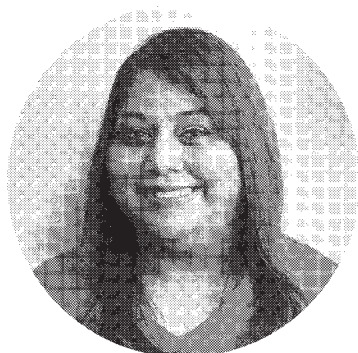


SHYAMALEE TUDAWE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF III!! MAGAZINE



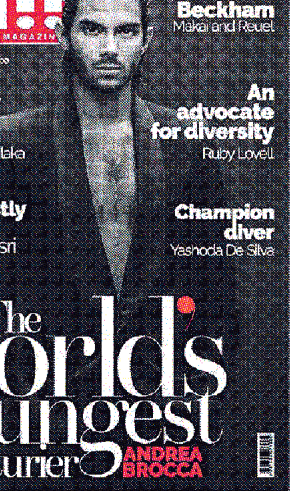
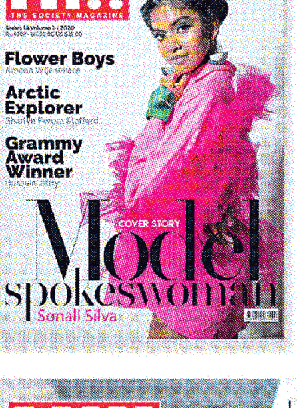
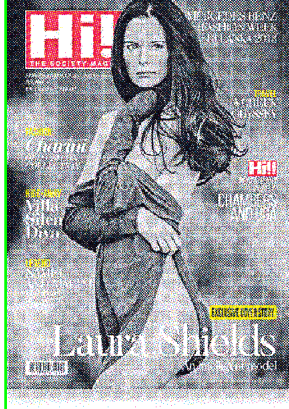
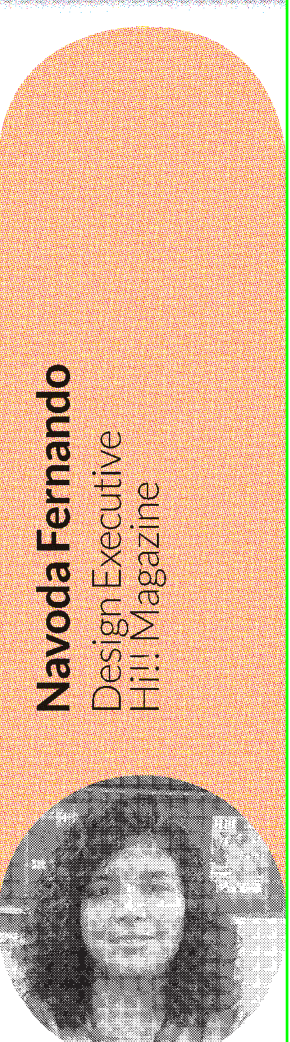
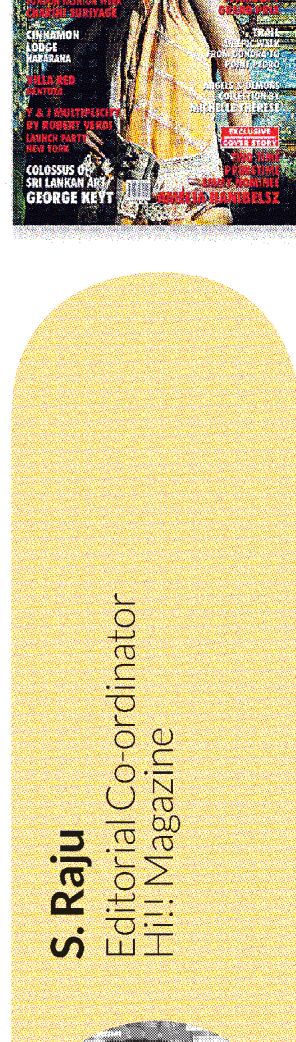
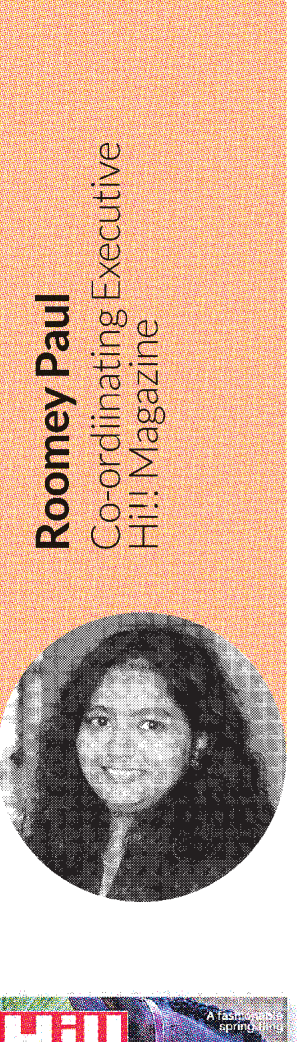
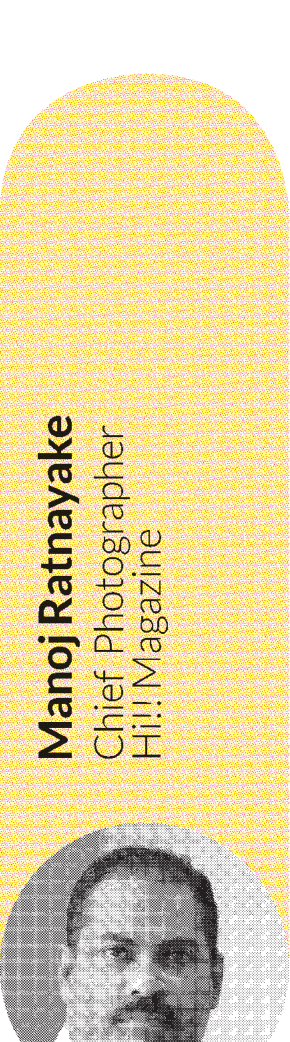
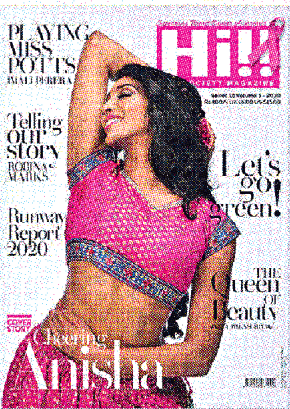
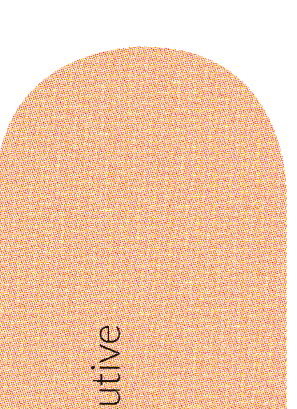
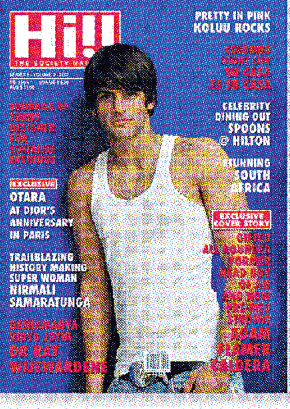
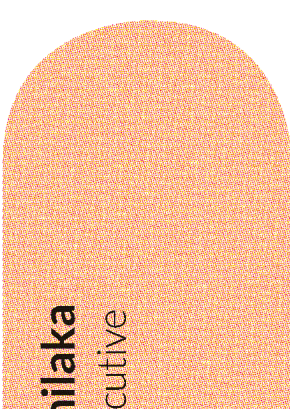
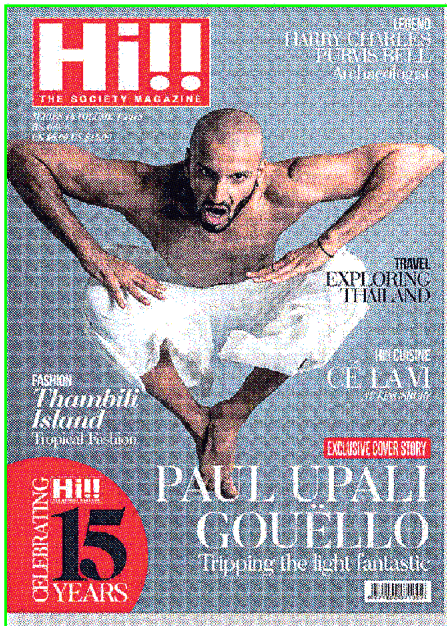
It was a fortuitous meeting with a friend that paved the way for me to join Hi!! Magazine almost 11 years ago. From being a loyal reader of Hi!! since its inception to being its Deputy Editor, it has been a rollercoaster ride. Hi!! has always been the zeitgeist of our times. From interviewing celebrities to those who have made a difference in society, our aim is to shine the spotlight on inspirational Sri Lankans or those connected to the island who can inspire our readers. Hi!! is my passion and I'm one of the fortunate few to do a job I love. Thank you to my bosses, our readers, advertisers, collaborators, friends and the team for being part of this exhilarating journey.

TINA EDWARD GUNAWARDHANA DEPUTY EDITOR - III!! MAGAZINE



Hi!! Magazine is a great place to work for as our bosses have placed great trust in Tina and me. We are given the freedom to be as creative as we like. It has been a long journey and each issue we challenge ourselves to create the best magazine and strive to be the best.

THARAKA D MUTHUKUMARA DESIGN CONSULTANT - III!! MAGAZINE





YOUR PAPER TODAY 12 PAGES

FINAL AGREEMENT WITH IMF TO BE SIGNED IN MARCH

Will get more assistance from Japan, China, USA, ADB and WB once the final agreement is signed

BY YOHAN PERERA

Sri Lankan government will sign the final agreement with IMF on the latter's bailout package for the country this month after which assistance would come from multinational donors and a few countries, two presidential advisors said yesterday.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

SL still considers reorganization of LTTE to be a top threat - US

BY SUNIL JAYASIRI

Although there were no terrorist incidents reported in Sri Lanka in 2021, the Sri Lankan government still considers the reorganization of the LTTE to be a top threat, the Department of State said in the 2021 Country Reports on Terrorism released Monday.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Bolivian woman nabbed with cocaine worth more than Rs. 230mn at BIA

BY CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA AND T.K.G. KAPILA

A 26-year-old Bolivian woman was arrested yesterday with a large stock of cocaine worth more than Rs.230 million at the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) by the customs officers attached to the Narcotics Control Unit, the Customs Deputy Director (Legal) and media spokesman Sudatta Silva said.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

TWO SHOT DEAD IN TWO SEPARATE INCIDENTS

- The body of a person who died due to a shooting at Pinwatta in Panadura, was found inside a luxury vehicle
Another resident of Usmudullawa, Madampagama had been shot at Ponaduwa, Ambalangoda and died at the Balapitiya Hospital

BY CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA

Two shooting incidents were reported yesterday at separate locations in Panadura and Ambalangoda, police said. They said the body of a person who died due to a shooting at Pinwatta in Panadura, was found inside a luxury vehicle last morning.

Later, the deceased was identified as a 56-year-old businessman and resident of Kirillawala, Kadawatha. The body was discovered in the driver's seat of a high-end jeep. The suspects had fled the area following the shooting.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Four suspects in kidney racket released on bail

BY T. FAROOK THAJUDEEN

Four suspects who were in remand including two brokers, a driver and another suspect in the kidney transplant case were released on Rupees One million personal bail with two sureties, a Colombo Magistrate yesterday.

