which Ministerial portfolios are formed. Reforming this has been a long standing demand.

21st Amendment to the Constitution should look into minimising number of Ministers, and holding politicians accountable regarding election promises: Dr. Gehan Gunatilleke

“There is another serious problem in terms of how leaders in power almost never fulfill their election promises. The people can only hold leaders to account for reneging on their manifestos at an election. Between elections, leaders are simply not required to answer to the people and the promises they make. This is complete impunity in terms of breaking promises given by politicians.”

Dr. Gunatilleke noted that these issues need to be addressed through the 21st Amendment to the Constitution.

After disputes, uncertainty and various proposals, the Government has expressed its willingness to accept a 21st Amendment to the Constitution, and if it is implemented, Sri Lanka will soon see a new Constitution.

However, as the experts who expressed their opinion during the discussion said, the 21st Amendment to the Constitution should address the issues in the existing Constitution, and should prevent future leaders from putting the country in difficult situations such as the prevailing economic crisis.

Contd. from page 4

IMF...

From a longer and wider perspective, the question arises: Was the strategic island “pumped and dumped” by the Washington Consensus, which upgraded it to a lower MIC in 1997, and then an upper MIC in 2019, thus making it ineligible for low-interest development aid, which compelled borrowing on capital markets – like other countries that are placed in the MIC trap – leading now to default?

Under most metrics, Sri Lanka should not have been downgraded to the point of default by rating agencies like Moody’s and Fitch. The downgrades were principally due to the \$ 7 billion payments due to US-based

bond traders like Goldman Sachs, BlackRock, and Vanguard, especially since there is a distinction between illiquidity and insolvency.

While China has often been identified as the source of Sri Lanka’s debt trap, it is US-based ISB traders, whose names are kept secret, that are mainly responsible for the default at this time.

The colour coding in Figure 1 may be misleading, since it is the green-coded ISBs and other financial markets that are the cause of Sri Lanka’s debt default at this time. Sri Lanka’s bilateral and multilateral donors (coded in red in the chart) have indicated willingness to delay debt payments that are due, and donated food, fuel and medicine to the cash-strapped island.

While the names and proportions

of the national debt owned by various bilateral donors and multilateral agencies, such as the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, Japan, China, and India, were known, the names of the US and EU-based ISBs that own over 55% of the island’s debt, and which are part of the shadowy international financial system where black money is parked in offshore accounts, who are primarily responsible for the “debt trap”, are never disclosed.

While ISBs are the root cause of Sri Lanka’s default at this time, this appears to be a well-kept secret due to the “Chinese debt trap” propaganda narrative, and local economists and think-tanks funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and EU grants.

In the final analysis, downgrades by rating agencies are based on various and subjective considerations of

“confidence” in the ability of a county to sustain debt, as stated by Dr. Nishan de Mel of Verite Research.

“When the IMF determines that a country’s debt is not sustainable, the country needs to take steps to restore debt sustainability prior to IMF lending,” IMF Country Director Masahiro Nozaki said recently in a statement regarding Sri Lanka.

Arguably, under most metrics, Sri Lanka should not have been downgraded to the point of default by rating agencies like Moody’s and Fitch at this time. The downgrades were principally due to the \$ 7 billion payments due to US-based bond traders like Goldman Sachs, BlackRock, and Vanguard.

Rating agencies and sovereign bond traders work in concert with the Washington Consensus and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Paris Club of Western aid donors, and do not recognise the difference between illiquidity and insolvency. It is increasingly evident that the island/s debt crisis has many external dimensions and is not entirely internally driven.

At this time, asset managers BlackRock Inc. and Ashmore Group PLC are said to be among the creditors organising in a group ahead of IMF talks, and have hired the law firm White & Case for advice. Ayres Investment Management LLP, Decision Boundaries LLC, and Perella Weinberg LP are among the firms seeking to provide financial advice to Sri Lanka’s creditors, sources said, as the country heads towards a revamp of its \$ 12 billion of external debt. Recent filings show major asset managers such as Fidelity, T. Rowe Price, and Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America also hold some of the

country’s outstanding USD bonds. The debt numbers slide around as new actors come on the scene, since initially, the debt for 2022 was \$ 7 billion and \$ 12 billion!

Indeed, from a different perspective, this island at the centre of the Indian Ocean’s sea lanes of communication (SLOC), may suffer from a “paradox of plenty” and a form of geostrategic “resource curse”, since the IMF does not differentiate between illiquidity and insolvency.

Part 2 of this article will be published in The Morning tomorrow.

(The writer is a social, medical, and economic anthropologist)

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

{ INSIGHT/PICTORIAL }

High rate of childhood leprosy and transmission in A'pura: Study

● Researchers recommend contact tracing and training medical officers



BY RUWAN LAKNATH JAYAKODY

There is a high rate of childhood leprosy and transmission seen in Anuradhapura while more than one fourth of a family member has a contact history showing that leprosy is still spreading, a local study found. Therefore, leprosy contacts should be traced in order to reduce further incidence while contact management should be an essential component of leprosy control along with the training of medical officers on the diagnosis and management of leprosy.

These findings and recommendations were made by H. Weerakoon and P. Bandara (attached to the Provincial Director of Health Services Office, Anuradhapura, North Central Province), H. Banduwardana and J. Warnasekara (attached to the Rajarata University's Medicine and Allied Sciences Faculty's Community Medicine Department), R. Ranawaka (attached to the Kalutara General Hospital), and U.S. Kumara and N. Ariyaratna (attached to the Regional Director of Health Services Office, Anuradhapura) in a research article on the "Socio demographic factors, treatment seeking behaviours, and common clinical presentations of leprosy patients in Anuradhapura"

which was published in the *Anuradhapura Medical Journal* 16 (1) in March, 2022.

Leprosy, Weerakoon et al. explain, is a chronic, minimally contagious infection of the skin, nerves, and mucosa of the respiratory tract caused by the *Mycobacterium leprae* infection. According to the WHO recommendation, as mentioned in I.P. Kahawita and G.M.P. Sirimanna's "Is leprosy being diagnosed efficiently at the primary healthcare level?", Sri Lanka reached the elimination level in the late 1990s while in 2001, the responsibility of diagnosing and managing patients with leprosy was handed over to medical officers of health (MOH) throughout the country.

The main associated factors for leprosy are living in close contact with patients who have untreated, active, multibacillary (MB) leprosy. The Anti-Leprosy Campaign in 2015 ("Central Leprosy Register") reported 163 patients (8.24%) and that there was more than one leprosy patient in a family. N.P. Madarasingha and J.K. Senaviratne's "A study of household contacts of children with leprosy" reported in 2011 that 33% of the index cases had positive contact within their household. The Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine is, as emphasised in C.S. Merle, S.S. Cunha, and L.C. Rodrigues's "BCG vaccination and leprosy protection: Review of current evidence and the status of BCG in

leprosy control" and the WHO's "Global strategy for further reducing the leprosy burden and sustaining leprosy control activities: Plan period: 2006-2010", known to have some protective effects against leprosy. The annual incidence of leprosy in Anuradhapura is around 100 patients, and the prevalence is more than one per population of 10,000, per the ministry's Epidemiology Unit. Yet, Weerakoon et al. continue to observe a similar number of leprosy patients attending the dermatology clinic in Anuradhapura.

Therefore, Weerakoon et al. carried out a descriptive cross-sectional study among leprosy patients diagnosed between 13 February 2019 and 12 February 2020, at the dermatology clinic of the Anuradhapura Teaching Hospital. All the clinically diagnosed leprosy patients were subjected to histological confirmation and histologically confirmed patients were included in the study. Each patient was interviewed using questionnaires which were drawn up to obtain data on groups of variables including the epidemiology (sex, age, occupation, monthly income, and the habitat), social awareness on leprosy, variables related to associated factors, variables related to the treatment pattern (number of medical office visits before referral to the dermatology clinic and from whom treatment was taken), and variables related to clinical aspects of leprosy patients (symptoms and signs, the duration of clinical features before the commencement of treatment, affected sites, and the number of affected sites).

The study included 66 leprosy patients. The majority (56%) were males, and 50% were between 30-50 years old (the median [the middle number in a sorted, ascending or descending, list of numbers or data set] age was 41 years). This included seven (10.6%) who were less than 14 years old. Most (26%) were housewives, followed by farmers (19%). The Thambuththegama MOH area was commonly affected with leprosy more than other MOH areas (13-19%). More than one third (40%) had a monthly family income of less than Rs. 10,000.

More than two thirds (45-68%) had heard about leprosy before being diagnosed with the disease. Most

(44-67%) knew the causative agent of leprosy as a bacteria, and the majority of them (47-71%) knew the mode of transmission as respiratory droplets. Additionally, 60 (91%) knew that the skin was the most commonly affected organ.

Nearly 18 (27%) had a previous contact history of leprosy with one affected family member.

Half were referred for treatment after being seen by one medical person, and 16% warranted repeated visits. More than half were not timely referred for treatment because of the delay in seeking medical advice, and they were referred after one year of developing clinical features. The majority (49-74%) had less than five affected sites giving rise to paucibacillary (PB) leprosy and 26% of MB leprosy with a small number. Many (47%) presented with hypopigmented skin patches. The majority (51-77%) had sensory impairment over the lesions. A total of 12 (18%) had other diseases, especially non-communicable diseases, and no one had other dermatological conditions or identified nutritional problems.

"Although leprosy control activities were started in the Dutch colonial era, Sri Lanka still reports more than 2,000 leprosy cases per year during the last two decades, including in the Anuradhapura District."

The present study revealed that most of the associated factors are preventable, and that proper health education can minimise the disease burden. Sri Lanka remains an endemic country in terms of leprosy as 95% of the leprosy cases have been detected in 16 endemic countries, including Sri Lanka, per the Epidemiology Unit's "Weekly Epidemiological Report" during a particular period in 2014.

