

**'IT IS NOT CORRUPTION  
ALONE THAT GOT  
SRI LANKA HERE'**



»SEE PAGE 9

# the morning



**WILL AMERICA ACHIEVE  
ITS SINISTER OBJECTIVES  
IN SRI LANKA?**  
»SEE PAGE 4



**TOURISM EARNINGS  
WILL NOT RESOLVE  
ECONOMIC CRISIS**  
»SEE PAGE 7



**DISCOUNTS  
GALORE  
AT THE BOURSE**  
»SEE PAGE 10

## Prez and PM at odds on PM's resignation

- Prez willing to form all-party Govt. after PM resignation
- PM says Prez hasn't and won't ask him to resign
- Prez invites 'independents' for meeting tomorrow

**In two seemingly contradictory statements yesterday (27), President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said that he is, in principle, willing to form an all-party government with the political parties representing the Parliament, following the resignation of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers, while Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had never asked him to resign from his position and believes the President would never make such a request.**

The President conveyed his stance on an all-party government in a letter directed to all political party leaders in the ruling faction, as well as the leaders of political parties that represented the Government after the 2020 General Election and currently sit independently in the House. The structure, tenure, and portfolios of

this all-party government, which is to be established after the resignation of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers, need to be agreed upon following discussions, the President said in the letter.

As the first step for this purpose, the President has called a meeting tomorrow (29) at 10.30 a.m. at the President's House in Colombo 1 with the participation of the recipients of the letter.

Contd. on page 2

## National grid risks losing 1,251 MW of renewable energy

- Renewable energy developers unable to operate; Rs. 22 bn unpaid dues by CEB since August 2021

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

**R**enewable Energy Associations that include small hydro, wind, solar, and biomass power developers, and also the Solar Industries Association of Sri Lanka, have jointly said that the national grid of Sri Lanka risks losing 1,250.9 megawatts (MW) of power generated by renewable energy developers, as the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) has not paid for Rs. 22 billion worth of electricity

supplied by them since August 2021. Speaking at a media briefing held yesterday (27), the representatives of the respective associations emphasised that at this critical juncture, where the country is in a dire economic state, they are pressed to cease operations, being unable to meet critical payment-related obligations including employee salaries, maintenance, and debts. "The net effect of this would not just be that the

country would lose this mass of clean energy, but it will lead to a severe economic crisis, as the alternative will be to procure thermal power by burning fossil fuel at an astronomically high cost of about Rs. 90 per unit, as opposed to the average cost of Rs. 15.77 paid for renewable energy. This will exacerbate the foreign exchange crisis and be unbearable to the country at this juncture," they noted.

Contd. on page 2

## Ceylon Cinnamon becomes first SL product with GI

- EU hands over Geographical Indication certification to EDB



EU Ambassador Denis Chaibi handing over the GI certification to EDB Chairman Suresh de Mel

**T**he European Union (EU) handed over the Geographical Indication (GI) certification for Ceylon Cinnamon to the Sri Lanka Export Development Board (EDB) yesterday (27), making it Sri Lanka's first GI-certified product, the EDB announced.

The GI application was made by the EDB and supported by the EU under the EU-Sri Lanka Trade Related Assistance Project, and through technical assistance from United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and the International Trade Centre (ITC).

Contd. on page 2

## No Maha cultivation if Yala doesn't produce enough seed paddy

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

**E**xperts in the field of agriculture have pointed out that if the country is unable to produce sufficient seed paddy during the coming Yala cultivating season, it will not be possible to cultivate paddy, even if the farmers receive a certain amount of chemical fertilisers in the next Maha season.

Speaking at a media briefing organised by the Academics' Movement to Safeguard Agriculture in Sri Lanka (AMSASL) yesterday (27), Prof. Aruna Kumara of the Ruhuna University said: "Paddy cultivation has failed in both the last Maha and Yala seasons, and as a result, the price of all rice varieties that are mostly used in Sri Lanka has gone up by more than Rs. 200. We also have to keep in mind that we have to buy rice at these prices, even when rice is being imported."

Contd. on page 2

## Public complain of lengthy queues at Consular Affairs Division

BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

**M**embers of the public have raised concerns over the Foreign Affairs Ministry's Consular Affairs Division, due to having to wait in long queues to seek services.

Speaking to *The Morning*, one person said that he had had to wait in three different queues to enter the division. "This division is situated at the Ceylinco building, on the second floor. Once we reached it to certify our documents, officers from the Civil Defence Force asked us to go downstairs and write our names," they recounted. "It was heavily crowded downstairs, and there was a huge queue to write names. Then there was another queue to get a token."

Contd. on page 2

## Receipt, bill, or invoice for goods in possession made mandatory

**A**ll manufacturers, producers, store owners, and traders are now required to have a receipt, bill, or invoice for goods in their possession, the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) stated.

The directive came into effect from yesterday (27).

According to the CAA, the relevant receipt, bill, or invoice should mention the name and address of the supplier, the purchased date, the price, type of goods, quantity, and the batch number, if any.

This was mentioned in a Gazette Extraordinary published by CAA Chairman Shantha Dissanayake.

## IGP ordered by court to arrest trigger-happy Rambukkana cops

- Kegalle Magistrate orders arrest of cops who ordered to fire and who followed such orders

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

**T**he Kegalle Magistrate's Court has ordered Inspector General of Police (IGP) Chandana D. Wickramaratne to arrest, and produce before court, all police officers involved in the shooting that resulted in the death of a person during a recent protest in the Rambukkana area. The directive was issued by Kegalle Magistrate Wasana

Nawarathna, when the case was taken up yesterday (27).

Accordingly, the Magistrate ordered the arrest of the police officers who ordered to open fire on the protestors, as well as those who had opened fire, during the said protest in Rambukkana on 19 April, which led to the death of one person and injured more than 30 others.

Contd. on page 2



A poster seen in Colombo calling on all trade unions to join the strike action against the President, PM, and Government

## Nearly 1,000 trade unions to strike today

- State, semi-govt., and private trade unions in show of strength

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA AND DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

**N**early 1,000 state, semi-government, and private sector trade unions are to engage in a joint token strike and hartal today (28) in support of the ongoing protests across the country demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, and the current Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP)-led Government.

Contd. on page 2

## Health Ministry denies only half of MSD stocks left

- Slams Govt. Pharmacists' 'misleading' claim

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

**T**he Health Ministry has rejected the recent statement made by the Society of Government Pharmacists (SGP) that about 50% of the stocks of medical supplies in the Medical Supplies Division (MSD) of the Ministry have been exhausted.

Speaking to *The Morning*, Health Ministry Communications

Director, Public Health Services Deputy Director General, and Disaster Preparedness and Response Division Head Dr. Hemantha Herath said: "As far as I know, there are about 14,000 medical supplies in the MSD, so 50% of that would be a very large amount. It is a misleading statement that there is such a shortage."

Contd. on page 2

## US envoy concludes first visit to North



US Ambassador Julie Chung in Jaffna

**U**S Ambassador to Sri Lanka Julie J. Chung visited Jaffna from 24 to 27 April during her initial trip to northern Sri Lanka as Ambassador, in which she said she gained a "better

understanding of the impact of the war and the human rights concerns", the US Embassy in Colombo said in a statement yesterday (27).

Contd. on page 2

## Exhuming remains of Sainthamaruthu dead begins

**T**he exhumation of the remains of those who were killed in the 2019 bomb explosion in Sainthamaruthu commenced last morning (27).

The Kalmunai Magistrate's Court yesterday granted permission to unearth the remains of the deceased for re-examination of their deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA).

Accordingly, the remains buried at the Ampara cemetery are being exhumed in the presence of the Ampara magistrate with the participation of the Judicial Medical Officer (JMO) and other police officers who were involved in the initial investigations, as well as government analysts.

By re-examining the DNA, the investigators intend to find out whether the remains of Pulasthini Mahendran alias Sara Jasmine, a converted Islamic extremist and part of Zahran Hashim's terror group,...

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A scene of one of the shootings being investigated by Police in Rambukkana  
PHOTO PRADEEP DAMBARAGE

இலங்கை தினசரி  
மற்றும் வாரந்த  
பத்திரிகைகளை  
உங்கள்  
மொபைல்ல்  
பெற்றுக்கொள்ள  
எம்மோடு  
இணையுங்கள்



Viber இல் இணைய  
இங்கே CLICK  
செய்யுங்கள்



இக் குழுமத்தில் இணைவதனால்  
மற்றவர்கள் உங்கள்  
தொலைபேசி இலக்கத்தை  
பார்வையிட முடியாது



# PUCSL awaits government guidelines on electricity tariff

- *Writes to Power Ministry regarding matter*
- *PUCSL Chair notes public consultation prior to decision*
- *CEB's proposed 82.4% tariff hike to recover Rs. 505 bn annual costs*
- *Power and Energy Minister says PUCSL approved tariff, but Cabinet will decide*

**The Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL) has written to the Power and Energy Ministry expecting the policy guidelines of the Government in order to reach a decision on the electricity tariffs.**

"The Commission expects the policy guidelines of the Government as indicated in Section 12 of the General Policy Guidelines issued

on 12 October 2021, and Section 5 of the Sri Lanka Electricity Act, No. 20 of 2009, in order to decide on the electricity tariffs as per Section 30 of the Electricity Act," read the letter by PUCSL Chairman Janaka Ratnayake to the Ministry on Monday (25).

Speaking to the media on Tuesday (26), Ratnayake said that the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) had requested a tariff hike twice this year – once on 19 March and more recently on 21 April.

"However, we first need the policy guidelines from the Government. They must tell us what kind of relief they are willing to provide for the public. After that, we will hold a public consultation process and then decide on the electricity tariff," said Ratnayake.

In the letter to the Ministry, Ratnayake said that the CEB's proposed tariff increase of 82.4% is expected to fully recover the forecast costs of Rs. 505 billion for this year.

"According to the CEB submission, their annual revenue requirement is Rs. 505 billion, and their sales revenue at the existing electricity tariffs is Rs. 276 billion. The proposed tariff structure would result in category-wise average monthly electricity bill increases," said the letter.

The letter further warned that this forecast revenue requirement is based on the exchange rate and fuel prices as of 19 March 2022, and that this may increase by an estimated Rs. 200 billion per year.

"So far, we have not given approval to the CEB for a tariff hike. There is a proper process to be followed prior to doing so, and consumers do not have to worry about a midnight increase of electricity tariffs," stressed Ratnayake.

However, Power and Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera Tweeted on Tuesday that the proposed tariff revisions by the CEB have been approved by the PUCSL.

"This was not the first time. Requests have been made on multiple

occasions since 2015. The Cabinet of Ministers has the authority to implement, revise, or reject the proposal. No decision has been made on the request so far," said Wijesekera.

When *The Morning* questioned Ratnayake about this statement, he said: "Ministers come for two months or so. We do not mind that. We work according to the PUCSL Act No. 35 of 2002."

"Wijesekera can talk to the Government and inform us about the Government's policy," he added.

## Contd. from page 1

### Prez...

The President added in the letter that the venerable Chief Prelates of the Three Chapters, Archbishop of Colombo His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, and other religious leaders, political parties, and various organisations have appealed to him to form an all-party government representative of each political party in Parliament, as a solution to the present social and economic crisis.

However, during an audience with the chairpersons, mayors, and members of local government institutions yesterday, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has never asked him to resign from his position and also expressed confidence that the President would not ask him to resign at any point.

"I have to tell you that the President has, at no stage, asked me to resign, and I am confident that he would not ask me to resign at any stage in future either," he said, to applause from the audience.

He also said that he is not willing to resign, as it would be detrimental to Sri Lanka.

"Anyone can make allegations, but those allegations need to be proven. We cannot turn our back on the Constitution and leave, and allow the country to descend into a state of anarchy," he said.

These remarks by the President and Prime Minister came yesterday amidst growing agitations against the incumbent Government, with protesters calling for the resignation of the President, the Premier, and the Cabinet of Ministers.

PM Rajapaksa also told the local government authorities that the Government would rebuild the country, even with foreign aid.

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on Tuesday (26) also emphasised that he does not intend to step down from his position, and that he has taken measures to resolve the present crisis within a matter of days.

"Don't worry about the current crisis, it will be resolved in the days ahead, and 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 on Tuesday.

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.

### Nearly...

Speaking at a media briefing held yesterday (27), the trade union representatives said that the decision to launch the strike and hartal was in support of the strongest people's struggle ever seen in the history of Sri Lanka.

"Working people are the biggest victims of the current crisis in the country. Despite the sharp decline in their incomes over the past year, the cost of living continues to rise. As a result of the prevailing shortages of milk powder, fuel, pharmaceutical drugs, and many other commodities, the people have been embarrassed like never before," they mentioned.

They further stated that not only has the Government completely lost the support of the people today, but that it has also lost the support of the majority in Parliament.

The trade union representatives also claimed that the Government is pursuing a repressive policy to suppress the people's struggle that is currently in progress.

According to them, several trade unions such as the Ceylon Bank Employees' Union, the Ceylon

Teachers' Union, the Health Professionals' Union, the Inter Company Employees' Union, the Ceylon Estate Service Union, the Free Trade Union Centre, the All-Ceylon Management Service Officers' Union, the United Postal Employees' Union, the Sri Lanka Freedom Employees' Union, the Ports Clerks' Union, the Private Sector Employees' Centre, the National Employees' Union, the Sri Lanka Freedom Health Service Union, the Locomotive Engine Operators' Union, the Sri Lanka Railway Station Masters' Union, the Ceylon Workers' Congress, the Ceylon Electricity Board Engineers' Union, the Government Nursing Officers' Association, and the Principals' Service Union would be engaged in the strike today.

The Ceylon Bank Employees Union and the Federation of University Teachers Associations (FUTA) have also decided to conduct a token strike today (28) to express their anger at the current Government.

Speaking to *The Morning*, Ceylon Bank Employees Union (CBEU) representative Jayalal Sudesh said that members of five state banks, including Bank of Ceylon, People's Bank, National Savings Bank, Regional Development Bank, and the State Mortgage and Investment Bank, and private banks including Seylan Bank, Commercial Bank, Hatton National Bank, Sanasa Development Bank, HSBC, Indian Overseas Axis Bank, and Standard Chartered Bank would participate in the strike.

Around 30,000 members would represent the strike action and the rally, heading towards Galle Face. However, essential services including automated teller machines and computerised services will not be affected during the strike.

Meanwhile, the FUTA and all its sister unions representing all state universities, in solidarity with other trade unions representing various state sector employees, will refrain from attending all regular duties today.

In a statement issued in this regard, it said: "We note that this crisis arose through systematic neglect by the Government and its failure to address the basic needs of the people during these very trying times. People have lost their livelihoods, and access to essential commodities, such as fuel, food, and fertiliser, and are left to confront the rising cost of living and food shortages in these uncertain times, with little in the form of direction or support from the Government.

"Education has also been disrupted by these shortages and the impractical solutions provided during the pandemic. The fallout from this crisis has been particularly felt by those who are already vulnerable and marginalised. The gradual weakening of democratic institutions and norms, through fear mongering and scapegoating, with their replacement by authoritarian structures, politicised bodies, and a silenced press, compels the public to take to the streets. Today, the Government has lost all legitimacy and trust and can only remain in power by coercive and violent means. The FUTA stands in solidarity with those who call for change."

### IGP...

Following the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) having announced a fuel price hike with effect from midnight on 18 April, filling stations in the Rambukkana area had stopped issuing fuel.

However, the people who were waiting in queues near filling stations until midnight that day started a protest in the Rambukkana area demanding the release of fuel at the old prices. Accordingly, they staged a protest on 19 April from 1.30 a.m., blocking the Colombo-Kandy railway line in the Rambukkana area. The Rambukkana-Mawanella, Rambukkana-Kegalle, and Rambukkana-Kurunegala main roads were also blocked due to the protests.

One person was killed and more than 30 others were injured when the Police opened fire on protestors who were engaged in the said protest over the prevailing fuel shortages and rising fuel prices on 19 April.

Meanwhile, claiming that the Opposition could not trust any police investigation into the police shooting at the said protest in the Rambukkana area, Opposition and Samagi Jana Balawegaya Leader Sajith Premadasa recently called for the appointment of a panel of inquiry comprising retired Supreme Court judges to investigate the said incident.

He also requested Speaker of Parliament

Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena to summon Defence Ministry Secretary Gen. (Retd.) Kamal Gunaratne, Public Security Ministry Secretary Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Jagath Alwis, IGP Wickramaratne, and the Senior Superintendent of Police who, according to Premadasa, had ordered the shooting, to Parliament, and to allow the party leaders representing Parliament to question them.

### Ceylon...

This, together with support from other private and public stakeholders, has been instrumental in achieving Sri Lanka's first GI certification, the EDB noted.

Sri Lanka is the world's largest producer and exporter of cinnamon, accounting for 90% of the global market share. The EDB noted that although there are many varieties of cinnamon, Ceylon Cinnamon is pure and considered superior due to its delicate taste and properties that contribute to many health benefits.

The EDB said that the Geographical Indication, which protects the name and trademark of a special product identified with a particular region and production practice, will differentiate Ceylon Cinnamon from other cinnamons of lower quality and provide a competitive advantage.

An official ceremony took place between the EU Delegation to Sri Lanka and the EDB to mark the handing over of the certification from the EU to the EDB.

EU Ambassador Denis Chaibi said: "GI is not only about linking a product to a place; it is about recognising the skill and achievement of the people who produce it. In the case of Ceylon Cinnamon, it is an endorsement of quality and an acknowledgement of the long tradition and rich history behind the production of this internationally renowned spice.

"An enhanced competitive position for Ceylon Cinnamon in the EU market will increase exports for Sri Lanka, and bring higher income and more employment across the cinnamon value chain. I am happy that EU's trade assistance has supported Sri Lanka's efforts to obtain its first ever GI certification."

EDB Chairman/Chief Executive Suresh de Mel said: "This achievement could not have come at a more fitting time than now, when increasing Sri Lanka's foreign exchange earnings is more important than ever before. I encourage our cinnamon growers, processors, and exporters to use the GI logo and attract high-quality, value-added, premium markets. The EDB and I stand committed to provide our fullest support to help you reach greater heights in exports to generate more foreign exchange income for Sri Lanka."

### US...

"It was essential to me to visit the North early in my tenure as Ambassador. During the visit, I explored the history of the region and heard from people first-hand about their challenges and opportunities," Ambassador Chung said.

"I gained a much better understanding of the impact of the war and the human rights concerns, as well as the current economic situation in the North."

This was Ambassador Chung's second official trip outside the Colombo area. Her first trip was to the Kandy region.

The statement said that while in Jaffna, Chung held courtesy calls with the Northern Province Governor and the Commander of the Security Forces Headquarters in Jaffna to discuss the political and security situation in the North during the current economic crisis.

She had also engaged with civil society and met with families of missing and disappeared persons. The Ambassador underscored the importance of the ongoing efforts towards justice and accountability towards national reconciliation and unity.

In a meeting with Tamil politicians, Ambassador Chung had discussed human rights and governance challenges. Ambassador Chung also met with representatives of diverse religious communities and visited sites of worship to underscore the importance of religious pluralism in Sri Lanka.

Ambassador Chung also spoke with representatives of the business community to learn about their current challenges and efforts towards economic recovery.

She noted the potential for Diaspora investment to develop local business. In addition, the Ambassador visited a US-funded demining project that makes land viable for local communities.

Ambassador Chung met with University of Jaffna faculty members to discuss their new peacebuilding degree programme and the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation grants for the Archeological Museum Laboratory.

She also visited a US-funded palm leaves manuscript conservation project at the Jaffna Library.

Prior to returning to Colombo, Ambassador Chung met with local youth leaders at the American Corner in Jaffna to learn about their perspectives on a path forward towards an inclusive and prosperous future for all Sri Lankans.

### Health...

He said that there are ample ways to manage the shortage of medical supplies in the country so that patients would not be harmed, adding that the Ministry is currently taking all necessary steps towards this end.

"In the current situation, we have limited some non-essential medical tests and there are alternatives for treatment. There is a shortage of medical supplies now, so we cannot say that there is no such shortage. However, all necessary steps are being taken to overcome this. There are plenty of other things that can be done to prevent any injustice from being caused to the patients, in the face of drug shortages," Dr. Herath explained.

Speaking further, he said that pharmaceutical drugs and other medical supplies are being used sparingly as a solution to the shortage.

He added that talks are also underway with international agencies such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Health Organisation on drug procurement. In addition, he said, several other short-term and long-term solutions are currently being considered.

The SGP claimed last week that about 50% of the stocks of medical supplies in the MSD have been exhausted. Speaking to *The Morning* at the time, SGP President Ajith Thilakarathne alleged that out of the 1,358 medicines that should be in the MSD, stocks of 525 have depleted, among which are six life-saving drugs, 239 essential drugs, and 280 rarely used drugs.

"Especially drugs that are used to treat heart patients, as well as the rabies vaccine, are out of stock. Most of them are scheduled to be imported under the Indian credit facility, but it will take another six weeks' time," he further claimed.

Thilakarathne also claimed that out of the 8,553 surgical items required to be in the MSD, stocks of 5,376, which is 62.9% of the total requirement, have been depleted. Noting that the above drugs and surgical items may be available in very small quantities in hospitals, he said that the lack of medical supplies in the MSD to be issued to hospitals could lead to a collapse of the hospital system.

### No...

He added that in the current situation, the Government and other relevant authorities should pay special attention to the production of seed paddy required for the coming seasons. Otherwise, he said, paddy cultivation would fail in 2023, just as it happened in 2022, which would cause a food crisis.

"If seed paddy cannot be produced in the Yala season, it will not be possible to cultivate paddy even if we get some amount of chemical fertilisers in the Maha season. However, if the Government intervenes and provides the farmers who produce seed paddy with the necessary facilities to continue their production, they will be able to produce a significant amount of seed paddy. Through that, there would be satisfactory rice production by April 2023," Prof. Kumara further said.

Meanwhile, speaking at the same media briefing, Senior Prof. Buddhi Marambe said that the paddy harvest in the country has dropped by as much as 45% during the last Maha season. He charged that the decision by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and the Government to ban the import of chemical fertilisers without any scientific basis has caused a major threat to food security, which is a key component of national security.

A proposal to ban the use and importation of chemical fertilisers and agrochemicals was submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers by President Rajapaksa in April 2021, and the same was granted approval. However, the

Government decided to revoke the said ban and to thereby allow the private sector to import such, with effect from 24 November 2021.

Following the Government's decision to ban the importation of chemical fertilisers and certain agrochemicals, farmers in several areas were seen charging that there was a serious shortage of fertilisers for their cultivations. In addition, several protests were organised by farmers in the recent past, demanding that their crop damages, particularly those caused to paddy fields, due to the fertiliser issue, be compensated.

### Public...

"We waited for at least two hours to go inside. After going in, there was another queue to issue yet another token. Most of the counters are closed, and people have to wait for long hours to obtain what they came to get done."

It was also learnt that there is no designated place for the public to wait.