Colombo Additional Magistrate Rajindra Jayasuriya while releasing the four suspect on bail ordered them to appear before the Colombo Crime Division on the first and third Sundays of every month. She also asserted that one of the two sureties for each suspect should be a close relation of the suspect. Magistrate Jayasuriya also imposed a travel ban on the four suspects.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Allocation of funds for LG polls Opposition MPs call for special resolution

BY YOHAN PERERA

A group of Opposition members including Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa, Dullas Alahapperuma, Professor G. L. Peiris and Dilan Perera who had met the Speaker yesterday had proposed that Parliament should immediately allocate funds for the local government elections through a special resolution.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>



RTI ACT APPLICABLE TO PARLIAMENTARIANS - COURT OF APPEAL

- Providing the list of names of MPs who have tendered their declaration of assets and liabilities is not disclosing the information they have provided in the declarations
MPs are persons elected by people and maintained by people - Justice Abeykoon

BY LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

In a landmark judgement pertaining to the scope of the Right to Information Act (RTI Act), the Court of Appeal yesterday held that provisions of the RTI Act are also applicable to the Members of Parliament in respect of the Declaration of Assets and Liabilities Law. The Court of Appeal held that the RTI Act should prevail over the provisions of the Declaration of Assets and Liabilities Law, enabling people to know the names of the Members of Parliament who have tendered their declaration of assets and liabilities.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

POWER, PETROLEUM, WATER, PORT, BANK, ACADEMIC SECTORS TO STRIKE WORK TODAY

- As long as the government does not listen to us, we will break the law tomorrow
A black flag will be hoisted in front of every school

BY CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA

A number of professional trade unions from the essential services sector, including power, petroleum, water, ports, teachers, university lecturers, and banks, assured that they will engage in a countrywide one-day strike today, Trade Union Alliance Convener Ranjan Jayalal said.

He said all trade unions would stand today against the government's decision to collect taxes from people. Accordingly, trade unions representing the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), the Ceylon Teachers' Union (CTU), postal services, the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) and the Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) are among the main trade union groups taking part in the strike action.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

WB to continue supporting SL's Development Reform Programme

Representatives from the World Bank stated that the World Bank will continue to support Sri Lanka's development reforms programme.

They stated that the World Bank will provide technical assistance in the drafting of laws for development policy operations, as well as work to provide additional guidance and support regarding the use of international media and welfare benefits.

These views were expressed when a World Bank delegation including the Vice President of the South Asian Region of the World Bank, Martin Raiser, met President Ranil Wickremesinghe at the Presidential Secretariat yesterday.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>



CA quashes charges against Ravi in two CB bond cases

BY LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

The Court of Appeal yesterday issued a writ of certiorari quashing the charges against former Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake in connection with two cases filed in Colombo High Court over Central Bank bond issuance.

Court of Appeal two-judge-bench comprising Justices Sobhitha Rajakaruna and Dhammika Ganepola made this order consequent to the writ petitions filed by former Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake challenging the

Attorney General's decision to file indictment over Central Bank bond issuance.

In his petition, the former Minister was challenging the decision made by the Attorney General to indict him at the Colombo High Court in connection with the second Central Bank bond issue that took place in March 29 and March 31, 2016.

Karunanayake had named the Attorney General, the Registrar of Colombo High Court, the Member of the Commission of Inquiry and several others as respondents in the petition.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Cabinet decision to establish 'National Contributory Pension Fund'

- NCPF will cover pension costs of employees who will join the public service in future

BY SANDUN A. JAYASEKERA

The cabinet that met on Monday has decided to establish a 'National Contributory Pension Fund' (NCPF) to cover pension costs of employees who will join the public service in future, Cabinet Spokesman, Minister Dr. Bandula Gunawardana said.

Accordingly, 8% from the basic salary of the employee and 12% from the employer should be credited to the proposed fund when a state employee is recruited in the state service.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

National Contributory Pension Fund' (NCPF)

- 8% from the basic salary of the employee and 12% from the employer should be credited to the proposed fund.
An independent establishment governed by the management board to manage the proposed contributory pension fund would be initiated.
Those recruited to government service after the month of January 2016 can be contributed to the proposed national contributory pension scheme as per their consent, since the clause that they should be subject to a pension scheme decided by the government.

POLITICAL GOSSIP Hogging power hinders Top Team reshuffle!

There are several Top Team members holding several subjects and there is a move on the part of the high authorities to distribute some of these additional subjects among some other ambitious Diyawanna members in the government ranks.

However, none of these Top Team members except for one member is prepared to give up any of the subjects they currently hold, they say.

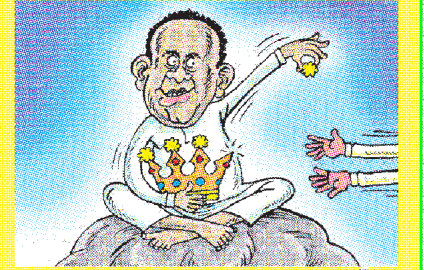
When the authorities concerned insist that they give up the additional subjects they are in charge of, they would give the excuse that they have already appointed private staffs to the Ministries in question and if they give up those subjects, these staffs would lose their jobs!

This has become a big issue within the government, they say, because the Pohottuwa Diyawanna members have started pressing that they be given the portfolios they were promised at the outset without any further delay!

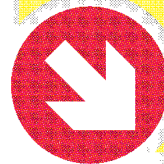
Given this unpleasant situation, the authorities are said to be stuck on carrying out the proposed Top Team reshuffle!

From among the Top Team members holding several subjects, only the young Top Team member hailing from the Galle area is in readiness to part with an additional subject he is holding, they say.

The government high-ups are highly pleased that there is at least one large-hearted member among a group greedy for power, they say.



Courtesy: 66005



Read more POLITICAL GOSSIP in the inside news pages

SL to have nuclear power plant soon: Atomic Energy Board Chairman

BY CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA

The Cabinet approved signing the international conventions relating to generating electricity using nuclear power as it was a reliable, low-carbon base load source of electricity to complement renewable energy sources in the future, Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board (SLAEB) Chairman Professor S.R.D. Rosa said.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Govt. to gradually increase goods detained by SL Customs

- Goods worth billions of rupees have been detained over the years for not fulfilling clearance regulations or imported illegally

BY SANDUN A. JAYASEKERA

The government is to gradually release thousands of vehicles, machinery, food and other goods detained by the Sri Lanka Customs worth billions of rupees over the years for not fulfilling clearance regulations or imported illegally, Cabinet Spokesman, Mass Media, Transport and Highways Minister Dr. Bandula Gunawardana said yesterday.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

NPP meets EC

EC agrees to set early date for LG polls: AKD

- According to the Local Authorities Elections Ordinance, a new date should be fixed after 21 days of the postponement of the election

BY AJITH SIRIWARDANA

The Elections Commission agreed to announce an early date for the LG polls at the meeting to be held on March 3, to decide a new date, NPP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake said yesterday.

He told reporters that the National People's Power (NPP) yesterday had a discussion with the Elections Commission on several matters such as announcing an early date for the Local Government election and the issues faced by state employees who are contesting the election and on no-pay leave.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>



# Daily Mirror

www.dailymirror.lk

CONT'D.  
FROM PAGE 1

## SL TO HAVE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT SOON: ATOMIC ENERGY BOARD CHAIRMAN

He told the Daily Mirror that the country is supposed to have barge-mounted small modular reactors (SMRs) that have a power capacity of up to 100 MW per unit.

After signing the conventions, the project is qualified to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as the next step.

With the use of nuclear power generators, the country would be able to stop the use of fossil fuels.

"The government has sought to implement the project with the Russian government. The required technology is provided by them, and they also agreed to take back the carbon waste. The Russian government has the technology to reprocess the nuclear waste," the professor said.

A feasibility study has been conducted to identify suitable land for establishing a nuclear power plant, but the first priority would be given to the barge-mounted power plant. Electricity is vital for society's functioning, and the steady production of nuclear electricity will help us avoid shortages and outages.

Sri Lanka is seeking to increase and diversify its power production capacity. The government is looking at nuclear power as a reliable and low carbon option for its energy mix as it aims to achieve carbon neutrality in the electricity sector by 2050.

## RTI ACT APPLICABLE TO PARLIAMENTARIANS - COURT OF APPEAL

The Court of Appeal two-judge-bench comprising Justices Sampath Abayakoon and P.Kumararatnam upheld the Right to Information Commission's decision that the information requested by a journalist regarding the names of Parliamentarians who have tendered their assets declarations should be released to him.

Justice Abeykoon held that providing the list of names of the Members of Parliament who have tendered their declaration of assets and liabilities as required by law is not disclosing the information they have provided in the declarations.

"Members of Parliament are persons who are elected by the people and maintained by the people. They are expected to abide by the laws of the country at all times and provide examples for others to follow. Under the provisions of the Declaration of Assets and Liabilities Law, any person who comes under the provisions of the Law, fails to provide the relevant declaration of assets and liabilities as required, would be committing an offence punishable with a fine or imprisonment of either description or both such fine and imprisonment," Justice Abeykoon observed.

The Court of Appeal delivered this judgement pursuant to an application filed by the Secretary General of Parliament challenging the Right to Information Commission's decision that the information requested by journalist Chamara Sampath should be released to him.

The journalist Chamara Sampath by his letter dated 21-06-2018 had requested the Information Officer of the Parliament that he be provided with a list of names of members of Parliament who have handed over their respective declarations of assets and liabilities in 2018. The Information Officer by his letter dated 21-08-2018 has refused the request on the basis that he has to make an application in terms of the Declaration of the Assets and Liabilities Act of Act No.1 of 1975 to the Speaker of Parliament, which is a separate Act that governs the declarations of the Members of Parliament.

The journalist being aggrieved by the decision of the Designated Officer has appealed to the Commission in terms of section 32 of the RTI Act, challenging the decision.

Mahen Gopallawa SDSG with Avanthi Perera DSG appeared for the Secretary General of Parliament. Counsel Thishya Weeragoda with S.Wimalaratne instructed by Niluka Dissanayake appeared for the journalist. Counsel Himali Kularatne with Jayani Ellepola appeared for the Right to Information Commission.

## TWO SHOT DEAD IN TWO SEPARATE INCIDENTS

The identity of the deceased has not yet been confirmed, and police suspect a person riding a motorcycle might have carried out the shooting and fled. He was shot dead while visiting his house under construction in the Pinwatte area off Panadura, according to police investigations.

Meanwhile, another individual on a motorcycle was shot at Ponaduwa and admitted to the Balapitiya hospital. The deceased was identified as a 42-year-old resident of Usmodullawa, Madampagama. He had been shot while returning home after dropping his wife at work and had died while being transported to the Balapitiya Hospital.

The incident was reported to police at 9.15am yesterday.

## FOUR SUSPECTS IN KIDNEY RACKET RELEASED ON BAIL

The Magistrate ordered the Officers of the Colombo Crime Division to seek the opinion of the Attorney General on conclusion of their investigation. During the case the State Counsel was assisted by SI Ratnamadulla and SI Priyantha Subasinghe of the Division. Further inquiry was postponed for March 21.

The suspects were arrested by the Colombo Crimes Division over an alleged racket of kidney transplant in a private hospital in Borella. The arrested suspect had promised to pay Rs.5 million to Rs.12 million for a kidney to six people including a woman who had donated their kidneys between August 3 and November 3. However the complainants had stated that they had not been given the money as promised.