In the study, MB leprosy patients were reduced, and childhood leprosy patients were increased. The new case detection rate of leprosy and new cases among children remain high, indicating, according to A. Selvasekar, J. Geetha, K. Nisa, N. Manimozhi, K. Jesudassan, and P.S.S.S. Rao's "Childhood leprosy in an endemic area", ongoing transmission, with Selvasekar et al. adding that leprosy among children reflects the disease transmission in the community and the efficiency of

the control programmes. The annual leprosy incidence in the study was 0.7 per population of 10,000, and it showed that the new case detection rate has reduced than earlier studies (The Anti Leprosy Campaign's "Quarterly review of leprosy statistics in Sri Lanka"). The study showed male predominance over females. The incidence of childhood leprosy in high endemic areas varies from 10-40%, and the peak incidence was in the age group of 10-14 years (V.N. Sehgal and Joginder's "Leprosy in children: Correlation of clinical histopathological, bacteriological, and immunological parameters" and P.S. Rao, A.B. Karat, V.G. Kaliperumal and S. Karat's "Transmission of leprosy within households"). The study showed a childhood leprosy rate of 10.6%, and it was less than R. Ranawaka and H.S. Weerakoon's "Childhood leprosy: Three years' experience from the Anuradhapura District: A hospital-based study", which showed a childhood leprosy rate of 12.1%. The study sample had satisfactory knowledge about leprosy. Ranawaka and Weerakoon showed a 45.4% contact history. Leprosy transmission within households has been identified in N. Vara's "Profile of new cases of childhood leprosy in a hospital setting" and K. Jesudasan, D. Bradley, P.G. Smith, and M. Christian's "Incidence rates of leprosy among household contacts of 'primary cases'". Good case finding and treatment with multidrug therapy with good coverage of BCG immunization in neonates would lead to a diminution of leprosy transmission and a decline in the incidence of leprosy, Weerakoon et al. elaborated. A total of one fifth of leprosy patients who had no BCG scar in the study may indicate, Weerakoon et al. add, protection from the BCG vaccination.

The MB type, per Selvasekar et al., indicates the high risk of transmission. The less number of MB cases in the instant study, explained Weerakoon et al., showed that the ongoing transmission of leprosy seems to be reduced. A total of 16% warranting repeated consultation by medical officers may be due to, Weerakoon et al. observe, a lack of knowledge among the medical officers. The diagnosis of leprosy has been missed on several occasions. Kahawita and Sirimanna too found that medical officers had missed the diagnosis of leprosy patients on a considerable number of occasions. A similar deficiency of knowledge was observed in M.P. Wijerathna and T. Ostbye's "Knowledge, attitudes, and practices relating to leprosy among public health care providers in Colombo", among public healthcare workers in the Colombo Municipal Council.

THE BONFIRE, TREASON, AND PLOT



Protesters donned in the infamous Guy Fawkes masks entered 'GotaGoGama' carrying a casket symbolising the death of 74 years of 'cursed' governance. The casket was later set on fire, signifying the achievement of what Fawkes and his colleagues failed to accomplish

PHOTOS SAMAN ABESIRIWARDANA AND KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM

'WE WANT GOTTA' AT THE SQUARE



A group of protesters occupied Independence Square on Monday (25) in support of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, amidst islandwide protests demanding his resignation

PHOTOS KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM

'MYNA GO GAMA'



A protest was staged outside the Temple Trees, in an area playfully titled 'Myna-Go-Gama', demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday (26)

PHOTOS KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM

'GOTAGOGAMA' GOES ON



Scenes from Monday night (26) at 'GotaGoGama' on Galle Face Green

PHOTOS SAMAN ABESIRIWARDANA

'CHEMICAL PLEASE!'



A group of farmers staged a protest outside the Fort Railway Station demanding the immediate supply of quality chemical fertilisers

PHOTOS PRADEEP DAMBARAGE

the morning business

ASPI	S&P SL20	Market
6,905.37	2,125.96	Market Closed
-608.48	-229.58	Share Volume
↓ -8.10%	↓ -9.75%	91,784,694
		Turnover
		800,415,132.10

S&P names Sri Lanka 'selective default' country

● Rating agency cuts foreign currency issuer rating to 'SD'



S&P Global Ratings cut Sri Lanka's rating as an issuer of foreign currency debt to "selective default" after the South Asian country missed sovereign bond interest payments, placing the country one notch away from "default", S&P said on Monday (25).

According to the rating agency, an "SD" rating is assigned when S&P Global Ratings believes that the obligor has selectively defaulted on a specific issue or class of obligations, but will continue to meet its payment obligations on other issues or classes of obligations in a timely manner. An obligor's rating is lowered to "D" or "SD" if it is conducting a distressed exchange offer.

The bonds that had missed payments, maturing in 2023 and 2028, were cut to "default" and the overall rating could be further cut to "D" on confirmation of the non-payment after a 30-day grace

period. S&P said it does not expect the Government to make payments during that period.

Sri Lanka's economic meltdown traces its roots to 2019, when President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's Government approved a large tax cut that depleted the Treasury's coffers even more than expected.

The weight of Covid-19 further weighed on revenues, while the cost of imports skyrocketed, and the situation deteriorated to the point of large-scale civil unrest on the streets.

Earlier this month, Sri Lanka suspended its debt service payments and approached the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Over the weekend, the IMF said it held "fruitful technical discussions" with Sri Lanka on its loan request, while the World Bank said it was preparing an emergency aid package.

Contd. on page 8

SL discussing with China on refinancing debt



Sri Lanka has begun discussions with China about refinancing its debt, a Cabinet spokesman said yesterday (26), as Colombo struggles with its worst financial crisis in decades, Reuters reported.

"China has indicated their stance is such because they have lent to many countries around the world... they have suggested that they will refinance the debt," Minister of Mass Media Nalaka Godahewa was quoted as

saying by Reuters, and added that discussions with Beijing were at an early stage.

Sri Lanka's appeal to China for debt restructuring came from President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in January when he met visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Colombo. The request is seen as a move to help Sri Lanka weather a worsening financial crisis. Sri Lanka owes China around \$ 35 billion.

Cabinet approves the 'Dhammika visa', economists sceptical

- Dhammika Perera's new visa for foreign investors gets Cabinet nod
- Prof. Sirimal says no foreigners want to stay in SL amidst shortages
- Prof. Colombage says 'nuts-and-bolts' solutions inadequate
- Dr. Senarath warns of money laundering risks

BY SHENAL FERNANDO



Dhammika Perera

Economists question the effectiveness of the Government's new long-term residence visa issuance methodology for foreign investors aimed at addressing Sri Lanka's foreign exchange liquidity crisis, pointing out that Sri Lanka's current economic crisis requires the development of the country's foreign exchange earning potential through export development instead.

The Cabinet of Ministers had on 25 April 2022 granted approval for the revised visa issuance methodology, proposed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa as Minister of Defense, for long-term residence visas to implement the "Golden Paradise visa programme" proposed by Vallibel One Chairman and Hayleys Co-Chairman Dhammika Perera. Speaking to *The Morning Business* yesterday (26), University of Colombo Department of Economics Senior Professor Sirimal Abeyratne stated that when the overall economic engine of the country has broken down, these measures amount to replacing a few nuts and bolts, which will have no effect. The current economic crisis of

the country requires an overall repair and restoration.

"The fundamental cause of the current economic crisis is the weak foreign exchange earnings. In order to address this we must achieve export growth. The reason for the weak growth in exports is the lack of investment in the export sector. Investors are hesitant to invest in the country due to a whole set of problems. Without addressing these issues, when we try to fix minor issues such as this (long-term residence visa issuance), we might derive some short-term benefits but that doesn't address the current economic crisis in the country," he opined. He further pointed that Sri Lanka already has already

implemented a similar residential visa mechanism to attract foreigners to bring money to the country under the name "My Dream Home Visa Programme", under which senior foreign nationals are granted a renewable residential visa for two years, provided they deposit \$ 15,000 in a fixed deposit account in any approved bank in Sri Lanka.

Prof. Abeyratne questioned the performance of the aforesaid visa programme, and claimed that this new long-term residence visa issuance will suffer a similar fate, as no foreigner would want to stay in Sri Lanka due to the prevailing energy crunch and commodity shortage.

Similar sentiments were expressed by University of Colombo Faculty of Arts Department of Economics Senior Lecturer Dr. Shanuka Senarath, who, speaking to *The Morning Business* yesterday, questioned why a foreigner would want to live in Sri Lanka, considering the current situation in the country.

Contd. on page 8

Stock exchange survives for five minutes yesterday

- Improvement from Monday's three-minute performance
- ASPI plummets to 12-month low

The Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) managed to survive for an additional two minutes yesterday, compared to its previous day's trading time of three minutes, amidst continuing collapse of the market. The downfall of the CSE continued yesterday as the All Share Price Index (ASPI) fell to a twelve-month low of 6,905.37 points, the lowest level recorded since 19 March 2021.

The regular trading session in the market yesterday was limited to around five minutes, as all three tiers of the CSE circuit breaker structure were tripped, and the market was subsequently

closed for the day at 11.35 a.m., when the S&P SL20 fell by over 10%.

Within the first minute of the market opening at 10.30 a.m., trading on the CSE was halted for five minutes until 10.36 a.m., as the first tier of the CSE circuit breaker was tripped when the S&P SL20 index dropped by over 5% from its previous close. Following this, the newly introduced CSE Auction Session was conducted for 25 minutes from 10.36 a.m. to 11.01 a.m.

Thereafter, the regular trading session commenced once again at 11.01 a.m. Subsequently, trading was

once again halted for five minutes at 11.02 a.m. when the S&P SL20 index fell by 7.5% from its previous close, and the CSE Auction Session was conducted for 25 minutes from 11.07 a.m. to 11.32 a.m.

However, the third tier of the CSE circuit breaker was subsequently tripped within three minutes of the resumption of regular trading, as the S&P SL20 index dropped by over 10% from its previous close. Consequently, trading in the market was halted at 11.35 a.m. and was closed for the rest of the day in terms of the SEC Directive dated 30 April 2020.

Contd. on page 8

Parliamentarians to discuss how to overcome SL's economic crisis

A discussion organised by the Parliamentary Committee on Public Finance on "How to overcome the prevailing economic crisis in Sri Lanka" is to be held today (27). Accordingly, the discussion has been scheduled at 2.30 p.m. in committee room No. 1.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific Chief Economic Advisor Dr. Swarnim Wagle, who has experience as an international development professional for more than 20 years, will be Chief Guest



at this discussion. He has also been a senior economist at the World Bank (WB) and UNDP offices in Hanoi, Colombo, and New York.



Maliban supports people's movement for economic stability

Maliban Group Sri Lanka extended its support to the peaceful and respectful social movement ongoing in the country, and pushed for a merit-based political and social system to regain growth momentum and economic stability.

Issuing a statement, the company said: "At this unprecedented and turbulent period in the history of our nation, as a truly Sri Lankan enterprise that evolved with inspiring goodness for over seven decades, our heartfelt thoughts and prayers are with fellow Sri Lankan consumers and stakeholders who are experiencing untold hardships due to unsustainable macro-

economic conditions."