One officer revealed that around 1,000 people arrive every day at the Consular Affairs Division due to the current situation in the country.

"We don't have enough facilities. When there is a power cut, there are only a few fans to provide ventilation," another officer claimed.

Even though the Ministry announced that those who wish to obtain services from the division are encouraged to make online appointments, people still have to wait in queues to obtain tokens, even if they have such an appointment.

The division receives a high number of service-seekers nowadays, to obtain various certificates and have documents authenticated, from different parts of the country. The division provides services using the full capacity of the officers and certificates, and documents are authenticated through the Electronic Documents Attestation System.

Attempts to contact the Acting Director General of the Consular Affairs Division regarding this matter proved futile.

### Exhuming...

...are among those who died inside the Sainthamaruthu safe house raided on 26 April 2019.

Sara Jasmine is the wife of Atchchi Muhammadu Muhammadu Hasthun, the attacker who targeted the Katuwapitiya St. Sebastian Church in the string of bomb blasts on 21 April 2019.

Days after the 2019 Easter Sunday terror attacks, several, including children, were killed in a bomb explosion inside a house at Sainthamaruthu in Kalmunai on 26 April. The bomb was detonated by one of the brothers of Zahran Hashim, identified as Mohamed Rilwan.

Although it was observed during investigations that a total of 17 people had died in the explosion, none of the DNA samples from the bodies of the deceased had matched the sample from Pulasthini's mother.

### National...

As a whole, they said, the CEB owes approximately Rs. 22 billion to renewable energy operators, due to which they are not even able to pay salaries to about 7,000 employees, which may lead to a severe social crisis. Claiming that the banks have lent about Rs. 60 billion to the industry, they said that the servicing of these loans would come to a halt soon.

"This can impact the banking system as well," they warned. "On the other hand, there are about 550 MW projects in the pipeline for impending financial closure, and if those are not financed and developed, the country will turn to high-cost fossil fuel for power, further fuelling the economic crisis. Also, the future target of 70% of power generated through renewable energy sources will never materialise, as delayed payments will drive away investors."

They added that the CEB should focus on cost efficiency and promoting renewable energy by creating greater flexibility in decision making at the Sustainable Energy Authority, the Power and Energy Ministry, the Finance Ministry, the Attorney General's (AG) Department, and the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL).

# Audit of state institutions recommended

● *Station Masters call for audit of Railways Dept., cite losses due to irregularities and corruption*

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWEERA

**T**he Sri Lanka Railway Station Masters' Union (SLRSMU) has pointed out that not only politicians but also state institutions should be subjected to a full audit process to overcome the current crisis in the country.

Speaking to *The Morning*, SLRSMU General Secretary Kasun Chamara said that the Department of Railways should also be subjected to a full and formal audit under a suitable process for auditing state institutions.

continues to be a loss-making state institution is due to the irregularities at various levels within the department, especially the informal development projects and the import of railway carriages," he claimed.

He also said that as a trade union, they had launched a massive struggle exposing various corruption, fraud, and the misappropriation of state property within the Railways Department, adding that the resistance against them through the political authorities, the department's administration as well as other trade unions was immense due to such efforts.

"At present, the country's youth, especially the progressive people, are taking to the streets and demanding that the administrative structure of



the country be made more transparent through auditing. It is a very just and positive awakening," Chamara added.

He noted that as a responsible trade union, they suggest that auditing should be done not only in the political arena,

but also in the public service. He said that the SLRSMU hoped that the authorities would conduct a full audit of the department as a starting point and set a good precedent for other state institutions.

## Revenue from SOEs should be duly received by Treasury: COPE

● *Notes several discrepancies in operations of State Timber Corporation*

Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) Chairman Prof. Charitha Herath said that the annual revenue earned by state-owned enterprises (SOEs) should be properly received by the Treasury, considering that the State Timber Corporation had only transferred Rs. 100 million to the Treasury despite recording an operating profit of Rs. 1.4 billion for 2021.

The Chairman made these remarks when the State Timber Corporation was summoned before the COPE recently (22 April) to examine the Auditor General's reports for 2019 and 2020 and to evaluate their performance, where he declared that state institutions should be prepared to send a significant portion of their earnings to the Treasury.

The COPE committee noted that the Forest Department had granted approval to the State Timber Corporation on 30 June 2020 for the removal of 28,958 pine trees from the Hyndford Estate in Weligampola, Kandy, but the trees had not yet been removed.



Prof. Charitha Herath

Mahindananda Aluthgamage stated that the State Timber Corporation could earn a huge profit if it could efficiently remove and export the timber recommended by the Forest Department for felling.

The Committee also noted that on 10 October 2012, it had directed that action had to be taken to amend the State Timber Corporation Act to empower the State Timber Corporation to issue a certificate for imported timber, but this has not yet been done. Officials of the Timber Corporation responded that a board paper had been submitted for this purpose. The Committee also

drew attention to the delays in this process from 2012 to date.

The COPE also inquired into the write-off of Rs. 14.4 million worth of debtors by the corporation without the approval of the Treasury. The officials said that the decision was taken by the then-Acting Board of Directors in 2007 with the approval of the Corporate Audit and Management Committee.

The COPE Chairman said that since the Secretary to the Treasury is in charge of the Consolidated Fund for Public Debt, the Chief Accounting Officer should inform the Secretary to the Treasury and obtain permission if debtors are to be written off as such.

The COPE also noted that in 2012, it had directed that the Kaldemulla Furniture Factory work on turning a profit, but had remained in loss-making condition to date. The COPE Chairman inquired as to what was the need to maintain the relevant institution at such a loss. The Chairman further stated that the furniture outlets owned by the corporation as a whole have incurred huge losses.

The Auditor General stated

that the wastage of large quantities of timber in the production of furniture has been observed as a reason for these losses, and that by-products of discarded timber can reduce this loss to some extent.

Officials said that this was due to the lack of employees with proper knowledge of furniture manufacturing and the need to compete with the private sector in the market. However, it was revealed that the major shortcoming of the State Timber Corporation was that it was not producing furniture. The Chairman instructed the Secretary to the Ministry to send a report within a month on the future course of action to be taken in consultation with the relevant officials.

The Committee also noted that two advisors and a driver had been recruited to assist the Chairman of the Corporation with only the approval of the Board of Directors, in contravention of the circular instructions.

The recruits were paid an allowance of Rs. 2,850 per day for 270 days, a sum of Rs. 769,500, from 12 February to 3 September 2019. Although the approval of the General

Treasury was sought for this purpose, it was not received and the COPE Chairman informed the Secretary to the Ministry to take legal action against the relevant Chairperson.

Moreover, the committee noted that the corporation had incurred a loss of Rs. 982,473 after reducing the price of items valued at Rs. 1,690,183 by more than 50% to Rs. 707,710 and the General Manager of the corporation stated that this decision was taken due to the fact that the furniture was in a defective condition after being kept for too long without disposal. The Chairman said that if such concessions could be justified, a Board Memorandum should be submitted and the Auditor General's Department should be informed.

The meeting was attended by MPs Mahindananda Aluthgamage, Jagath Pushpakumara, Harsha de Silva, Eran Wickramaratne, Indika Anuruddha, Sagara Kariyawasam, and Madhura Withanage, as well as the Secretary to the Ministry of Wildlife and Forest Conservation and officials of the State Timber Corporation.

## CID to probe attack on journo Chamuditha's house

● *Decision taken by Kesbewa Magistrate*

BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

The Kesbewa Magistrate has handed over the case regarding the attack on electronic media journalist Chamuditha Samarawickrama's residence to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Speaking to *The Morning*, Samarawickrama said that while this was suggested by his lawyer, the Kesbewa Magistrate had decided to hand over the investigation to the CID if the Police could not arrest any of the suspects.

"The Police were unable to arrest any suspects. They informed the Court that they are unable to find the suspects, since the number plates of the vehicles in which the attackers arrived were not clear. However, I am happy about the decision," stated Samarawickrama.

Samarawickrama appeared before the Kesbewa Magistrate's Court on 25 March related to the motion he filed over his protection, after four unidentified individuals attacked his residence in Piliyandala on 14 February. It was the second time he appeared in court after the Kesbewa Magistrate's Court issued an order directing the Victims Protection Division of the Police to provide sufficient security to Samarawickrama on 18 February.

Samarawickrama said earlier that he is not satisfied with the Police's investigation, as no one had been arrested in relation to the incident so far.

"It is almost three months now. I really feel that this would also end up like all the other unsolved cases pertaining to attacks on journalists," he had said.

"Most of these cases had no end when it came to the Police's investigations. No one was arrested. I was not killed, fortunately, but I was attacked by unidentified individuals. Who



Journalist Chamuditha Samarawickrama

are these people? I have a right to know," he stated.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 13 journalists were killed from 2005-2015, whereas others were threatened, abducted, and tortured, and these cases are yet to be solved.

Meanwhile, Police Media Spokesman Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Attorney-at-Law Nihal Thalduma, speaking to *The Morning* earlier, said that the Police have deployed several teams to check the closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras on the roads in the area and telephone towers.

The suspects behind the attack are yet to be identified.

"CCTV footage was sent to the Moratuwa University to identify the van and the motorcycle in which the attackers are believed to have arrived. It is still in this process."

The attackers had entered the housing complex where Samarawickrama lives and while one of the four attackers had been holding the security guard at gunpoint, the other three had pelted stones at Samarawickrama's house and had also thrown excrement at his house. The group of unidentified attackers had arrived wearing helmets and face coverings.

## Fire reported at leading school in Colombo

A fire reportedly broke out inside a building at St. Joseph's College in Maradana.

The Colombo Fire Brigade said that five fire engines along with around 18 firefighters were

deployed to douse the flames.

By the time they were able to bring the situation under control, they had noted that the cause of the fire and the full extent of damage were yet to be ascertained.

## ICRC to provide humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Sri Lanka Delegation Head Loukas Petridis paid a farewell call on Minister of Foreign Affairs Prof. G.L. Peiris at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Foreign Minister Prof. Peiris appreciated the contribution made by the ICRC in Sri Lanka, the ministry said in a statement yesterday (27).

He recalled the important role played in the past during the conflict situation and its current role in assisting with post-conflict rehabilitation and reconciliation, as well as the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) training being provided to the armed forces, the Police, and other government institutions.

In response to the briefing by Minister Peiris on current economic challenges, ICRC Delegation Head Petridis informed that the ICRC will donate medical supplies to Sri Lanka through the Sri Lanka Red Cross, and further indicated that it is ready to provide humanitarian assistance based on the requirements of the Government.

Foreign Minister Peiris conveyed his best wishes to Petridis on his new assignment, and assured that he would continue to work closely with his successor to further strengthen co-operation with the ICRC.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs Tharaka Balasooriya and ministry officials were also present at the occasion.

## Deposit amount for prison inmates revised

● *Deposit to be used for purchase of sanitary items/food from canteen*

● *Rs. 3,000 per week for suspects on remand, per month for prisoners*



BY DINITHA RATHNAYAKE

The Prisons Department has decided to revise the amount deposited at the canteen for prison inmates, to be utilised for the purchase of sanitary items and food from the canteen.

Owing to the current crisis in the country, transportation problems, and the high cost of goods, it has become difficult for relatives of inmates to visit prisons regularly. Therefore, prison inmates would be able to acquire food and sanitary items by depositing money under this system.

Accordingly, Commissioner of Prisons (Administration,

Rehabilitation and Skill Development) (Covering Up Duties) and Prisons Media Spokesman Chandana Ekanayaka, issuing a statement in this regard, stated that a sum of Rs. 3,000 per week for a suspect in remand custody and Rs. 3,000 per month for a prisoner would be the deposit amount, adding that the inmates would then be allowed to purchase food and sanitary items thereafter.

In view of this, Commissioner General of Prisons Thushara Uplundeniya has revised the amount provided for the deposit for sanitary items and food items for prison inmates from 26 April.

## Circular issued to control expenditures in public service

The Secretary to the Finance Ministry on Tuesday (26) issued a circular to control the expenditures in the public service.

The circular has called for a project expenditure control system and the reduction of fuel usage and communication expenses, and suspending public sector recruitment.

The circular stated that the Sri Lankan economy has approached a highly critical juncture and with that, the requirement of providing an efficient and productive service for the public while using

public finances in the most responsible and economical manner has become the foremost priority.

"Enhancing government revenue is a crucial requirement to control this challenging situation. However, as it takes a certain time, public expenditure needs to be well-tightened, making it available only for the most essential services for a certain period," the Finance Ministry said.

"Therefore, the restrictions already introduced by several circulars such as controlling the payment of fuel and

communication allowances, restrictions of water and electricity expenditure, suspending the construction and hiring buildings, stopping foreign study tours and trainings conducted using local funds, suspending the payment of various allowances made at ministry or institution-level without the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers, and avoiding any new commitments for various welfare/subsidy programmes and development programmes, should be thoroughly followed by all government institutions."

## Power cut schedule announced for next three days

The Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL) stated it had approved the Ceylon Electricity Board's request, made yesterday (27), to impose power cuts lasting three hours and 20 minutes from 28 to 30 April.

Accordingly, the power cuts have been scheduled as follows:

Areas designated under groups A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, and W under the schedule will experience two hours of power

interruption between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and another one hour and 20 minutes of interruption between 5 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. Areas designated under the group CC will experience three hours of interrupted supply from 6 a.m. to 9.20 a.m.

### NOTICE OF ENROLMENT

**I, NAYANA PUBUDU SOMARATNA of APARTMENT 4/2, HEDGES COURT RESIDENCIES, NO. 18, HEDGES COURT ROAD, COLOMBO 10** do hereby give notice that I shall in SIX WEEKS HENCE apply to HIS LORDSHIP THE CHIEF JUSTICE AND THE OTHER HONOURABLE JUSTICES OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA to be admitted and enrolled as an ATTORNEY-AT-LAW OF THE SUPREME COURT OF SRI LANKA.

**Nayana Pubudu Somaratna**

Date: April 21, 2022

### IALOG CLUB VISION MEMBERS RECEIVE ACCESS TO THE EXCLUSIVE' LEGENDS RETRO PARTY

Taking its members down memory lane, Dialog Club Vision, Sri Lanka's premier loyalty programme powered the exclusive virtual event 'Legends Retro Party' on March 18 via Zoom. Over 5,000 Club Vision members and their loved ones were invited to join in on this exclusive virtual event and were treated to timeless party anthems from the 70's-90's.

The 'Legends Retro

Party' by Legends 96.6 featured three well known personalities from the local entertainment industry; Tareeq



Musafer, Kapila Mohotti and Harpo Goonerathne. On this night to remember, Dialog

Club Vision

Members and their loved ones grooved to their own private parties while listening to smash hits of the 70's, 80's and 90's from the comfort and safety of their homes. Dialog Club Vision continues to deliver a world of exclusivity and privileges to its valued members and their loved ones, such as personalized care, exclusive discounts and offers, lifestyle and entertainment events and more. To explore more exciting offers available for Dialog Club Vision members, and to learn more about Sri Lanka's premier loyalty programme, customers can visit the MyDialog App or visit <https://dlg.lk/3qL5fqr>



## Police actions louder than words

It was reported this week that the relevant authorities have been instructed to expedite the implementation of a special welfare programme for Police officers and to take immediate action to address issues pertaining to their allowances and facilities.

At the same time, newly appointed Public Security Minister Prasanna Ranatunga, who issued the aforesaid instructions, had also remarked on the importance and necessity of making the Police force a people-friendly institution, while also acknowledging that there are various concerns about the people-friendliness of the Police. He had also stated that Police officers should only act in accordance with the powers vested in them by the Police Ordinance and per Police orders, and that under no circumstances should those powers be violated.

The Minister made these statements in a context where the Sri Lanka Police has come under fire over how it dealt with protestors during the ongoing spate of protests.

There are serious allegations against the Police force with regard to the excessive use of power, unlawful actions aimed at curbing protests, and acting in an intimidating manner during protests. It is also the Police force that has been accused of exercising powers in a manner that caused the death of a man during a protest in Rambukkana, which is the first, and fortunately so far the only, death reported during the ongoing protests. However, there are plenty of other allegations against the Police force for acting in an unlawful manner during protests, especially when it comes to instituting legal action against those arrested during these protests.

These are merely recent incidents that have corroded public trust and confidence in the Police force, and during the past few decades, Sri Lankans have witnessed Police officers engaging in unlawful or inhumane behaviour on many occasions. In such a context, restoring public trust and confidence is going to be a difficult task, although it is an extremely timely need.

The necessary changes to the Police force highlighted by Ranatunga, especially pertaining to its image and conduct, have been highlighted by rights activists for many years. However, despite promises by Ministers formerly in charge of the Police force, and even legal action taken by activists, the question remains as to how much has changed. Even when it comes to the most basic roles of the Police force, such as protecting and serving the people and maintaining public order, we cannot say that the people are completely satisfied with how Police officers exercise their power.

In addition to this, the changes the Minister wants to make, although admirable given the intentions he has mentioned, lack a crucial element of this discussion – the importance of addressing the root causes that have affected public trust in the Police force. The Minister's statement shows that he is concerned about how the Police are perceived in the society, but not what led to that situation. Until and unless the Minister looks into how citizens are treated by the Police, it will be impossible for him to create a Police force that is approved and respected by the people.

At the same time, we must acknowledge the simple fact that “the Police force” is actually the individual police officers serving in the Police, and that it is these officers' actions that build or destroy the reputation of the Police Department. Therefore, instead of assigning a certain value to the Police force in general, what must actually be done is taking steps to ensure that police officers act responsibly and respectfully, and that they properly understand and perform their duties in a people-friendly manner.

Merely because police officers' job description, or the role of the Police Department, relates to duties for the well-being of the people, it does not automatically make the Police a respectable authority. What builds, strengthens, and maintains public trust is how those duties are discharged.



# Will America achieve its sinister objectives in Sri Lanka?



BY PROF. TISSA VITHARANA

**O**ne recalls that the United National Party-led “Yahapalanaya” (good governance) Government was on the verge of signing the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) Agreements with the US Government, after having signed the periodic Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA).

The latter was signed at regular intervals to enable military exercises to be conducted in Sri Lanka and to receive military assistance from the US. This was renewed at regular intervals and therefore it was a routine, but the MCC and SOFA Agreements were new developments. These were a result of the only American military base in the Indian Ocean rim located at Diego Garcia being given back to the country that it belongs to, Mauritius, by virtue of a verdict delivered by the International Court of Justice.

According to the MCC Agreement, the strip of land extending from Colombo and Katunayake to the Trincomalee Harbour was to be given to the US to construct a means of rapid transport (rail and road), and the door would also be open for American companies to freely operate within our country. This would naturally lead to the domination of our economy as well.

The SOFA Agreement would enable any American soldier in uniform with a gun in hand to enter our country, bringing any type of arms as luggage; Sri Lanka Customs would not be able to even examine them, leave alone charge any duty.

US Army personnel would have full use of all ports and airports and the right to enter any of our Government premises at any time. In other words, Sri Lanka would become a virtual colony of the US, and its military base. But these two agreements could not be signed because of the defeat of the “Yahapalanaya” Government at the Presidential and General Elections.

It was generally accepted that the present Government would not sign the two agreements, and that the danger had passed. But a series of events should make us reconsider whether this danger may be forced upon us in the near future. The Sri Lankan economy has been run down to the lowest level in its history since Independence. A total of 60% of families are living below the poverty line and the level of malnutrition has grown to 18.3% (per a Medical Research Institute survey conducted about seven months ago). Many families have only one meal and that too without adequate nutrition. Children are suffering badly. I regret that my proposal to give the highest priority to feeding those who are hungry, which was made to the higher authorities, has been ignored.

A major cause for the above situation is the high cost of living. It has soared due to the Covid-19 epidemic on top of the global economic crisis. But what is surprising is that the Government has allowed traders to fix prices without any control or justification. To make matters worse, the Government has not intervened to bring down the cost of living by measures that have succeeded in the past.

For example, during the coalition Government of 1970-1975, the co-operative system was strengthened, thereby linking producer co-operatives with consumer co-operatives so that essentials were available at a reasonable price without any profit. This was supported by the

Food Control Department and the Marketing Department, which also directly bought from the producer and delivered through sales outlets to the consumer, only adding on the actual cost. There was no profiteering. Automatically, the traders too had to bring their prices down as well.

The people are suffering due to unwise decisions (e.g. the fertiliser problem, which has badly affected the farmers). The major blunder has been the US dollar crisis, which has led to shortages of imported items that have affected all layers of society as well as the many industries that depend on imported inputs. The lack of fuel, gas, imported food and medicines has led to shortages resulting in long queues and the disruption of the whole transport system. Many people have lost their jobs as a result.

This US dollar crisis has led to our foreign reserves falling from \$ 8 billion to less than \$ 1 billion. Rating agencies such as Fitch and Moody have dropped Sri Lanka to the lowest level, a single C, as being on the verge of bankruptcy. Our importers are badly affected, as letters of credit are no longer accepted, so orders are only acted on when US dollars are directly paid to the suppliers. This means a delay of several months even if US dollars are sent.

But the reality is that the importers are unable to get US dollars from local banks. Our foreign debt is said to have reached \$ 52 billion, and debt servicing is in the region of \$ 6 billion per year. The Government has not made use, up to now, of the various methods that are available to escape from this situation, such as restructuring the economy by negotiating a moratorium on the debt payments. For instance, it is possible to negotiate for a postponement of the annual debt servicing for a period of about five years. This would save us about \$ 30 billion, starting from the

next payment due in June this year. This money can be used to provide the people's needs from abroad and also develop the economy. A very surprising feature is that no serious effort is being made to have such an arrangement with our main creditor, China.

Instead, we are now signing an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and a begging mission has gone to Washington, D.C. This will only make matters worse, as in addition to getting into deeper debt, we are likely to be subject to their conditions, which include the neoliberal policy of unlimited imports. The main cause of our US dollar crisis is the fact that the Government, when it began to face the emerging US dollar crisis, failed to severely restrict imports (which cost more than twice our export earnings) to narrow the adverse foreign trade gap.