## SL STILL CONSIDERS REORGANIZATION OF LTTE TO BE A TOP THREAT - US

"While the rise of radicalization and extremism are security concerns in Sri Lanka, government security officials concerned that the legacy of LTTE could inspire terrorism in Sri Lanka and throughout the diaspora internationally," the report stated.

"LTTE's legacy leaves some government security officials concerned that it could inspire terrorism in Sri Lanka and throughout the diaspora internationally. The government was cooperative in engaging on counter terrorism and attended several meetings of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS as observers," the State Department said.

It said Sri Lanka has continued efforts to enhance its counterterrorism capabilities and to improve border security, including through engagement with the United States and other international partners.

However, efforts were somewhat hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic and a government focus on opening the country for economic recovery.

The United States has discussed strategies with Quad country and like-minded partners on how to support Sri Lanka in countering terrorism, it said.

The report further stated that The Government of Sri Lanka continued to use the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), enacted in 1979 as a wartime measure, enabling the police to exercise broad powers to search, arrest, and detain terrorist suspects for investigation. Sri Lanka implemented the Cyber Security Bill and the Defense Cyber Command Bill to strengthen cyber security against cyber-facilitated acts of terrorism.

Meanwhile, the report also said that the LTTE's international network of sympathizers and financial support has persisted.

The LTTE's financial network of support continued after the group's military defeat in 2009. The LTTE - a U.S. designated Foreign Terrorists Organization that fought the government for 26 years until its military defeat in 2009 - has employed charities as fronts to collect and divert funds for its activities, the report added.

## Power, petroleum, water, port, bank, academic sectors to strike work today

Jayalal said all trade unions continuously demanded the government to withdraw the decisions that were implemented to collect taxes. But the government did not give any favourable responses to any of our requests.

The Trade Union Alliance threatened the government that they would not obey any laws imposed by the government and said that there was no point in issuing an emergency gazette notification stating the services of the above sectors were essential.

As long as the government does not listen to us, we will break the law tomorrow and have challenged the government to do everything possible to put an end to the trade union action.

Meanwhile, Joseph Stalin, General Secretary of the Ceylon Teachers' Union, announced that they had decided to hold a daylong black protest in the education sector today. He requested all teachers and principals come to schools wearing black bands or clothes. A black flag will be hoisted in front of every school, demanding the government to provide immediate solutions to the issues in the education sector.

The CPC trade unions announced that they have decided to launch a work to rule campaign today. If something happened to the fuel distribution system in the country today, the government should take full responsibility.

## CA quashes charges against Ravi in two CB bond cases

The petitioner states the report of the Commission of Inquiry has alleged that he chaired a meeting held at the Ministry of Finance on March 28, 2016 attended by representatives of three State Banks and other officials.

Karunanayake states that although he was a Minister of Finance, neither the Central Bank of Sri Lanka nor the State Banks came under his purview. He said the Central Bank of Sri Lanka was at that time a subject gazetted under then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and three State Banks were gazetted as a subject under the Ministry of State Enterprises under Kabir Hashim.

The petitioner said he could neither give legally binding instructions to the three State Banks nor provide legally binding assurances on behalf of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka as alleged in the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry. Karunanayake said the Commission of Inquiry has failed to consider the legal position. He further said the decision made by the Commission of Inquiry to the effect that the Petitioner issued "instructions" to State Banks and "assurances" on behalf of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka at the alleged meeting held on March 28, 2016 is an abuse of powers.

He further said the decision made by the Attorney General to indict him or exhibit information against him on the basis that he issued "instructions" to State Banks and "assurances" on behalf of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka at the alleged meeting held on March 28, 2016 is ultra vires.

President's Counsel Faisz Musthapha, Razick Zaroock PC, Shavindra Fernando PC, Counsel Faisza Musthapha Markar, Zainab Markar Hasheem, Keerthi Tillekaranne, Riad Ameen, Zamzam Ismail and Rumesh Perera instructed by Dilini Gamage and Sanjeewa Kaluarachchi appeared for former Minister Ravi Karunanayake. Additional Solicitor General Priyantha Nawana PC appeared for the Attorney General.

## Cabinet decision to establish 'National Contributory Pension Fund'

"The government has suspended new recruitments to the public service and the newly recruited public servants will come under the NCPF," Minister Dr. Gunawardana told the weekly post cabinet news briefing yesterday.

It has been recognized appropriate to establish a fund named National Contributory Pension Fund to ensure an appropriate environment to spend their pension life without being a burden to the country as well as to provide a pension with a certain profit for the pension life of the state sector pensioners. An independent establishment governed by the management board to manage the proposed contributory pension fund will be initiated and a fund manager with special skills will be appointed for management of the funds.

The proposed national contributory pension scheme will be applicable to the individuals newly recruited to the government service.

## WB to continue supporting SL's Development Reform Programme

The World Bank Development Policy Operational Programme was fully investigated and the President and World Bank representatives commented on its progress.

Improving financial supervision and credit management, improving tax administration, sovereign-financial sector linkages and reducing systemic risks; maintaining stability and confidence in the banking sector, restructuring and divestment, reducing policy uncertainty and increasing competitiveness in the economy, mobilizing private capital and competition in the broadband market, strengthening the social security institution, delivery system and targeting was discussed.

World Bank's Country Director for Sri Lanka Faris H. Hadad-Zervos, World Bank's Country Manager for the Maldives and Sri Lanka Chiyo Kanda, International Finance Corporation (IFC) Country Manager Sri Lanka and Maldives Alejandro Alvarez de la Campa, Advisor of the World Bank in Sri Lanka Husam Abudagga, World Bank representatives, President's Senior Advisor on National Security and President's Chief of Staff Sagala Ratnayake, President's Secretary Saman Ekanayake, Finance Ministry Secretary Mahinda Siriwardena, President's Senior Advisor on Economic Affairs Dr. R.H.S. Samarasinghe, Central Bank Governor Nandalal Weerasinghe and other officials participated in the event.

### Wavering between two minds!

**A good-looking woman - Diyawanna**  
A member from Galle holding a purohita office is said to have got disgusted with politics now.

The lady who had to renounce her citizenship of an important foreign country so that she could continue in politics is reportedly telling all and sundry that politics has become bitter to her now. She is said to be telling everyone that she has no idea of remaining in politics any longer and she has made up mind to give up all political positions she is holding!

Meanwhile, she has confessed that she has a liking for the Green party given the able leadership of Number One and however, she has entertained the fear of falling into a worse position eventually as a result of switching over her party allegiance. Nevertheless, she remains bitter about politics, they say.

Courtesy: දේශපාලන

## BOLIVIAN WOMAN NABBED WITH COCAINE WORTH MORE THAN RS. 230MN AT BIA

He stated that the 4.6 kg of cocaine was discovered in the green channel area of the customs arrival alley, sealed in a cloth bag and a backpack.

The customs investigations revealed that this was her first trip abroad, and this was her first flight permit issued by the Bolivian government this month.

"The woman suspect arrived in the country from Dubai with a single bag. The customs officers found that the clothes, fabrics, and parts of the bag made of cloth, including the pockets, were soaked in cocaine liquid, and this cocaine stock was prepared and brought as a solution," the spokesman said. The officers of the Customs Narcotics Control Division said that the concentration of cocaine in the cocaine solution that has been brought is high.

## Govt. to gradually increase goods detained by SL Customs

It has been observed that it takes a long time to complete the inspections, investigations and other related procedures carried out by the Sri Lanka Customs on the goods detained. As a result, there are many economic losses including damage and destruction of the goods, so the existing procedures followed by the customs concerning the said goods should be expedited, he stressed.

Accordingly, the Cabinet gave the green light to appoint a ministerial committee to study the matters and identify the amendments to be made to the Customs Ordinance if necessary and make necessary recommendations to set in motion a mechanism to clear all detained goods by the Sri Lanka Customs in a speedier and legally accepted procedure, Minister Dr. Gunawardana noted.

Other members of the ministerial sub-committee are Minister of Plantation and Industries Dr. Ramesh Pathirana, State Minister of Finance, Ranjith Siyambalapitiya, State Minister of Investment Promotion, Dilum Amunugama and State Minister of Finance, Shehan Semasinghe.

## EC agrees to set early date for LG polls: AKD

"According to the Local Authorities Elections Ordinance, a new date should be fixed after 21 days of the postponement of the election. We requested the Elections Commission to set an early date as 33 days from the allocated 44-day election campaign has been completed by now. Political parties have spent huge amounts of money on election campaigns," he said.

Dissanayake said they brought to the notice of the Elections Commission, the issues faced by state employees who are contesting the LG polls. "The state employees who are contesting the election are on no-pay leave from January 21 to March 9 and as the election is set to be postponed, they will not get their salaries for an extended period. We requested to permit them to report for duty during the period of postponement. The Elections Commission agreed to look into the matter," he said.

## FINAL AGREEMENT WITH IMF TO BE SIGNED IN MARCH

Presidential Advisor and UNP Deputy Leader Ruwan Wijewardene and Presidential Advisor Sagala Ratnayake said Sri Lanka will get more assistance from Japan, China, USA, Asian Development Bank and World Bank once the final agreement with IMF is signed.

"One must understand that youth has lost confidence in politicians in recent times after the financial crisis hit the nation. It was only incumbent President Ranil Wickremesinghe who responded to former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa who called the opposition to take over the government. The President was able to stop the queues and bring about stability. We call upon the youth to play their role for the sake of the nation and cooperate in bringing financial stability to the nation," Sagala Ratnayake said.

Mr. Ratnayake added that Sri Lanka will be able to be like developed countries, where fuel prices are adjusted daily. "Sri Lanka will be a developed nation by 2040," he said.

## Opposition MPs call for special resolution

A statement from the Opposition Leader's office said the MPs requested the Speaker to take this step in relation to the request made by Election Commission Chairman Nimal PUNCHIHewa from the Speaker, to intervene in ensuring that the local government election is held. A request to this effect was made by the polls chief in writing recently.

The MPs have also requested that the House should be convened before March 8, on which it was to meet initially.

"The MPs requested that the legislature should make sure that people's sovereignty is safeguarded.

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### OBITUARIES

**FERNANDEZ - CHARMAINE.** Dearly beloved wife of late Basil Fernandez, much loved sister of late Rangith Senavirathna, late Lalith Senavirathna, Premani De Silva and Dr. Sarath Senavirathna (Australia), precious mother of Angelo and Rozaine, loving mother-in-law of Sean, Avory and Ruby Fernandez, beloved grandmother of Abhishek, Rahul, Tanina, Tohnarsha, Tyanna and Tyseam. **Remains lie at Mahinda Jayakody Funeral Directors (Pvt) Ltd. The funeral service will be held at Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Panadura at 9 a.m. on the 1st March 2023 followed by the burial at the Miniwanpitiya Cemetery. 065807**

**RODRIGO - BRIAN.** Beloved husband of Malathi, beloved father of Shanaka (Fedex), son of late Conrad Rodrigo and of Basilika (nee Tissera), beloved brother of Felix, Palitha and Harendra, brother-in-law of Rebecca, Rajine, late Rohitha Weerasekera and of Sonali Weerasekera. **Cortege leaves residence 'Rose Mistika', 40/1, Uswetikeiyawa, Kandana at 3.30 p.m. on Wednesday 1st March for burial at St. Mary's Church, Uswetikeiyawa. 065873**



Today is Zero Discrimination Day

# DECRIMINALISING HOMOSEXUALITY: What this means for Sri Lanka

By **Vinuki Medagama**

An Indian supporter of the LGBTIQ community takes part in a pride parade (AFP)



**The decriminalisation of homosexuality does have the power to change how the police and various state actors treat LGBTIQ individuals as well as open the door towards achieving positive social change**

This is important so that they do not grow up with sexist, misogynistic values. It is this lack of awareness and understanding that creates environments which enable violence against women and LGBTIQ persons" said Satkunanathan. She further commented, "We have a Member of Parliament using abusive, sexist language against a woman Parliamentarian, and that apparently is okay but teaching children about their bodies and their sexuality is not. This denial and hypocrisy is harming us".

and safety of these individuals. Little by little, this change is taking place. Flamer-Caldera stated, "Equal Ground has done programmes in 20 out of the 25 districts and we have never once faced any kind of hatred from people. They have understood and opened their minds, once they realised what the subject is and why people are different. When people are educated, they think in a totally different fashion. One would think that people in the rural areas would be more homophobic and uptight but they accepted us and were able to converse with us and ask questions to better understand what the LGBTIQ community really is". "Since 2015, we have been doing diversity and inclusion programmes in many corporations. We're seeing these efforts beginning to bear fruit. Many corporations are supporting LGBTIQ rights and sponsoring LGBTIQ groups as well as joining us for Colombo Pride. The culture is changing," she added. Satkunanathan echoed the need for more social awareness and education, emphasising the role of the state, political parties and schools. "Our school curriculum is quite sexist, there are elements in it which are prejudicial to certain communities. It does not contain progressive values that can contribute towards creating an equitable society in which there is social cohesion and harmony. This needs to change," she said.