Further, Maliban Group stated that it admired the deep resilience and cultured restraint of the Sri Lankan public and notably the aspiring youth, as the company stands in unison with their noble aspirations to guide Sri Lanka to regain the country's "lost glory and place of pride" built on sound transparent policies, good governance, and apolitical approach based on mutual respect among all stakeholders.

It read that as a nation which has overcome a multitude of trials and tribulations in the past, the group is confident of overcoming this period of economic uncertainty.

Elon Musk buys Twitter for \$ 44 bn

The board of Twitter has agreed to a \$ 44 billion takeover offer from billionaire Elon Musk.

Musk, who made the shock bid less than two weeks ago, said Twitter had "tremendous potential" that he would unlock. He also called for a series of changes from relaxing its content

restrictions to eradicating fake accounts.

The firm initially rebuffed Musk's bid, but it will now ask shareholders to vote to approve the deal.

Musk is the world's richest person, according to *Forbes*, with an estimated net worth of \$ 273.6 billion, mostly due to his

shareholding in electric vehicle maker Tesla, which he runs. He also leads the aerospace firm SpaceX.

News of the takeover has been cheered by the right in the US, although Trump yesterday (26) told Fox News he had no plans to re-join the platform.

(BBC)

{ NEWS }

Asia growth slows on commodities, Covid-19, and rising interest rates

BY ANNE-MARIE GULDE-WOLF, SANJAYA PANTH, AND SHANAKA J. PEIRIS

Economic growth in Asia and the Pacific is poised to slow more than previously estimated this year amid headwinds from the war in Ukraine, a resurgent pandemic, and tightening global financial conditions.

Regional gross domestic product (GDP) will expand by 4.9%, 0.5 percentage points less than we forecast in January and slower than last year's 6.5% growth rate, according to our latest projections. We also estimate that inflation will rise faster in many countries, though from relatively low levels. Slower growth and rising prices, coupled with the challenges of war, infection, and tightening financial conditions will exacerbate the difficult policy trade-off between supporting recovery and containing inflation and debt.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine will pose the biggest challenge for economic growth, with the region's advanced economies hurt most by reduced demand from Europe and emerging markets feeling the effects of higher global commodity prices, according to our latest projections.

Our latest World Economic Outlook lowered the 2022 global growth estimate by 0.8% to 3.6%. It reflects a 1.1% point cut for the euro area, now seen expanding 2.8%. Because Asia's advanced economies have strong ties with Europe, the continent's weaker growth will weigh on external demand and ultimately growth for major regional trade partners like Japan and Korea.

Most of Asia's emerging and developing economies are net importers of oil, gas, and metals, making them particularly vulnerable to rising global

Economic forecasts: Asia and the Pacific
(real GDP growth, percent)

	2021	2022	2023
Asia	6.5	4.9	5.1
Advanced Asian economies	7.6	2.7	2.7
Australia	4.7	4.2	2.5
New Zealand	5.6	2.7	2.6
Japan	1.6	2.4	2.3
Hong Kong SAR	6.4	0.5	4.9
Korea	4.0	2.5	2.9
Taiwan Province of China	6.3	3.2	2.9
Singapore	7.6	4.0	2.9
Asian emerging market and developing economies	7.3	5.4	5.6
Bangladesh	5.0	6.4	6.7
Brunei Darussalam	-0.7	5.8	2.6
Cambodia	2.2	5.1	5.9
China	8.1	4.4	5.1
India	8.9	8.2	6.9
Indonesia	3.7	5.4	6.0
Lao P.D.R.	2.1	3.2	3.5
Malaysia	3.1	5.6	5.5
Myanmar	-17.9	1.6	3.0
Mongolia	1.4	2.0	7.0
Nepal	2.7	4.1	6.1
Philippines	5.6	6.5	6.3
Sri Lanka	3.6	2.6	2.7
Thailand	1.6	3.3	4.3
Vietnam	2.6	6.0	7.2
Pacific island countries and other small states	4.2	4.7	5.4

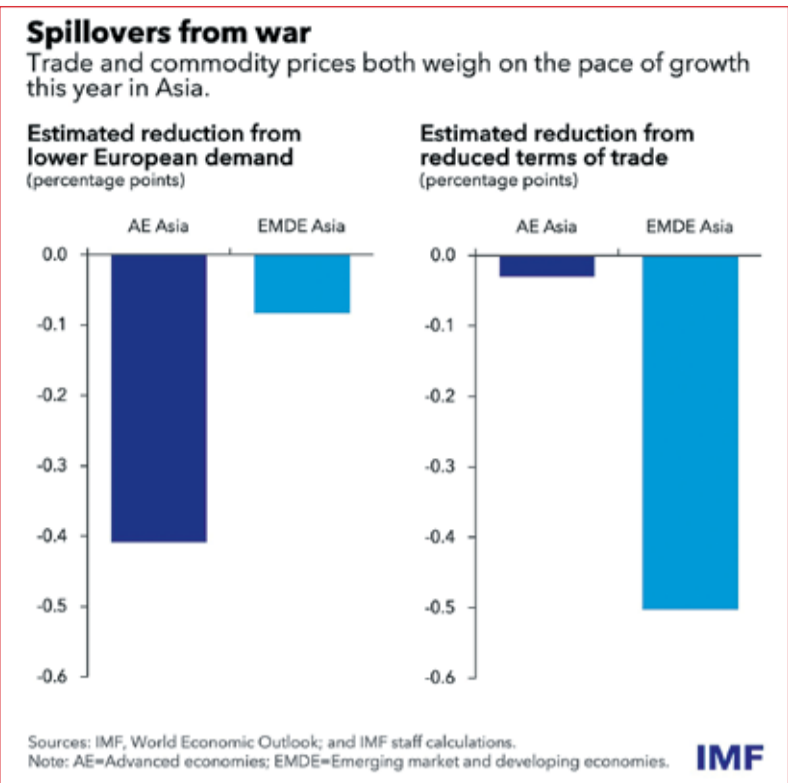
Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Database, April 2022. IMF

commodity prices. That means that a deterioration in their terms of trade – a measure of prices for a country's exports relative to its imports – will likely reduce growth, weaken currencies, and worsen current-account balances. High food and fuel costs also add to inflation pressures, especially in lower-income countries where they make up a large share of consumer spending.

Coronavirus infections in most of Asia have retreated from their peaks during the rapid spread of the omicron variant, with mobility indicators approaching pre-pandemic levels. China is the most notable exception to this, as lockdowns in Shanghai and elsewhere idle a wide range

of activity and threaten to cause further disruptions to regional and global supply chains. These lockdowns are one reason that we project growth in China to slow to 4.4% this year, which will affect Asia's emerging economies through reduced trade and demand.

Tightening and inflation
Tightening global financial conditions will weigh on economic growth. Government bond yields in major Asian economies have begun rising as the Federal Reserve starts to lift US interest rates. Our forecasts are predicated on the expectation that continued tightening abroad and rising inflation at home will lead many



Asian central banks to hike rates themselves, placing a drag on investment. Risks to the economic outlook include an intensification of the aforementioned three main headwinds.

An escalation of the war in Ukraine would further increase food and energy prices, adding to stresses for vulnerable households and potentially causing social unrest to spread to more countries.

A tightening of US monetary policy that is materially faster or larger than currently expected by markets – or both – would have large spillovers to Asia. If disruptive capital outflows occur as a result, central banks in affected countries could respond through the judicious use of all their policy levers in an integrated fashion. The downside risk of capital outflows is mitigated in countries that have built up strong buffers, but is amplified where

high debt conspires with other vulnerabilities.

Finally, a greater slowdown in China's economy due to broader virus lockdowns or other risk factors such as the continued weakness in the real estate sector, would also have large implications for the region, given trade linkages within Asia.

More broadly, a potential fragmentation of supply chains and added geopolitical tensions will remain risks for the longer term for a region that has flourished in recent decades from rising wealth and other economic gains from globalisation.

Strong responses needed
Addressing pressures on growth and managing the difficult short-term trade-offs requires strong and co-ordinated policy responses that are tailored to country-specific circumstances. Authorities in the region should:

Protect the most vulnerable from rising fuel and food costs. Social unrest has already flared where these pressures exacerbate vulnerabilities, such as in Sri Lanka. Promising regional examples of targeted and temporary protections include a Philippine cash-transfer programme and New Zealand's reduction in public transport fares

Anchor medium-term fiscal policy frameworks to ensure debt sustainability. With output gaps still large in many countries, the withdrawal of fiscal stimulus must be well calibrated to support the pandemic recovery. Some countries with the space to do so, including China and Japan, responded to recent headwinds with fiscal measures to support recovery this year. But countries most vulnerable to debt distress will need consolidation sooner, and some may benefit from debt treatment under the Common Framework

Tighten monetary policy where inflation is rising faster, such as Singapore, or above central-bank targets, as in Korea. Macroeprudential policies should limit financial stability risks amid high household debt levels, including to address significant increases in housing prices in some countries

Enact economic reforms to boost long-term growth. This is particularly important in Asia's emerging economies because they may see the most scarring from the pandemic. Overhauls are needed in several areas to boost productivity, such as non-tariff barriers and product and labour markets. Education reforms are essential to address the long-term effects of school closures, which were substantial in South Asia and low-income and developing countries
(This was first published on the IMF Blog on 26 April 2022)

Contd. from page 7

Cabinet...

He also claimed that this new initiative could lead to another wave of money laundering and claimed that "our politicians who have black money abroad will pay dummy foreigners to bring it to Sri Lanka to start a business, and then sell it to the person who funded it".

Accordingly, in terms of the new methodology for the issuance of long-term visas, any foreigner or director of a foreign company, their spouses, and their dependents shall be eligible for the issuance of a long-term residence visa for a period of 5-10 years if they invest at least \$ 75,000 or more in condominium properties within Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, for the implementation of the "Golden Paradise visa programme", the new visa issuance methodology permitted the issuance of a 10-year resident visa for foreigners who deposit at least \$ 100,000 in a local commercial bank recognised by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

Perera had presented the proposal to President Rajapaksa as a viable initiative to help the country overcome the current foreign exchange crisis.

This proposal was submitted by Perera at the meeting held on 21 February 2022, which was convened by the Government and chaired by the President to call on private sector leaders to invest in local industries and to lend a hand in the nation-building process. This proposal by Perera was reportedly approved by the President, who has subsequently informed the relevant authorities to take the necessary steps for its implementation.

S&P names...

Sri Lanka has about \$ 14 billion in outstanding foreign

bonds, plus \$ 26 billion in local currency debt, according to Refinitiv data.