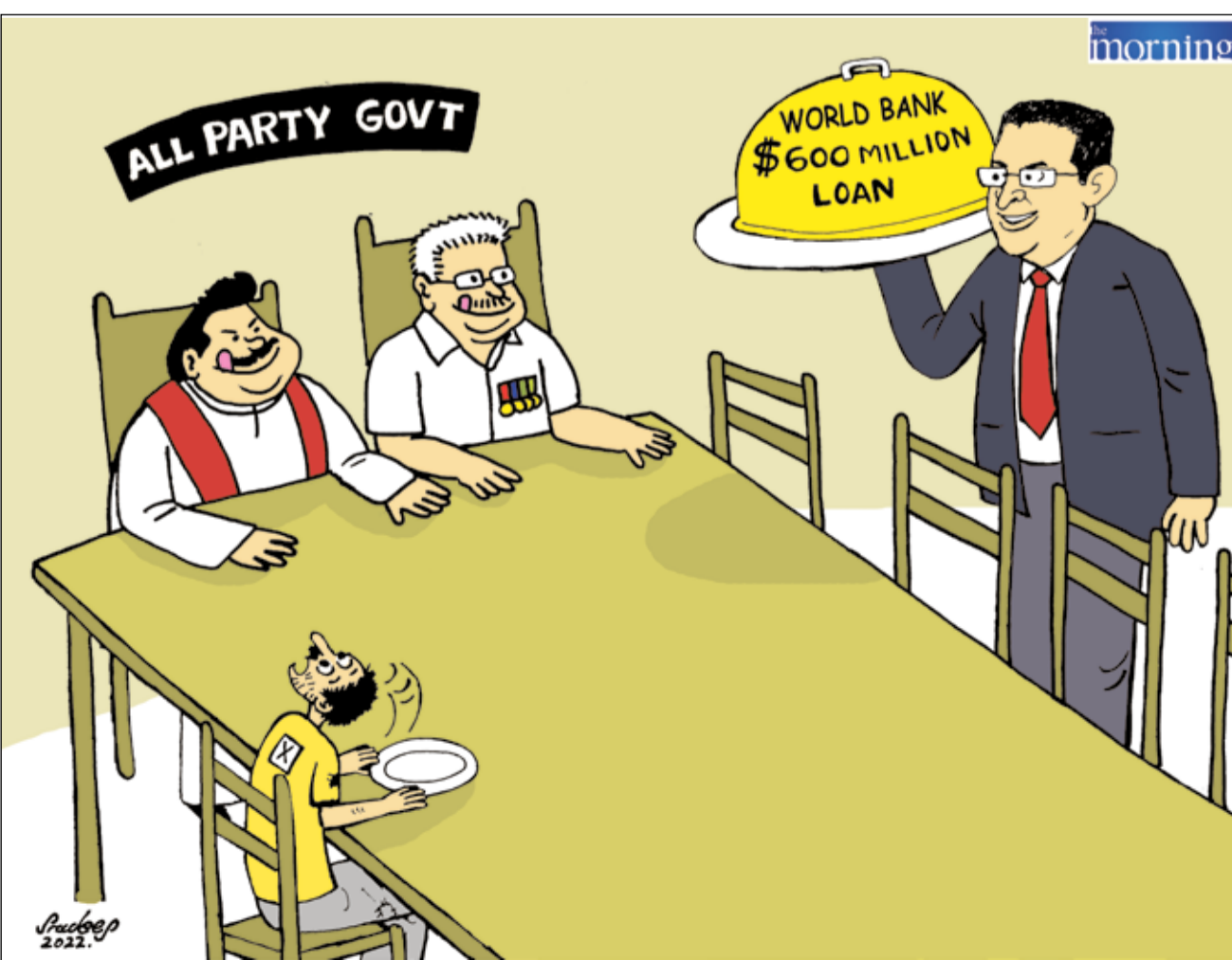
There should have been a strict import ban on all non-essentials, so that the outflow of the US dollar would have been minimised. There should have been more support to the organisations that I set up to promote small and medium enterprises (SMEs), like the 243 Vidatha Centres, to provide technology to support SMEs, one in each administrative division around the country. In the five years that I was the Minister of Science and Technology, the outcome had been the development of 231,000 SMEs. To support large scale industry as well as the SMEs, I set up an Institute of Nanotechnology in Homagama (which happens to be the 18th nanotechnology centre in the world, which even India had not achieved). While the Government talks of cutting down imports and promoting local industries, there has been no serious attempt to promote this technology transfer mechanism.

The complaint of many Ministers that various decisions are taken without their knowledge suggest that there is a section of the bureaucracy, possibly supported by some politicians, who are controlling the economy according to a plan determined by the US to disrupt our economy to the point where we may be forced to accept any terms and even sign the MCC and SOFA agreements. The fact that Executive President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was a former American citizen and former Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa is currently an American citizen further complicates the situation.

Thus, the proposal to set up an interim Government for a period of six to eight months to restore the economy and stabilise the social and economic situation in the country, as proposed by the group of 11 dissident political Parties, may provide a way out if done effectively. But this will not be easy, and certainly it would need a firm hand and the active support of the people.

*(The writer is a virologist, Government Parliamentarian, the Committee on Public Accounts Chairman, and the Lanka Sama Samaja Party General Secretary)*

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



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# Technology's role in resurrecting the power and energy sector

● Industrialists note need for renewable energy, proper pricing, digital connectivity, and sound policy decisions

BY SUMUDU CHAMARA

**W**ith today's technological advancements and inventions, the world can look into combining various technologies, and in this regard, complementing attempts aimed at dealing with global challenges, such as climate issues, with new technologies is crucial, and can prove immensely effective in the long run. Even though various technologies are already available for such purposes, to mainstream such methods and create a considerable impact, the support of various stakeholders is necessary.

When it comes to Sri Lanka, which is currently grappling with several crises, including a power and energy crisis, a significant change can be brought about by exploring how we can reap the maximum benefit of renewable energy sources, and utilising and supporting the available technologies. Policies, investments, technology, and knowledge are key areas that require attention.

These were some of the key points discussed at the event "Digital Lanka, Green Tech, Huawei Digital Congress 2022" held in Colombo on 25 April. The event was attended by experts from various fields who discussed how technology can be used to revive various sectors, including Sri Lanka's information and communication technology (ICT) and power and energy sectors.

## Sri Lanka's energy sector

During the event, Solar Industries Association of Sri Lanka President Kushan Jayasuriya pointed out the importance of urgently shifting to renewable energy sources such as solar power, in a context where the country is going through a massive energy and power crisis. He noted the importance of taking steps to ensure that the national grid is properly equipped to adopt solar power, while also highlighting that policy and decision making processes should pay more attention to this matter.

He noted that even though strengthening and supporting solar power as a power generation method in Sri Lanka may take time, it is crucial to take the necessary initiatives now in order to enjoy benefits in the near future. To support this process, he pointed out, it is important that policy makers make the correct decisions.

At the same time, Jayasuriya pointed out the importance of

pricing electricity properly so as to minimise or prevent losses to the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB). Adding that the key aspect is to ensure that the prices charged for electricity reflect the actual costs, he said that failing to take steps to do so will discourage private investors from entering the field. Furthermore, he noted that plans pertaining to renewable energy should be realistic, as otherwise, investors will not come forward.

"It is time that we charge the right price so that we will have money to invest in renewables," he added. "The future is renewable energy, and we are looking at a 70% share of renewable energy by 2030, which I think is a possible objective."

He added that achieving this objective, however, requires the contribution of various stakeholders from both the private and public sectors. Jayasuriya also noted the importance of making solar power generation more affordable and available, especially when it comes to the household level, and stressed that with the proper support, Sri Lanka can make solar power a beneficial method of power generation.

## Global challenges and targets

Meanwhile, Huawei Sri Lanka Vice President - Digital Power Don Chen discussed the importance of setting and achieving long-term goals in order to ensure sustainable, eco-friendly, efficient, user-friendly, and affordable technologies concerning various fields such as digitalisation and energy.

Elaborating on the digital power strategy, Chen noted the importance of developing clean energy, promoting the digitalisation of traditional energy, integrating digital and power electronics technologies, and converging information and energy flows to



Solar Industries Association of Sri Lanka President Kushan Jayasuriya  
PHOTOS SAMAN ABESIRIWARDANA

drive the energy revolution for a better and greener future. With regard to the necessary steps to be taken to ensure a better connection between the future developments and needs of the energy and technology sectors, under the 'one cloud' concept, he described the importance of streamlining the intelligent management of the delivery, storage, distribution, and usage of power.

This mainly relates to the "application platform as a service (aPaaS)" (a cloud service that offers development and deployment environments for application services) and the "energy cloud" (a cloud that enables customers to take on a more active role in the generation and utilisation of energy). In addition, four application scenarios, including energy generation, storage, and



Huawei Sri Lanka Vice President - Digital Power Don Chen

usage, were also explained by Chen, and they are intended to streamline energy and information flows during the process of providing energy to consumers. With regard to streamlining root technologies to applications in this process, the importance of integrating, among others, energy storage, cloud and artificial intelligence (AI), and communications technologies was explained.

Moreover, Chen spoke of the concept of carbon neutrality (having a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere), emphasising that low carbon, electrification, and intelligence are the ways to achieve carbon neutrality.

During the presentation on low carbonation, with a focus on the energy supply side decentralisation, it was noted that clean energy (energy that does not pollute the environment, nor increase the amount of greenhouse gases that may contribute to climate change) will become the main source of energy, and that clean energy generation will account for 75% of the total energy generation by 2050, with photovoltaic (PV) (conversion of light into electricity using semiconducting materials that exhibit the PV effect) and wind power becoming major new energy sources. With regard to upgrading to new power systems, changes to new power systems with raw energy as the main source was also pointed out.

The topic of electrification was also highlighted by Chen, adding that on the energy consumption

side, electricity will become the main force in the future.

Noting that electricity is the mainstream of energy consumption, he pointed out that some of the targets are to increase power from 20% in 2020 to 49% by 2050, and to increase the sales of new energy vehicles from 4.7% in 2020 to 4.9% by 2030. Speaking of the development of new energy vehicles, regarding which Chen said user experience becomes a key driving force for new energy vehicles, it was pointed out that key factors influencing purchase include charging, mileage anxiety (concerns with regard to the mileage per unit of energy/mileage compared to the amount of energy used), and safety-related concerns.

**Adopting newer technologies can help streamline power and energy sector activities**

With regard to intelligence, another key aspect pertaining to carbon neutrality in the long run, it was noted that it relates to the deep integration of power electronics and digital technologies. Moreover, during the presentation, it was noted that the convergence of energy flows and information flows become an inevitable source/network/load/storage/intelligence collaborative development. The presentation described that information flows and energy flows are fully integrated to build a modern energy system that is more efficient, cleaner, and cost-effective, improving energy production security and productivity, and enabling low-carbon and personalised experiences in energy consumption.

As was mentioned during the event, the main source of carbon emissions are electricity generation and the energy consumption of industries, such as transportation and other sectors. According to the

statistics regarding global carbon emissions, in 2020, around 48,900 million tons had been released, and the biggest contributor, which accounted for 40% of the said amount, was the electricity generation sector. Targets have been set to reduce the total amount of carbon emissions to 21,150 million tonnes by 2030, and to 6,315 million tonnes by 2040, with the aim of achieving zero carbon emission by 2050.

At present, five countries and regions account for around 64% of total carbon emissions. They are China, the US, the EU, India, and Russia, which account for 28%, 14%, 10%, 7%, and 5%, respectively.

Targets set for each milestone are, among others - ensuring zero carbon emissions from all new buildings; electric vehicles accounting for 60% of the annual passenger car sales; green technologies being used in heavy industries on a large scale and phasing out coal in advanced economies by 2030; ensuring that 50% of existing buildings achieve carbon neutrality; 50% aviation fuel achieves low emissions; stopping 90% of the world's heavy power consumption assets investment cycle; global electricity generation achieving carbon neutrality; global coal and oil power plants being phased out by 2040; ensuring that more than 85% of buildings achieve carbon neutrality globally and more than 90% of heavy industry production achieves low emissions; and ensuring nearly 70% of the world's electricity generation comes from PV and wind power.

It was further noted that in order to make this process a success, the contribution of many parties, including ICT companies, citizens, the public sector, and startups, is crucial.

As industry experts mentioned, even though resolving the energy and power sector crisis is an uphill battle, taking the initiative now to put to good use the available resources and technologies is key. Such endeavours will not only help Sri Lanka get out of the said crisis, it will help the country keep up with other countries that are trying to achieve long-term, sustainable, eco-friendly energy solutions.

**Sri Lanka needs to pay more attention to making available policies, knowledge, and support for solar power generation methods**

BY SHRUTI MENON

As calls continue for India to keep its distance from Moscow after the invasion of Ukraine, its oil purchases from Russia have more than doubled from last year. The Indian Government has defended the move to buy Russian oil, and said what it buys from Russia in a month is less than what Europe buys from Russia in an afternoon.

## Why is India buying more Russian oil?

India has taken advantage of discounted prices to ramp up oil imports from Russia at a time when global energy prices have been rising. The US has said that although these oil imports do not violate sanctions, "support for Russia...is support for an invasion that obviously is having a devastating impact".

UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss also urged India to reduce its dependence on Russia during a trip to Delhi in March, which took place at the same time as a visit by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Lavrov told his Indian counterparts that Russia was willing to discuss any goods that India wanted to buy and urged that payments be made in rubles.

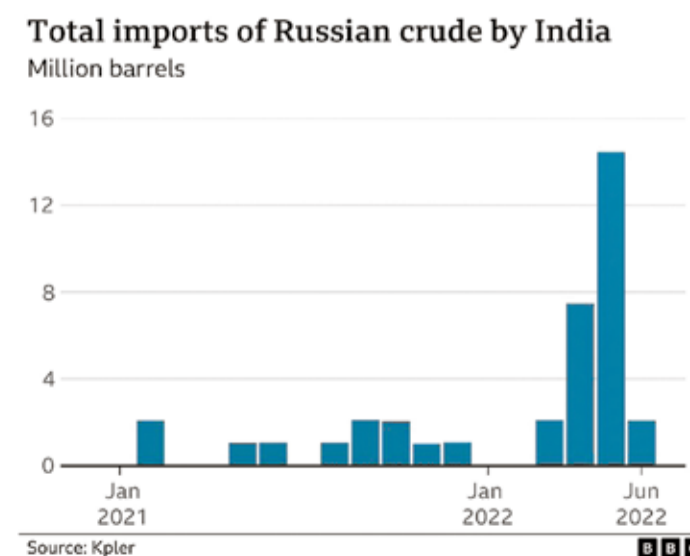
## Where does India get its oil?

After the US and China, India is the world's third-largest consumer of oil, over 80% of which is imported.

But in 2021, only around 2% of its total oil imports (12 million barrels of Urals crude) came from Russia, according to Kpler, a commodities research group. By far the largest supplies last year came from oil producers in the Middle East, with significant quantities also from the US and Nigeria.

In January and February, India didn't import any oil from Russia. But so far, the amount of Urals oil contracts made

# Why India is buying more Russian oil despite Ukraine war



for India covering March, April, May and June - around 26 million barrels - is higher than the quantity purchased during the whole of 2021, according to Kpler.

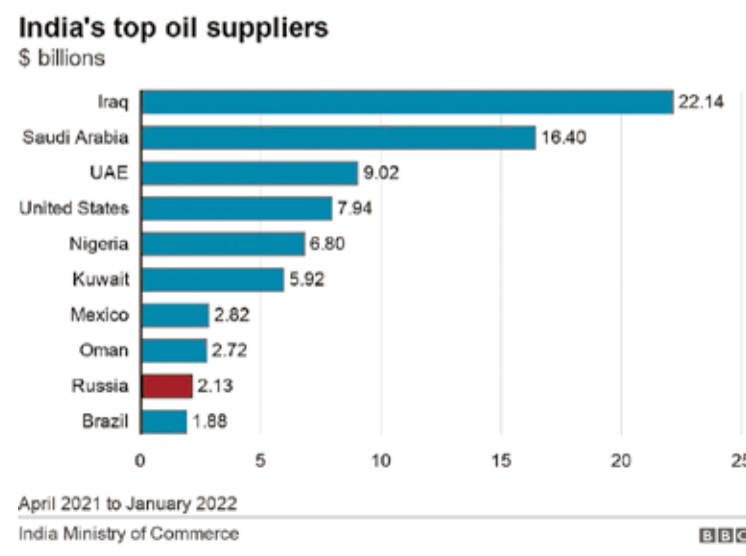
## What's the deal India is getting?

Following its invasion of Ukraine, there are now fewer buyers for Russia's Urals crude oil, with some foreign governments and companies deciding to shun Russian

energy exports, and its price has fallen.

While the exact price of the sales made to India is unknown, "the discount of Urals to Brent crude (the global benchmark) remains at around \$ 30 per barrel", said Kpler analyst Matt Smith.

These two types of crude normally sell at a similar price. At one point in March, as the price of Urals crude continued to drop, the difference between them reached an all-



time record, he added. Thus, he said, "India is likely to purchase at least some of this (Russian) crude at a significant discount".

## What's the impact of financial sanctions?

Although the price is attractive, India's big refining companies are facing a challenge trying to finance these purchases, because of sanctions on Russian banks. It's a problem facing trade



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets Russian President Vladimir Putin in early December 2021  
PHOTO © REUTERS

in both directions.

One of the options India is looking at is a transaction system based on local currencies, where Indian exporters to Russia get paid in rubles instead of dollars or euros. The US has made clear its reservations with this, saying it could "prop up the ruble or undermine the dollar-based financial system".

## Where else is India looking to buy oil?

India's oil imports from the US have gone up significantly since February, according to analysts at Refinitiv. However, market analysts say this may not be sustainable in the future as the US seeks to use its domestic oil production to replace supplies from Russia after its invasion of Ukraine.

There are also suggestions that trade with Iran could resume under a barter mechanism which Indian oil refiners could use to buy its oil. This arrangement stopped three years ago, when the US re-imposed sanctions on Iran. But this is unlikely to resume without a wider deal reached in international negotiations with Iran over its nuclear programme.

# Academic don highlights methods of commercialising university research

- Notes tech transfer models, open innovation platforms, academic entrepreneurship, industry collaborations, and knowledge-driven startup clusters associated with universities
- Calls on scientific community and journal publishers to collaborate and draw attention towards new scientific discoveries
- Recommends scientists, research institutions to maintain active social media accounts and to upload interesting posts of discoveries

BY RUWAN LAKNATH JAYAKODY

**T**he commercialisation of academic and university research or the production of research that has commercial potential should be encouraged through the establishment of tech transfer models, open innovation platforms, academic entrepreneurship, industry collaborations and knowledge driven start-up clusters associated with universities, as the next generation vehicle of economic transformation, an academic noted.

This recommendation was made in an editorial on the “Ladder of scientific research to develop developing nations” authored by the Sri Jayawardenepura University’s Chemistry Department’s Head, Prof. N. Kottegoda and published in the *Ceylon Journal of Science 51 (1)* this month.

Kottegoda is of the view that with the exponential increase in the disruption of the delicate ecological balance, humankind is marching towards a new existential threat, that of “ecological collapse”, which she claims has hardly registered on the political radar. As a result, she noted, the population growth and the available resources are no longer in equilibrium since the rate of consumption of resources is many times greater than their availability.

In this regard, she cited Y.N. Harari’s “21 Lessons for the 21st Century” where it is claimed that “Homo sapiens have morphed into mass ecological killers”. Of all the activities, the climate change caused due to the massive disruption of the earth’s green coating up to 80% of its total global coverage is, Prof. Kottegoda pointed out, more threatening than ever before in history, adding that this current reality and emergency will lead to expanded deserts, the melting of the ice caps, and extreme weather patterns, which will in turn result in irreversible cataclysm to the soil, water and the atmosphere. “The issue is currently reaching its tipping point, with the environment moving towards the point of no return, where even if humans find solutions, they may not be able to reverse the tragedy. Even though natural resources were taken for granted for providing for the sustainable availability of food, potable water, and other human needs, today we face a terrifying situation. The only solutions to address this ecological meltdown and the threats faced by humankind are the promises of research, advanced science and technology and, more importantly, science led decision-making and leadership. We humans have only a very little time left so we need to act fast,” she observed.

Speaking about scientific research, technology and economic disruption, Kottegoda explained that globally, the

“creative economy”, with its inexorable parade of modern technologies and technological innovations that are unfolding on many fronts, has been recognised as a critical force for fostering new drivers of competitiveness, promoting new business opportunities, and opening up pathways for major lifestyle and market related transformations. These are described, per Kottegoda, as “disruptive innovations”. “In the modern world, as the tempo continues to hasten, what disruptive ‘big things’ are in store? Nanotechnology, artificial intelligence (AI), and genetics are among the ever changing long list of ‘next big things’ in the cornucopia of research. However, not every research would lead to emerging technology and alter the business or social landscape, yet some however, truly disrupt the status quo by altering the lifestyle of the people or by reshuffling value pools or by laying the basic foundation to understand mysterious scientific concepts.”

Therefore, Kottegoda emphasised that it is critical to understand which technologies will matter when it comes to prioritising needs based on the social and economic status of a country. In this regard, she notes that emerging technologies such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, the Internet of things, cloud computing, robotics and AI have been adopted to introduce advanced and smart solutions to global food, energy and water-related issues. On the other hand, she pointed out that while these technologies have already been tested and adopted in developed countries, developing countries are yet to enter the race of making their systems smart. “Research leading to smartness would be a major driver in bringing the next technological revolution.” According to the World Bank’s recommendations for sustainable agricultural practices, climate – smart agriculture is an integrated approach to managing landscapes – cropland, livestock, forests, and fisheries, and one that addresses the interlinked challenges of food security and accelerating climate change while attempting to achieve the increasing of agricultural productivity, enhancing of resilience, and the reducing of emissions, simultaneously. “Therefore, a synergistic



PHOTO © UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYAWARDENEPURA

approach of greener technological advancements coupled with climate smart strategies will soon rewrite the next agricultural revolution.”

Similarly, there is an increased scientific focus on replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources in order to meet the climate smart objectives of “zero emissions by 2050”. There is an urgency to develop advanced materials and novel technology in order to harness alternative energies and storage mechanisms. Additionally, Kottegoda observed that the application of novel materials, particularly those based on carbon sources, have already proven their superior characteristics for providing potable water through desalination.

Addressing matters pertaining to publication in journals, Prof. Kottegoda elaborated on the fact while many leaders and policymakers believe, theoretically speaking, that a constant focus on research and innovations leading to social well-being based on a knowledge-based, research-driven economy should become an intrinsic part of their strategic and management plan in order to develop new offerings so as to keep in pace with the ever growing client related needs, unfortunately however, in many instances, what Nobel laureate theoretical physicist Albert Einstein described as “The process of scientific discovery is, in effect, a continual flight from wonder”, ends up only as a journal publication. As she explained, even though this should not be the case, most scientists consider this milestone as the ending of their current discovery and then move onto the next “flight of wonder”. “If one

closely observes the world of scientific discovery, the repetition of this same cycle of discovery and publication is seen throughout the career of a scientist till his/her retirement. Indeed, peer reviewed scientific publications are highly imperative for the existence of a healthy world of science with accurate information; However, when the bigger picture and the greater positive impact that these scientific discoveries and innovations should have on human lives, gets confined only to the pages of a journal, it is an injustice,” Kottegoda opined.

In the current context, the target audience of scientific journals is mainly researchers and academics of similar disciplines. Governmental leaders and officials including policy makers and investors who can elevate these new discoveries into commercial scale products, Kottegoda added, are oft not interested in reading these journals, which are full of scientific jargon. Therefore, on many occasions, the potential of converting lab scale research into an industrial scale production which will benefit humankind will often go unnoticed. On the other hand, Kottegoda further noted that journalists who have the capability to provide the necessary publicity for novel innovations are also not readers of scientific journals. As a result, she explained, a major portion of the new discoveries, in particular those arising from the developing part of the world, will only be visible within the relevant scientific community, without making greater footprints with practical applications in human society.