### WHAT NEXT?

While decriminalising homosexuality would be a notable advancement in terms of state recognition of the gay and lesbian community, it is still a small step in the long-drawn road to equality. During this interim period before the Bill progresses through the lawmaking levels, it is important to question what else can be done to promote equality.

"We don't need to wait for decriminalisation to change our textbooks, but one of the most difficult things to do is to change our educational curriculum. We don't need to wait for decriminalisation for political parties to change their behaviour. We don't need to wait for decriminalisation to create awareness or for state sector staff, such as those in health care, to treat LGBTIQ persons with respect and dignity", Satkunanathan pointed out.

### CREATING A CULTURE OF ACCEPTANCE

There is still a huge stigma and a sense of propagated shame surrounding the LGBTIQ community in Sri Lanka which has resulted in them being mistreated and discriminated against. Legislative change must, therefore, be compounded with social change in order to advance the acceptance

in certain contexts, specifically:

1. Without the consent of the other person,
2. With or without the consent of the other person when that person is under 16 years of age,
3. With the consent of the other person while one such other person was in lawful or unlawful detention or where that consent has been obtained, by use of force, or intimidation, or threat of detention or by putting such other person in fear of death or hurt,
4. With the consent of the other person where such consent has been obtained at a time the other person was of unsound mind or was in a state of intoxication induced by alcohol or drugs.

services, unless you don't say you are gay or lesbian or part of the community and are able to 'pass'. We don't want to 'pass' in order to be treated as full citizens," shared Flamer-Caldera.

This marginalisation has resulted in the inequitable treatment of LGBTIQ individuals, thus limiting their access to healthcare, justice and fair consideration in the workplace. Children are bullied and treated differently by teachers. Slurs are yelled out in public and arbitrary arrests are made. The decriminalisation of homosexuality does, therefore, have the power to change how the police and various state actors treat LGBTIQ individuals as well as open the door towards achieving positive social change.

"We are a very puritanical and conservative society as well as a hypocritical society. For example, people don't want sex-ed taught in schools. Teaching sex-ed does not corrupt children, it makes them more aware. It makes them safer by giving them the knowledge to protect themselves.

This proposed amendment carries an overlap with sections 363 and 364 of the Penal Code as well as the Prevention of Torture Act and laws on abuse.

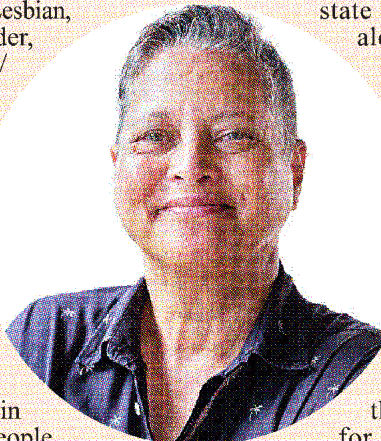
Satkunanathan commented, "There is no rationale for not repealing sections 365 and 365A and then amending provisions in the laws that are criticized for being gender specific to be gender neutral. Continued retention of sections 365

and 365A after amendment makes them redundant because they will then cover areas that are already dealt with by existing law".

Flamer-Caldera expressed the same concern. "I don't see why they can't take off 365 and 365A completely and just decriminalise the same. We don't know how the government is going to tweak these laws. We're concerned. I'm concerned," she remarked.

### THE CURRENT REALITY

"The LGBTIQ community is currently marginalised in all social



Rosanna Flamer-Caldera

Decriminalisation is an extremely important and long overdue step. It will show that the law, rightfully, does not view same-sex relationships as an offence, a wrong or something that requires state interference or punishment," said Ambika Satkunanathan, human rights lawyer, activist and former Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. In August 2022, a Private Members' Bill was initiated by MP Premnath C. Dolawatte and the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) calling for the decriminalisation of homosexuality and the amendment of Sections 365 and 365A of the Penal Code. The President announced that the government would not take action to block the Bill shortly after it was presented. The ruling party as well as several other parties have since stated their support for the Bill's passing. The draft Bill has been referred to the Attorney General's Department to assess its alignment with the Sri Lankan Constitution.

If the Bill passes, Sri Lanka would become the 30th Asian country to decriminalise homosexuality. Same-sex marriages, however, would not be legalised.

The decriminalisation of same-sex relationships would play an integral role in reducing discrimination against members of the LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Questioning/ Queer) community, and has been a focal aim of activists.

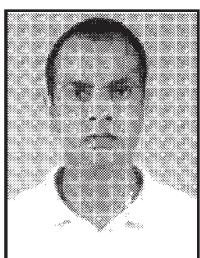
"For a very long time, we have tried many avenues through which to convince the government to decriminalise consenting same-sex relationships. It's a wait-and-see game because we know what has happened in the past. Hopefully, the people in power have learned from their mistakes, opened their eyes and become less discriminatory. There's a lot of hope," shared Rosanna Flamer-Caldera, LGBTIQ rights activist and Founder of Equal Ground.

### THE BILL: FAR FROM PERFECT

Dolawatte's Private Member Bill has sparked progressive conversation within many political parties as well as amongst the public. However, an important detail of this Bill is that it seeks to amend sections 365 and 365A, rather than repeal them.

The proposed amendment to section 365 retains the criminalisation of carnal intercourse with animals. It can be noted that this is already covered in Section 2(1) of the Prevention of Cruelty To Animals Act. The Bill seeks to amend section 365A to criminalise gross acts of indecency committed

### NOTICE



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Sinhabahu  
**MORATUWA**  
Sarvodaya Vishwasamadhi Theater  
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இலங்கை மத்திய வங்கி  
CENTRAL BANK OF SRI LANKA

**Renovation works of Roof of the Holiday Home at Nuwara Eliya of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka**

<b>Tender Number</b>	FMD/ENG/HH/2023/01
<b>Tender Description</b>	Tender for Renovation works of Roof of the Holiday Home at Nuwara Eliya of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka
<b>Bid closing and opening</b>	<b>Date:</b> 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2023 <b>Time:</b> 1430 hrs. <b>Location:</b> Ground floor, Head Office Building, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, No. 30, Janadhipathi Mawatha, Colombo-01
<b>Site visit &amp; Pre-bid meeting</b>	<b>Date:</b> 07 <sup>th</sup> March 2023 <b>Time:</b> 1000 hrs. <b>Location:</b> CBSL Holiday Home, No. 19, Grand Hotel Rd, Nuwara Eliya

For further information please refer <https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/en/tenders> or contact Maintenance & Project Engineer on 0112 477 476.

Director, Facilities Management Department, Central Bank of Sri Lanka

# EDITORIAL

*"It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it"*  
- ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

## OUR THOUGHT

### WAR OR PEACE IN UKRAINE; WHO GAINS, WHO LOSES

**O**n Tuesday February 21, at a security conference in Beijing, Qin Gang, the Chinese Foreign Minister told participants, that China was concerned the almost year-long war Russia-Ukraine conflict could spill "out of control."

He stated China was offering a 12-point proposal to end the fighting and added, "Chinese President Xi Jinping had put forward proposals to ease the situation and de-escalate the crisis."

The Daily Mirror however, has not been privy to these proposals. According to the minister, China urged peace talks to bring about a political settlement. It called on all countries to immediately stop adding fuel to fire - an apparent reference to military support provided to Ukraine by the US and its West European allies. He emphasized his country wants to play a role in ending the conflict.

The Chinese FM made his remarks in Beijing. Even before Ukraine or its president could respond to the initiative, US president Joe Biden cynically remarked "Putin's applauding it, so how could it be any good?"

Biden told ABC News. "I've seen nothing in the plan that would indicate that there is something that would be beneficial to anyone other than Russia, if the Chinese plan were followed." Earlier US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Beijing was considering supplying weapons and ammunition to Russia.

Despite the US and its president attempting to put words into the Ukrainian President's mouth, the BBC reported Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he plans to meet China's leader Xi Jinping to discuss Beijing's proposals on ending the war in Ukraine. What is becoming clear however, is that the Ukrainian president does want a political settlement to the ongoing conflict. China's plan according to the BBC report, calls for peace talks and respect for national sovereignty, though it makes no mention of the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. Be that as it may, one would scarcely expect peace in a sovereign country, if occupation forces were to remain in the land of that sovereign state. Rather, it looks as if the US wants the conflict in Ukraine, for whatever reason to continue. According to the OHCHR - the estimated number of Ukraine civilian deaths or non-armed individuals, in Ukraine stands at over 8,000 since the start of the war on February 24, 2022.

Statista.com puts the damage to housing facilities from the Russian invasion of Ukraine based on publicly available evidence at an estimated at US\$54 billion as of December 2022. A further US\$35.6 billion were recorded in direct losses from damage to infrastructure.

The only bodies who are benefiting from the ongoing Russian-Ukraine conflict are the arms merchants in those nations. Statistics published by the US government itself show more than US\$3.75 billion in US military assistance to Ukraine.

Ukraine needs to remember the lessons of US involvement in Afghanistan. Studies conducted by the Watson Institute of Brown University in the US, reveal, 92% of Afghanistan's population faces some level of food insecurity. Around 3 million children are at risk of acute malnutrition. Some regions of the country are currently are facing famine. At least half the population is living on less than US\$1.90 per day.

Undoubtedly these and similar statistics were in president Zelensky's mind when he told the BBC he would like to meet the Chinese President to discuss the Chinese peace proposals.

We in Sri Lanka, can fully understand the death and pain of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, having had to face a near three-decade civil war in our country, which commenced in 1983. We call on all parties to the conflict to do their utmost to bring the conflict in Ukraine, to a speedy end with justice to all parties.

The US though having being party to armed conflicts in different parts of the world has largely been free of the pain, war inflicts on the civilian population, as the wars never occurred in the US itself.

However, the US war in Afghanistan, brought war home to the people of the US, when Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda bombed the Twin Towers in the 9/11 attack where 2,996 US civilians, including the 19 hijackers died.

The war in Ukraine has the potential to spread globally and out of control once again and will inflict pain on the US population, if this present conflict gets out of hand.

It's time major powers put humanity first. Perhaps the Chinese peace proposal is a good starting point.