"The negative outlook on our 'CCC-' long-term local currency sovereign rating on Sri Lanka reflects the high risk that the Government could restructure its local currency debt amid the country's economic, external, and fiscal pressures," S&P said in a statement.

The Sri Lankan stock market was shut half an hour into trading on Monday, after shares tumbled nearly 10% in their first session since the Central Bank doubled its interest rates two weeks ago to tame inflation.

Stock exchange...

After market close, the S&P SL20 index was adjusted to show only a decrease of 9.75% from the previous day's close, down 229.58 points to 2,125.96 points. Similarly, the ASPI ended the day down 608.48 points (a drop of 8.1%) from the previous day's close, and reached 6,905.37 points, which is the second-largest decrease recorded in the history of the CSE. Due to the limited trading time, turnover was limited to Rs. 800.4 million, with around 91.7 million shares traded.

In order to curb the collapse of the market, the CSE amended the new Auction Session introduced in the Automated Trading System (ATS) prior to moving to the Regular Trading Session once the market is halted due to the application of circuit breakers. Accordingly, the CSE, by circular No.14-04-2022, announced yesterday with effect from 26 April that the order book will not be shown during the Auction Session.

CBL joins 'Manudam Mehewara' by Dialog, MAS, and Hemas

The CBL Group recently joined forces with the "Manudam Mehewara" programme initiated by Dialog Axiata PLC, MAS Holdings, Hemas Holdings PLC, Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, and PwC Sri Lanka, in a mission to provide emergency relief to the most vulnerable families and communities in the country impacted by the ongoing economic crisis.

Joining hands with like-minded partners including its execution partner Sarvodaya and accountability partner PwC Sri Lanka, the Manudam Mehewara initiative funded by Dialog, MAS, Hemas and CBL aims to provide emergency relief to more than 100,000 adversely affected families, especially communities in deep poverty, across the country. Emergency relief is currently being distributed across all 25 districts, and the Manudam Mehewara programme will conduct its relief efforts for 60-90 days, until a sustainable benefit transfer system is established in the country



From left: CBL Food Cluster Manager – Senior Promotions and Activations Sisira Gunawardane, CBL Group Senior Manager – Corporate Communication and Sustainability Ishara Wickramasinghe, CBL Food Cluster General Manager – Marketing Jayanga Perera, CBL Group Managing Director Sheamalee Wickramasingha, Dialog Axiata PLC Group Chief Executive Officer Supun Weerasinghe, Dialog Enterprise Group Chief Officer Navin Pieris, and Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement Executive Director Chaminda Rajakaruna

through an effective economic recovery plan.

Speaking on the occasion, CBL Group Managing Director Sheamalee Wickramasingha stated: "CBL is built on our four core values of caring, quality, innovation, and integrity and the value of caring has a special place at CBL. We are happy to partner in this call of action and thank Dialog for inviting us to be a part of this timely endeavour. As responsible corporates, we have a duty to

proactively engage in ways that can positively impact communities, and I hope that we can help many Sri Lankans in need at this time. As a country, we need a new vision, one of prosperity for all, and CBL is happy to partner with this humanitarian effort to help this vision take a step forward."

Speaking on the new partner announcement, Dialog Axiata PLC's Dialog Enterprise Group Chief Officer Navin Pieris stated: "On behalf of Dialog,

Addressing the gathering, Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka Executive Director Chaminda Rajakaruna shared: "On behalf of Sarvodaya, I would like to express my gratitude and admiration of Dialog, MAS, Hemas and CBL who have joined together in a noble cause. As an organisation built on providing humanitarian services, Sarvodaya has journeyed across the island and witnessed first-hand the strife faced by low-income families who cannot find the means of providing daily meals for their children, yet this is the first time we are witnessing middle-income families who are uncertain about where their next meal comes from. Hunger is universal and we are honoured to join hands with these responsible corporates in this national-level mission of bringing a smile to the faces of all Sri Lankans."

Manudam Mehewara invites all corporates to join this effort and help expand the emergency relief distribution operations.

Sarrah Sammoon appointed to Southeast Asian Leadership Academy Board



Sarrah Sammoon

Sarrah Sammoon has been recently appointed to Southeast Asian Leadership Academy Board (SEALA).

SEALA is an Asian platform for sharing practical knowledge, leadership tools, mentorship network support and global networks – making themselves fully available to a new generation of leaders. In a comparison of the coaching industry in South Asia, Forbes declared SEALA a clear winner in the field. The single most valuable piece of SEALA is the network they've built. SEALA has GMs of

to SEALA. It has a rigorous approval process.

SIBF (Society of International Business Fellows) is the parent organisation of SEALA. Formed in the US by a group of CEOs, corporate executives and leading entrepreneurs about 40 years ago to bridge the gap between regions. They were profoundly tired of the usual off-the-shelf training and wanted to share with up-and-coming business and civil society leaders in all parts of the world the practical knowledge and leadership tools that they had experienced and

used with success in their own professional lives. CELA (Central Eurasia Leadership Academy) was inaugurated in 2002. MELA was launched in 2010. Soon to enter its 10th year, SEALA is entering a fresh and exciting period. Other new board members are Nini Daing (Malaysia), Marcellinus Jerry Winata (Indonesia) and Harley Trung (Vietnam). The board also includes Anand Sharma (Founder of SEALA, USA), Anun Dhawan (Chairperson of SEALA, India), Arj Wignaraja (Past Chair, Sri Lanka), Ashok Mittal (India), Bill Starnes

(Past Chair SIBF, and current Head of Faculty, USA), and Saad Khan (Pakistan).

Sarrah Sammoon has over 30 years of entrepreneurial experience in global mobility, immigration, residence and citizenship by investment, cutting red tape allowing freedom of movement for businesses and HNWI. She is the Founder CEO of Magellan Champlain, Sri Lanka's pioneer global mobility solutions firm and Director of Sapphire Capital Group which operates in gemstones, jewellery and hospitality.

brunch

Sharon Osbourne's 'horrendous' facelift left her looking like 'Cyclops'

Sharon Osbourne wasn't pleased with the results of her most recent plastic surgery procedure. "I had a full facelift done in October and I looked like one of those mummies that they wrap (with bandages)," the 69-year-old TV personality told *The Sunday Times* recently. "It hurt like hell. You have no idea." The procedure took five-and-a-half hours, and Osbourne felt she looked "horrendous" afterward. "(To the surgeon) I'm, like, 'You've got to be joking'. One eye was different to the other. I looked like a Cyclops. I'm, like, 'All I need is a hunchback,'" she recalled. She wasn't the only one displeased with the results. Her husband, Ozzy Osbourne, told her: "I don't care how much it costs, we'll get it redone."



(Page Six)

BY VENESSA ANTHONY

"The protest was peaceful, so why are you killing us?" read a poster board held by a mother, cradling her baby in her other arm, while silently calling for justice for the innocent that were killed by the unlawful use of force exercised by our law enforcement officials.

Independence Square saw a peaceful protest in the form of a candlelight vigil on Monday (25), to voice out against police brutality in Sri Lanka. Since the day the people's revolution was sparked in Mirihana, there were several claims and even videos circulating on social media of policemen entering houses and torturing citizens, throwing stones at protesters, setting up spikes on a deceptively covered barricade, and, perhaps most notably, using live bullets to ward off protesters, which resulted in the murder of a citizen in Rambukkana who, according to his daughter, had simply gone out to acquire fuel. These are just a few cases that emerged in the recent past, but over the years, police brutality has been severe – especially towards minorities in Sri Lanka. The verbal and physical abuse by the very same men who have sworn their lives to protect us must end now – this was the call sounded by those participating in Monday's event.

On the rainy evening of the vigil, citizens were seen writing slogans on boards – all speaking of the injustice caused by our law enforcement and calling to stop the killing of the innocent – and passing out candles to what seemed like a crowd of about 50 individuals. While this was going on, a training instructor, conducting his classes at Independence Square, approached the protesters to warn them of a handful of people staging a pro-Government protest at the pavilion nearby. Looks of disbelief, anger, and confusion passed around the protesters, now discussing how to approach this situation without escalating or creating unnecessary tension. It was then unanimously decided that they would carry on with their silent vigil against police brutality, and up walked the group towards the pavilion.

While they were taking places and lighting candles, they were swarmed by the few pro-Government supporters, who claimed to have obtained a permit to camp out on the Independence Square pavilion, and have been there for three days now. "You can't protest here. We have permission, so you all can leave and take this somewhere else," said one lady, who called herself the organiser of the pro-Government protest, adding that they too have children, and want what's best for our slowly collapsing country.

When the participants of the vigil

PHOTO KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM



'PROTEST WAS PEACEFUL, SO WHY KILL US?'

Candlelight vigil at Independence Square calls for end to police brutality

asked them to produce their permit or the letter they claimed to have, several attempts were made to talk through and insist that the participants leave. A permit was not produced, and so everyone attending the candlelight vigil moved towards the right side of the pavilion, which faces the main road. Once the pro-Government protesters saw that instead of leaving the premises, which they claimed to have rented, the group had moved towards an area with more visibility, verbal threats arose against the protesters, which resulted in Police intervention.

Attorney-at-Law Antoinette George, who attended the vigil, noted the irony of the situation.

"We were there to protest against police brutality, and in the end, we carried on our protest peacefully and silently with the Police preventing any more uncalled for disturbances," she noted.

We also asked her to shed some light on the legalities of protesting at Independence Square, in case anyone else wanting to organise one was met with a similar obstruction.

"Sri Lankan citizens are able to exercise their fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of Sri Lanka under Article 14, such as freedom of speech and freedom of peaceful assembly, especially in a public place such as Independence Square, and so it cannot be reserved for any one group and be restricted to another. It was absolutely ridiculous that these Pro-

Rajapaksa protestors attempted to oust us from this area," she shared, in regard to the situation.

Speaking about the protest itself, she stated that she attended the candlelight vigil to commemorate those killed by police brutality.

"The focus was not only on the recent incidents of police brutality, but also of how state terrorism had directed the Police and the armed forces to act beyond their powers against the citizens of this country for decades, especially in the North and East."

Activist Marisa de Silva, another citizen at the protest, highlighted that one aspect that contrasts starkly, and has been a case – particularly in the South – that we can't seem to shake off, especially during the ongoing protests, is an appeal to the forces to stand with the people, and protect the citizens of this country.

"There is an inherent problem in this kind of appeal, not because I'm saying every individual in the forces is inhumane, but because you cannot look at them in isolation," she stressed, adding that we cannot look at individual police officers without taking into consideration the Police's behaviour throughout history and separate them from their actions against minorities.