With regard to the role of journal publications acting as a ladder, she observed that while not all scientific discoveries have the potential for commercialisation and to support policy decisions, even the ones that possess that capacity could go unobserved due to this significant black hole in scientific journal publications as the latter fails to reach wider and important audiences outside targeted scientific peers. Kottegoda explained that it is surprising that in an era where the social media and other methods of new knowledge are easily accessible and widely used, how new scientific knowledge does not however penetrate to the masses. In many cases, scientists do what they do, she elaborated, because of their personal passion for innovations and not for media attention or other personal benefits, and consequently, they are satisfied after publishing in a good scientific journal which would be sufficient for the progression of their career.

When it comes to the majority of the journals, according to Kottegoda, they do not show much interest in portraying or communicating the contents of their journal to the general audience in a language that the lay folk can understand. Hence, she recommended that both the scientific community and journal publishers should work hand-in-hand in order to solve this knowledge gap and also to draw the attention of Government officials and investors towards new scientific discoveries. An interesting option, she suggested, would be for scientists or research institutions to maintain active accounts on popular social media platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram, where with each new discovery, they can upload interesting posts and short videos of their discovery in a creative and attractive manner, on these platforms, so that they can reach a wider audience and grab the attention of non-experts. Also, if they can penetrate into the mainstream media such as national newspapers, television (TV) and radio channels regarding their new work, the chance of catching the eye of an investor or a Government official, she opined, is much higher. According to “Benchmarking United States university patent value and commercialisation efforts: A new approach” by D.H. Hsu, P.H. Hsu, T. Zhou and A.A. Ziedonis, and “Revisiting the entrepreneurial commercialisation of academic science: Evidence from ‘twin’ discoveries” by M. Marx and D.H. Hsu, “on average, universities only capture 16% of the revenue that they help to create through groundbreaking discoveries”.

Therefore, giving publicity to new discoveries, Kottegoda emphasised, can also create opportunities for research institutions to generate more revenue. According to her, in filling this void from publication to commercialisation, journal publishers can also facilitate and accelerate the process where if the journal publishers can go one step further and try to bring the published articles to common platforms so as to reach the public through the social media and other mainstream media, and in simple language, that would also help to popularise new innovations.

Touching on the need to redefine the role of researchers, Kottegoda noted that in today’s context, there is increased attention given to positioning university research as an enabler of economic growth and leadership. In conclusion, T. Caulfield, S.H. Harmon and Y. Joly noted in “Open science versus commercialisation: A modern research conflict?” that unlike in the past, the roles of universities have been redefined to accommodate “knowledge production and transmission, and economic development”.

## Meteorites could have brought all 5 genetic ‘letters’ of DNA to early Earth

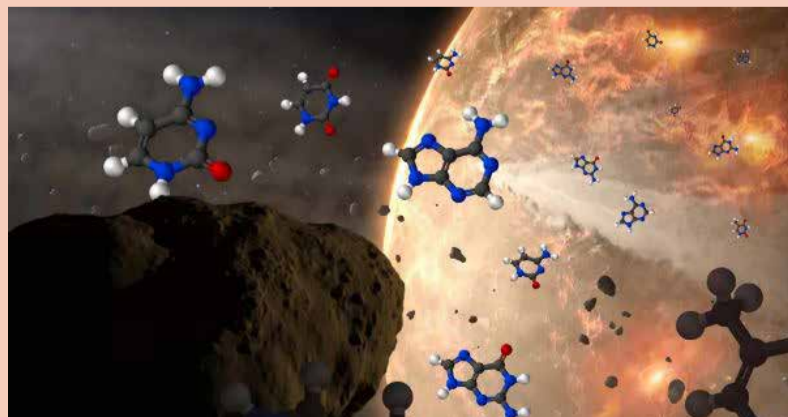
- Key building blocks of life were found in space rocks, scientists confirm

BY CHARLES Q. CHOI

Key building blocks of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) that previous research mysteriously failed to discover in meteorites have now been discovered in space rocks, suggesting that cosmic impacts might once have helped deliver these vital ingredients of life to ancient Earth.

DNA is made of four main building blocks – nucleobases called adenine (A), thymine (T), cytosine (C), and guanine (G). DNA’s sister molecule, RNA, also uses A, C, and G, but swaps out thymine for uracil (U). Scientists wondering whether meteorites might have helped deliver these compounds to Earth have previously looked for nucleobases in space rocks, but until now, scientists had only detected A and G in space rocks, and not T, C, or U.

Nucleobases come in two flavours, known as purines and pyrimidines.



In this conceptual image of meteoroids delivering nucleobases to ancient Earth, the nucleobases are represented by structural diagrams with hydrogen atoms as white spheres, carbon as black, nitrogen as blue and oxygen as red

PHOTO © DAN GALLAGHER/NASA GODDARD

The nucleobases previously seen in meteorites are both purines, which are each made of a hexagonal molecule fused with a pentagonal molecule.

The ones missing in space rocks until now are pyrimidines, which

are smaller structures each made of just a hexagonal molecule.

It was long a mystery why only purines, not pyrimidines, were seen in meteorites. Prior lab experiments

simulating conditions in outer space

suggested that both purines and pyrimidines could have formed during light-triggered chemical reactions within interstellar molecular clouds, and that the compounds could then have been incorporated into asteroids and meteorites during the formation of the solar system. Such chemical reactions may have also happened directly within the space rocks.

Now, scientists have finally detected all the pyrimidines and purines found in DNA and RNA in meteorites that made it to Earth.

“The presence of the five primary nucleobases in meteorites may have a contribution to the emergence of genetic functions before the onset of life on the early Earth,” study lead author Yasuhiro Oba, an astrochemist at Hokkaido University in Japan, told *Space.com*.

The researchers employed state-of-the-art analytical techniques

originally designed for use in genetic and pharmaceutical research to detect tiny amounts of nucleobases, down to the range of parts per trillion. This is at least 10-100 times more sensitive than prior methods that attempted to detect pyrimidines in meteorites, Oba said.

The scientists analysed samples from three carbon-rich, or carbonaceous, meteorites that prior work suggested could have hosted the kinds of chemical reactions that created nucleobases – the Murchison, Murray, and Tagish Lake meteorites.

The scientists detected T, C, and U at levels of up to a few parts per billion within the meteorites. These compounds were present at concentrations similar to those predicted by experiments replicating the conditions that existed prior to the formation of the solar system. In addition to the crucial T, C, and

U compounds, the scientists also detected other pyrimidines not used in DNA or RNA that further show meteorites’ ability to carry these compounds.

“Due to our findings, we can say nucleobases also show wide varieties in carbonaceous meteorites,” Oba said.

It remains uncertain why pyrimidines were so much less abundant in these meteorites than purines. Oba suggested a clue might lie in the fact that purines include a pentagonal ring known as imidazole, whereas pyrimidines do not.

Imidazole and similar molecules proved far more abundant than pyrimidines in these meteorites, suggesting they might prove easier for naturally occurring chemical reactions to synthesise. In addition, imidazole can act like a primitive catalyst to set off chemical reactions, such as forming purines instead of pyrimidines.

(Space.com)

# The misplaced expectation that tourism earnings will resolve the economic crisis

BY PUBLIC FINANCE.LK

**The manifestations of Sri Lanka's foreign exchange crisis are now felt by all citizens – whether it is long spells without electricity or shortages of cooking gas and other imported commodities. The underlying cause for these issues is the depletion of foreign reserves and shortage of foreign currency in the market.**

Sri Lanka's usable foreign exchange reserves had declined to \$ 369 million as of end March 2022. Total debt repayment in 2022 amounts to \$ 6.9 billion, which has to be financed along with a widening current account deficit as global fuel prices have reached multi year highs. In this context the most pragmatic solution is for Sri Lanka to restructure its external debt, supported by an IMF programme.

The Government has however taken the position that the present crisis is a short-term liquidity issue that can be addressed by short-term swaps and government-to-government loans until the impacts of the pandemic are behind us. A key expectation the Government has in terms of solving the current economic crisis is the recovery of tourism in the country. It



Although Sri Lanka's tourism industry is picking back up, it is doubtful whether the industry's earnings alone will be enough to sustain the battered economy

PHOTO LALITH PERERA



is expected that once tourism recovers fully, it will provide sufficient foreign currency earnings to address Sri Lanka's external debt challenges. This expectation is likely to be

misplaced. Even when Sri Lanka had its highest estimated earnings from tourism of \$ 4.4 billion in 2018, the country still ran a balance of payments current account deficit of 3.2% of gross domestic product (GDP). Therefore, tourism alone is unable to generate the required surplus to meet the capital account outflows arising out of debt repayments.

## How are our earnings from tourism calculated?

There are also important concerns regarding the accuracy of the estimated earnings from tourism. The estimated earnings from tourism are based on a calculation done using three variables:

- Number of tourist arrivals
- Average duration of stay by a tourist
- Foreign exchange receipts per tourists per day

For example, in 2019, Sri Lanka had 1,913,702 tourist arrivals and on average each tourist stayed 10.4 days in Sri Lanka. The first two variables are likely to be fairly accurate. The third variable which is the foreign exchange receipts per tourist per day stood at \$ 181.2 per day in 2019. This is an estimate based on an exit survey done at the airport.

## Problems with the estimation

When considering the above three variables, the per day expenditure estimate is likely to be exaggerated. Accommodation is typically the largest expenditure item for tourists. At \$ 181.2 per day per person for accommodation, a couple would need to spend \$ 362 per day and a family of four would need to spend \$ 725 per day.

This expense can be justified only for tourists who stay in five-star accommodation. However, on average between 2012 and 2019 only 11% out of the total tourist guest nights were at five-star hotels. It is unlikely that lower grade accommodation would be able to command a premium that could justify a per day spend of \$ 362 for a couple.

## Is Sri Lanka overestimating tourist expenditure?

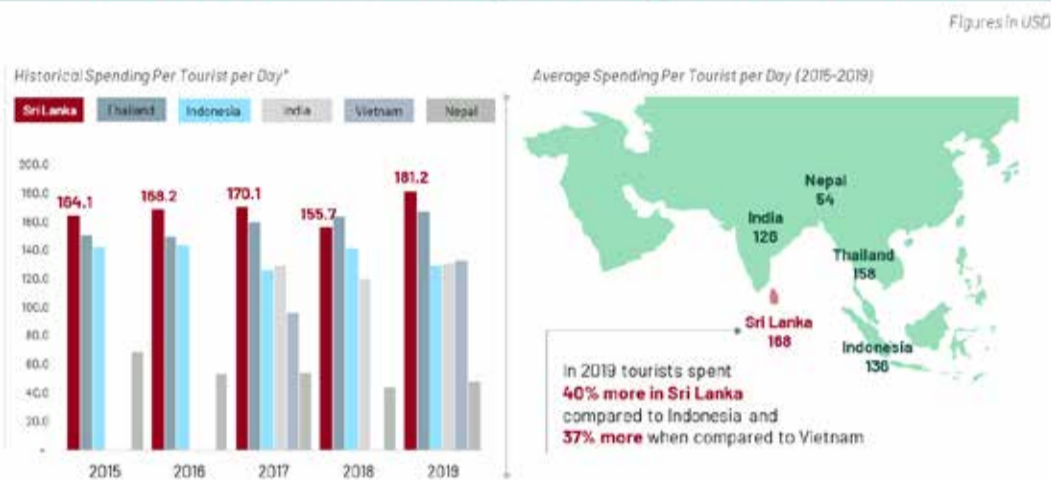
When comparing Sri Lanka's foreign exchange receipts per tourists per day with Sri Lanka's regional peers, the likely overestimation becomes evident. When compared to countries such as Indonesia, India, Vietnam, and Nepal, Sri Lanka ranks the highest in tourist expenditure per day by a large margin. This raises important questions on the accuracy of Sri Lanka's estimations of earnings from tourism.

## Recent revision in tourism earnings

According to the most recent data for the month of January 2022, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka estimates tourist arrivals of 82,327, yielding a revenue of \$ 268 million. This translates to \$ 3,255 per tourist. Hence a tourist staying 10 days would have to spend \$ 325 per day and a tourist staying 20 days would still be paying \$ 162 per day. Even though the average length of stay may have increased due to the pandemic, it is likely that if the tourist is staying longer, they will likely switch to a cheaper option to manage total cost.

*(PublicFinance.lk is a tri-lingual platform for public finance-related information in Sri Lanka, and is run by Verité Research, an independent think-tank that provides strategic analysis for Asia in the areas of economics, politics, law, and media)*

## Is Sri Lanka Overestimating its Receipts from Tourism?



## 52% of Tourist Stay in Hotels but only 11% of Tourists stay in 5 Star Hotels



The first part of this article was published in The Morning yesterday (27)

BY DR. DARINI RAJASINGHAM-SENANAYAKE

Former US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Alice G. Wells, a few years ago, called Sri Lanka a “valuable piece of real estate” in the Indian Ocean, and the country not long ago turned down an MCC Compact and a Status of Forces Agreement.

Others have termed Sri Lanka “an unsinkable aircraft carrier” in the Indian Ocean – more strategic than the Chagos Islands whose citizens were forcibly evicted by US marines in the early 1960s to set up the Diego Garcia military base and a Central Intelligence Agency black site, which was recently greenwashed by the occupying British Government as a marine protected area. In February 2019, the International Court of Justice in the Hague had ruled that the British and hence US occupation of the Chagos Islands was illegal under international law, as the island belongs to the Government and people of Mauritius.

In the context, it is noteworthy that Sri Lankan media announced that the Government, heading into IMF negotiations, is hoping to raise \$ 8 billion from the lease or sale of valuable public assets to bolster its rapidly dwindling foreign reserves, based on a report of a newly appointed economic advisory committee.

Among the main items for sale or long lease were the Katunayake International Airport for \$ 2 billion, the Mattala Airport for \$ 300 million, and the Ratmalana Airport for \$ 400 million. The Colombo North Port development project was to be



The International Monetary Fund spring meeting

## IMF spring meetings amidst Sri Lanka's Arab Spring

### • The need for debt cancellation over asset-stripping

#### PART II

handed over for an investment of \$ 600 million, while the Colombo Port City's lands would be leased out at a total of \$ 4 billion.

Shares of Sri Lanka Telecom will be sold at a price of \$ 500 million and Sri Lanka Insurance Corporation shares for \$ 300 million. The strategic island's telecom frequencies, important for cyber security and 5G technology, had been previously targeted – like the island's land, transport and energy sectors – by the MCC.

Divestment of non-strategic state-owned assets, such as lands owned by the Sri Lanka Railways and the SriLankan Airlines have been suggested as a part of the Government's multi pronged plan in the short term to improve their operational and financial efficiency

while increasing the country's reserves position.

There is a difference between illiquidity and insolvency that has been ignored in the rush to monetise strategic transport, energy, land, and cyber security assets in this island at the centre of the Indian Ocean's SLOC. Moreover, divesting strategic assets because of cultivated corruption in the targeted public institutions is tantamount to throwing the baby out with the bathwater!

Questions arise as to who has made the valuations, when and on what basis? In the context of Sri Lanka being valuable real estate in the Indian Ocean's SLOC with extensive ocean and mineral resources, including rare

earth elements, the island may suffer from a geostrategic resource curse, that made it a donor darling in the past as well as the subject of various colonisation projects, and always in the crosshairs of the great power rivalry in the Indian Ocean region.

It is increasingly evident that the island's debt crisis has many external dimensions and is not entirely internally driven. The strategic island has long been in the crosshairs of big power rivalry.

## Geopolitics of Sri Lanka's permanent crisis

The IMF was gracious in Washington and commended Sri Lanka's new Finance Minister President's Counsel M.U.M. Ali Sabry, who was previously the Justice

Minister, for his dash to Washington for a “bailout” and for the steps taken to stabilise the economy. Sri Lanka was urged to apply for a Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI), having delayed debt restructuring for two years. Meanwhile, Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who was also in Washington for the spring meetings, made representations on behalf of her dear debt-trapped Southern neighbour. It should be noted that India is a US Quadrilateral Security Dialogue partner in America's confrontation with China in the “free and open Indo Pacific”.

Notably absent at the IMF meetings was the President's brother Basil Rajapaksa, the dual US citizen and ex-Finance Minister who led Sri Lanka's default into Washington's arms. Back in 2020, during the Covid-19 lockdowns, the law of the land was changed to enable Basil Rajapaksa to enter Parliament and head the Covid-19 Task Force that directed two years of militarised Covid-19 lockdowns. Basil Rajapaksa was supposed to lead the Government of Sri Lanka delegation to the IMF, but had become a burden as the Colombo regime lost its coalition partners, and had to be ditched.

Questions had been raised about foreign interests and hands behind Sri Lanka's crisis following Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's allegation of regime change operations in his country: Was the long planned and anticipated plunge of the Sri Lankan rupee against the “exorbitantly privileged” USD, which came to pass just in time for the IMF's spring meetings, partly to pre-empt a rescue from China, which has invested heavily in Sri Lanka?

Sri Lanka's default effectively enables the IMF and foreign “legal advisors” to take over this strategic island nation's economic policy process, and the country would lose economic and social policy autonomy and sovereignty. Simultaneously, the IMF's aid conditionalities would enable Washington to stave off a perceived China threat, and likely make it impossible for Sri Lanka to source its oil, gas, and other energy requirements, which are at the root of the current crisis, at discount rates from sanctions-hit Russia.

Has strategic Sri Lanka, sitting amid the Indian Ocean SLOC become, like Ukraine, a theater of proxy war this time, as the USD is weaponised and a new hybrid Cold War envelops the world?

In the final analysis, questions arise if Sri Lanka, ruled by a hybrid Rajapaksa family comprising dual American citizens, is being targeted for hybrid economic warfare? With the USD increasingly weaponised also against sanctions-hit Russia and other emerging economies, this is not just a theoretical question. Is the debt crisis staged by local and global networks of financial corruption at play in this strategic island in order to deliver Sri Lanka on a platter to Washington and its Consensus? After all, we live in a post-Covid-19 world where conspiracy theories increasingly seem to come true.

*(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.*



{ PICTORIAL }

**'LET'S END THE CURSE OF THE SATAKAYA'**



Protestors continued to show their dissent for Premier Mahinda Rajapaksa at 'Maina Go Gama' outside Temple Trees yesterday (27)

PHOTOS KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM



**'GIVE THE FARMERS THEIR RIGHTS BACK'**



A satyagraha was held by farmers' organisations at the Battaramulla Polduwa Junction yesterday (27), demanding that the farmers be given their rights and lands

PHOTOS PRADEEP DAMBARAGE

**CURRENTS OF DISSENT FROM MAHAWELI**



A protest was staged by the Association of Mahaweli Engineers outside the Mahaweli Authority yesterday (27), demanding that the Government heed the voice of people, put an end to political appointments, and protect the rights of farmers

PHOTOS KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM



# 'It is not corruption alone that got Sri Lanka here'

● *New York-based author and associate professor Nimanthi Perera-Rajasingham talks about the deepening economic crisis and the ever-growing protests*



**Colgate University, New York Associate Professor of English and Women's Studies Nimanthi Perera-Rajasingham often hid the fact that her father was Tamil when she was a child. She feels she has lost out on many aspects of a Tamil childhood because she tried to pass off as Sinhalese to avoid being looked at differently.**

In her book, *Assembling Ethnicities in Neoliberal Times: Ethnographic Fictions and Sri Lanka's War* she explores how globalisation and free markets contributed to Sri Lanka's war, a fresh and uncommon perspective, to say the least.

Perera-Rajasingham, although based just outside of New York City in Jersey City, has visited Galle Face Green to join the ongoing protests asking incumbent President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down.

"They are really inspiring and remind me of my time in the Occupy Wall Street Movement. The energy and creativity are wonderful," she shares. When people say "give us back our money", they are making a working-class claim, she says.

"For the working classes know that they are exploited and underpaid. It is their sweat that has made the wealthy rich. So while the focus is on corruption and how the Rajapaksa stole wealth, the reality is that the elite has always stolen from working-class people. I think this consciousness is really there at the protests."

This week on Write Home About, I speak with Perera-Rajasingham about her early years on the island, her mixed-race upbringing, her unique inspiration for her book, and Sri Lanka's deepening turmoil.

*Following are some excerpts from the interview.*

**Tell me a little bit about your life in Sri Lanka, before you moved to the US?**

I grew up in Colombo. I went to St. Bridget's Convent. I come from a Catholic family on my mother's side. My father's family were Hindus. When 1983 came to pass, we lived in Kotahena, which was terribly impacted by the pogrom. I was seven years old then, so I did not understand much, but I do remember my father hiding and I was sent to a neighbour's. I grew up in a working-class family. My mother was the main income-earner of the family, and I was an only child.

I actually did my undergrad in the US too, but came back because I really wanted to work and live in Sri Lanka. I spent two years doing my Master's at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi and then worked at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) for about four years.

**When and why did you move to the US?**

I moved to the US again, 10 years after my BA, to get a PhD. I was working at the ICES from about 2002 to 2006. At the time, it was a very vibrant space for intellectual

growth. However, like most non-profits, donor demands can drive activist and research agendas. The director then – Radhika Coomaraswamy – was excellent at obtaining funds while giving us the freedom to do research. This is where I first read Sunil Bastian, who tried to connect the liberalisation of the economy and the rise of racism in Sri Lanka.

Yet, I felt a lot of questions were not being asked about ethnonationalism and free markets. I had also done some work for The Social Scientists' Association at the time, and the thinking of Kumari Jayawardena really influenced me. So I took off to do my PhD, in the hopes of having time to do the necessary reading and thinking.

One of the other struggles I had was that many research institutions are largely focused on social sciences, especially anthropology. I wanted to think of the relationship between anthropology and fiction. Since anthropological discourses dominated the study of violence, I had to think of the place of fiction and narrative in relation to it. Most importantly, however, I really wanted to think about the importance and significance of fiction in thinking about Sri Lanka's war, liberalisation, and nationalism.

**Your mother was Sinhalese and your father Tamil. Did this shape your experience of the ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka?**

It really did shape so much of my childhood. I grew up a lot with my mother's side of the family, though I had regular contact with my paternal grandmother. I think because Colombo was full of checkpoints and suspicion of Tamils, I often hid the fact that my father was Tamil. I never learned to read and write in Tamil, and I was in the Sinhala medium throughout. So I would say that I lost out on many aspects of a Tamil childhood, because I tried to pass as Sinhalese to avoid being looked at differently.

If I had studied in the Tamil medium, I would have been friends with other Tamil kids and known how to tackle some of the comments, etc. But we never discussed these issues openly at home, so I did not know how to deal with the ways people treated me when they found out what my last name was. I just felt shame.

Every time a bomb went off in Colombo, I heard people around me talk about how much they hated Tamils. People often did not differentiate between the actions of militants and ordinary Tamils, nor think about the parallel and worse bombings happening in the North, perpetrated by the State. Because I spoke Sinhala and was raised to be culturally Sinhalese, people forgot what they said in front of me.