FOR MORE CARTOONS LOG ON [www.dailymirror.lk/cartoon](http://www.dailymirror.lk/cartoon)

# WHERE TO FROM HERE FOR ALL OF US?

By **Amantha Perera**

**A**tumultuous year in Sri Lanka seems to be never ending. The island lurching from one disaster to another. Looking at home from afar, it always gives you the sense that its internally perched on a precipice.

Maybe it has always been like that. But these few years spent away from Sri Lanka, the longest stretch I have been away, makes you look at your own country differently. The loss of opportunities is just mindboggling.

Several friends have returned after spending time in Sri Lanka and their recent memories are laced with despondency. Being let down by those that we elect is a universal feeling, but Sri Lankan politicians have made an art of fattening their own lot at the expense of millions of fellow country men, women and children.

We just celebrated 75 years of independence at great cost. But after three quarters of a century of being free (from?), where do we find ourselves? Sri Lanka as a nation lies among the main problem cases in the region.

"The hunger crisis in Afghanistan has persisted for over a year, with unparalleled levels of acute food insecurity. Conflict and political turmoil in Myanmar are driving up needs and exacerbating economic fragility.

In Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the underlying economic and climate vulnerabilities will challenge the capacity of governments and people to cope with the global food crisis" the World Food Programme said in a recent operational update.

When we celebrated our 50th Independence, there was a war in full throttle, in fact a major attack was carried out days before the celebrations. But we were still considered a nation with enormous potential held back by the war. Now there is no war, there has been no war to speak of for the last 14 years and we are worse off than ever.

When I joined journalism after leaving what then appeared to be a secure career at the Foreign Ministry, the field held so much promise. Don't get me wrong, it was not for the faint-hearted. There were very real threats, especially if you were working for a newspaper that was viewed as the harshest critic of the then government. But there was career promise both within the country and outside of it.

Now most colleagues I speak with has one intent; how to get out and get out quickly. I woke up this morning and one of the big news items on a chat group was that a prominent Sinhala television



Economic instability, political crisis and many other negative factors drive many professionals overseas whereby the country is in danger of facing brain drain in the future.

**We just celebrated 75 years of independence at great cost. But after three quarters of a century of being free (from?), where do we find ourselves? Sri Lanka as a nation lies among the main problem cases in the region**

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**Twenty-five years ago, when we celebrated 50 years of Independence, if someone were to say that this where we would be 25 years down the road, we would not have believed that prediction for a minute. We were probably doing better than the current rot even with the war**

anchor had decamped to Canada. There was an image of the beaming gentleman in a winter coat accompanying the post. If this is confirmed, this would be the second occasion a colleague has sought relocation in this nation.

### WHERE TO FROM HERE FOR ALL OF US?

If we remain where we are, we are looking at an abyss on a daily basis. No one can keep doing that. If we leave, then there is another set of pressures. Relocating overseas during the second half of your career and life is not as easy as when you are starting off. Your body sometimes feel like an old rusted bicycle which really does not want to move.

And if you find yourself without a close-knit support structure, you might as well be on Mars.

Twenty-five years ago, when we celebrated 50 years of Independence, if someone were to say that this where we would be 25 years down the road, we would not have believed that prediction for a minute. We were probably doing better than the current rot even with the war.

For the sake of our individual and collective sanity, it is probably best we not even contemplate the next 25 years.

The writer is a journalism researcher and the Project Lead at the Dart Centre Asia Pacific. He can be contacted on [amantha.perera@cqumail.com](mailto:amantha.perera@cqumail.com)

## DM Poll

How motivated are you to vote in the coming Local Government election?

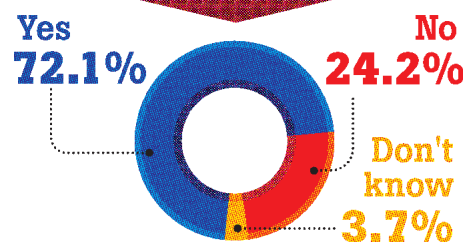
- Extremely motivated
- Somewhat motivated
- Not motivated
- Don't Know



Scan to Vote

## LAST POLL

Can the holding of local government elections be justified during a period of bankruptcy?



See web poll at [www.DailyMirror.lk](http://www.DailyMirror.lk)

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### BRUTALITY OF GOVERNANCE

The recent behaviour of our Police indicates that they consider themselves as above the Law of the Country, clearly in line with the country's President's sordid actions. His outright refusal to provide funds for the LG elections, despite the allocation of funds by the Parliament in the most recent Budget goes beyond the powers of the Supreme Legislative body, through which the Law is enacted and maintained.

**I think that such foolish actions inspired by the President could drive this Nation along a precipice and kill the economy further bringing untold suffering to the entirety of the population**

In this back drop, brutal actions by the Police, on protesters under the directions of the hierarchy of the Government resulted in the death of a non-violent protester, with nearly 40 of them injured. With a large number of the total population suffering from food shortages, with the economy battered to the ground, by idiotic actions of the former President GR, such protests should be expected and handled in a humane way. A decent Society should condemn these squalid actions by the Police, in no uncertain terms.

I think that such foolish actions inspired by the President could drive this Nation along a precipice and kill the economy further bringing untold suffering to the entirety of the population. This could happen if the international community views Sri Lanka as a Country that does not respect Human Rights and governed by an authoritative Ruler, who is not acceptable to a large segment of its population. In brief what would our President do, if the GSP + Facility is withdrawn by the EU? It could end up in the near closure of hundreds of factories producing and supplying garments and fish products to Europe. This could result in hundreds of thousands of workers thrown out of their jobs with unemployment, sky rocketing. On the other hand, IMF could also view Sri Lanka as a country with an unstable Government and may differ the facility of extending the loan facility which the Country is depending on for its survival.

We could only pray that saner counsel would prevail among our rulers even at this crucial juncture of our country.

Tilakararatne Ranaweera

### Russian family had a narrow shave from elephant attack

#### WEB COMMENTS

**PUNCHI** - Russia needs all its money to fight Ukraine. Why are Russian tourists spending their money here

**ROMANTHA DE SILVA** - Sri Lanka needs all its men and women to pitch in for their country and push its economy back up, why are they leaving to foreign countries?

**RAM** - Vehicle drivers or the guides must be charged for negligence,

for allowing them to get off vehicle in the presence of wild animals

**NANDASENA R** - It is sad that humans seldom realise that these are wild animals and to respect them accordingly. Also, SL has a habit of treating anyone with white skin as demigods regardless of the fact that some of them can sadly be classified as "white trash".

See more web comments at [www.DailyMirror.lk](http://www.DailyMirror.lk)

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Exposé

Critics are pointing out that CEB authorities are oppressing the innocent who pay electricity bills and trying to cover their losses



By Prageeth Sampath Karunathilaka

# TARIFF HIKE PUTS CEB, PETROLEUM IN TROUBLE

The Minister of Energy recently increased the electricity tariffs by 1200% to cover the losses of the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB). General Secretary of CEB Trade Union Alliance Ranjan Jayalal recently made a revelation about the politicians who have not paid their electricity bills while the burden is placed on the public to cover the losses incurred by the CEB. He also revealed names of the ministers who did not pay their electricity bills. He said that the CEB should collect a massive sum of 420 million rupees from 54 ministers who haven't paid their electricity bills, due on 13 November 2022. It was also revealed that the heads of the security forces too haven't paid their electricity bills amounting to more than 5 billion rupees. The latest audit report revealed that the general consumers have to pay 2000 million rupees to the CEB.

Usually, if you don't pay the bill after using electricity, the electricity supply will be disconnected. If the bill isn't settled the CEB would take away the metre after three months. However, electricity will be restored to the same house under a different name. But during the re-supply of electricity, the unpaid amount will not be charged. As a result the amount to be collected from the public so far is 200 crore rupees, according to the latest Audit Report. Following an investigation it was revealed that the ministers and some officials of the security forces have arranged to pay the electricity bills in instalments and through government ministries.

The CEB should collect the remaining amount from those who have not paid the electricity bill. CEB Trade Union Collective Chairman Malaka Wickramasinghe said that instead the CEB authorities are oppressing the innocent who pay electricity bills and trying to cover their losses.

The CEB imposed power cuts maintaining that there was no coal, naphtha and diesel to generate electricity. Now the CEB provides continuous supply of electricity by increasing electricity tariffs excessively. In increasing the electricity tariffs the electricity bill has been increased by 1200 percent for those who use the lowest number of units and there is an increase in price by 200 percent for those who use the highest number of units. In Sri Lanka, the cost of producing hydroelectric power is 2.76 rupees per unit of electricity. A unit of electricity costs around 12.76 rupees along with the wages of CEB employees and all other expenses. Wickramasinghe said that even if a unit of electricity is sold at 15 rupees, it is still profitable for the CEB.

According to the power generation plan mapped out by the CEB this year, 4500-gigawatt hours can be generated from hydroelectricity. About 2500 gigawatt hours are required for this year to provide electricity to all consumers who use less than 90 units. That leaves another 2000 gigawatt hours. Before the electricity tariff hike, the electricity bill of those who use less than 30 units was only 130 rupees. But now with the bill increase, the amount will increase to 1500 rupees. That is a 1200 percent increase. But the bill of those who use a high number of units has increased by only 200 percent. It is a slight increase. Earlier, the lowest income earners and those who live on income support of 500 rupees paid an electricity bill of 130 rupees. With the increase, they have to have three months' income to pay the bill for one month. Those who use less than 30 units of electricity only use a bulb at home. People who use a television or charge a phone consume two units of electricity per day. Those who use a refrigerator consume four units of electricity per day. Wickramasinghe said that using an electric iron costs about 120 units per month.

Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera, who attended a media programme recently, said that the electricity bill was increased based on the methods suggested by the electrical engineers and that he too didn't support the increase in the electricity bills. The minister pointed out that the amounts of increase in electricity prices were determined by calculating the average value of a unit of electricity. But it costs 2.76 rupees per unit to produce hydroelectricity. It costs 10 rupees to produce a unit of electricity using wind, 30 rupees using solar power and 50 rupees using coal. It costs 125 rupees using crude oil, naphtha and diesel, and 200 rupees if gas turbines are used. Accordingly, the minister pointed out that the total cost of generating electricity, divided by its average value, is 56 rupees per unit. Hydroelectricity can be provided to those who use 90 units, but electricity is generated from diesel because of the high demand for electricity. The high demand for electricity is caused by a certain group of people. These people have air-conditioned their houses. They use around 300-600 or 1000 units of electricity per month. Electricity is produced with diesel

to meet their high electricity demand. Wickramasinghe pointed out that Minister Wijesekera fears that they would leave the system if the electricity bill for them is increased by a high amount.

If the bill is increased for those who use much electricity and they withdraw from the system, the solution to the electricity crisis is right there. They will switch to solar power or some other option and fulfil their electricity needs anyway. Otherwise, the price of an electricity unit can be increased at the time they consume electricity excessively. "As a trade union, we informed authorities that they should not increase the electricity bill of the less affluent. But instead of listening to us or going for another alternative, Minister Kanchana Wijesekera acted to increase the electricity bill of low-income earners," Wickramasinghe said.