"We must understand that the forces are arms of the State; they will protect the State, whether or not they personally believe in what we are saying," she shared, adding that many are under the impression

that the people in the forces can refuse to follow orders under personal capacity, but questioned how we can ask that of them.

"The forces are their bread and butter. If they were to refuse to follow orders, they'd lose their jobs. It makes no sense to appeal to the forces to 'come onto our side'," she elaborated.

She observed that during the recent protest, people – especially those from the South – could be seen head on with police officers, saying "you are one of us, come to our side", and questioned if people in the North, who have been continuously harassed, abused, and tortured by our forces, would ever be considered "one of us". She thus highlighted that this is an incredibly privileged and nationalistic mindset, and urged the public to look, if not at the Tamils and minorities, at the Sinhalese that are tortured in police stations – sometimes even without valid reasons.

"Torture is systematic in the Police force in Sri Lanka; it is part and parcel of their life. The majority of the victims could potentially have been Sinhalese, so how are the Sinhalese so blind to the Police being arms of the State?"

She strongly emphasised that demonising members of the forces is not the way to go, and that claiming them to be heartless and inhumane is pointless, as it is the system that needs to change. "It is the State, which gives them orders, that needs to change," she noted.

She brought to light how long

minorities have been suffering, adding that she speaks so much about the Sinhalese as they are the majority of this country, and without their support, no change will ever happen in what she called "our racist State".

"For me, Gotabaya Rajapaksa going home is secondary. For me, this historic, monumental moment in time is about whether we, as a people, can come together and look at the difficult and uncomfortable issues and try to reconcile this very deeply divided island," she told us.

In conversation with journalist and human rights activist Amalini De Sayrah about the recent acts of police brutality and gross misuse of power, she explained that shooting at people that are simply asking for a solution to a crisis created by bad governance is absolutely unconscionable, and that it just adds to a long list of reasons that go to show how little members of the forces care about the people.

"Many have been asking for justice for the man killed during the Rambukkana protest, but if we look at history, whether it's shooting or custodial killings, we see zero accountability," she stated. Bringing up the many reports which indicate deaths caused by the Police, she observed that we have normalised it to the point where it is just routine in Sri Lanka.

"This should not be the case. People should not be shot at under the guise of 'minimum force'," she stated, adding that unfortunately, with the current system we have in place, accountability is almost impossible.

In the current system, she explained, such incidents are investigated by the Police itself, and thus the only result is that the officer in question gets transferred, and it ends there. She also spoke of several cases where many families have waited years and years for justice for their loved ones that were killed by the Police, to no avail.

"We are told that the Police is for our protection, we are told that they will maintain the law, but we only see them protecting the State and power," she expressed, using the recent protest at "GotaGoGama" as an example to show that while people don't have the money to survive, the public's money is being used to buy new gas masks for the Police so they can protect themselves.

These sentiments were shared by all those that were at Independence Square on the day, despite the rains and other disturbances; their stories told on cardboard placards. Will a change of governance mean an end to police brutality? Is systematic change something that we can hope for in the times to come? Will justice be served to those that were wronged by the people employed to protect us? Only time will tell.

Four things Elon Musk wants to change at Twitter

Tesla Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Elon Musk has struck a deal with Twitter to buy the social media site for roughly \$ 44 billion, and wants the world to know that change is coming to Twitter.

Here are four changes Musk could push for at Twitter:

Tweak content moderation

What is and isn't allowed on Twitter is a subject Musk has been tweeting about since before he disclosed his stake in the company. At the end of March, for instance, Musk tweeted a poll inquiring whether users believed Twitter was protecting free speech. He said the poll results would be "very important".

Musk tweeted, "Free speech is essential to a functioning democracy. Do you believe Twitter rigorously adheres to this principle?" About 70% of two million respondents responded no.

The United States of America's First Amendment doesn't apply to private companies, such as Twitter, which can create their own rules about what is allowed. In 2020, Agrawal, then Twitter's Chief Technology Officer (CTO), told *MIT Technology Review* the company's role is "not to be bound by the First Amendment" but "to serve a healthy public conversation".

In a follow-up tweet, Musk said: "Given that Twitter serves as the de facto public town square, failing to adhere to free speech principles fundamentally undermines democracy. What should be done?"

He also asked whether a new platform was needed.

Musk isn't the first person to question whether Twitter is censoring some voices. Conservatives criticised the company for banning former US President Donald Trump after the deadly 6 January Capitol Hill riots, though Dorsey has defended the call, made because of the risk of inciting violence. Some Twitter users have been calling on Musk to allow Trump back on the platform.

Musk tweeted this week that "a social media platform's policies are good if the most extreme 10% on left and right are equally unhappy". He didn't answer questions about how Twitter would measure this.

How much influence Musk can have on content moderation is an open question. Twitter says its policy decisions aren't determined by either the board or shareholders, and it has no plans to reverse any existing policies.

For what it's worth, Musk's tweets haven't been free of controversy. Musk was accused of violating Twitter's rules against harmful coronavirus misinformation in 2020 when he falsely tweeted that "kids are essentially immune" from Covid-19. In reality, children can catch the virus. Twitter told Axios the tweet didn't violate its rules because it wasn't "definitive".

Combat cryptocurrency scams

Cryptocurrency scams have been a thorn in Twitter's side, and they're a problem that has personally impacted Musk.



PHOTO © JOE SKIPPER, REUTERS

Elon Musk

Scammers have impersonated Musk using fake accounts on various social media sites in an effort to get people to give away cryptocurrency. In 2020, Musk's account was also among high-profile Twitter accounts that were hacked to push a bitcoin scam.

In January, Musk complained that Twitter was spending time on products such as profile pictures that showcase non-fungible tokens, assets verified on a blockchain, rather than fighting crypto spam bots.

"Twitter is spending engineering resources on this bs while crypto scammers are throwing a spambot block party in every thread!?" [sic] he tweeted.

He's also tweeted that bots are the "single most annoying problem" on Twitter. On Thursday, Musk tweeted if a Twitter bid succeeds "we will defeat the spam bots or die trying!" and "authenticate all real humans".

Release an edit button

Twitter users have long asked for a way to edit their tweets for typos and other problems, but the highly requested feature hasn't been at the top of the company's priorities. Twitter did include a way to undo tweets as part of its Twitter Blue \$ 3-a-month subscription plan.

On 4 April, Musk brought up the idea of an edit button again, tweeting another poll. "Do you want an edit button," he tweeted, misspelling the words yes and no. More than four million votes were cast, with almost three quarters supporting the idea.

Musk hasn't offered his own view of whether he thinks an edit button is needed. On 5 April, Twitter tweeted that it's been working on an edit feature since last year – "no, we didn't get the idea from a poll," Twitter's communications team tweeted with a wink face emoji. The company said it will start testing the tool to learn what works and is possible.

Twitter has expressed concerns before that an edit tool could lead to issues such as people sharing tweets that are then altered to change their meaning. In 2020, Dorsey even told *Wired* that Twitter would probably never add an edit button.

"We started as an SMS text messaging service. So, as you all know, when you send a text, you can't really take it back," Dorsey said in the interview. "We wanted to preserve that vibe and that feeling in the early days."

It seems like Twitter is putting the feature higher on its priority list. On 4 April, Agrawal used familiar language to respond to Musk's edit button poll.

"The consequences of this poll will be important. Please vote carefully," Agrawal tweeted.

Open up Twitter's algorithm

Social media users have complained that algorithms control their lives, enticing them to spend more time on Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms. Some Twitter users prefer to see tweets in chronological order. In March, Twitter rolled back a change that would show the algorithmic feed by default after user complaints.

Musk has suggested Twitter could make the algorithm open-source. Musk didn't specify what that would entail, but open-source software is freely available and can be altered. He posed the idea in a 24 March poll. About 83% of one million respondents said yes.

Dorsey appeared to endorse the results, tweeting: "The choice of which algorithm to use (or not) should be open to everyone."

In a TED Talk earlier this month, Musk said he thinks Twitter users should be able to see if a tweet has been demoted or promoted on the site so there's no "behind-the-scenes manipulation". Twitter's code should be on Github, he said, so people can look for errors and suggest changes.

Barberyn spreads the art of holistic healing

BY VENESSA ANTHONY
Ayuwanna by Barberyn recently held an open day event, exhibition, and workshop series titled "Journey to healing with Barberyn" at the Prana Lounge premises at No. 60, Horton Place, Colombo 7. Curated with the intention of sharing the ancient wisdom of holistic healing with the general public, the event touched on how one may navigate through stress and anxiety during these challenging times.



Discovering the healing power of medicinal forests and preservation of Ayurveda medicinal plants

and preservation of ayurvedic medicinal plants – a lesson conducted by Prof. Piyal Marasinghe, where guests learned about the fascinating variety of indigenous plants and its unique preservation methods.

"We had a session for kids as well; it was an interactive activity on making your own medicinal pouch (*beheth pottiniya*) conducted by Anusha Samarasinghe and allowed space for kids to get creative and use the knowledge from the previous lessons in building a medicine bag specifically made for themselves," Rodrigo further stated.

Furthermore, viewers got a glimpse of Diyabubula, the enchanting art and jungle hideaway designed by renowned artist Laki Senanayake for Barberyn.

The two days featured a wide variety of Ayurveda-related workshops and several key highlights were Prof. Marasinghe's engaging workshop on the preservation and healing power of medicinal forests and plants, a heart-centric meditation session by Shobana Cooke, and an exploration of the integration of yoga and Ayurveda with Rekha Krishnamoorthy.

Additionally, Rodrigo told us that an interactive panel discussion was held by Ayurveda practitioners Dr. Sewwandi, Dr. Haresha, and Dr. Charitha to debunk the most common myths in Ayurveda, and Dr.

and living conditions. It automatically switches to the most appropriate cooling mode based on preferred temperature and outside temperature.

Its Welcome Cooling feature ensures that the room before users reach home with geo-fencing. If there is no movement in the room for 20 minutes, the Motion Detect Sensor automatically switches the AC to WindFree™ mode to save energy. Users can also set it to blow air away from them, or follow wherever they move.

The WindFree™ AC can also be connected with the SmartThings app to be controlled directly from a smartphone. The WindFree™ AC also supports Bixby voice assistant, Alexa and Google Home, enabling voice control over the device.

The Samsung WindFree™ range is available for purchase at authorised Samsung partners: Softlogic, Singer, Singhagiri, Damro, and the Samsung e-Store.

The exhibition was officially launched with a Dhanvantari Puja, followed by live eastern classical music and refreshments. We had the opportunity to attend the first opening day and begin our journey into holistic healing.