So I learned to try to pass as Sinhalese when I could during my childhood. I guess that is why I use the hyphenated name. I want to remind everyone so they don't say such things in front of me again.

**Why did you want to show how globalisation and free markets contributed to the war, a rather uncommon and unexplored aspect, through your book?**

The arguments I make may be under-developed today, but I do draw from a



Colgate University Associate Professor of English and Women's Studies Nimanthi Perera-Rajasingham

number of scholars who have made these connections. I am thinking of people like Newton Gunasinghe, Kumari Jayawardena, Ambalavaner Sivadandan, and Sunil Bastian, to name just a few. The Social Scientists' Association was a central place that discussed the relationship between political economy and race and class.

Scholars like Nira Wickremasinghe and R.A.L.H. Gunawardena have also done very important work to demonstrate how ethnic identities, being Sinhalese or Tamil, etc., are modern constructs. They show us how during colonialism, scholars and administrators created knowledge to suit the needs of a colonial administration. Classifying people and producing them

as opposed racial groups is an example of this from Sri Lanka. So race or ethnicity is a technology for governing populations, a means of dividing them into enclosures and contained units.

If we have learned that during colonialism, race/ethnicity was produced in rigid ways to divide people and rule them, then we have to ask ourselves who benefits from contemporary racism. What capitalist and neocolonial ends can it serve? So in many ways, my book expands and extends what I learned from this rich scholarship.

**What are your thoughts on the current economic crisis Sri Lanka is facing?**

I would say these are the predictable and terrifying results of free markets and neoliberalism. I think a lot of debates are wrongly focused on corruption. Of course, corruption is high. I do not dispute this. However, it is not corruption alone that got us to this place. Over 30 years of an import-export economy, dismantling welfare that shielded people from market instability, and neglecting agriculture and fisheries have really led to this.

We need a State that promotes local production as much as possible. We do not need to keep relying on tourism, garments, tea, etc., to save the economy. This kind of import-export, free market model makes us extremely vulnerable to global trends.

We need to think of what people in this country need for their livelihoods. Under neoliberalism, inequality in this country and globally has increased. We need to address this through greater redistribution of wealth and resources to the poor, working classes, women, and war-impacted minorities. We really need a different economic model.

More debt and free markets will just prolong our present tragedy. Loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) come with more and more conditions that will negatively impact people. In the long term, more debt will deepen the crisis, not resolve it.

**How has your experience in the US been different from your experience here in Sri Lanka, particularly concerning race relations?**

My husband is an African American, and a photographer. Marrying him completely changed my experience of America. I spent time with his family and friends and was accepted in ways I never would have been otherwise. It also opened my eyes to thinking about race in the US, and to really learning from African American scholars who have done so much critical work theorising racism there.

Of course, the history of racism and capitalist exploitation in the US is different from Sri Lanka. The US is, and remains, a settler colony, a country that enslaved people to make its wealth; it is an empire that colonises other countries and disposes of anyone who dares disagree with it. Really, the scale of American violence on this planet is unparalleled. Yet, the scholars who study race, racism and empire have taught me how to think of issues in Sri Lanka too.

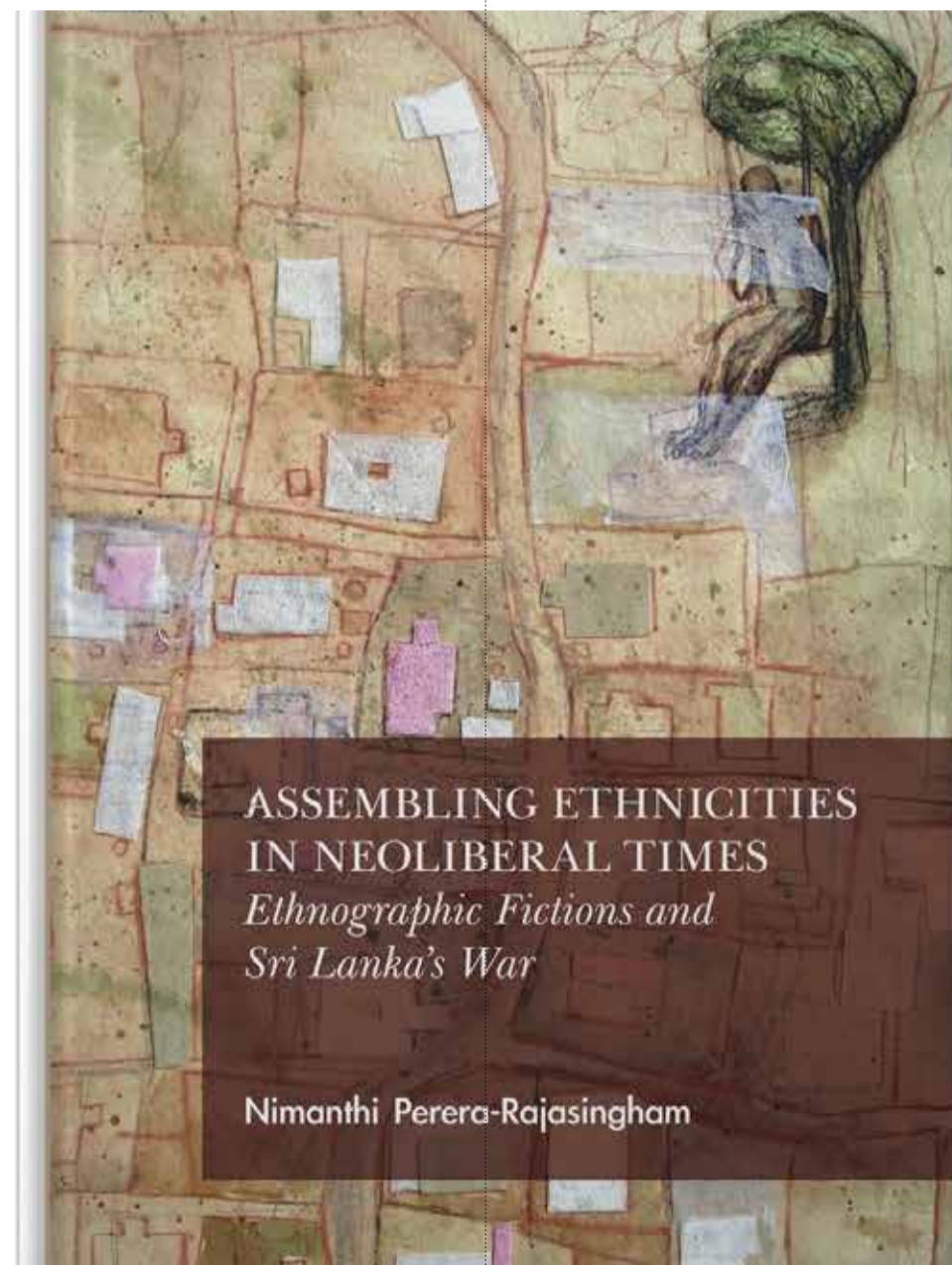
**What are your thoughts on the current protests across Sri Lanka, specifically #GotaGoGama?**

I finally see posters highlighting Gotabaya Rajapaksa's alleged war crimes. Indeed, we need to link our present economic crisis and minority rights and justice together. So while I want to see even more connections of this kind, I do see them more and more.

The atmosphere at "GotaGoGama" is festive at times. I do not think this is because Colombo people are having fun as others starve. Really, many different people are present. At times I feel I have seen a million people there in one evening. So, it is a broad mix of people across class and ethnicities. But joy is an essential component of revolution and change. To be hopeful and to have a belief in change, we must also experience collective happiness.

We are lucky and blessed to be together in this space, to be with one another and to be part of the multitude. Revolution is a utopian project, full of hope. Without this joyousness, revolutions could never be possible.

*Jennifer Anandanayagam is a journalist and editor with over 15 years of experience in Sri Lanka's print and digital media landscape. She is also a freelance contributor with the SaltWire Network in Canada. She spends her time between both countries.*



The cover of Nimanthi Perera-Rajasingham's book 'Assembling Ethnicities in Neoliberal Times: Ethnographic Fictions and Sri Lanka's War'

# Myanmar junta sentences Aung San Suu Kyi to five years for corruption

● *Deposed leader charged with offences ranging from fraud to violating Official Secrets Act*

BY REBECCA RATCLIFFE

Aung San Suu Kyi has been sentenced to five years in prison after she was found guilty of corruption by a court in military-controlled Myanmar, the latest in a series of legal cases condemned as an attempt to remove her as a political threat.

Myanmar's former leader, 76, has been detained since a military coup in February last year plunged the country into a political crisis and escalating conflict. Since then, she has been charged with at least 18 offences, ranging from election fraud to violating the Official Secrets Act. The various charges carry maximum sentences that could lead to Aung San



Aung San Suu Kyi has been sentenced to five years in prison in Myanmar. PHOTO © AFP

Suu Kyi spending the rest of her life in detention.

In the latest case, she was accused of accepting 11.4 kg (402 oz) of gold bars and cash payments totalling \$ 600,000 from the former Yangon chief minister Phyo Min Thein.

Her legal team have rejected the charges as absurd, while rights groups have described them as a clear attempt to remove Aung San Suu Kyi from politics.

Human Rights Watch Deputy Asia Director Phil Robertson called the corruption allegations as "bogus".

"The days of Aung San Suu Kyi as a free woman are effectively over. Myanmar's junta and the country's kangaroo courts are walking in lockstep to put Aung San Suu Kyi away for what could ultimately be the equivalent of a

life sentence, given her advanced age," Robertson said.

"Destroying popular democracy in Myanmar also means getting rid of Aung San Suu Kyi, and the junta is leaving nothing to chance," he added.

The military has faced strong opposition to its rule, including both peaceful pro-democracy protest movements, and an armed resistance, with civilians taking up arms in response to military attacks. The junta has used relentless violence to assert its control, prompting the UN to warn such abuses may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, citing the bombardment of populated areas with airstrikes, as well as reports of mass killings of civilians, and torture.

It is not known where Aung San Suu Kyi is being held. She has not been seen in public since the coup, and trials have taken place in a closed court, with her legal representatives banned from talking to the media.

Last month, the independent media outlet Myanmar Now reported a rare message from the ousted leader, relayed through an anonymous source, in which she urged the public to stay united.

The source told the outlet: "She said today that everyone needs to stay united and hold discussions on different views. If they still aren't able to open dialogues now, she said to wait patiently until it is possible to do so."

Aung San Suu Kyi is one of more than 10,300 people currently in

detention, according to estimates by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, an advocacy group that tracks arrests and killings. Among those arrested are members of Aung San Suu Kyi's party, National League for Democracy, as well as anyone suspected of opposing the military – from writers and intellectuals, to public sector workers who refuse to work in junta-controlled departments.

According to AAPP, 100 people have been sentenced to death, including 57 adults and two children who are currently in prison. Others have been sentenced in absentia. *(The Guardian)*

# the morning business

ASPI	S&P SL20	Market
7,280.52	2,356.71	Market Closed
375.15	230.75	Share Volume
↑ 5.43%	↑ 10.85%	144,599,572
		Turnover
		2,184,684,009.45



## Discounts galore at the bourse

- Expolanka, Browns, LOLC share prices fall by over 70%
- Hayleys, Watawala, Royal Ceramics also see significant erosions

There appears to be significant value for traders on the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) right now, as many fundamentally strong and dollar-earning shares are currently trading at steep discounts well below their fair values, following the collapse of the CSE over the past three months, with the All-Share Price Index (ASPI) falling by over 45% after reaching its all-time high of 13,462.39 points on 19 January 2019.

Expolanka Holding PLC (EXPO), which was the Cinderella of the last bull run from May 2021 to January 2022, fell to Rs. 99.3 on 26 April 2022, which represents a 75% decrease from its price level of Rs. 389.5 on 19 January 2022. This significant collapse of the counter over the past three months is puzzling, considering that over 90% of its revenue is in US dollars, while the Sri Lankan rupee depreciated against the US dollar by over 69% since the 7 March

decision by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka to float the exchange rate. In the absence of any significant loss of business, EXPO is on track to set another all-time record this quarter in terms of its quarterly revenue. However, EXPO had a resurgence following Tuesday's (26) announcement of financial assistance by the World Bank, surging by 44.8% yesterday to trade at Rs. 143.75 at market close.

Contd. on page 11



## Circuit-breakers take a break after World Bank news

- CSE makes comeback after \$ 600 mn pledged by World Bank for SL
- ASPI gains 375 points, S&P SL20 gains 230 points

BY SHENAL FERNANDO

The Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) experienced a sharp recovery yesterday (27) as the market reacted positively to the announcement of the \$ 600 million financial assistance from the World Bank on Tuesday (26). Accordingly, the All-Share Price Index increased by 375.15 points (up 5.43%) to reach 7,280.52 points from the previous day's close of 6,905.37. Similarly, the blue-chip S&P SL20 was up by 10.85%, reaching 2,356.71 points by market close, which is a 230.75 point increase compared to the previous day's close of 2,125.96 points. This market rally yesterday came in

the aftermath of two consecutive days where trading was halted due to the tripping of the CSE circuit breakers, following the over-10% decrease of the S&P SL20 index on both days. The ASPI has been on a steep downward trend since late January 2022 after reaching its all-time high of 13,462.39 points on 19 January 2019. Following the close of market yesterday CSE market capitalisation stood at Rs. 3.2 trillion, down 41.9% Year-to-Date (YTD). The market yesterday was characterised by a healthy turnover of Rs. 2.2 billion, with around 144.6 million shares traded. Prior to this week, the CSE was on a 17-day hiatus from 8 April 2022 due to

New Year holidays and the temporary closure of the market by the SEC due to the prevalent economic crisis in the country. During this 17-day period, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL), on the evening of 8 April after market close, announced a 700 basis point rate hike of the Standing Deposit Facility Rate (SDFR) and the Standing Lending Facility Rate (SLFR) to 13.5% and 14.5%, respectively. Subsequently on 12 April, the Finance Minister announced the suspension of all foreign debt payments, pending an orderly and consensual restructuring of the debt. This was followed by rating downgrades by all three international rating agencies.

## Increasing cement prices bring construction sector to standstill

BY IMSHA IQBAL

With the soaring price of imported cement, construction sector-related work has come to a standstill. The Morning Business learns. Speaking to us, Chamber of Construction Industry of Sri Lanka (CCI) President Eng. Maj. Ranjith Gunatilleke yesterday (26) stated: "Most of the construction work has come to a standstill because people do not get credit when purchasing cement, as the



price (of cement) changes overnight by a high margin." He said that the construction industry is in such disarray that the word "profitable" cannot be used in the sector, causing it to come to a halt.

Contd. on page 11



## IMF forecasts SL to grow 2.6% this year

- 1% down from previous year
- Urges tightening monetary policy, raising tax

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasted on Tuesday (26) that the economy of Sri Lanka would grow by 2.6% this year, down from 3.6% growth in 2021. In its World Economic Outlook (WEO), a survey published twice a year, the IMF showed a projection of 2.7% for Sri Lanka's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth. The IMF has meanwhile urged Sri Lanka to tighten its monetary policy, raise taxes, and adopt flexible exchange rates to

address its debt crisis. IMF Asia and Pacific Department Acting Director Anne-Marie Gulde-Wolf said that progress toward debt sustainability would be a requirement for fund lending. She called on Sri Lanka to take measures to increase tax revenues to address critical spending needs. "Monetary policy has to be tightened to keep inflation in check," she said, adding that there is a need for flexible exchange rates.

## 12 Sri Lankan NBFIs under Fitch's negative watch

Fitch Ratings has placed the National Long-Term Ratings of 12 Sri Lankan non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) on Rating Watch Negative (RWN). The finance and leasing companies thus rated are Bimputh Finance PLC (Bimputh), CBC Finance LTD (CBCF), Central Finance Company PLC (CF), Fintrex Finance Ltd. (Fintrex), HNB Finance PLC (HNB), LB Finance PLC (LB), Mercantile Investments and Finance PLC (MIF), People's Leasing and Finance PLC (PLC), Sarvodaya Development Finance Limited (SDF), Senkadagala Finance PLC (Senka), Siyapatha Finance PLC

(Siyapatha), and Asia Securities (Pvt) Ltd (ASPL). The RWN reflects heightened downside risks to the NBFIs' credit profiles amid increased economic and financial market volatility in Sri Lanka. This risk is exacerbated by the deteriorating sovereign credit profile (Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating [IDR]: C, Long-Term Local-Currency IDR: CCC) and the ensuing risks to the stability of the financial system. Fitch will review the National Ratings of financial-institution subsidiaries of Sri Lankan corporates that are not included above separately, if needed.



## Coconut kernel products promoted in Belgium

The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Brussels conducted a workshop titled "Coconut Wonder - Truly Sri Lankan" to promote export of Sri Lankan coconut kernel products to Belgium, on 21 April 2022. The Sri Lanka Export Development Board (EDB), Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC), and Federation Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FCCISL) co-ordinated

the participation of the exporters of coconut products in Sri Lanka at the workshop on a virtual platform. Sri Lankan Ambassador Grace Asirwatham made an opening statement about the coconut industry of Sri Lanka and presented reasons why the importers of coconut products in Belgium should consider importing from Sri Lanka.



Contd. on page 11

## Shipping lines to settle SLPA payments in USD

Minister of Ports and Shipping Premitha Bandara Tennakoon has advised shipping lines to settle their payments to the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) in US dollars. In a statement, the Ports Authority said the Minister has taken the initiative to discuss with all stakeholders in the shipping industry as well as SLPA officials to increase revenue in US dollars. His initiative has resulted in converting payments from shipping lines to the SLPA from local currencies to the US dollar, the statement read further. Accordingly, the amount of revenue that will be collected in US dollars is expected to exceed \$ 100 million per annum, the SLPA noted. It has been decided to implement this initiative from 1 June 2022.



# ComBank ranked 'Strongest Bank Brand' in Sri Lanka for third successive year

**The Commercial Bank of Ceylon has been ranked the "Strongest Bank Brand" in Sri Lanka for the third consecutive year in the 2022 report on the country's most valuable and strongest brands by Brand Finance, the world's independent brand valuation consultancy.**

The Commercial Bank brand also moved up the value ranking to be the third most valuable brand in Sri Lanka across all sectors covered by the latest edition of the "Brand Finance Sri Lanka 100" released in April 2022.

Brand Finance assigned the Commercial Bank brand a value of Rs. 46.7 billion, an increase of Rs. 3 billion or 7% over its valuation for 2021, recognising that the value of the Commercial Bank brand grew at a faster pace than the overall brand value of the banking sector, which was up by 3%.

In terms of brand strength, Brand Finance gave Commercial Bank a Brand Strength Index (BSI) score of 86.7 and a AAA brand rating, the highest rating assigned to the top brands this year. In its summary of the results, Brand Finance noted that the stronger the brand, the higher the potential value it can generate in the future.

Referring to Commercial Bank, the consultancy commented that the

bank's attempt to differentiate its product offering through a digitally-driven banking environment such as the Q+ Payment App, (which was the first QR code-based payment app under LankaQR) coupled with other digital transformation strategies, and its strong network of branches are a big contributor to its strength.

Among the other digital and social media banking services offered by Commercial Bank are ComBank Digital, ComBank ePassbook, the Flash Digital Bank Account, ComBank eSlips, ComBank RemitPlus, ComBank WhatsApp Banking and Bank with ComBank on Viber.

"The banking sector continues to play a pivotal role in maintaining a healthy financial system in the country," Brand Finance said. "This year sees a growth in value for banking brands despite the turbulent economy as they continue to make efforts in meeting the fast-growing consumer demands and efficient

cost management systems. Overall brand value of the sector grew by 3%, accounting for 44% of the Sri Lanka 100 total brand value."

Commercial Bank Managing Director/Group CEO S. Renganathan stated: "These are extremely challenging times for businesses, and brands that can grow in these circumstances are those that visibly live up to their promise in tangible and customer-responsive ways. This has always been a strength at Commercial Bank. We believe that every employee must live our brand values."

According to Commercial Bank's Group Chief Marketing Officer Hasrath Munasinghe, the bank continued its strategic brand building activities despite the tough external conditions during the pandemic. "The bank's strategic marketing efforts are not just about making the brand heard or seen, but mainly about building, engaging, and maintaining relationships with our key stakeholders through delivering consistent value to them," he said in an interview with Brand Finance. "The bank has defined brand strategy as a central part of

its corporate strategy. Brand values have been aligned to synergise with the corporate values. The key to the success of the bank has been finding the elements to differentiate the bank and its products and services from the rest."

Brand Finance computes the value of brands listed on the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) and private companies that wish to be featured, using a method based on the Royalty Relief approach – a brand valuation method used by the company globally. Every year it puts 5,000 of the world's biggest brands to the test and ranks brands across all sectors and countries and publishes nearly 100 reports.

Brand Finance experts helped craft the internationally recognised standards on Brand Valuation – ISO 10668 and Brand Evaluation – ISO 20671. The consultancy's methodology has been certified by global independent auditors – Austrian Standards – as compliant with both, and received the official approval of the Marketing Accountability Standards Board.

One of the most active and vibrant brands in Sri Lanka, Commercial Bank's brand building

efforts maintain a healthy balance between corporate and product communications and ground level customer engagement events. In addition to traditional media, the bank is highly active in social and digital media and customer engagement events, at national and regional level. The bank's customer base covers all segments of society, and encompasses all socio economic groups spread across Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's first 100% carbon neutral bank, the first Sri Lankan bank to be listed among the Top 1000 Banks of the World and the only Sri Lankan bank to be listed for 11 years consecutively, Commercial Bank operates a network of 268 branches and 938 automated machines in Sri Lanka. Commercial Bank is the largest lender to Sri Lanka's SME sector and is a leader in digital innovation in the country's Banking sector. The bank's overseas operations encompass Bangladesh, where the bank operates 19 outlets; Myanmar, where it has a microfinance company in Nay Pyi Taw; and the Maldives, where the bank has a fully-fledged Tier One bank with a majority stake.

# Lanka IOC working towards social upliftment during economic crisis

As a part of ongoing efforts to support the country's endeavour to mitigate the unprecedented challenge from the scarcity of essentials and economic meltdown, Lanka IOC further stepped up its commitment towards social upliftment by way of distribution of hygienic dry ration packets to numerous families of the society at St. Lucia Cathedral, Kotahena, Colombo.

Speaking on the occasion Lanka IOC PLC

Managing Director Manoj Gupta said: "Our ongoing initiatives are in line with nation's current need for fighting challenges of economic meltdown and scarcity of food items. During this unprecedented time, when inflation on food items has gone above 30%, people are finding it hard to fulfil their daily needs. We always endeavour to connect with society through our various CSR activities." Gupta extended heartfelt

thanks to management of the church for giving this noble opportunity and assured them for continued empathy and assistance to the best possible in extending such help.