## CONSUMERS MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO CHEAT

There are 4.7 million people who use less than 90 units of electricity. About a million of them are at risk of losing their power connections. It will not be a problem if only one house in a village sees the electricity supply being disconnected due to non-payment of the electricity bill. Wickramasinghe pointed out that if electricity will have to be disconnected for a whole village, it will be a serious issue. Sometimes people will be tempted to obtain electricity in an illegal manner. Meter readers, maintenance units and those tasked with disconnecting electricity will not be able to perform their duties. Likewise, if the consumers stop paying their electricity bills the CEB's current loss would increase from 8.5 percent to 16 percent. Therefore, we, as a trade union, would like to ask the authorities who have made plans to increase the electricity price to make public their own electricity bills, Wickramasinghe said. This government is suppressing the poorest to provide electricity to the upper class who use more than 300 electricity units, he added.

The CEB could not provide electricity to students preparing for the Advanced Level Examination for 14 consecutive days. At that time, there was enough coal, naphtha and diesel to provide electricity. As soon as the bill was increased, the minister acted to ensure a continuous supply of electricity. The minister recently announced that he had obtained loans from Bank of Ceylon and People's Bank to purchase diesel, naphtha and coal to provide a continuous supply of electricity. The CEB authorities dream that the revenue generated from the increased electricity bills will be received from next May. But given the current economic situation in the country, the people are struggling to make ends meet. In such a situation, granting loans to the CEB will put the state banks and the petroleum corporation at risk. Wickramasinghe also pointed out that in the midst of all these issues the authorities are now trying restructure and privatise the CEB.

According to the Minister, the electricity tariffs had been increased in keeping with the guidelines provided by the electrical engineers. But the Co-secretary of the CEB Engineers Union Isuru Kasthuriratne said, "There is a guideline to set electricity tariffs. Electrical engineers provide all relevant data to the Public Utilities Commission. Then the Public Utilities Commission sets the electricity tariffs. That was the system till 2021. After 2021, the Public Utilities Commission informed the CEB to prepare the tariffs itself. Then the CEB prepared the tariffs and

submitted them to the Public Utilities Commission. The tariffs were calculated covering every field. This time, the electrical engineers prepared the electricity tariffs following cabinet orders. An order given by the cabinet was that no electricity subsidy should be given to any household or religious place. In that case we prepare tariffs according to the cost of production. The IMF gave instructions to calculate tariffs so that the cost of production is billed." Kasthuriratne said that the IMF is directly behind the increase in electricity bills.

"The bill of the consumer, who uses fewer units, was increased while the bill of those who use more units was reduced according to the IMF conditions. But as electrical engineers, we also pointed out that separate tariffs should be set up for those who use more units. That is what should happen. We were asked to increase the tariffs. If we, as electrical engineers, had prepared the tariffs, we would never have increased tariffs in this manner. If the tariffs had been calculated taking into account the actual costs, we would have had the opportunity to calculate a 60 percent or less increase," Kasthuriratne explained.


"We are not satisfied with the coal and diesel prices we were informed of when setting up tariffs. Diesel and coal vessels are subject to VAT while they are at sea. VAT will also be charged on the electricity bill. In addition to the tax charged when a diesel ship arrives, the government also charges a separate cost of production tax. Naphtha which was at 165 rupees was increased to 220 rupees. The price of a barrel of crude oil in the world market has decreased by about 15 percent. It has reached the same price as in 2021. A metric ton of coal has dropped below 160 US\$. But we import coal at 240-250 US\$ per metric ton," said Kasthuriratne who pointed out that the electricity consumer does not enjoy that advantage.

"The government is now making plans to restructure the CEB. Three foreign companies have got cabinet approval to import oil. Those companies know that they can obtain maximum profit by importing oil. A barrel of premium crude used to cost 9 US\$. Now we have to pay more than 30 US\$ per barrel along with insurance charges and other charges. Moreover, millions of dollars have to be paid as late fees for the vessels. Therefore, three foreign companies were allowed to import oil in the hope of gaining more profit. Similarly, when electricity generation is given to three companies, those companies will also be able to obtain maximum profit. When those companies bring in cheap naphtha, diesel and coal, they can sell electricity at a higher price retaining more profit. According to an IMF proposal, the tariffs were increased. But the IMF did not ask to restructure the CEB. A diesel power plant can cease operations if the consumption of heavy users can be reduced," said Kasthuriratne who added that if that was the case, there would be no need to increase the electricity bill.

The Daily Mirror contacted CEB Chairman Nalinda Ilangakoon. The Chairman said that he was having a discussion with the Minister of Energy and hung up. Several attempts made to contact him later proved futile.


This newspaper then made attempts to contact CEB General Manager Rohan Seneviratne to inquire into all these matters, but an official at his office said that the General Manager wasn't available.

"As a trade union, we informed authorities that they should not increase the electricity bill of the less affluent. But instead of listening to us or going for another alternative, Minister Kanchana Wijesekera acted to increase the electricity bill of low-income earners"



- CEB Trade Union Collective Chairman Malaka Wickramasinghe

"This time, the electrical engineers prepared the electricity tariffs following cabinet orders. An order given by the cabinet was that no electricity subsidy should be given to any household or religious place. In that case we prepare tariffs according to the cost of production. The IMF gave instructions to calculate tariffs so that the cost of production is billed"



- Co-secretary of the CEB Engineers Union Isuru Kasthuriratne

an urgent meeting. He asked for the author's mobile number promising to call back, but he never did. Attempts made to contact Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera were also futile.



The bills of consumers, who use fewer units, were increased while the bills of those who use more units were reduced according to the IMF conditions



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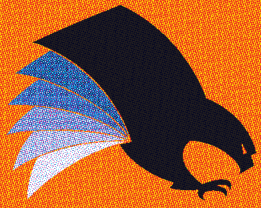
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# Mirror Business

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Full Stock Market **POB**

## Rupee appreciates after almost a year into free float

- Spot rupee traded at Rs.356.75 - 357.75 yesterday
- Deal with IFC, rising prospects for IMF relief and eased forex conversion rules reinvigorate sentiments
- Inflows from remittances and tourism sector revival also add a fillip
- Currency dealers observe forex supply outstripping demand as of late
- Sri Lanka returning to economic normalcy after a year of turmoil when rupee was let go

Sri Lankan rupee appreciated yesterday on improved sentiments over the current and future foreign exchange conditions in the domestic market after the announcement that International Finance Corporation (IFC) is willing to provide US\$ 400 million worth of swap facility for three commercial banks to support essential imports.

The spot rupee appreciated to Rs.356.75 - 357.75 against the US dollar, yesterday.

The telegraphic transfer rates quoted by commercial banks in Colombo also eased yesterday, as both buying and selling prices of US dollars stood at Rs.358.36 and Rs.367.93, respectively.

The market also remains upbeat over the prospects of getting the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to unfreeze its US\$ 2.9 billion relief package as early as next month with or without adequate financing assurances from China whose assurances fell short of what the multilateral lender sought.

In a further positive development, the Central Bank relaxed the

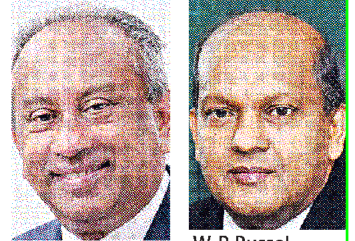


mandatory foreign exchange conversion requirement applicable to banks to 15 percent from 25 percent, effective from Monday, in a reflection of improved foreign currency liquidity conditions in the domestic market.

According to treasury department of banks, this has the potential to release between an additional 30 to 40 million US dollars further enhancing liquidity in the market.

## BOC reports Rs.32bn PAT for FY22 amid tough economic conditions

- NII grows 13.6% to Rs.126.3tn
- Total assets base of Rs.4.3tn
- Total deposit base of Rs.3.3tn
- Gross loans and advances reach to Rs.2.6tn



Ronald C Perera - Chairman  
W. P. Russel Fonseka - General Manager/CEO

Bank of Ceylon (BOC) reported Rs. 32.0 billion profit after tax (PAT) for the year ended 31 December 2022 (FY22) despite of many headwinds caused by the unprecedented economic and operational environment prevailed during the year.

BOC's net interest income grew by 13.6 percent to Rs. 126.3 billion in FY22 contributing 71 percent to total operating income. The increase in interest rates in line with the upsurge in policy rates and materialising the volume growth resulted in 61 percent growth in

interest from loans and advances which denotes 68 percent of total interest income.

Interest income from investments boomed up year-on-year (YoY) to Rs. 146.0 billion and the major portion of it derived through Treasury bills and bonds.

The upsurge in deposit rates increased the cost of funding. The YoY interest expense rose by 121 percent, and as a considerable portion of FDs is reprised by now, during the latter part of the year interest expense moved up by nearly threefold than previous year.

## Cabinet gives nod to expedite negotiations for PTA with Bangladesh

The Cabinet greenlight has been granted to fast-track negotiations with Bangladesh for the proposed preferential trade agreement (PTA) under the guidance of the International Trade Office.

With the aim of boosting bilateral trade flows, President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Monday sought the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers to expedite negotiations on the proposed PTA with Bangladesh

under the guidance of the International Trade Office.

The initial Cabinet approval was granted for a PTA between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in June 2021. However, it was delayed as the country plunged into economic and political crisis the following year. According to Bangladeshi authorities, negotiations for the proposed PTA have reached an advanced stage by now.

**MORE ON P8**

## Colombo inflation eases to 51.7% in February

The Colombo inflation decelerated for the fifth consecutive month in February continuing the disinflation path which was envisaged by the Central Bank, but the non-food inflation accelerated from a month ago reflecting still lingering price pressures entrenched in the economy.

Prices measured by the Colombo Consumer Price Index registered a reading of 50.6 percent in the twelve months to February, decelerating from 51.7 percent through January.

Monthly inflation rose by 0.5 percent in February, same level from

a month ago, reflecting still sticky nature of some of the prices in the consumer spending basket.

The core inflation barring the often-volatile food, energy and transport rose by 43.6 percent, easing from 45.6 percent through January, reflecting the underlying price pressures still prevalent in the economy.

The core price index under the CCPI is the most preferred inflation gauge by officials and is used for policy making and determining the trajectory of the rates.

The Monetary Board is largely expected to leave the key policy rates

unchanged at the current level at the upcoming policy meeting schedule for Friday, March 03.

Meanwhile, the Colombo food inflation rose by 54.4 percent on an annual basis, decelerating from 60.0 percent through January.

Measured on a monthly basis, food prices declined by 2.2 percent, turning around from the 0.8 percent increase in January. Monthly prices are a better indicator of near term price pressures than the prices measured on an annual basis which is distorted by the higher base effects in the previous year.

**MORE ON P8**

## Govt. to fix Customs' time-consuming inspection, investigation procedures

The Cabinet of Ministers has decided to appoint a five-member ministerial committee to recommend amendments to the Customs Ordinance in order to expedite the 'time-consuming' inspection and investigation procedures of Sri Lanka Customs.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe in his capacity as Minister of Finance, Economic Stabilisation and National Policies on Monday sought the approval of the Cabinet to appoint a five-member ministerial committee to study the issues and identify the amendments to be made to the Customs Ordinance.

The five-member ministerial

committee includes Minister Ports, Shipping and Aviation Nimal Siripala de Silva, Minister of Plantation Industry and Industries Ramesh Pathirana, State Minister of Finance Ranjith Siyambalapitiya, State Minister of Investment Promotions Dilum Amunugama and State Minister of Finance Shehan Semasinghe. According to the Government Information Department, as a result of the time-consuming investigation procedures carried out by the Sri Lanka Customs, the value of a great deal of goods detained by the Sri Lanka Customs has decreased significantly.

**MORE ON P8**

## Government expects rice prices to fall following SSCL removal

The government expects a considerable fall in rice prices following the removal of the Social Security Contribution Levy (SSCL) imposed on the purchasing of paddy, production of rice and marketing.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe in his capacity as Minister of Finance, Economic Stabilisation and National Policies on Monday sought the approval of the Cabinet

of Ministers to revise the Social Security Contribution Levy imposed on the purchasing of paddy, production of rice and marketing.