The event, held over the course of two days, commenced as a memorable evening when the

The event also featured a session where guests could discover the healing power of medicinal forests

Rashipaba provided an informative session on how to embark on your own Ayurveda journey.

Other Ayurveda-related workshops illustrated the cleansing methods in Ayurveda, maintaining an ayurvedic routine, and a self-massage oil application session by Chief Therapist Janani. The workshop series also incorporated an Ayurveda-related film screening and post discussion on the holistic system of Ayurveda, which we found to be very informative and a great first step into the art of holistic healing, where many misconceptions were cast away, as the film enabled newcomers to have an open mind and heart.

Overall, we found that "Journey to Healing with Barberyn" brought together like-minded individuals within a holistic community in urban Colombo as they embarked on their own journeys to attain optimal health.

Rodrigo added that through such events, they hope to encourage more guests to take up ayurvedic practices by showing them what it entails exactly and how to go about it.

Guests at A Journey to Healing by Barberyn



Guests at A Journey to Healing by Barberyn

Internationally recognised artist Jayantha Premachandra revisited

Rendez-Vous with Yasmin and Kumar this month will feature the work of Jayantha Premachandra, one of Sri Lanka's internationally recognised artists who spent the last years of his life living and painting in Paris.

Born in 1935, Premachandra's creative output extended across canvasses, mosaics, batik motifs, murals, line drawings, and lots more, all of them appealing to a worldwide audience. His work has been exhibited in many countries across the world including France, the former USSR, West Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Finland, and Sri Lanka.

He was, in fact, the first Sri Lankan to hold a solo exhibition at both the National Museum of Modern Art in Baghdad, Iraq and at the Ksiazki Gallery in Ghury Olszyn, Poland.

Nilanka Premachandra Nilaweera, his daughter, will join the show and talk about her father's artistic life in Paris and the sources of his inspiration. Dr. Sarath Amunugama, a friend of the artist, will talk about the socially-conscious humanist in Premachandra and his lasting contribution to the world of art. The show will close with a visit to Montmartre, the large hill in the 18th district of



Jayantha Premachandra at work



Dr Sarath Amunugama



Yasmin and Kumar with Nilanka Premachandra

Paris primarily known for its artistic history and the white-domed Basilica of the Sacre-Coeur on its summit.

During the Belle Epoque, towards the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, many artists lived, worked, or had studios in or around Montmartre. Among them were Modigliani, Monet, Renoir, Degas, Toulouse Lautrec, Picasso, Pissarro, and Van Gogh to name just a few. Artists have immortalised the celebrated windmill, Moulin de la Galette through their artwork, among which the most notable is Renoir's festive painting "Bal du Moulin de la Galette". Le

Moulin de la Galette in Montmartre represented a welcome diversion for Parisians seeking entertainment, a glass of wine, and bread made from flour ground by the windmill. The Place du Tertre square atop the hill bustles with many artists who set up their easels each day, from dawn to dusk, through all seasons of the year, making it a major tourist attraction in Paris.

All this and lots more will be available on *Rendez-Vous with Yasmin and Kumar* on Saturday (30) at 7 p.m. (Sri Lanka time) on the YouTube channel of the Embassy of France in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.



Officials of Fadna Tea and the University of Sabaragamuwa at the launch of 'Diabe Tea-Sabaragamuwa'

Fadna Tea launches 'Diabe Tea-Sabaragamuwa' for blood sugar patients

Fadna Tea (Pvt.) Ltd., a company in the Sri Lankan herbal tea industry, announced the launch of its new product, "Diabe Tea-Sabaragamuwa". Fadna stated that it now produces its own functional herbal tea products by preserving their natural goodness, while conforming to international standards.

This product purportedly uses 100% natural ingredients to maximise benefits for patients suffering with blood sugar-related disorders. In understanding the challenges faced by such patients in society, Fadna Tea stated, it was motivated to develop a product that would somewhat alleviate their daily struggles. The product is developed in collaboration with the Accelerating Higher Education Expansion and Development Operation (AHEAD) and the Faculty of Applied Sciences at the Sabaragamuwa University.

Speaking about the project, Sabaragamuwa University Vice Chancellor Senior Prof. Udaya Rathanayake stated: "As a university, we are continuously engaging in these types of product development projects, and launching and commercialising Diabe Tea-Sabaragamuwa is a great initiative as well as a motive for upcoming projects. We expect to do these types of projects similarly with Fadna

and also other companies for the betterment of society."

Fadna Tea Managing Director Chamendra Somatunga said: "Innovation associated with problem solving is vital for the development of societies and countries. Commercialising products that are born out of this innovativeness not only opens up new avenues for people, especially those suffering from blood sugar-related disorders, to adopt healthier lifestyles, but also supports the local economy.

"We thank the AHEAD Grant for their collaboration, research, and assistance in making this product a success. We hope to introduce and commercialise similar products in the future to serve more people in the long run."

Fadna Tea stated it strives to continuously innovate in collaboration with esteemed research and educational institutes across the country, adding that Fadna Diabe Tea-Sabaragamuwa is a stepping stone in its journey towards truly elevating the lifestyles of the people of Sri Lanka.

Fadna products are exported to many destinations across the world, while the company has also expanded its production domain to functional cosmetics based on traditional formulae.



Samsung introduces WindFree AC range to SL for 'summer life'

Samsung has introduced in Sri Lanka its range of WindFree™ air-conditioners (ACs), which is billed as "powerful yet gentle".

"The warm, bright summer days are here, and so is the scorching heat. This time of the year calls for an air conditioner that is powerful yet gentle at the same time. As more people are working from home, having a comfortable room temperature is important. The WindFree™ AC features 23,000 micro-holes that blow a gentle breeze at a speed of 0.15 m/s and prevent a strong cold draft. It also features PM 1.0 filter technology that traps all allergens. But that's not the end of the features that the AC comes packed with," Samsung said in a press release.

Samsung noted that the WindFree™ AC also comes with a host of smart features to make users' lives easier. With the smart AI Auto Cooling feature, the WindFree™ AC can optimise cooling based on the owner's usage behaviour

and living conditions. It automatically switches to the most appropriate cooling mode based on preferred temperature and outside temperature.

Its Welcome Cooling feature ensures that the room before users reach home with geo-fencing. If there is no movement in the room for 20 minutes, the Motion Detect Sensor automatically switches the AC to WindFree™ mode to save energy. Users can also set it to blow air away from them, or follow wherever they move.

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The Samsung WindFree™ range is available for purchase at authorised Samsung partners: Softlogic, Singer, Singhagiri, Damro, and the Samsung e-Store.



Johnny Depp concludes testimony in Amber Heard case

BY MARIANNE GARVEY

Actor Johnny Depp concluded his testimony in his defamation trial against Amber Heard in a Fairfax, Virginia court on Monday.

On his fourth day on the stand, Depp was cross-examined by Heard's attorney, Ben Rottenborn.

He was asked about audio recordings of arguments with Heard and whether she was the only person who had a problem with his alcohol abuse.

"Sir, if anyone had a problem with my drinking, at any time in my life, it was me," Depp replied. "The only person I've abused in my life is myself."

Depp then remained on the stand for redirect examination from his attorney Jessica Meyers. Depp is suing Heard, his ex-wife, for \$50 million over a 2018 op-ed she wrote for *The Washington Post* in which she described herself as a "public figure representing domestic abuse". Though Depp was not named in the article, he claims it cost him lucrative acting work.

Both Heard and Depp, who met in 2009 and were married from 2015-2016, accuse the other of acts of physical violence during their relationship. They have both denied the other's claims.

The former couple settled their divorce in August 2016, releasing a joint statement which read in part: "Our relationship was intensely passionate and at times volatile, but always bound by love."

The trial, which started on 11 April, is set to last six weeks. Heard has not yet testified.

Under redirect from his attorney, Depp explained that some of the texts introduced as evidence by Heard's attorney were meant to be "irreverent", or based on Monty Python movies. Depp said he often handles a "difficult or unpleasant situation" with humour. In an effort to de-escalate disagreements with Heard, Depp testified he would try to leave the room or leave the house.

"No one deserves to live like that," Depp said, describing their relationship. (CNN)



Kane Tanaka, who was born in 1903, died in Fukuoka city earlier this month. PHOTO © REUTERS

Japan's Kane Tanaka, world's oldest person, dies at 119

Kane Tanaka, a Japanese woman believed to have been the world's oldest person, has died aged 119.

Tanaka died of old age at a hospital in southwestern Fukuoka city on 19 April, Japanese public broadcaster NHK reported on Monday. She was born in the Fukuoka region on 2 January 1903 – the same year the Wright brothers flew for the first time and Marie Curie became the first woman to win a Nobel Prize.

She was confirmed as being the world's oldest living person by Guinness World Records in 2019.

Tanaka was in relatively good health until recently and lived at a nursing home, where she enjoyed board games, solving math problems, fizzy drinks, and chocolate. She had been planning to join last year's torch relay for the Olympic Games, but pulled out because of coronavirus concerns. Local Governor Seitaro

Hattori hailed Tanaka's life and said he was "extremely saddened" at her death.

"I was looking forward to seeing Kane-san on this year's Respect for the Aged Day (a national holiday in September) and celebrating together with her favorite soda and chocolate," he said in a statement on Monday.

In her younger years, Tanaka ran various businesses including a noodle shop and a rice cake store. She married

Hideo Tanaka a century ago in 1922, giving birth to four children and adopting a fifth. Japan has an ageing population, with about 28% of people aged 65 or more. As of last September, the country had 86,510 centenarians, and nine out of every 10 were women.

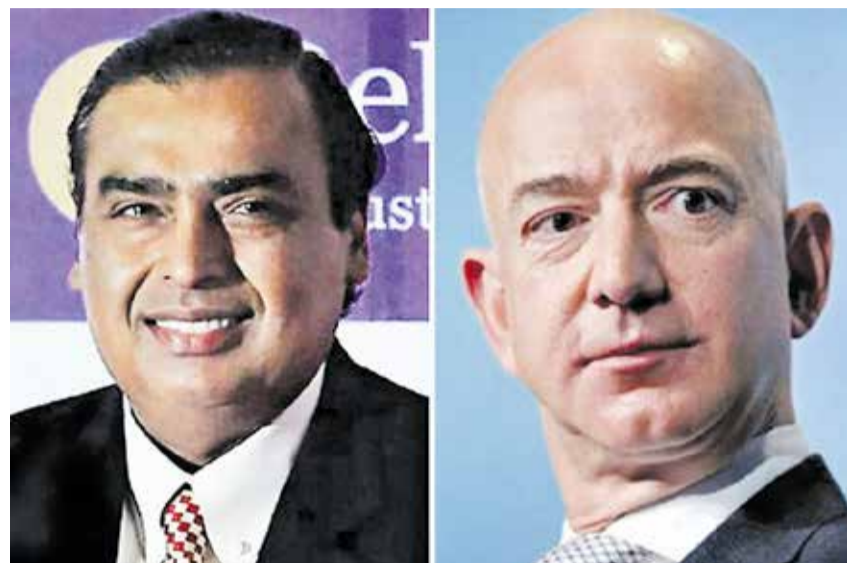
With Tanaka's death, Lucile Randon, a French nun better known as Sister Andre, becomes the world's oldest known living person. Randon was born in southern France on 11 February 1904, and recently celebrated her 118th birthday with her favourite port-and-chocolate cocktail.