Rev. Father Ronnie Wickramasinghe at St. Lucia Cathedral and the local community extended their thanks to Lanka IOC for coming forward during this very hard time and taking care of very needy families.



## Contd. from page 9

### Discounts...

Similarly, LOLC Holdings PLC (LOLC) and Browns Investments PLC (BIL), which hold significant US dollar-denominated assets have also fallen by 80% and 76%, respectively, over the period. In the case of LOLC, it was trading at Rs. 1,349 on 19 January and had fallen to Rs. 269.0 by 26 April, before increasing by 21.6% yesterday to Rs. 327.0. Similarly, BIL was trading at Rs. 16.8 on 19 January and fell to Rs. 4.1 as of 26 April, before recovering by 36.6% yesterday to trade at Rs. 5.6 as of market close.

Fundamentally strong counters such as Hayleys PLC (HAYL), Royal Ceramics Lanka PLC (RCL) and Watawala Plantations PLC (WATA) have also experienced a significant erosion of value over the past three months. In the case of HAYL, it is the holding company for the largest conglomerate in the country and has positively benefitted from the import restrictions. However, over the past three months, HAYL has fallen by around 64% from Rs. 142.75 on 19 January 2022 to Rs. 51.6 as of 26 April, before recovering 20.7% yesterday to Rs. 62.3.

Similarly, RCL, which has seen its revenue skyrocket over the past two years following the import ban of tiles and its own production expansion, observed a 69% erosion of value over the past three months, as its price has fallen from Rs. 80.0 on 19 January to Rs. 25.1 on 26 April, before recovering by 32.3% yesterday to reach Rs. 33.2 by market close.

Finally, WATA had fallen by 69% to

Rs. 54.3 as of 26 April after trading at Rs. 176.75 on 19 January, despite global palm oil prices reaching all-time highs due to the supply crunch caused by the Indonesian export ban. WATA recovered strongly yesterday by 26.9% to reach Rs. 68.9 by market close. Meanwhile, CT CLSA Securities in a report noted that the bourse is nearing stability amid decade-low bargains on offer. It added that valuations are now at a decade's low amid recent economic and market adjustments.

It noted that during the discussions last week with the IMF, the authorities were entrusted to commence the debt sustainability programme whilst appointing lawyers and getting creditor approvals for the proposed programme.

"A proposed external debt restructure programme could also benefit from a long lease/privatisation of certain assets as bridging finance in the immediate near term. Further, Sri Lanka should look at increasing Value Added Tax and income taxes, in general, to increase government revenue to GDP by +500 bps to 13% levels to contain fiscal drain, with a targeted cash transfer programme to reduce the economic shock on extremely vulnerable segments amid mounting price pressures in the economy," it stated.

### Increasing...

He added that due to the shortage of diesel, employees are finding it difficult to report to work, while affording a meal has also become a challenge due to the high

cost of living.

Responding to the inquiry we made regarding a possible scarcity of cement as a result of sudden and unexpected price increases, Maj. Gunatilleke said: "There is no supply-demand issue with the pricing. I think the problem comes with the devaluing of the Sri Lankan rupee, as apart from the cement produced by local manufacturers and distributors, the rest of the required cement stock needs to be imported."

The foreign reserves crisis has directly affected cement imports, and due to dollar value fluctuations, people are unable to keep up with the corresponding price increase in cement. The CCI had requested that such goods be priced in dollars, such as with tourist hotels, but, he admitted, there are currently no dollars to implement this mechanism.

Regarding the job security of the sector's employees and employers, he stressed that many would lose jobs, as the sector has been out of work. During the Chamber Council meeting held on Monday (25), many construction sector stakeholders expressed that they cannot predict that construction projects would be available while there is limited capital in their savings to survive. Therefore, they predicted that within two months, companies would be forced to shut down regardless of whether they are employed in the role of consultancy or contractor. It was predicted that such individuals would probably travel overseas, where there is demand for both educated and skilled employees.

When contacted by The Morning Business, Lanka Readymix Concrete Association (LRCA) Chairman J. Anura

Vithanage expressed a similar stance regarding the sustainability of the construction sector with the delay of payments and the price escalation.

"The construction industry has a thousand issues, similar to the other industries," he stated, highlighting that these matters related to the industry do not seem to have a solution due to the "artificial pricing" system in place.

With effect from Tuesday (26) onwards, the price of a 50 kg bag of cement was increased by Rs. 500, making a bag of cement sold at Rs. 2,850.

It is noteworthy that this is the fourth time that the cement price has been hiked. Locally manufactured cement prices increased by Rs. 100 with effect from 1 January, while on 13 March, a 50 kg bag increased by Rs. 350, and both local and imported cement escalated by Rs. 500 on 1 April.

### Coconut...

Product samples and company profiles of Wichy Coconut, Adanjee Lukmanjee and Sons, Senikma Holdings, Cocolanka, E-Silk route ventures, Ceylon Exports and Trading (Pvt.) Ltd., Ceylon Coco Green Manufacturing (Pvt.) Ltd., Renuka Foods, and Enrich Tea and Food Exports (Pvt.) Ltd. were presented to the Belgian importers at the event.

The use of coconut products has been gaining more attention recently thanks to growing consumer interest in vegetarian, vegan, and Asian cooking. Europe's imports of desiccated coconut have been growing, and Belgium is also among the leading importers of coconut products in the EU region.

The Belgian importers appreciated the quality of Sri Lankan organic coconut products, methods, and technology used in production of coconut products and the zero tariff concessions provided for coconut products imports from Sri Lanka by the European Union (EU) under the GSP-plus scheme.

The Belgian exporters also engaged in virtual discussions with the Sri Lankan exporters. As the Belgian importers showed a keen interest in continuing their interaction with the exporters in Sri Lanka, the Embassy promised to arrange business-to-business (B2B) meetings between the interested parties in the near future.

A cookery video using Sri Lankan coconut products as ingredients was played during the workshop which created awareness on the new and innovative coconut products that can be used in the confectionery, bakery, and chocolate industry, restaurants, and hotels. Despite having a smaller population compared to other top European markets, Belgium imports 5,800 tonnes of desiccated coconut to the value of € 11.7 million. Belgium also imports around 4% of its desiccated coconut from Sri Lanka.

The objective of the workshop was to increase Sri Lanka's share of the coconut product market by diversifying the product basket by introducing novel and state-of-the-art new products as per the evolving consumer needs and expectations in Belgium. Belgium is home to several large-scale producers of chocolate products, pastries, cookies, and other desserts where desiccated coconut and other coconut products are used as ingredients.

# DIMO renews buyback agreement with Sarvodaya Development Finance PLC

Sarvodaya Development Finance PLC (SDF) has entered into an MoU with DIMO to provide attractive leasing rates and low down-payments exclusively to the agricultural sector, through a special finance scheme, for the third consecutive year, along with a host of other exclusive benefits. This partnership will position SDF as the preferred financial partner for new and existing customers looking to finance all Mahindra and Swaraj tractors and Lovol and CLASS Combined Harvesters imported and sold by DIMO to its customers for agricultural purposes. A buyback-offer from DIMO, for the tractors sold by SDF, under certain conditions, is another attractive and valuable benefit created by this partnership, which was initially entered into in 2019 and has since been extended annually, this year for a third time. The MoU formalising the partnership was signed recently at a small ceremony with top officials from both SDF and DIMO present.



Sarvodaya Development Finance PLC CEO Nilantha Jayanetti (right) with Diesel and Motor Engineering Co. Ltd. Group CEO Gahanath Pandithage (left)

In addition to lower rates, new and existing SDF customers who obtain leases under the above partnership and special finance facility will also enjoy benefits such as a comprehensive two-year warranty for the products, along with a further four-year extended warranty for Mahindra and Swaraj tractors.

Combined Harvesters will enjoy a comprehensive one-year warranty period. In addition to these benefits, customers will also receive a free farmer kit and free oil filters, coupled with three services provided free-of-charge.

Additionally, Combined Harvesters will enjoy free GPS devices added at no cost. In order to further support the agricultural sector, customer visits will also be conducted to better educate customers and share knowledge.

SDF is among a handful of finance companies in Sri Lanka that are continuing to outperform, despite external challenges. Earlier in January 2022, the company released robust financials for the first nine months of FY 2021/22, recording a remarkable 48% growth in PAT, amidst a challenging market environment. oversubscribed.

# DFCC Bank announces seasonal offers for debit and credit cards

**DFCC Bank has announced a plethora of seasonal offers and benefits, for its range of credit and debit cards, which cater to a wide range of customers.**

DFCC Bank cardholders can enjoy up to 60% savings at over 300 merchant locations islandwide during the Avurudu season, covering electronics, supermarkets, e-commerce and entertainment. In addition to the seasonal offers, cardholders also enjoy a 1% cashback on every swipe all year, while also benefiting from DFCC

Bank's "Buy Now Pay Later" plans, which allow customers to enjoy the flexibility of making large purchases and then conveniently paying for them in instalments for up to 5 years. DFCC Bank Cards also provide the lowest processing fees for loan on card and balance transfer products. DFCC Bank provides a range of

cards that cater to all requirements. The range includes the DFCC Bank World Mastercard credit card, DFCC Visa Infinite Signature Gold credit card, Platinum credit card, DFCC Aloka credit card, Corporate credit card and others. These cards provide a varied range of benefits to suit every lifestyle, including those that are big on travel savings and perks, and others that provide exceptional year-round savings on shopping and other facilities. DFCC Bank cards also provide instant cash loans up to 75% of the credit limit, along with

attractive balance transfer arrangements for customers looking to change issuers and enjoy lower fees and charges and more favourable terms with DFCC Bank.

The bank's Avurudu offers on cards cover a variety of categories including dining, online purchases and services, 0% instalment plans, education, automobile, shopping, homecare and electronics, holidays, travel, footwear, bookshops, supermarkets, jewellery, healthcare and insurance, entertainment and many others.

# Prime Group upgraded to (SL) A (Stable) credit rating from ICRA by Moody's

Prime Lands (Pvt.) Ltd., and Prime Lands Residencies PLC have received a further strengthened issuer rating of (SL) A (Stable) making Prime Group the largest real estate company in Sri Lanka to receive this rating from ICRA Lanka.

In its special notification Prime Group, ICRA Lanka stated: "The Rating Committee of ICRA Lanka Limited, after due consideration of the latest developments in your company, has revised the Issuer Rating to "(SL)A" (pronounced as S L A) with Stable outlook from (SL) A- (pronounced as S L A minus) with a Stable outlook, assigned to your company. Entities with this rating are considered to have (an) adequate degree of safety regarding (the) timely servicing of financial obligations. Such entities carry low credit risk. The rating is only an

opinion on the general creditworthiness of the rated entity and not specific to any particular debt instrument."

Brand Finance crowned Prime Lands Residencies as the "Most Valuable Real Estate Brand" in LMD's latest brand annual. Prime Group was also awarded as the "Most Respected Entity in Real Estate" for two consecutive years, and "Most Respected Real Estate" for four years. PropertyGuru Asia Property Awards also recognised Prime Group as Sri Lanka's best developer for two consecutive years. Achieving the Great Place to Work for six years reflects their human capital strength as a diversified group.



Prime Group Chairman Brahmanage Premalal

To date, Prime Group owns probably the largest land bank, representing 18 districts across the country along with multiple apartments and individual housing projects strategically located across the island.

"These ratings and recognitions awarded by external rewarding bodies after reviewing our work reflects the high standards we keep and the hard work and commitment we have towards our customers on all our projects. The best award we have received is the customer satisfaction for timely delivery of all the projects we have started," noted Prime Group Chairman Brahmanage Premalal.



School-going children of Bairaha staff who participated at a 'Bairaha Help to Learn' event

# Bairaha Farms PLC nurtures its ecosystem with multi-platform projects

Recognising the need to nurture an educated Sri Lanka, Bairaha Farms PLC continued its purposeful drive for the fourth consecutive year through its hallmark "Bairaha Help to Learn" programme. The programme offers support to all school going children of all its employees across all its farms, factories and offices islandwide. Simultaneously, while nurturing the future of the country on the one hand, Bairaha Farms PLC also provided a powerful purpose by instilling environmentally conscious civic mindedness to its employees by gifting them with individual miniature potted house plants, to celebrate the dawn of 2022. The potted house plants are gifted with the aim of reinforcing in employees the need to respect and protect nature and care for it responsibly for the future. The Bairaha Help to Learn project supports nearly 600

students annually. Each year, much needed school supplies are gifted to children of employees through an annual event that is held at one of Bairaha Farms' strategic locations. Since 2018, events have been held at Anamaduwa, Nikaweratiya, and Hiripitiya, and even at its processing plant at Pasyala. For this year, the processing factory at Pasyala was selected as the location for the gifting ceremony. By alternating locations for the ceremony, Bairaha Farms PLC aims to enhance greater inclusivity across the organisation and ensure that as many of its employees and their families are able to participate, connect and celebrate directly together as one family at these ceremonies at some point in time. With a heritage spanning close to 50 years, founded in 1975, Bairaha Farms PLC is proud to have diligently served Sri Lanka for generations.

# ComBank now offers WhatsApp and Viber banking services in Sinhala, Tamil, and English

The Commercial Bank of Ceylon, the first bank in Sri Lanka to enable social network banking services, has announced that it has enabled trilingual access to both its WhatsApp Banking and Bank with ComBank on Viber services, another first in Sri Lanka.

Consequently, users of these services can now perform functions such as account balance inquiry, account history view, cheque book request, interest rates inquiry, subscribe to ComBank Digital, and even open new Flash Digital bank accounts in the preferred language. Users will be prompted to select from Sinhala, Tamil and English for communication, each



time they access either one of these services, the bank said.

Commercial Bank already has a trilingual official website and a one-stop trilingual Integrated Contact Centre with customer service representatives who handle calls, written communications, customer

requests and customer feedback routed through social media, team leaders and trainers.

To access "ComBank WhatsApp Banking", customers simply type "Hi" on WhatsApp and send the greeting to the designated number 0713 353 353. A set of simple instructions such as entering numerical

commands to receive the information they are looking for will follow, and the required information will be shared with the customer after he or she enters a unique One-Time-Password (OTP) sent by the bank via SMS. Similarly, "Bank with ComBank on Viber" delivers real-time customer service via an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Chatbot that can be located by those who already have the Viber app installed. To begin using "Bank with ComBank on Viber", interested parties must install the Viber app on their smartphones from the App Store or Google Play and search for the "Bank with ComBank on Viber" bot.

# Lanka SSL receives dual recognition at the National Business Excellence Awards 2021

Continuing its winning streak for distinction and quality, Lanka Special Steel Ltd. (Lanka SSL), a BOI-registered company with an undisputed reputation for premium quality wires and a fully owned subsidiary of E B Creasy and Company PLC, was awarded the first runner-up in the "Large" category at the National Business Excellence Awards 2021 held by the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka (NCCSL).

Lanka SSL was also named winner in the "Manufacturing - Other Sector" category. The company is no stranger to the awards, having won the second



Lanka SSL Director/CEO Pravin De Silva (second from left) receiving the award. Also seen here is Gayan Pathinayaka, Lalinda Geekkiyanage, and Anusha Weerasinghe

runner-up in the "Overall - Large" category and the gold award in the

"Manufacturing Sector - Other" category in the 2018 edition.

Over the years, Lanka SSL has pioneered a wide range of mild steel galvanised iron wire backed by proven scientific research and professional guidance, making it the largest manufacturer and market leader specifically in the fence wire sector with a 70% market share. Lanka SSL takes great pride in being the only manufacturer in the country to produce galvanised steel wires, with a portfolio serving a multitude of purposes.

Its continuous appetite for

innovation and excellence, coupled with an extensive distribution network that is only growing stronger, has had a significant impact in shaping the country's wire industry over the last 23 years.

An ISO 9001: 2015, ISO 45001:2018 certified company, Lanka SSL has been at the forefront of the country's galvanised wire segment with a top-of-mind brand, enjoying a loyal and repetitive clientele closer to three decades. Its products are on par with some of the world's best, manufactured in its state-of-the-art factory situated at Sapugaskanda.

# Amāna Bank Awards 2022 held recently

Recognising the best of the best under the theme "Rewarding Excellence", the Amāna Bank Awards 2022 was recently held at Shangri-La Colombo under the patronage of the bank's Chairman Asgi Akbarally.

The highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of the CEO Award, given to the most outstanding employees of the bank for their unwavering display of dedication, passion and going beyond the call of duty. Six CEO Award recipients were selected based on a stringent evaluation criteria. The recipients of the prestigious CEO Award at Amāna Bank Awards 2022 were Mohamed Asmil (Manager - Acquisition Channels), Sameera Senanayake (Manager - Operations), Azim Rali (Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications), Nizath Mustafa (Manager - Software Development and MIS), Udara Kodipilli (Head - Emerging Corporates, Western Region) and



Token of appreciation handed to Amāna Bank Founder Chairman Osman Kassim by Incumbent Chairman Asgi Akbarally, and CEO Mohamed Azmeer

Azam Ameer (Head of Business - Kandy Branch). Other employees who were nominated for the CEO Award were Aadil Haniffa, Arkam Azeez, Aslam Shahabdeen, Dilan Joseph, Fawaz Ansar, Harindra Marasinghe, Imran Razick, Mushtaq Jiffrey, Nadeeka Weerasekera, Razi Giado, Riziniya Faiz, Sanjeeva Fonseka, and Shakir Nawaz.

In the category of branch awards, the bank's Nintavur Branch walked away with the gold award for "Best Overall Branch" which was presented to Branch Manager Mohamed Nafeel while the Kandy branch was bestowed the silver award for "Best Overall Branch", collected by Head of Business - Kandy Branch Azam Ameer. The gold award for "Best Branch - Central Region" was won by the Kuliypitiya branch and was accepted by Branch Manager Shiran Ibrahim, while the silver award was presented to the Kurunegala branch, which was collected by Branch Manager Hussain Samsudeen. The bank's Sammanthurai branch was recognised with the gold award for "Best Branch - Eastern Region" which was accepted by Branch Manager Siraz Mohamed, while the Kinnyia Branch walked away with the silver award, received by Branch Manager Imran Bathurdeen.

# Dialog Television, ViU App to air IPL 2022

It is that time of the year when cricket fans all over the world are glued to their TV screens! The Indian Premier League (IPL) is back to treat cricket fans all over the world with some out-of-this-world cricket entertainment.

This year's IPL edition is extra special for us as Sri Lankans. Three of our star players Bhanuka Rajapakse, Wanidu Hasaranga and pacer Dushmantha Chameera have been drafted by three franchises and have already proved their worth in the matches that they have played so far. This is the first time in years that Sri Lankan players have been drafted into multiple teams.

Dialog Television has facilitated all Sri Lankans to follow the entire tournament and also to witness our heroes in action in one of cricket's biggest arenas. The IPL 2022 tournament can be viewed on four channels including two HD channels to view the action in high definition. The channels are Star Sports 1, Star Sports HD1, Star Sports Select 1, and Star Sports Select HD 1.

Dialog Television customers can easily activate the channels via SMS, MyDialog app, or by giving a missed call. More details on channel activation can be accessed via www.dialog.lk.

Furthermore, accessibility to the IPL excitement is not limited to the Dialog Television customers. Any Dialog Mobile Smartphone user can watch the entire tournament on the Dialog ViU App by subscribing to the Sports Pack. The ViU app allows its users to enjoy their favourite content on the go at any time, from anywhere without any data charges on the Dialog network. Any Dialog Television customer can also download the ViU app and register their Dialog Television account to enjoy all the channels they have subscribed to without any subscription charges or data charges on the Dialog network.

# Seylan Bank upgrades online transaction security for all cards

Seylan Bank announced the enhancement of its online transaction security protocol to EMV 3DS 2.0 for both Issuing and Acquiring stages, becoming one of the first banks in Sri Lanka to do so. This upgrade will ensure superior fraud prevention ability and a seamless customer check-out experience for Seylan customers on their Master and Visa card-based transactions.



**Seylan Bank Head - Cards Ruchith Liyanage**

transaction behaviour of customers. As such, the bank had already enabled all its cards with the Three Domain Secure (3DS) protocol previously. This authenticates cardholders when they perform card-not-present (CNP) transactions such as online payments on e-commerce websites using credit and debit cards. The upgrade to 3DS 2.0 will further secure the customers in their card transactions ensuring better customer experience resulting in fewer false declines and reduced stepped-up authentication.

The new and improved version of 3DS adds several upgrades to the existing version. The secured data sharing between the bank and merchants helps to make better informed authentication and authorisation decisions, which will increase authorisation rates and reduce CNP fraud. The new version also expands the safety network to the mobile app and IoT devices. The mobile friendly protocol is an important feature as mobile commerce continues to grow rapidly.

At present, transactions increasingly take place through digital touchpoints, ranging from computers, smartphones, tabs and various Internet-of-Things (IoT) devices such as Alexa and Google Home. While this transition makes payment activities faster and more convenient, opening up more opportunities for engagement, it also requires intense security processes for fraud detection, authentication and authorisation of transactions.

With client security at the forefront of its core deliverables, Seylan Bank continuously ensures that processes and protocols are updated to best suit the evolving

# Cash prizes granted to winners of 'Hutch Danumai Miliyanayai'



**Hutch Manager - Value Added Services Manoj Benildus (left), together with the first runner-up of 'Hutch Danumai Miliyanayai' - A.A.M.C. Premalal from Seeduwa (centre), and hSenid Mobile Solutions Head - Value Added Services Danasiri Wijedasa (right)**



**Hutch Assistant Manager - Value Added Services Kasun Jayasooriya, together with the second runner-up of 'Hutch Danumai Miliyanayai' - G.H.S.A. Shantha from Buttala (centre), and hSenid Mobile Solutions Account Manager Isuru Edirimannage**

Hutch announced the winners of the 27th season of "Hutch Danumai Miliyanayai" - a general knowledge quiz competition to improve knowledge. This season's winners were awarded Rs. 1 million worth of cash prizes at an event held at the Hutch Head Office in Colombo.

The first prize was awarded to K.L.S. Kumara from Athurugiriya, the second prize to A.A.M.C. Premalal from Seeduwa, and the third prize was awarded to G.H.S.A. Shantha from Buttala.

Hutch Danumai Miliyanayai is organised by Hutch together with Beyond M, a supplier of software products and services and a subsidiary of hSenid Software International, acting as the service provider for the platform on which the quiz is

hosted. Users can participate in this six-month-long competition via SMS, web or by downloading the app Danumai Miliyanayai.

Anyone can participate in the competition by registering for just Rs. 5 per day. Users could increase their points by answering bonus questions as well, where they can acquire extra marks.

The Hutch Danumai Miliyanayai competition is highly rewarding which offers equal winning opportunities for every contestant. Users may register to participate by typing WIN and sending an SMS to 6633 or by downloading the Danumai Miliyanayai app from the Google Play Store. At the end of the six months, three winners will be chosen via a draw, where only the highest scorers are eligible.