Issuing a media statement yesterday, the State Minister of Finance Ranjith Siyambalapitiya said that the measure would result in a considerable fall in market prices of rice in the coming period.

**MORE ON P8**

## Union Bank December quarter stung by hefty loss provisions

Union Bank of Colombo PLC yesterday reported some tepid performance in the three months to December bringing the banking sector earnings reports to a close, which showed some mixed results.

The relatively small lender with assets

of little under Rs.130 billion reported a net interest income of Rs.1.97 billion in the final quarter ended in December last year, recording 33 percent increase as the bank took the benefit of the elevated interest rates.

**MORE ON P8**

## Merchandise exports fall in Jan. as demand in major markets slows

- Trade deficit narrows to US\$ 410mn from US\$ 857 a year ago
- Exports down 11.3% to US\$ 978mn; imports down 29.2 YoY to US\$ 1.38bn
- Workers' remittances and tourism earnings continue to grow
- Official gross foreign reserves improve to US\$ 2.1bn amid CB net purchases

Sri Lanka's merchandise export earnings fell in January 2023, while trade deficit narrowed from a year ago, as imports fell sharply, the external sector data released by the Central Bank showed.

Exports fell 11.3 percent year-on-year (YoY) to US\$ 978 million in January "continuing the moderation observed since September 2022, though at a slower pace than expected" the Central Bank said.

The January trade gap narrowed to US\$ 410 million from US\$ 857 million a year ago. However, the trade

balance widened compared to the deficit of US\$ 358 million recorded in December 2022.

Sri Lanka ended 2022 with an overall trade balance of US\$ 2.8 billion, down from US\$ 3.9 billion in 2021.

Both industrial and agricultural exports fell in January. Industrial exports, led by textile and garment exports fell 12.4 percent YoY to US\$ 781.3 million. Textile and garment exports fell 17.8 percent YoY to US\$ 424.4 million largely due to slowing demand in major markets such as the US, EU and the UK.

Agricultural exports led

by tea fell 6.6 percent to US\$ 191 million. Tea exports rose 9.1 percent YoY to US\$ 99.6 million, but both rubber and coconut exports fell. Seafood exports also fell by 13.1 percent YoY to US\$ 20.9 million.

Meanwhile, imports in the month of January 2023 fell 29.2 percent YoY to US\$ 1.38 billion as all three import categories reported lower imports.

Consumer goods imports—both food and non-food—fell 39.3 percent YoY to US\$ 218.5 million. As of now, Sri Lanka has relaxed most

of the restrictions brought in for imports, except for motor vehicles.

However, the sharp depreciation of the rupee has made most of the imported items unaffordable to many, particularly when the inflation remains elevated.

Intermediate goods imports also fell 20 percent YoY to US\$ 970.5 million in January, though the country's oil bill, which is the largest component of this category rose 11.8 percent to US\$ 481.1 million amid higher crude oil and coal imports.

**MORE ON P8**



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28.02.2023

Table with columns: SECURITY, VOLUME, V.W.A. (TODAY'S), OPEN, HIGH, LOW, and CHANGE (%). It lists various stocks and their market performance for the day.

Market Indicators

28.03.2023

Table showing currency exchange rates (BUYING RATE and SELLING RATE) and indicative rates for various countries like Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE.

Month ends with gains

The ASPI edged down as a result of price losses in counters such as Chevron Lubricants, Hatton National Bank and Vallibel One with the turnover crossing Rs. 1.4 bn. Meanwhile, the S&P SL20 closed in red. High net worth and institutional investor participation was noted in Lanka IOC, John Keells Holdings and Aitken Spence.

Softlogic Capital and SMB Leasing. Foreign participation in the market activity remained at subdued levels with foreigners closing as net buyers. During the month, the ASPI and the S&P SL20 gained 3.6% and 1.2% respectively whilst recording an average daily turnover of Rs. 1.87 bn. The Banking sector was the top contributor to the market turnover (due to Hatton National Bank and Sampath Bank) whilst the sector index edged up by 0.06%. The share price of Hatton National Bank decreased by Rs.



2.75 (2.55%) to close at Rs. 105.00. The share price of Sampath Bank appreciated by Rs. 2.10 (4.23%) to close at Rs. 51.70. Capital Goods sector was the second highest contributor to the

market turnover (due to John Keells Holdings) whilst the sector index decreased by 0.36%. The share price of John Keells Holdings moved down by Rs. 0.75 (0.55%) to close at Rs. 135.00. Lanka IOC and Expolanka Holdings were also included amongst the top turnover contributors. The share price of Lanka IOC lost Rs. 0.25 (0.13%) to close at Rs. 198.00. The share price of Expolanka Holdings recorded a loss of Rs. 1.50 (0.83%) to close at Rs. 178.50.

Contd. from Page 7

Rupee appreciates...

Sri Lanka was seen looking past its dire foreign currency liquidity conditions from around the third quarter last year as the Central Bank ramped up its net purchases bucking more than a year-long trend of being a net seller. In December last year, the Central Bank bought US\$ 103.78 million on net basis before increasing to US\$ 211.15 million in January, signalling a gradual improvement in foreign currency liquidity conditions. A currency dealer said that they get more supply nowadays for dollars than the demand. Sri Lanka crushed demand and thereby imports last year teaching the principles of frugality and contentment for the masses who for decades relied on foreign made goods, as the country ran out of foreign currency. Meanwhile, the inflows from worker remittances and tourism also reached record highs in January after more than a year long weakness in both sources.

BOC reports...

As rupee depreciation is around 81 percent for the period, net exchange gains derived through trading activities and currency conversion represents considerable portion in non-funded based income amounting to Rs. 32.9 billion. Similarly, net fee and commission income also contributed Rs. 16.4 billion with 15 percent growth as business operations are now normalised and increased number of retail transactions and trade financing activities caused by improvement in related fee income. As conducive environment did not prevail in the share

market activities during the year the mark to market losses of Rs. 804.4 million was resulted from equity and unit trust portfolio. However, through trading of equity and government securities, the bank was able to gain Rs. 861.3 million. Meanwhile, the impairment provision made to compensate the ECL from loans and advances amounted to Rs.70.7 billion during the year ended 31 December 2022. Consequently, the gross loans to impairment provision reserve ratio stood at 10 percent against the 6 percent reported by end 2021. The bank also set aside a considerable level of impairment provisions for its investments in International Sovereign Bonds and Sri Lanka Development Bonds. The bank saw its operating expenses increasing 13.5 percent YoY to Rs.47.3 billion largely due to escalations in personnel costs. Meanwhile, BOC reported a profit before tax of Rs. 31 billion for the FY22 down 22 percent YoY. A tax reversal to the tune of Rs.995.8 million helped the bank to record a PAT of Rs.32 billion. During FY22 the bank's total assets grew by 14 percent and reached to Rs.4.3 trillion, preserving its industry leadership. During the year 2022 lending to private sector grew by 10 percent and the bank continued to extend its support towards business revival. However, the total gross loans and advances showed only a marginal growth of Rs.8.0 billion due to reduction in lending to direct government and major SOEs by considerable amount during the year. Net loans and advances showed a decline of 4 percent, showing the bank's prudent approach of making provision for credit losses as part of strengthening the balance sheet in order to safeguard from the possible future shocks. The bank wishes to reverse these provisions back to profit after materialising its future recovery strategies. BOC Chairman Ronald C Perera said the bank was able to transfer Rs. 6.7 billion from non performing stock to performing. The bank's deposit base during the year increased to Rs. 3.3 trillion with a 16 percent growth. The bank's Current and Saving deposit (CASA) ratio decreased from 36 percent to 29 percent during the year. Return on Assets (ROA) ratio of the bank stood at 0.76 percent while reporting 14.1 percent Return on Equity (ROE) ratio resulting a decline YoY as the bottom-line performance of this year is in low scale than previous year.

However, the bank was able to maintain its Tier I Capital and Total Capital ratio at 12.4 percent and 15.4 percent respectively as of end December 2022, even though the increase in risk weighted assets with the rupee depreciation, payment of Rs. 6.7 billion surcharge tax which was deducted from retained earnings and rising stage III loans adversely impacted to the bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR). Govt. to... Further, these detained goods also occupy a large storage space in warehouses and terminals in Port of Colombo, which has inhibited revenue streams for the port while causing exporters and importers to seek warehouse spaces outside the port. Colombo inflation... Prices of vegetables, eggs and rice registered sharp declines in February from their January levels helping the monthly deceleration in prices. Meanwhile, non-food prices rose by 48.8 percent annually and 1.8 percent monthly, firming up from 47.9 percent and 0.5 percent in the previous month, reflecting the constant changes in the prices of products and services in the non-food basket in line with the changes in the policies and global commodities prices. For instance, February non-food prices were predominantly driven by the electricity bill which was revised again by an average 66 percent in February and the increase in the petrol prices at the pump. With the rupee showing signs of appreciation and also with the slight ease seen in global commodities prices, Sri Lanka could see further deceleration in inflation in the months ahead in the absence of any major exogenous shocks. Cabinet gives... Cabinet Spokesperson Minister Bandula Gunawardana

stressed that trade agreements have become a necessary tool in modern global trade to boost exports. Government expects... During a tax review, it was found that the Social Security Contribution Levy is imposed during three occasions - purchasing paddy, production of rice and marketing. In addition to the amount paid to the farmer for a kilo of paddy, the paddy producers had pointed out that approximately Rs.6-7 has been incurred over a kilogram of rice as social security tax apart from the additional cost that has to be borne for water, electricity, storage, transport etc. until the final product of one kilogram of paddy is produced and handed over to the customer within the process of rice production. The measure is also aimed at providing farmers a higher price above Rs.100 per one kilogram of Nadu rice, sustaining the maximum price for rice in the market at present. Earlier, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a proposal to implement a programme to distribute Nadu rice purchased by the government among low income earners free-of-charge. Union Bank... The bank's net interest margin, the difference between what the bank charges for its loans and other financial assets and what it pays for deposits and other financial liabilities, expanded to 4.69 percent from 3.53 percent last year. As was the case with the rest of the industry, Union Bank wasn't immune to the aftershocks of the economic crisis, which resulted in soaring interest rates and a deteriorated economy. The bank set aside Rs.1.06 billion in provisions against possible loan defaults and other losses in the quarter, up 165 percent from the same period in 2021. Banks in Sri Lanka had to provide their highest ever provisions last year amid higher borrowers' inability to service their debts and their investments in sovereign bonds following the debt standstill announced by the government last April. As a result and also due to higher operating costs, Union

Bank reported tepid earnings of Rs.118.7 million or 11 cents for the October - December quarter, compared to earnings of Rs.170.9 million or 16 cents a share in the year earlier period. The bottomline was assisted by fee incomes, which rose by 28 percent to Rs.345.7 million from a year ago levels, which the bank attributed to, "increased activity from the trade business, remittances, credit, and debit cards". The bank's loans suffered slight de-growth when the foreign currency translation impact was stripped out. The bank reported a Stage 3 ratio, somewhat equivalent to the gross non-performing loans of 8.19 percent, up sharply from 4.46 percent at the start of the year. The private equity firm Culture Financial Holdings Limited held 70.84 percent stake in Union Bank by the end of December 2022. Merchandise exports... Fertiliser imports also rose 285.6 percent YoY to US\$ 9.6 million in January. The investment goods imports also fell 45.6 percent YoY to US\$ 198.9 million in January with lower machinery & equipment, building material and transport equipment imports. Meanwhile, earnings from both tourism and workers' remittances made positive gains in January with tourism earnings reaching an estimated US\$ 162 million in comparison to US\$ 127 million in the previous month and US\$ 152 million in the corresponding month in the previous year. The workers' remittances in January rose to US\$ 427 million, in comparison to US\$ 259 million in the corresponding month in the previous year. Total departures for foreign employment were recorded at 24,236 during the month of January 2023. Total departures for foreign employment comprised unskilled (7,556), skilled (7,283) and domestic aid (6,120) categories. Meanwhile, the Central Bank said the country's external foreign reserves improved to US\$ 2.1 billion by the end of January amid net absorptions. However, this includes a swap facility from the People's Bank of China, equivalent to around US\$ 1.4 billion, which is subject to conditionality on usability.