She lives at a nursing home in Toulon along the Mediterranean coast of France. (Al Jazeera)

AN ESSENTIALLY ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

Amazon takes on Ambani again

Mukesh Ambani, the petrochemicals and telecommunications tycoon, is expected to vie for broadcast and streaming rights of the Indian Premier League (IPL) via his flagship Reliance Industries Ltd., going up against a rival bid by Amazon.com Inc.



Two of the world's richest men are heading for the second round in their contest: Mukesh Ambani (left) and Amazon Chairman Jeff Bezos are expected to vie for broadcast and streaming rights of the IPL for the next cycle on 12 June 2022

Both Amazon Chairman Jeff Bezos, the second-richest person in the world, and Ambani, No. 9, want to dominate India's large – and still highly informal – retail industry. To that end, what could be a better route to commerce than cricket, the national passion of the country's 1.4 billion people?

Star Sports, Murdoch, and Facebook

IPL is as big a business in India as it is a craze: The total viewership of last year's edition ran into 242 billion minutes. In 2017, Star Sports, the previous winner of the five-year deal for television and digital rights, paid \$ 2.55 billion under Rupert Murdoch's stewardship.

When Facebook Inc. joined that fray, offering \$ 600 million to live-stream the matches, the Australian-born media mogul got a warning shot about how quickly the media landscape was changing. He went and sold his 21st Century Fox Inc. assets to Walt Disney & Co.

Emerging-market consumers

Now owned by Disney, Star Sports recently hawked 10-second TV spots for more than 1.7 million Indian rupees (\$ 22,000) apiece. To that, add the subscription and advertising revenue from the Disney+ Hotstar app, where the matches are shown live, and the current take – plus the growth potential – could easily justify a winning bid in excess of \$ 5 billion this time around.

The cricket league is a testament to the growing heft of emerging-market consumers. Amazon's Prime Video will get an edge over Netflix Inc. and Disney in India, if it can snag the streaming deal. The importance of that is not lost on Ambani, who wants his

Their bruising battle for control of a bankrupt Indian retailer isn't over yet, and two of the world's richest men are already heading for the second round in their contest – this time on the cricket field. Here is an economic perspective on the game of cricket, IPL, and the Indian market. This write-up is from Andy Mukherjee of Bloomberg that appeared on 23 April 2022.

own empire to sit atop the three pillars of carriage, content, and commerce.

Amazon live-streams EPL

With 400 million-plus customers, Reliance's Jio is the country's largest telco. As his subscribers burn through their data plans to watch cricket, Ambani gets a chance to exploit their love of the game to not only earn advertising dollars but also sell them more stuff – provided the eyeballs are glued to his media properties rather than his competitors'.

And Amazon, which live-streams English Premier League (EPL) soccer, is just one of those rivals. Reliance failed to get into the driver's seat at Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd., the country's largest publicly traded

TV network. Zee is combining instead with Sony Group Corp.

Ambani's next generation

If Ambani secures the rights to the Super Bowl of India, he could take on Zee-Sony, a very real possibility now that he's reportedly in talks with Murdoch's son, James, and his trusted lieutenant Uday Shankar. Star TV's former India boss, for a 39% stake in Viacom18, Reliance's local television-content joint venture with ViacomCBS. Sony will also very likely bid for IPL. If Americans can take to the sport of the erstwhile British empire, so can the Japanese.

Ambani's involvement with cricket extends beyond media rights. He also owns the Mumbai Indians, whose five title wins since the league began in 2008 have made it the most successful IPL team. The franchise gives Ambani the opportunity to introduce his children to the art of buying players on a budget, steeping them into the much bigger capital allocation decisions that await them as the 65-year-old gets ready to pass on the leadership of his empire to the next generation.

Leading players

Control of the team also qualifies the Indian businessman for the title of the richest sports team financier on earth. Depending on share prices,

that crown keeps passing between him and Microsoft Corp.'s former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Steve Ballmer. The owner of Los Angeles Clippers, a professional basketball team, was Ambani's classmate at Stanford University's business school. (Both of them dropped out.)

India's media has thrown out names from Meta Platforms Inc. (formerly Facebook) to Alphabet Inc.'s YouTube and Apple Inc. as likely contenders for the media-rights auction on 12 June. Since Alphabet's Google and Facebook have equity stakes in Jio, it's doubtful if they will want to enter an overcrowded bidding war. Apple just got busy with major league baseball (MLB) in the US and needs to sell more phones in India before it can monetise Apple TV+.

More than advertising money

Netflix may well want to steady its core business after losing 200,000 customers in the first three months of the year. India won't be of much help to its sagging stock because it can't yet deliver rich-country pricing.

Ambani, Amazon, and incumbent Disney are the most obvious hopefuls. Viewer fatigue with the match format, leading to a drop in ratings, is the biggest risk to the successful bidders for domestic and overseas TV and digital rights. For Ambani and Bezos, though, the game is about much more than just advertising dollars.

12 June duel tantalising

A large captive audience for 65 days in a year, five years in a row can do wonders for their own offline and online retail ambitions in India, which is why everyone is looking to the duo to be the most aggressive.

Reliance has taken physical control of many of the stores of the unprofitable Future Retail Ltd., which agreed in 2020 to sell its assets to Ambani to repay creditors. Amazon is trying to block the deal for alleged breach of contract as Future's founder took money from the e-commerce giant, promising not to sell the business to Ambani.

If that legal battle is any guide, the audience on 12 June should get its money's worth of entertainment.

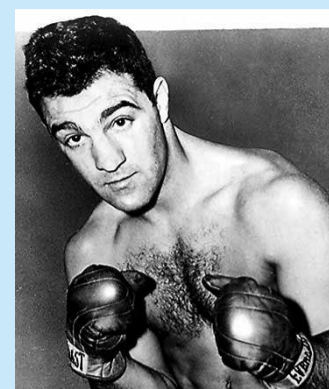
ON THIS DAY



ACHIEVEMENTS / HISTORIC EVENTS

1908 The Fourth Summer Olympic Games opened in London

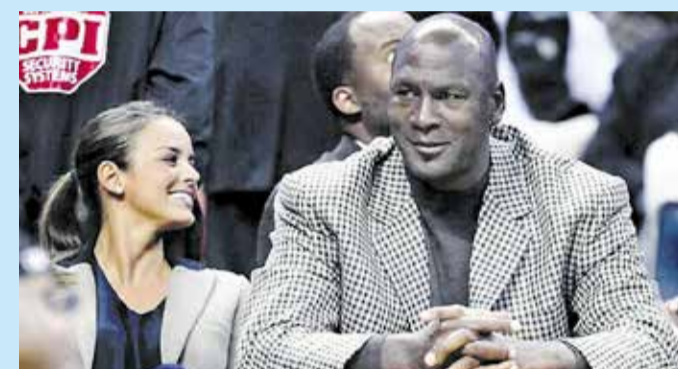
1994 The seventh-longest National Hockey League (NHL) game ran for 125 minutes and 43 seconds, in which the Buffalo Sabres beat the New Jersey Devils 1-0



Rocky Marciano, the world heavyweight boxing champion from 1952-56

1994 Graeme Obree cycled 52,713 km in world record time

2002 Pakistan fast-bowler Shoaib Akhtar became the first man to break the 100 mph barrier when he was clocked bowling to Craig McMillan at 100.04 mph or 161 kmph during a One-Day International against New Zealand in Lahore. Anyway, the record remains unofficial



NBA great Michael Jordan wedded his second wife Yvette Prieto on this day today

2013 National Basketball Association (NBA) great Michael Jordan wed his second wife Yvette Prieto in Florida, U.S.A.

UNUSUAL

1956 World heavyweight boxing champion Rocco Francis Marchegiano aka Rocky Marciano (1923-1969) retired as the only boxer to retire undefeated

TRAGEDIES/ACCIDENTS

1993 All 30 members of the Zambia national football team lost their lives in a plane crash off Libreville, Gabon in route to Dakar, Senegal to play a 1994 FIFA World Cup qualifying match against Senegal

BIRTHS

1929 Birth of the first Soviet Olympic champion Nina Ponomareva Romaschkova, the female discus thrower who won Olympic gold in 1952 and 1960

1933 Birth of American auto racer Bob Bondurant, whose School of High Performance Driving was responsible for training generations of American racing drivers

1995 Birth of Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios



The 1993 plane crash of the Zambia football team, the most tragic incident to date in African football history

Macron's second-term victory and Paris 2024

● *His second term to include Summer Olympics and World Para Athletics too*

On Sunday (24), Emmanuel Macron won a second term as French President which will cover the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games in the capital Paris. He defeated Marine Le Pen by a significant margin in the two-candidate run-off.

Macron received more than 58.5% of the vote, with far-right candidate Le Pen polling a little more than 41.4%.

How the win affects sports

The healthy margin of victory represents a sharp decline from the 2017 election, however, when Macron received more than 66% of the votes in a run-off versus the same opponent.

Turnout was marginally below 72% – the lowest in a Presidential run-off for more than 50 years – and more than 13.6 million voters abstained. Macron nonetheless called it a “brilliant victory”.

How does Macron's election win this time affect sports?

French Olympic Committee went for Macron

The French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF) had urged the public to vote for Macron, claiming his manifesto and that of the party La République En Marche! were “the



Emmanuel Macron, in a jubilant mood here, was keen to be seen at the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia

most favourable for developing sport in our country”.

Last October, Macron vowed to build thousands of local sporting facilities as part of his re-election campaign and expressed a desire to use Paris 2024 “to put sport at the heart of the nation”.

France, reigning FIFA World Cup champs

The centrist has appeared at several high-profile sporting events while being the President, including the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, which France won. Macron watched the final alongside

FIFA President Gianni Infantino, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Croatia's President at the time Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, who has since become an IOC member and now heads the Future Host Commission for the Games of the Olympiad.