# SLT-Mobitel wins at NBEA 2021

**SLT-Mobitel clinched the runner-up accolade in the "Infrastructure and Utilities" category at the National Business Excellence Awards 2021 (NBEA). Organised by the National Chamber of Commerce, Sri Lanka, the NBEA 2021 was held at the BMICH recently. The annual award, pioneered by the Chamber since 2004, recognises excellence in businesses and entities that contribute to the country's socio economic development. SLT-Mobitel winning the award reaffirms its commitment to business excellence and international best practices.**



**Pictured accepting the award from left: SLT General Manager - Marketing Services Anuruddha Suriyarachchi, SLT Group Chief Finance Officer Sanjeeva Samaranyake, SLT Chief Marketing Officer Prabhath Dahanayake, National Chamber of Commerce Senior Deputy President Deepal Nelson, National Chamber of Commerce Secretary Kavinda Rajapaksa, Imperial Teas (Pvt.) Ltd. Director/CEO Jayantha P. Karunaratne, SLT Deputy General Manager - Public Relations Nilanthi Renuka Jayakody, and SLT Assistant Manager - Public Relations Nilmini Wijesinghe**

# Allianz Lanka awards winners of first-ever internal retail sales competition

In a bid to provide a mechanism to recognize its top performers and incentivize exceptional excellence, Allianz Lanka, a premier provider of insurance in Sri Lanka, carried out a retail competition for its sales teams in 2021. Marking the first time in Allianz Lanka's history that such a competition was held, the retail competition 2021 considered top and notable performances with regard to acquiring new customers, along with the renewal of insurance policies across customer categories such as retail motor, non-motor and SME. The winners of the competition were recognised and honoured at a special awards ceremony held recently, under the patronage of Allianz Lanka's Senior Leadership Team.

Discussing the programme, Allianz Lanka Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Gany Subramaniam said: "As one of the best insurance companies in Sri Lanka, we are constantly striving to create opportunities for our people, in this case, our sales professionals,



**Allianz Insurance Lanka Ltd. CEO Gany Subramaniam (fifth from left) hands over the grand prize to the competition winner P. Brinthapan (centre) of Allianz Insurance Lanka Ltd. Wellawatte branch**

to achieve excellence in their work lives. We do this by investing in our people through training programmes, upskilling initiatives and also various internal competitions, in order to help us all develop that sense of professionalism, commitment and passion that is unique to Allianz Lanka. Together, these efforts help us to succeed in a highly competitive and challenging environment."

A total of 28 winners emerged from the Allianz Lanka Retail Competition 2021. The overall

winner of the competition - P. Brinthapan of the Wellawatte branch, walked away with the grand prize of a KUV 100 SUV. The first and second runners up - A.J.D. Sharon of the Vavuniya branch and R.C. Amarasinghe of the Colombo Metro branch, respectively, walked away with handsome cash prizes for their exceptional efforts. Twenty five other top achievers were also honoured at the awards ceremony and received generous cash prizes in line with the achievements.

# NDB Wealth Management strengthened with appointments

Driven with the passion to deliver the best to its loyal clients and to continue to uplift its service offerings through professionalism and dedication, NDB Wealth Management is pleased to announce the key and strategic appointments of Vindhya Jayasekera as Chief Investment Officer, and Indika De Silva as Vice President.

Chief Investment Officer Vindhya Jayasekera heads the Asset Management Division of NDB Wealth Management overseeing all equity and fixed income portfolios. Since joining the company in 2010, she has managed its unit trust product portfolio of various risk rated funds ranging from equity to fixed



**NDB Wealth Management Chief Investment Officer Vindhya Jayasekera**



**NDB Wealth Management Vice President Indika De Silva**

income. Backed with over eighteen years of combined experience in the investment banking and fund management industry, her previous work experience includes NDB Investment Bank and Lehman Brothers, USA.

An alumnus of the University of Moratuwa,

Vindhya graduated with first class honours in BSc (Eng) in Civil Engineering. She is a recipient of the Fulbright Scholarship under which she completed her MSc in Finance at the University of Illinois, USA with a medal for Academic Excellence in the programme.

Vice President Indika De Silva commenced his career at NDB Wealth in 2008 as a Management Trainee. Indika, a CFA Charter holder is also a graduate of University of London, where he acquired his Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance.

As the Lead Fund Manager of the Discretionary Portfolio Management Vertical, the largest vertical of the company, Indika manages a variety of investment portfolios ranging from insurance portfolios to state sector gilt-edged portfolios, private sector defined-benefit and defined-contribution funds of corporates and investment portfolios of high net-worth individuals.

# Browns Hotels & Resorts launches 'Futurekey'

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Browns Hotels and Resorts Group General Manager Eksath Wijeratne, and National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) Chairman Tharanga Gamlath, Chairman, forming a partnership to upskill and reskill youth. Browns Hotels and Resorts takes pride in being the first hotel chain to establish a training programme where participants are provided with an internationally recognised qualification in addition to being remunerated well above industry standards, allowing them to prosper within the hospitality sphere.



**Signing of the MoU by Browns Hotels and Resorts Group General Manager Eksath Wijeratne (centre) and National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) Chairman Tharanga Gamlath (centre)**

The FutureKey Apprentice programme is a one-to-two-year programme where candidates can opt to specialise in either Front Office, Housekeeping, Food and Beverages, Culinary or Maintenance departments, and will be facilitated at three main locations; Club Hotel Dolphin in Waikkal, Avani Bentota Resort, and The Calm Resort and Spa in

Pasikuda. Upon completion, participants will receive a NAITA internationally accredited NVQ Level Three to Four qualifications, opening many doors within the hospitality sphere, both locally as well as internationally.

Browns Hotels and Resorts fundamentally focuses on two main pillars, soft skills and leadership skills

development for the above programmes.

LOLC Group's investments in the leisure sector are clustered under Browns Investments, which maintains controlling interest in a number of properties in iconic locations in the country. The portfolio currently consists of Avani Bentota Resort, Club Hotel Dolphin, Dickwella Resort and Spa, Hotel Sigiriya, The Calm Resort and Spa, five boutique properties under Reveal, Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort, Occidental Paradise Dambulla, and Occidental Eden Beruwala. A further two projects; including a five-star resort in Beruwala, and Port City Mega Leisure development comprising a five-star city hotel are scheduled to be unveiled in the near future. A series of offshore investments in the Maldives including four resorts and one city hotel/condominium, and a five-star resort in Mauritius too has been added to the development pipeline.

# NDB recognised as one of the Top 20 Brands in SL

The National Development Bank PLC (NDB) has been recognised as one of the top 20 brands in the country by the world's independent brand valuation consultancy - Brand Finance Lanka's annual index of Most Valuable Brands.

Leaping in the rankings from number 20 in 2020 to number 16 in 2021, and maintaining the rank at number 16 in 2022, the bank's brand value has seen an increase of 7% from Rs. 10,287 million to Rs. 11,038 million. NDB has maintained its brand strength despite the challenges during the year due to the pandemic and economic situation within the country.

As a brand this is encapsulated in NDB's brand promise: "The future is banking on us". The digitalisation of banking services through technology delivered safely and securely forms the core of the NDB brand strategy as it seeks to realise the ambitions of all customers and other stakeholders.

Similarly, the bank was also recently awarded two gold awards for "Financial Inclusivity" and "Best Common ATM Enabler of the Year" and one merit award for "Excellence in Customer Convenience" at the Lankapay Technovation Awards 2022.

While NDB Bank has always been known for delivering the very best to its customers, digital and technological advancement is the bedrock of its strategy. Considerable resources are deployed towards this end, enabling the bank to establish a remarkable positioning in the industry as one of the fastest growing, systematic and technologically savvy players.

NDB Bank was awarded the "Best Digital Bank 2021" at the Asiamoney Best Bank Awards for Sri Lanka in addition to being crowned "Sri Lanka's Best Bank 2021" by the prestigious Global Finance magazine based in the US, and "The Bank of the Year Sri Lanka", by The Banker magazine based in the UK and is the "Most Awarded Corporate 2021" as per LMD ranking.

# Orel Corporation to offer businesses an opportunity to lease solar energy

Orel Corporation, in an innovative move to combat the current power outage, has stepped up to offer businesses and the general public the opportunity to lease solar energy, thereby setting a new trend of enabling a viable energy solution at a minimal cost.

Through this offer, customers will not have to pay the high upfront costs generally incurred for solar equipment and installations, but still enjoy the same benefits as that of a solar power user. In essence, this choice affords customers the opportunity to maximise savings by securing access



**Wanasinghe Holding (Pvt.) Ltd. signing the MoU with Orel Corporation**

to and usage of the equipment needed to provide solar energy for their homes or

business premises, for a fixed monthly minimal cost that fits their budgets. This is also accompanied by the dependable Orel-managed and-maintained system, which includes daily monitoring of assured solar generation.

This valuable benefit has become possible with Orel Corporation's timely investment in a solar power plant of 1,800k W. This move will further benefit the National Grid of 232,960 Kwh with savings of up to 1,000 Kw CO2 carbon emission annually. A host of companies recently signed up

with Orel Corporation to enjoy this valuable offer that included Trans Screen (Pvt.) Ltd. for 200 Kw, Wanasinghe Holding (Pvt.) Ltd. for 312 Kw, Unilak Fashion (Pvt.) Ltd. for 414 Kw, Mount Packs (Pvt.) Ltd. for 500 kW, and Fruits and Nuts Exports (Pvt.) Ltd. for 366 kW.

Through this timely value proposition, Orel Corporation offers any organisation, regardless of size, to take advantage of availing themselves the opportunity to cut the ever-increasing utility prices while also enjoying clean renewable energy.

# the morning brunch

## Amber Heard diagnosed with borderline personality disorder: Psychologist testifies

Amber Heard's mental health was a main topic of testimony in court on Tuesday (26). Dr. Shannon Curry, a clinical and forensic psychologist hired by Johnny Depp's legal team amid his ongoing defamation trial against his ex, testified that she diagnosed Heard with borderline personality disorder and histrionic personality disorder. *ET* has reached out to Heard for comment. Dr. Curry's diagnoses, which she described as "two sides of the same coin", came after reviewing "multiple sources" including testing, Heard's past medical records, the actress' self-report, and two meetings with Heard. Additionally, Dr. Curry said that she does not believe that Heard has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as the actress has claimed. "Ms. Heard did not have PTSD," Dr. Curry said. "And there were also pretty significant indications that she was grossly exaggerating symptoms of PTSD when asked about them."

(Entertainment Tonight)



### International Crow and Raven Appreciation Day

# For Sri Lanka's crows, following the trash is all part of the hustle

BY MALAKA RODRIGO

**Crows have long had a reputation of being a nuisance and a pest, even though it's widely recognised that they're among the most intelligent of birds.**

In Sri Lanka, that reputation goes back some 2,000 years, to the Jataka morality tales from the Buddhist tradition. One of the tales is of a "greedy crow" that spies a half-covered plate of fish in a nobleman's kitchen and tries to steal it, only to be caught, have its feathers plucked, and thrown out. The moral being, of course, that greed is bad.

But if the modern-day crows of Sri Lanka are any indication, it would be safe to assume that the crow in the Jataka story ended up just fine, ever hustling and thriving — the perfect avatar for the International Crow and Raven Appreciation Day which fell yesterday (27).

Sri Lanka is home to two crow species: the large-billed crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) and the house crow (*Corvus splendens*), also known as the Indian crow, a common bird found throughout much of South Asia. (The house crows found in Malaysia's Penang State are thought to come from a population of 56 birds brought over from Sri Lanka in the 1890s for caterpillar control.)

While the large-billed crow abounds in rural settings in Sri Lanka, the house crow occurs mostly in cities. One thing they have in common, though, is that both thrive on trash, flocking to the many open dumpsites around the island. Another thing: both are among just seven bird species that aren't protected under



PHOTO © ISTOCK

A study shows that garbage is directly linked to fluctuations in the crow population in Sri Lanka

**Crows are now seen even in wilderness havens such as Horton Plains**

Sri Lankan law; the vast majority of the around-500 bird species found in the country are protected.

### Thriving on trash

Colombo, Sri Lanka's commercial capital, appears to have the country's biggest crow population. The Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka (FOGSL), the local affiliate of BirdLife International, initiated a study on Colombo's crows in the late 1970s, and the effort continues today. "Our study showed that garbage is directly linked to crow population fluctuations," FOGSL President and University of Colombo Professor of Zoology Nihal Dayawansa, told Mongabay.

Crows have communal roosts, often a single tree, or several in the same area, depending on the size of the flock. This makes it easy to carry out a population assessment, which the FOGSL researchers perform through roost counts at dusk. Over the decades, they've recorded the Colombo crow population growing from about 50,000 birds in 1980 to a peak of 124,300 in 2006, before dropping below the 100,000 mark, at 98,350, in 2012.

The turning point, Dayawansa said, was the Colombo Beautification project in 2010, which included the shut down of several open dumpsites that were considered eyesores. But after 2014, the Government largely abandoned the project, and new dumpsites began appearing.

The Colombo crows are predominantly house crows (only about 5% are large-billed crows), roosting in flocks of as many as 500 individual crows — although figures like this aren't common anymore, Dayawansa said.

### Impact on endemic wildlife

The inspiration to begin the crow study came from a public market near a school where the birds had become a nuisance, said ornithologist and University of Colombo Emeritus Professor of Ecology Sarath Kotagama.

"This market got shifted to another area and the crow population in the area too declined," Kotagama informed Mongabay.

Over the years, the study has confirmed that crows move with the garbage. And it's not just open dumpsites that make for easy pickings. In Horton Plains National Park, one of

the most ecologically sensitive areas of Sri Lanka and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, large-billed crows swoop in with every surge of human visitors, thanks to the large amounts of trash that the latter generate.

When visitor numbers to the national park drop significantly, as was the case throughout much of the Covid-19 pandemic, the crows lose their main source of food and begin hunting native species, which includes endemic species like the Ceylon deaf agama, a lizard found only in Sri Lanka. This development raises concerns about the impact on native species if the crow population increases unchecked, Kotagama said.

Dayawansa said that crow populations can be controlled through the management of food resources that are available to the birds. This means an effective garbage management strategy, he said. Some countries, such as Singapore, have crow-culling competitions and other methods to eradicate the birds.

But if there's an alternative moral to the Jataka tale from 2,000 years ago, one that applies to the present-day problem, it's that the plate of fish in the nobleman's kitchen should have been fully covered to begin with.

"Implementing artificial population control methods such as destroying eggs and culling of adults would not be necessary, if garbage sites are better managed," Dayawansa explained.

*The writer is a naturalist with an IT background who took environmental journalism in 2007 to follow his belief in "conservation through awareness". He has won many awards for his work and writes extensively on biodiversity, wildlife, oceans, water, climate change, and environmental issues.*

*(This article was first published in Mongabay, a nonprofit environmental science and conservation news platform that has over 800 correspondents in some 70 countries)*

## The new world's oldest person enjoys chocolate and wine

A 118-year-old nun living in a nursing home in southern France has become the world's oldest living person according to the Guinness World Records, and enjoys a glass of wine a day and loves chocolate.

Sister André was named the oldest person after the death of Kane Tanaka, a Japanese woman previously certified as the world's oldest person, who died at the age of 119 on 19 April. She is also the oldest nun ever, according to a statement released by Guinness on Monday (25).

Born as Lucile Randon on 11 February 1904, Sister André has dedicated most of her life to religious service, the statement said. Before becoming a Catholic nun, she looked after children during World War II and then spent 28 years caring for orphans and elderly people at a hospital.

Sister André, who lives near the French city of Toulon, is also the world's oldest Covid-19 survivor. The Guinness World Records statement said she tested positive for the virus at the beginning of 2021, but recovered fully within three weeks, just in time for her 117th birthday.

In an interview with the French TV channel RMC

Story on Tuesday (26), Sister André appeared to have mixed feelings about becoming the new oldest living person.

"I feel I would be better off in heaven, but the good Lord doesn't want me yet," she said, calling the title a "sad honour".

However, she also expressed her joy at being "pampered" by her family.

Sister André enjoys chocolate and wine — and drinks a glass every day — her nursing home, Résidence Catherine Labouré, confirmed to CNN on Tuesday.

When she turned 118 earlier this year, the elderly nun received a handwritten birthday note from French President Emmanuel Macron — the 18th French president of her lifetime — according to a Tweet from the nursing home. There have also been 10 different Popes presiding over the Catholic Church since she was born.

The title of oldest person ever recorded also belongs to a French woman. Born on 21 February 1875, Jeanne Louise Calment's life spanned 122 years and 164 days, according to the Guinness World Records statement.

(With input from CNN)



Sister André, the world's oldest person, is also the world's oldest Covid-19 survivor

# Upfield Lanka celebrates International Chefs Day with Chefs' Guild



Upfield celebrates International Chefs Day in partnership with the Chefs' Guild of Sri Lanka

sponsor the occasion with the Chefs' Guild of Sri Lanka.

International Chefs Day is globally celebrated to acknowledge the contribution of chefs as artists of gastronomy, to share and discuss their fine culinary skills, new innovations, and to recognise achievements and exceptional performances in the field. At this year's celebration, a professional book written by the Chefs' Guild of Sri Lanka was launched by

the experts of the profession as a guidebook for beginners and existing chefs on how they can further upgrade their skills.

The Chefs' Guild also emphasised the ethos and duty of the profession towards sustainability and the environment and their role in considering the impact that the production, creation, and consumption of food has on the environment.

In light of this theme, Upfield's

vision of "A better plant-based future" was shared among the professional chef community of Sri Lanka, highlighting how plant-based foods can make a difference, discussing the emerging trends in the food and culinary industry, and the role of plant-based food in supporting efforts of chefs to create excellent food.

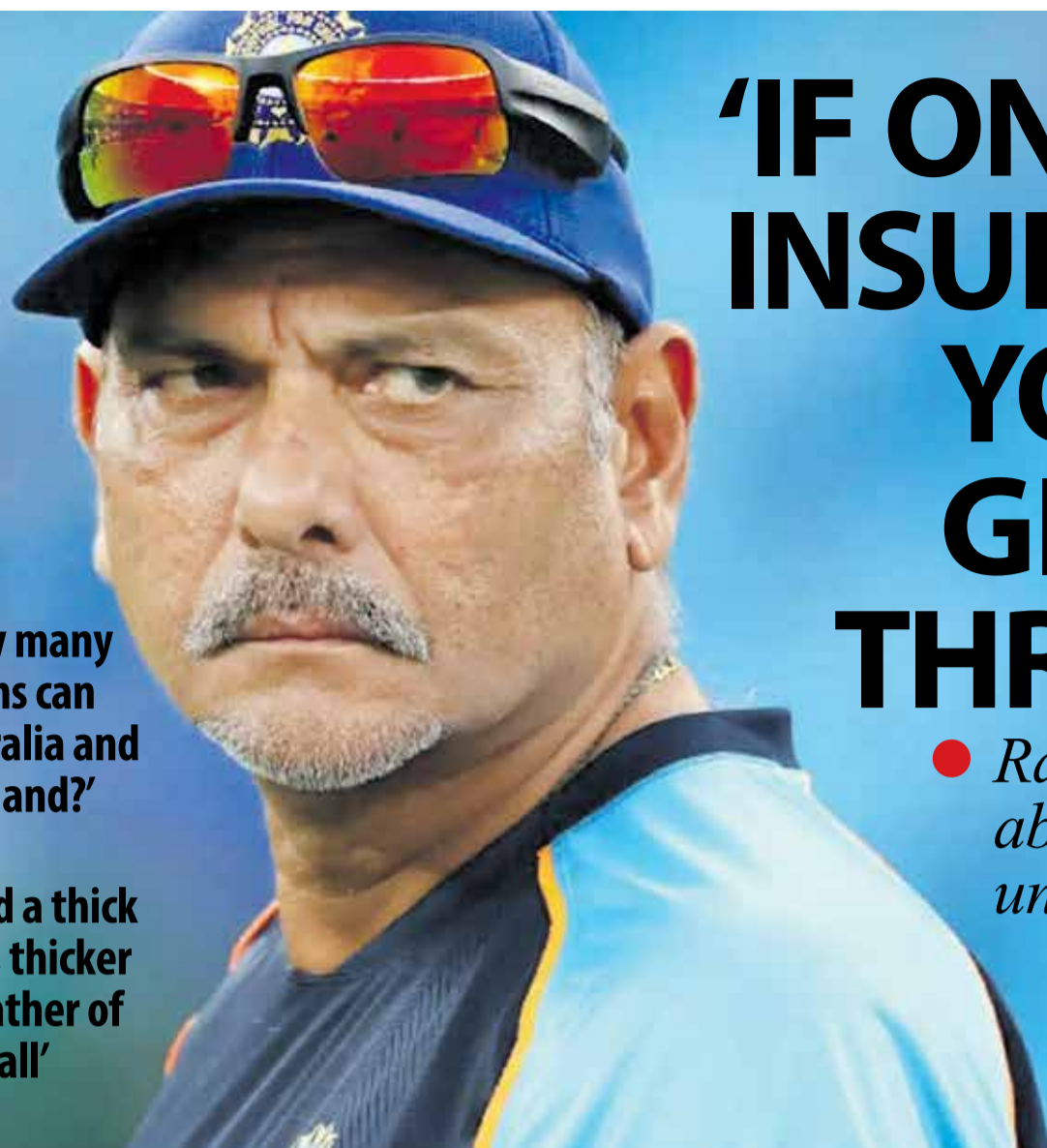
As the world gravitates towards health-conscious and sustainable dining, professional chefs are

staying on trend, shifting their focus to offer more plant-based meals on their menus, keen to support a food culture that supports better health and a better climate that is ultimately beneficial to mankind. Choosing a plant-based diet is one of the best choices for the sustainability of the environment, as plant-based products generate less greenhouse gas emissions and encourage more responsible

and sustainable use of land, water, fuel, and fertiliser in its production than animal-sourced products.

Upfield Lanka, the brand owner of plant-based products Astra, Flora, and Meadowland specifically designs its products to cater to consumers who want to enjoy delicious plant-based foods. Upfield stated that it created plant-based creams like Meadowland to help chefs make dishes that taste as if it was made with dairy creams. With Meadowland, chefs can also create dishes for anyone, even for those who are lactose/gluten intolerant, the brand stated.

Upfield stated that it continues to be a pioneer in the food industry; a leader in advocacy for sustainable food systems through the adoption of plant-based foods among their consumers and culinary professionals. Through its partnership with the Chefs' Guild of Sri Lanka, Upfield Lanka stated it looks forward to building and championing a sustainable plant-based food system together.



# 'IF ONE SINGLE INSULT COMES YOUR WAY, GIVE THEM THREE BACK'

● *Ravi Shastri talks about coaching India to unprecedented success*

Ravi Shastri: 'I was straight in from the commentary box. I was still in my jeans and loafers. Instantly my job changed.'

How many teams can win in Australia and then in England?

I had a thick skin, thicker than the leather of the Dukes ball'

"Oh no, no, don't go down that route," replies Ravi Shastri, his familiar baritone laugh bellowing down the phone line from Mumbai when asked if he would be interested in filling the vacant position of England men's head coach.