'A new era'

Macron is the first sitting French President to be re-elected since Jacques Chirac in 2002 but claimed his second term would represent a “new era” rather than continuity.

“An answer must be found to the anger and disagreements that led many of our compatriots to vote for the extreme right,” Macron also told supporters.

“It will be my responsibility and that of those around me.”

Many high-profile events

Before the Olympics and Paralympics, France is also due to stage the men's Rugby World Cup, Alpine World Ski Championships, and World Para Athletics Championships in 2023.

Macron did not support the diplomatic boycott of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games which many of France's Western allies participated in.

'Philosophy of Sport'

While sport has been practised since pre-historic times, it is a relatively new subject of systematic philosophical enquiry.

Indeed, the philosophy of sport as an academic sub-field dates back only to the 1970s. Yet, in this short time, it has grown into a vibrant area of philosophical research that promises both to deepen our understanding of sport and to inform sports practice.

Recent controversies at the elite and professional level have highlighted the ethical dimensions of sport in particular:

- Lance Armstrong's use of performance-enhancing drugs raised new issues in the ethics of cheating
- Middle-distance runner Caster Semenya has challenged prevailing rules



around sex classification in sport

- Oscar Pistorius's prosthesis has problematised the distinction between able-bodied and disabled sport

While philosophical analysis may help to achieve a deeper understanding of sport, such analysis may also illuminate problems of philosophy beyond sport, ranging from the nature of skill to the ethics of altruism. (The above is an extract from the book “Philosophy of Sport” by John William Devine, first published in February 2020)



Caster Semenya challenged prevailing rules around sex classification in sport

the morning sports

Verstappen, Thompson-Herah clinch Laureus Awards

Formula-1 (F1) world champion Max Verstappen and Olympic sprinter Elaine Thompson-Herah have been named as the winners of this year's Laureus World Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year awards.

Dutch driver Verstappen, who holds dual nationality status in Belgium, edged Lewis Hamilton of Britain to claim his first F1 title in



spectacular fashion at last year's season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, while Thompson-Herah of Jamaica

was recognised for defending her 100 and 200 m Olympic titles in Tokyo as well as securing the 4x100 m relay.

Alcaraz youngest into top 10 since Nadal

Carlos Alcaraz moved up to No. 9 in the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) rankings on Monday (25), a little more than a month before he turns 19, making him the youngest man to break into the top 10 since fellow Spaniard Rafael Nadal did it exactly 17 years ago. Alcaraz rose two spots after winning the Barcelona Open on Sunday, beating Pablo Carreño Busta 6-3, 6-2 in the final, at 18 years, 11 months, and 20 days old. Alcaraz is the ninth-youngest man to reach the top 10 since the ATP's computer rankings began in 1973.



Foreign Sports News in Brief

Snubbed by IPL, Adani becomes richest person in Asia

India's business tycoon Gautam Adani may be ruing not to get admission to the Indian Premier League (IPL) but he is now at the top of his game. In the recent list of "World's Richest Person", Adani Group's chairperson is at fifth, surpassing Berkshire Hathaway CEO Warren Buffett. Adani is now the richest person in Asia with a net worth of \$ 129.4 billion (Rs. 44,683 billion) ahead of IPL team Mumbai Indians' owner Mukesh Ambani, who has a new worth of \$ 104.9 billion (Rs. 36,223 billion).



Gautam Adani

But despite IPL's snub, Adani is now likely to become the richest sports team owner, reported *The Inside Sport*. He owns the Pro Kabaddi League team Gujarat Giants and is already in the process of buying the Emirates T20 league team. If he does so, he will top the next list of Forbes' Richest Sports Team Owners list.

Other overseas sports highlights:

Australia and New Zealand deny participation in China's Asian Games 2022

The upcoming Asian Games 2022, slated to be held in September in Hangzhou, received a major blow yesterday with Australia and New Zealand denying participation in the quadrennial event. Australia will not be taking up an offer to send athletes to the Asian Games for the first time this year as none of the invited sports federations expressed an interest in going to Hangzhou, the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) said. A New Zealand Olympic

Committee spokeswoman also confirmed the country would not participate at the Games.

Maestro Federer returns

The Swiss tennis maestro is all set to return, after a long injury layoff, to play in front of a home crowd in October. Roger Federer has signed up to play at his home tournament in Basel in October, the tournament organisers said yesterday (26). Doubts continue on when the 20-time major winner will return to competition from his knee problem.

NBA play-offs: Boston Celtics into semi-finals

The Boston Celtics completed a 4-0 sweep over the Brooklyn Nets to book their place in the Eastern Conference semi-finals yesterday. The second-seeded Celtics never trailed in a 116-112 victory in New York, as Jayson Tatum led with 29 points. Jaylen Brown added 22 points while the Nets' Kevin Durant made 39 for his best game of the series. "We knew who we were facing, we knew how talented they were, we knew it was going to be a dog fight," said Tatum.



Jayson Tatum celebrates with Boston Celtics fans



In this 2018 photo is Srinath Sooriyabandara (in front) being held back by a Japanese defender in the semi-finals of the Asian Games Rugby Sevens in Indonesia. Sooriyabandara is expected to be the skipper of the Sri Lankan team for the Commonwealth Games, starting in July 2022

COMMONWEALTH GAMES RUGBY SQUAD ANNOUNCEMENT DEBACLE

Genuine mistake from our end, admits Illyas

BY RANJIKA PERERA

What has been a chaotic past few months for rugby in Sri Lanka took another twist yesterday (26) after news emerged that Sri Lanka Rugby (SLR) had picked a 20-member squad on Monday (25) for the forthcoming Commonwealth and Asia Games this year.

Controversially, the squad had been divided into 12 players in the main squad and eight others as standby players. SLR also named a 20-member women's squad, in the same manner, on Monday for the above two Games.

Standby players disappointed

As a result, a few leading men's players, who had been picked in the 20-player squad, yet only as standbys, have been left in utter disappointment, *The Morning Sports* learnt yesterday.

Further, some have also made queries as to how a squad could be picked in as early as April for a tournament which is to be held as far away as September.

Sevens rugby in both Games

The 2022 22nd Commonwealth Games are to be held from 28 July to 8 August 2022 in Birmingham, England before the 19th Asian Games are scheduled to be held from 10 to 25 September 2022, in Hangzhou, China. Rugby sevens at the 2022 Commonwealth Games are set to be held at the Coventry Stadium from 29-31 July.

At both Commonwealth and Asian Games, rugby will be held in the Sevens variant in which teams are made up of seven players playing seven-minute halves, instead of the usual 15 players playing 40-minute halves.

After trials on Sunday

Our sources at SLR said yesterday that the 12-member men's and women's squads may change in the lead-up to the two Games. They further revealed that the standby players may still be included in the main 12-player squads.

The Sri Lanka squads were issued on Monday, following single-day trials held on Sunday, under the signature of SLR Executive Director Hamza Hidayathullah.

Illyas and co. still in control

Despite the former Minister of Youth and Sports dissolving SLR on 2 April, its "former" President Rizly Illyas and his ex-co are adamant that they are still in control of the country's main governing body of the sport.

The Sri Lanka National Rugby Selection Committee includes Chairman Ashoka Jayasena, Leslie de Silva, Hemantha Yatawara, Rohan Abeykoon, and Kapila Knowlton.

Standby players left confused

When news broke about the naming of the two key Sri Lanka squads last morning, many players on the "standby list" had been left bemused.

Many have questioned relevant authorities about what the point is for them to join training if they are already

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left out of the main 12-member squad for the national Sevens team.

A genuine mistake

Do they not stand a chance to make it to the final squad?

Speaking to *The Morning Sports* yesterday, Illyas said: "There is no way that we have finalised the 12-member squad for the two Games. There are more than two-and-a-half months remaining for the Commonwealth Games alone. The players will undergo training and we will finalise the 12-member squad, depending on their levels, later on."

He further added: "The usual format when submitting squads is like what we published yesterday. The selectors simply filled out the forms and it was a genuine mistake from our end to let it go without notice."

Too soon to select players for Asiad

The document on the selected national squads which was published on Monday read that the two squads

are not only for the Commonwealth Games 2022; it said the squads are also valid for the Asian Games 2022 in September as well.

However, it is not logical and practical, and it is also puzzling as to why the selectors had chosen the same squads for both events. It is now likely that the selectors will hold another trial to finalise the squad for the Asian Games in due course.

League to restart soon

The Morning Sports also learned yesterday that the Nippon Paint-sponsored Sri Lanka Rugby League 2022, which was halted after SLR was suspended by former Minister of Youth and Sports Namal Rajapaksa early this month, is set to return in the coming weeks.

The remaining matches in the super round of the league will be played to determine the league champions. It will be followed up with the Clifford Cup Knockout Championship, which is expected to draw to a close by the first week of June.

Ibrahim to continue as Head Coach?

The Sri Lanka Sevens squads already named will then be allowed by their respective clubs to join the national pool. However, SLR is yet to officially appoint a national Coach for the two forthcoming Games.

Nilufer Ibrahim is set to continue as the Head Coach. He was put in charge last year when the Sri Lankans, aka the Tuskers, travelled to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the Asia Sevens Series.

ATF U-14 Week-1 Tennis in Colombo



The fourth day's play of the Asian Tennis Federation (ATF) Week-1 category-2 tournament was held yesterday (26) at the Sri Lanka Tennis Association (SLTA) clay courts in Colombo. It will go on till Sunday (1 May). In the photo is Aahil M. Kaleel from Sri Lanka who beat compatriot Kenul Rathnayake 6-2, 4-6, 6-2 in boys' singles

PHOTO ISHAN WANNIARACHCHI

SL Emerging Cricket Team to tour the UK in May



Sri Lanka Emerging Cricket Team will engage in a tour to the UK to play three four-day and three Twenty20 (T20) matches during May 2022. The team is expected to arrive in the UK on 1 May.

SCHEDULE

DATE	MATCH	VENUE
6-9 May (Fri.-Mon.)	1st four-day match	Canterbury, Kent
13-16 May (Fri.-Mon.)	2nd four-day match	Ageas Bowl, Hampshire
20-23 May (Fri.-Mon.)	3rd four-day match	Guildford Cricket Club, Surrey
25 May (Wed.)	1st T20	Kia Oval, Surrey
27 May (Fri.)	2nd T20	The Cooper Associates County Grounds, Somerset
29 May (Sun.)	3rd T20	Bristol County Ground, Gloucestershire