"Haha. Oh no. Seven years with India – a full-time job, 300 days a year, 1.4 billion people judging you every day – that takes its toll. Good luck to anyone who lasts that long."

Here are excerpts from the tantalising interview Ali Martin had done with Shastri that appeared on *The Guardian in England on Monday (25)*:

Rob Key left the skybox to become the director of England men's cricket last week and Shastri had noted a line in *The Guardian* that compared this with his time as India's equivalent from 2014 to 2016 and then a hugely successful spell as Head Coach from 2017 until last year, after more than two decades as a broadcaster.

"I had no warning," he says. "I was commentating at the Oval during India's (2014) tour of England and came off air to find six or seven missed calls. 'Seven bloody calls? What's happened here?'. (The BCCI) just said: 'We want you to take over, starting tomorrow, at any cost.' I told them I'd have to speak to my family and commercial partners but they just said they would sort all that out. And like that I was straight in

from the commentary box. You'll see when I joined the setup (during the ODIs), I was still in jeans and loafers. Instantly my job changed."

### No prima donnas

It is worth stating at this juncture that, while Shastri, like Key, had no coaching qualifications and – bar a brief stint as India's Team Manager in 2007 – had spent his retirement from playing behind the microphone, the worlds they walked into are vastly different.

"Rob may have more work with the domestic game, but when it comes to the national team, it is very similar," he says. "The most important thing is getting among the players and setting a tone from the outset: what you believe in, what you think of them and changing the mindset to compete and win. You have to be bullish and brutish in wanting to achieve that.

"For us, and now England, it was about setting the challenge of winning abroad, big time. I was very firm when it came to team culture: all the prima donnas and all that s\*\*\*,

that had to go out of the window early."

### Give them three back!

"And you leave everything you said as a commentator behind. Park it. When I was the Director of the team, it was about diagnosing problems: I was asked to hire and fire, whoever I wanted I could get in and whoever I didn't could be shown the door. And it was also outlining how we want to play: to be aggressive and ruthless, to up the fitness levels, to get a group of fast bowlers to take 20 wickets

overseas. And it was about attitude, especially when playing the Aussies. I told the boys, 'if one single 'f\*\*\* you' comes your way, give them three back – two in our language and one in theirs.'"

It is a classic Shastri-ism, the same moustachioed chutzpah that has run through from his playing days.

### No coaching badges

"And I didn't have coaching badges. Level one? Level two? F\*\*\* that. And in a country



Breaching 'the Gabba Fortress': On 19 January 2021, India defeated Australia at the Gabba, Brisbane, to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2-1

like India, there is always jealousy or a gang of people willing you to fail. I had a thick skin, thicker than the leather of the Dukes ball you use. A real solid hide. And you need a bloody hide over here..."

So much of Shastri's philosophy comes down to unbridled aggression, and in Virat Kohli he had a Captain ready to spread this through the squad. The results speak for themselves, India winning 10 Test series out of 14, rising to No. 1 in the rankings and beating Australia twice in their own backyard. Key is expected to appoint Ben Stokes to lead England's Test team, a cricketer Shastri describes as a "first-class" option.

### How many can win like that?

This appraisal of England may surprise some but Shastri is keen to talk up his legacy. There is one Test remaining from the series India led 2-1 last summer – to be staged at Edgbaston in July – and the former all-rounder will be back commentating for Sky, hoping his old charges, now under the captaincy of Rohit Sharma, can complete a famous double.

"How many teams can win in Australia – beating an attack with Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, and Josh Hazlewood from 1-0 down – and then win in England? That will be hard for any team to replicate for a long time," he says.

### There was no dodging

"Mentality and technique trump past records in domestic cricket," he says. "Get the first two right and the runs will come. It was all about the preparation. We told our batsmen to leave their driving licence behind and learn to leave the ball. Make the bowler bowl to you and you'll score. Be prepared to bat five hours to get a century in England. It won't come in three and you'll get out trying.

"We also had slingers (coaches with dog-sticks) in the nets smashing the ball in at 160 kph from 16 yards. Guys had no choice. There was no dodging. I'd stand behind the stumps to make sure of that. No matter who the person was, he had to go through that. The slingers would seriously let it rip and guys would look ugly. But you are meant to look ugly in the nets. In England you have to grind and earn your runs."

### There's no substitute for experience

"The same with the bowlers, we told them to stick in because there is a five-wicket session at any given time in England and at Lord's and the Oval this decides the result. And we knew winning in Australia or England wasn't coming with spin, it was fast bowlers, guys with aggression like Jasprit Bumrah. We were instrumental in making sure that guy played Test cricket. You don't even need express pace, you just need attitude," he recalls.

"There is no substitute for experience. Test cricket is the purest form of the game and, if the guys are fit, hungry, you jolly well look in that direction. Every country makes this mistake, looking too far ahead. It's too easy to look 100 feet away and lose the plot by not backing the guys who have been there and done it."

## Susanthika's Olympic miracle

● *Uttering 'Jayo Munindassa' before Sydney Olympics final race*

BY REVATHA S. SILVA

It was one fine Thursday, 28 September 2000 at Stadium Australia, currently Accor Stadium, the central venue of the 27th Summer Olympics in Sydney, the capital city of New South Wales, Australia.

The world's best eight female sprinters in the 200 metres discipline of the time are ready to go.

This will be the ultimate prize of their distinguished careers. The next half a minute will either make you or break you – you will either end up as a mere Olympic finalist or you may enter the history books as an Olympic champion.

That poor girl from Ethnawala, Warakapola in the Kegalle district, now 24 years of age, feels nervous.

### Enters final as third best

The previous day, Wednesday, she had come through the event's heats (first place in 22.53 seconds) and the quarter-finals (first place in 22.54), before finishing second in the semi-finals (22.45) on Thursday.

Jayasinghe enters the final as the third best overall. That was out of 52 competitors who came to the Sydney Olympics from 38 countries. There is no one from Asia but a couple of Chinese.

The eight lanes in the final sprint on Thursday comprised in the following order:

(Lane 1) Beverly McDonald from Jamaica, (2) Cathy Freeman from Australia, (3) Pauline Davis-Thompson from Bahamas, (4) Marion Jones from U.S.A., (5) Debbie Ferguson from Bahamas, (6) Susanthika Jayasinghe from Sri Lanka, (7) Melinda Gainsford-Taylor from Australia, and (8) Zhanna Pintusevich from Ukraine

### A defining moment

The tension is mounting on the Ethnawala village lass. On her left is Debbie Ferguson and on her right is Australia's Melinda Gainsford-Taylor. At a time the national cricket team had started making ripples in Sri Lankan society following a World Cup triumph four years ago, the entire island nation is now glued to their TV screens as "Susi" aka the Asian Black Mare

is trying to raise her country's sports into new heights.

It was only in the 14th Summer Olympics about 52 years ago, in 1948, that Sri Lanka, then named Ceylon, had won a medal in the Olympics – Duncan White in the men's 400 m hurdles.

### Lead up to the Olympics

There is reason for garnering courage for the Lankan damsel. After winning gold medals at the South Asian level, she had won a 200 m gold in 1995 in the Asian Championship in Jakarta.

Yet the true defining moment came in 1997 when she became the first-ever Asian woman to win a medal in either an Olympics or World Championship sprint event, clinching the silver in 200 m in World Championship, Athens, Greece. After three years, Susanthika is now facing perhaps the ultimate test in her remarkable athletic career.

### Dutugemunu and 'Jayo Munindassa'

Tensed and perplexed, in a bid to gather strength, Susanthika uttered to herself the revered lines much hailed in Buddhist chronicles, "Jayo munindassa subodhi mule".

It is a verse one uses to derive courage and blessings by remembering how Lord Buddha attained Buddhahood or Nibbana under a Bo tree by defeating the evil powers of all sins or Mara. These lines are said to have been uttered by King Gamini Abhaya, better known as Dutugemunu, of ancient Sri Lanka before he led his troops to the war against Tamil Chola king Elara, to capture the Anuradhapura kingdom and unify the island nation around 160 BC. Abhaya won that war.

### The best run in her career

It was incredible. Not only did Susanthika come out of her nervousness, she took a majestic start to the race, and to the utmost joy of a nation that watched action live on TV, recorded her career's best-ever timing in 200 m – 22.28 seconds – in the crunch race.

Marion Jones won first place (21.84), Pauline Davis-



Moments before the women's 200 m final in Sydney Olympics on 28 September 2000. Susanthika is third from left

PHOTO © YOUTUBE

### The power of that truth will bring you glory

*"Jayo munindassa subodhi mule,  
Ahoosi marassa parajayohi,  
Ugghosayum deva ganā pasannā,  
Eetena saccena jayassu maimham / tuiham"*

### A loose translation follows:

"Victory was achieved by Lord Buddha under a Bo tree, Māra, the evil one, was dispelled after he was defeated, Assemblies of beautiful Gods applauded, By the power of that truth, may I/you too achieve victory!"

Thompson second (22.27), and Susanthika third.

Susi's bronze medal achievement stood as the only Olympic medal for a South Asian in an athletic event for 21 years until India's Neeraj Chopra won a gold medal in men's javelin throw at the 2020 Summer Olympics (held in 2021) in Tokyo, Japan.

### Time-tested Buddhist verse

The story didn't stop there. Seven years later, Jayasinghe was awarded, as we all know, the silver medal in place of the bronze when Marion Jones was found guilty of having taken banned steroids during the 2000 Olympics. All five of her medals won in the Sydney Games, including the gold in 200 m, were revoked. Beverly McDonald, the original fourth place winner of the 200 m finals, was awarded the bronze.

The girl from Ethnawala thus achieved something an entire generation of a nation had been waiting for.

Further, the moment becomes more significant and historic: a girl from Asia derived courage and blessings from a time-tested Buddhist verse at the pinnacle of the world stage in international sport.



**BANGLADESH TEST SQUAD FOR SRI LANKA – HIGHLIGHTS**



Bangladesh announced their Test cricket squad for the two-match home series against Sri Lanka (SL) on Sunday (24).

### THE SQUAD (16)

Mominul Haque (Captain), Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan, Liton Das, Yasir Ali, Tajjul Islam, Mehidy Hasan Miraz (out for first Test), Ebadot Hossain, Khaled Ahmed, Nurul Hasan, Rejaur Rahman Raja, Shohidul Islam, and Shoriful Islam (subject to fitness)

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Veteran all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is back after missing the previous New Zealand and South Africa Test series due to personal reasons
- Opening batter Shadman Islam and right-arm fast bowler Abu Jayed have been dropped
- Uncapped fast bowler Rejaur Rahman Raja gets a call up
- Left-arm quick bowler Shoriful Islam is included subject to fitness
- The series will be played under the International Cricket Council (ICC) World Test Championship 2021-23 cycle
- Sri Lanka are currently placed fifth with a point percentage of 50%
- Bangladesh are one before the last in the nine-team ranking with 16.66%
- Bangladesh lost their previous Test series (two Tests) against South Africa away from home 2-0
- Sri Lanka too lost their last series (two Tests) 2-0, against India in India

### SCHEDULE

- 8 May (Sunday) – Sri Lanka arrive in Bangladesh
- 11 and 12 May (Wednesday and Thursday) – Two-day practice match at M.A. Aziz Stadium, Chattogram
- 15-19 May (Sunday to Thursday) – first Test at Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Chittagong
- 23-27 May (Monday to Friday) – second Test at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Dhaka

### Note:

The series will be the first assignment of Sri Lanka men's new coaching/support staff: Head Coach Chris Silverwood, Assistant Coach Naveed Nawaz, Fast Bowling Coach Chaminda Vaas (not confirmed yet), Spin Bowling Coach Piyal Wijetunge, Fielding and Support Coach Manoj Abeywickraman, and Manager Mahinda Halangoda





# the morning sports

Virat Kohli's dismal IPL showing: The star batter has so far scored only 128 runs in nine innings in the tournament at a worrisome average of 16.00 runs per an innings



Kohli may well be seen in the Indian jersey next in July, on their next England tour, it was reported.

## 'Overcooked'

"It's not the first time that a player has gone through a rough patch. It's only natural. We were anyway looking to give chances to some young bunch and rest the senior players. Virat will be given rest. But if he wants to play, then we will see. We will speak to him before the team selection meeting," a member of the selection committee had told *Inside Sport* yesterday, reported Krishnendu Banerjee.

While many, including Kohli's close friend Ravi Shastri, have advised him to take rest, calling him "overcooked", he is yet to inform the selectors about his availability for the forthcoming series.

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



## Future plans

However, the selectors are already planning to rest a few senior players including Kohli, present skipper Rohit Sharma, and Jasprit Bumrah for the T20I series against South Africa.

South Africa will play five T20Is from 9 to 19 June in India.

The selectors will speak to Kohli not just on his form, but also on his future plans. A bunch of members of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is all set to advise Kohli to leave one format (T20) and focus on the other two, including Test, which is a priority for the former Indian Captain as well.

## May lose his place

"No, we haven't discussed anything with Virat yet. It's too premature. He needs the space and time to process the lean patch. Let the IPL get over, we will speak to him about a break if he wants. But in all likelihood, he will play only in the England series; but it will depend on what he wants. We should give him that respect," the selector said.

The way things are going, he can lose his place in the Indian T20I side altogether. The BCCI is desperate to win an International Cricket Council (ICC) trophy, which has been long overdue in the country's trophy cupboard.

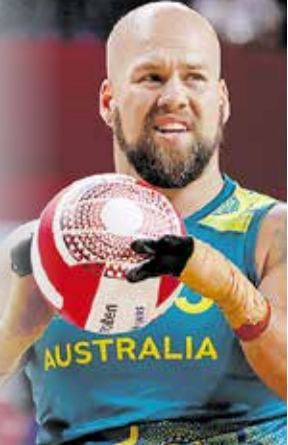
## Russia open to hosting sports events: Putin



Russia's President Vladimir Putin has claimed the country remains open to staging international sports events, despite a multitude being moved already and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) urging international federations (IFs) not to organise events there or in Belarus. The International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) 2023 Men's Ice Hockey World Championships in St. Petersburg on Tuesday (26) became the latest high-profile event to be moved from Russia due to the invasion of Ukraine, following the likes of the 2022 UEFA Champions League football final in the same city and the International Volleyball Federation Volleyball Men's World Championship being moved.

## Popularity for Aus paralympians at highest level

True North Research's 2021 BenchMark study has found that the emotional connection to the Australian paralympic team was at its highest following success at Tokyo 2020. The research has explored the emotional connection of sport and sponsors. The paralympic team scored extraordinary marks on trust, pride, and respect to put it at the top of the table, which included 19 of Australia's national and state teams. It also assessed the country's largest leagues, including teams from the Australian Football League, National Rugby League, Super Netball, and Super Rugby.



## VIRAT KOHLI IN THE IPL 2022:

Kohli plays for Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB)

- 41\* vs. Punjab Kings (PBKS)
- 12 vs. Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR)
- 5 vs. Rajasthan Royals (RR)
- 48 vs. Mumbai Indian (MI)
- 1 vs. Chennai Super Kings (CSK)
- 12 vs. Delhi Capitals (DC)
- 0 vs. Lucknow Super Giants (LSG)
- 0 vs. Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH)
- 9 vs. Rajasthan Royals (RR)

\*Not Out

## The Indian players who are going to be rested?

Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma (after discussion), Rishabh Pant, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Shami, and Bhuvneshwar Kumar

## India's upcoming fixtures

- India vs. South Africa T20Is: 9-19 June
- Ireland vs. India T20Is: 26-28 June
- England vs. India 5th Test: 1-5 July
- England vs. India T20Is: 7-10 July
- England vs. India ODIs: 12-17 July

## His form a talking point

The T20 World Cup coming up later this year in Australia is of huge priority. With Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan in the mix, the prospect of dropping Kohli isn't ruled out.

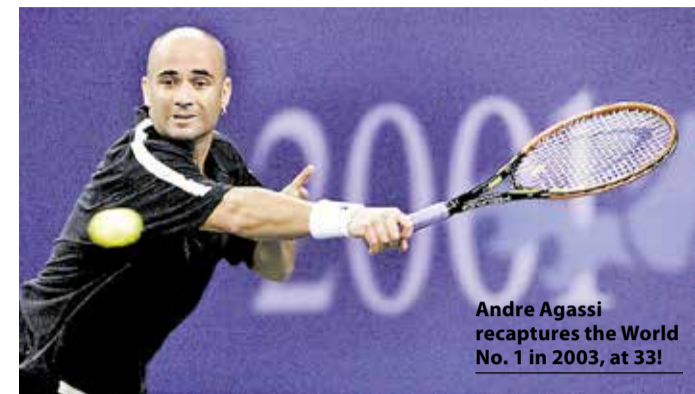
A top BCCI Official confirmed that Kohli's form is being discussed among the Indian national selectors.

## In selectors' hands

"He is a great servant of Indian cricket. But his form, for some time now, is a huge concern for the national selectors and BCCI," the said official had confirmed.

When prodded further, the top board official said that selectors will deal with the matter.

"We don't intervene in the selection matters. Selectors have to take call on Virat and others. We can't give our judgement to them. Obviously, they are concerned what is happening to him," the said official had added.



Andre Agassi recaptures the World No. 1 in 2003, at 33!

## ON THIS DAY

28  
APRIL

### ACHIEVEMENTS/HISTORIC EVENTS

**1923** Wembley Stadium opened for the game between Bolton Wanderers vs. West Ham United in the FA Cup

### TRAGEDIES/ACCIDENTS

**1967** Muhammad Ali refused to be inducted into the US Army. He was immediately stripped of his boxing title as a result

**1983** The mysterious Indian leg-spinner Laxman Sivaramakrishnan was the fifth-youngest player in Test history at the time – and the youngest non-Pakistani – at 17 years 118 days, when he made his debut against West Indies in Antigua

**2007** Australia made it a hat-trick of World Cup wins with a 53-run victory over Sri Lanka in Barbados

**1993** A DHC-5 Buffalo transport aircraft of the Zambian Air Force crashed into the Atlantic Ocean shortly after taking off from Libreville, Gabon. The flight was carrying most of the Zambian national football team to a 1994 FIFA World Cup Qualifier against Senegal in Dakar. All 25 passengers and five crew members were killed. The official investigation concluded that the pilot had shut down the wrong engine following an engine fire. It also found that pilot fatigue and a faulty instrument had contributed to the accident

### UNUSUAL



Mysterious Indian leg-spinner Laxman 'Siva' Sivaramakrishnan took 12/181 in the rout of England in Bombay, 1984  
PHOTO © ADRIAN MURRELL

**2003** Andre Agassi recaptured the World No. 1 ranking to become the oldest top-ranked male in history, at 33 years and 13 days

**2019** American diver Victor Vescovo made the deepest dive ever to the bottom of the Mariana trench at 10,927 m, where he found a plastic bag

### BIRTHS

**1930** Birth of Alf Valentine, the renowned West Indian left-arm spinner

**1968** Birth of the great Zimbabwe batter Andy Flower



Diego Simeone

**1970** Birth of Diego Simeone, Argentine footballer and manager of Spanish club Atlético Madrid

**1988** Birth of West Indian fast bowler Shannon Gabriel

# Out-of-form Kohli out of South Africa T20 series!

- May lose national team spot in the format for good

Virat Kohli, now struggling with the bat in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) 2022, is likely to be out of the forthcoming India Twenty20 International (T20I) series against South Africa.

His poor form has caused the Indian selectors to rest the former

captain, Indian media revealed yesterday (27).

## IPL club valuations growing

- Growth even outpacing NFL and NBA teams

Indian Premier League (IPL) clubs have seen an annual growth rate of 24% in just over a decade, according to *Forbes*. That's more than both the National Basketball Association (NBA) and National Football League (NFL) in the US, which have seen only 16% and 10% growth rates, respectively.

Of the league's 10 teams, the Mumbai Indians (MI) have the highest valuation at \$ 1.3 billion (Sri Lankan rupees (LKR) 461 billion).

Seven teams of the current IPL are worth at least \$ 1 billion (LKR 355 billion). The lowest valuation, the Gujarat Titans (GT), are still worth \$ 850 million (LKR 301.9 billion).

*Forbes* attributes the high numbers to explosive viewership in India, as well as a business model that yields high revenues and low costs, reported

There's a new sport with billion-dollar team valuations: Cricket



Front Office Sports yesterday (27).

The current media rights deal with Star India, part of Walt Disney, is worth around \$ 2.4 billion (LKR 852 billion) each year. But the next deal could be

worth more than twice that number.

The highly valued teams have caught the eye of private equity firms investing in other areas of the sports world.

Last year, RedBird Capital

purchased a 16% stake in the Rajasthan Royals (RR).

And last October, CVC Capital Partners put in a bid, too. It currently owns the Titans, for which it reportedly paid about \$ 750 million (LKR 266 billion).

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FOOTBALL

# Man City take edge over Real in seven-goal thriller

COMPILED BY RANJIKA PERERA

Manchester City will take a slender Champions League semi-final advantage to the Bernabeu after winning a seven-goal first-leg classic by 4-3 against Real Madrid at Etihad Stadium on Tuesday (26).

City delivered a magnificent display as they peppered Real's goal for long periods, but Carlo Ancelotti's side kept rising off the canvas to somehow keep themselves in serious contention to reach another final.

## Mehrez enraged Guardiola

Kevin de Bruyne set the tone for a magical night of football with a diving header from Riyad



Kevin De Bruyne (left) celebrates after his opening goal against Real Madrid

Mahrez's cross in the second minute and in-form Gabriel Jesus quickly added a second from close range as Real reeled under wave after wave of attacks.

Mahrez enraged Manager Pep Guardiola when he hit the side-netting instead of finding the unmarked Phil Foden and shot inches wide before Karim Benzema,

inevitably giving Real a lifeline by sweeping home Ferland Mendy's cross after 33 minutes.

## Superb second for Real

The Spanish side escaped again shortly after the break when Mahrez struck the post, but City restored their two-goal advantage when

an unmarked Foden headed home Fernando Luiz Roza's (aka Fernandinho) cross in the 53rd minute.

City were pegged back again when Vinicius Junior dummied past Fernandinho and ran from inside his own half to score a superb second for Real.

## Still no let-up

However, a brilliant use of advantage from referee Istvan Kovacs allowed Bernardo Silva to fire into the top-left corner for City's fourth.

There was still no let-up and Benzema capped a spectacular game by showing nerves of steel to chip a Panenka penalty past Ederson with eight minutes left following Aymeric Laporte's handball.

இலங்கை தினசரி  
மற்றும் வாரந்த  
பத்திரிகைகளை  
உங்கள்  
மொபைல்ல்  
பெற்றுக்கொள்ள  
எம்மோடு  
இணையுங்கள்



Viber இல் இணைய  
இங்கே CLICK  
செய்யுங்கள்



இக் குழுமத்தில் இணைவதனால்  
மற்றவர்கள் உங்கள்  
தொலைபேசி இலக்கத்தை  
பார்வையிட முடியாது