## Bernhard Stefan takes over as Managing Director of Nestlé Lanka

Nestlé Lanka PLC appointed Bernhard Stefan as its Managing Director, effective March 1, 2023, succeeding Jason Avanceña, whose term ends on February 28, 2023.



Bernhard Stefan

Avanceña, who successfully led Nestlé's operations in Sri Lanka and the Maldives through unprecedented challenges during his tenure, will move on to a new role as Managing Director of Nestlé Pakistan and Afghanistan, with effect from March 1, 2023.

Joining Nestlé Lanka with over 22 years of experience, Stefan began his career with Nestlé Waters in France in the field of mergers and acquisitions. In the years that followed, he took on various roles with increasing responsibility in Nestlé Waters in the United Kingdom, Germany and Switzerland, eventually becoming Country Business Manager, Nestlé Waters Direct, in Germany, in 2007.

A year later, he moved to Australia to become Head of Route Sales and Operations for Nestlé Peters Ice Cream, a role he held for more than four years before moving to the Greater China Region in 2012, to lead strategy and business development. In 2017, he returned to Switzerland as a Regional Manager for Zone Asia, Oceania and Africa, supporting Greater China, South Asia Region and Nestlé Pakistan and leading marketing, sales and e-commerce for the Zone and Ice Cream. When Nestlé created Zone Greater China a year ago, Stefan joined the team as Zone Deputy.

Stefan's breadth of experience and his extensive knowledge of the South Asia region, his challenges and opportunities will no doubt help him to navigate successfully in his new role as Managing Director of Nestlé Lanka PLC.

# LOLC in epochal mission to support education of schoolchildren



The LOLC group commenced the 'Divi Saviya' programme to carry out a meaningful mission for the needy people of the nation, who were severely affected by the economic recession that brought the country into a crisis, with the global epidemic.

The launch was marked with the theme 'Jeewithaya Dinanata' (To Win Life). The humanitarian mission was spread to the 10 corners of the country, targeting the people who looked at life indifferently, with income deprivation and with no means of livelihood. The project, which was a tremendous force to quench the hunger of millions of low-income people, who were oppressed in the 25 districts, was

implemented through four phases.

LOLC is now on another epochal mission for the children of the country. Assembling the path to another colossal foundation of upliftment, targeting humanity for the next generation of the country, LOLC Divi Saviya 'Daye Daruwange Anagathaya Wenuwen' (For The Future Of The Children) was conceptualised to support the most deserving schools and students of the country.

Through this project, the yearly requirements of exercise books, school bags, water bottles and other stationery such as pens, pencils, colour boxes, mathematic toolboxes, etc. will be provided to schoolchildren from grades one to 13

islandwide, in a sequential order. For the initial phase of the project, 2671 schools with less than 100 children have been identified.

The ceremonial launch of the event took place yesterday, at the Excel World. For the inception of the project, seven selected schools from Colombo and its suburbs were invited. LOLC Holdings PLC Group Managing Director/CEO Kapila Jayawardena together with Education Ministry Secretary Nihal Ranasinghe symbolically handed over the book packs to children during the course of the event.

Jayawardena stated, "The after effects and potential impact of hardships that the nation is going through, which may reflect

on the next generation of the country is alarming. At a point, where education is neglected from basic households, due to extreme insufficiencies and deprivation, LOLC has created this substantial social assistance to recuperate the future generation of Sri Lanka.

Understanding the responsibility of a corporate, the flag of life that empowers our children is now raised by LOLC, through Divi Saviya. This in turn would develop a society that would respect others' rights and fundamental freedom. We believe this project will provide them a right to education, a hope and a vision to develop themselves, to their fullest potential."

PIX BY KITHSIRI DE MEL

## Sithara wins at CNCI Achiever Awards



Sithara Limited Director Chayanka Wickremesinghe and CEO T.A. Pullenayegam obtain honour with senior management team

Sithara Limited, the leading printing ink manufacturer in Sri Lanka, recently won the Merit award in the extra-large category, national level, manufacturing sector, at the annual CNCI Achiever Awards 2022, organised by the Ceylon National Chamber of Industries (CNCI).

Sithara Limited Director Chayanka Wickremesinghe acknowledged the award on behalf of the organisation. President Ranil Wickremesinghe was the chief guest of the event. The CNCI Achiever Awards was established to boost the industrial sector in the country

by recognising and rewarding industrialists who excel in their businesses.

"It's a great privilege for us to be awarded by the CNCI for the good work that our team is doing day in and day out. At a time when we are both approaching six decades of a leading presence in the industry and also navigating through global challenges, it's a testament of our team's resilience to not only be steady but also continue finding growth opportunities in a highly competitive industry. We are very proud to be a truly Sri Lankan company in an industry with

large global players and to be moving ahead with a clear vision for success," said Chayanka.

Sithara Limited was established in 1964 by Esmond Wickremesinghe and over the years has grown to be an industry leader. Sithara is committed to providing its customers with the best quality products and the company has received the ISO 9001:2015 quality certification. In addition, Sithara is one of the few companies in the world which are certified by TUV Austria to manufacture compostable inks for packaging.

## StrEdge Group drives technology consultancy for business transformation



StrEdge Advisory CEO Sumedha Wijesekera, StrEdge Group Director Janaka Epasinghe, StrEdge Tech Solutions CEO Udaya Samaradivakara

The impact of digital transformation in business is overwhelming, driving businesses to be more competitive in local and international markets. Nevertheless, certain gaps in terms of technology transformation and lack of internal and external resources to identify the required technology needs leave many businesses, largely SMEs and mid-corporates striving to reach the next level.

StrEdge Group is positioned to offer consultancy for need assessment before hiring a technology company for a solution. Armed with expertise in multiple segments of business, StrEdge helps businesses identify their need first and then explore best-suited and cost-effective technology solutions in the market.

"Need identification is fundamental in all tech solutions and once the need of each business is identified, business owners can find suitable tech-vendors out in the market independently," said StrEdge Tech Solutions CEO Udaya Samaradivakara.

The contribution of SMEs to the Sri Lankan economy is enormous, yet the lack of knowledge to identify the technology requirements for the current and future business needs of their own, leave many businesses challenged, stifling their technological growth and true potential.

"As a home-grown company exposed to best global practices, our consultants and business analysts are geared to assist businesses to address this gap and thereby give more muscle to SMEs, which play a critical role in our economy," said Samaradivakara.

The Technology Need Analysis Consultation Package focusing on SMEs and mid-corporates is specially designed to ascertain the technology requirement in moving from their current state to the future desired state. This analysis will provide an in-depth study and guidance for businesses to raise a RFP for them to go to the market and hire a suitable technology solution. This package will also highlight the current gaps in the processes and gaps in HR, which will be challenging for technology implementation.

The competency and experience of StrEdge as a consultancy group offering holistic solutions, has enabled businesses to align their processes and people for an effective digital transformation. The StrEdge approach will certainly increase the ROI on the potential investments in technology, especially in SMEs and mid-corporates, said StrEdge Group Director Janaka Epasinghe.

"We, as a group, at all times offer the 360-view in all what we do for the optimal outcome," said StrEdge Advisory CEO Sumedha Wijesekera, who went on to note that this approach would help businesses make empowered decisions in their 'business transformation' journey.

"This helps our economy grow to greater heights, which can be considered one of the most important national needs at this hour," concludes Wijesekera.

## Sri Lanka's ICT sector receives high honours at Asia Pacific ICT Awards 2022

Every year, the Chartered Institute for IT (BCS) nominates the National ICT Awards - NBQSA winners to represent the nation at the Asia Pacific ICT Awards, organised by the Asia Pacific ICT Alliance (APICTA).

This year, the Asia Pacific ICT Awards was held in Islamabad, Pakistan and Sri Lanka was represented by a large number of National ICT Awards winners and six Young Scientists Competition (YCS) nominees selected by the Federation of Information Technology Industry Sri Lanka (FITIS).

The Sri Lankan contingent achieved great success at the Asia Pacific ICT Awards, taking the fifth overall position winning one trophy and six merit awards out of 216 nominees from 16 APICTA member countries. The Merit award winners included Cyber Labs Services - TestMyUsers,

Informatics Institute of Technology - Planet Hunters, Airplane, FONIX Software Solutions (Pvt.) Ltd - ExamHub Sri Lanka and Eduscope Private Limited - Eduscope Unified Media Station (UMS). The Provincial Department of Education, Sabaragamuwa - Education Management Information System (SipThathu) won the most sorted-after APICTA Trophy. The Trophy Award winner and other Merit award winners were nominated by BCS from the National ICT Awards - NBQSA 2022 while a Merit award winner of the school category was a

student from Royal College, Colombo 7, who was nominated from the Young Scientists Competition organised by FITIS.

Vajeendra S. Kandegamage, Chairman, BCS, the chartered institute for IT, Sri Lanka, shared his thoughts, "It is wonderful to see such a vast number of participants from Sri Lanka at the Asia Pacific ICT Awards. It is a great representation of how innovative and inventive Sri Lanka is, in terms of ICT, especially given the challenges we face at present as a nation. I would like to congratulate all the winners and the participants and I wish them great success in the future. I would also like to thank all the nominees and EXCO members who were able to travel to Pakistan, despite the challenges they faced in doing so."

The APICTA is an association of ICT communities nominated by member economies, including Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Macao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, who came together to form a regional association to promote technology innovation and encourage the development of indigenous ICT solutions for the global market via an annual awards programme in the Asia Pacific region.



## IQ Global-UoK partner to launch Sri Lanka Digital Readiness Index



From left: Prof. B. Wanninayake, B. Emmanuel, Dr. N. Fernando, Dr. A. Medis, Senior Prof. N. De Silva, N.A. Cader, M. Ishaq, A. Irfan and H. Hewavitsent

IQ Global, Sri Lanka's first and only business design company, recently announced its partnership with the University of Kelaniya (UoK), to promote and grow awareness about the necessity of business design and digital transformation within modern businesses using Sri Lanka's Digital Readiness Index.

The announcement took place recently at Movenpick Hotel under the patronage of esteemed guests that include UoK Vice Chancellor Senior Professor Nilanthi De Silva.

The curated index will evaluate, prepare and inform participants of tools that will

help them effectively manage and assimilate into the modern marketplace to overcome the challenges businesses face with automation, artificial intelligence and big data.

The launch of the Digital Readiness Index, Developed by IQ Global and validated by the UoK, will be the first of its kind in the region. Innovation and digital readiness has been a dormant concept for most organisations in the region, with most resting on their established laurels for decades. In more developed corners of the globe, indexes have already been established to gauge innovation

and digital readiness and have therefore acted on those indications to tackle the digital paradigm shift we currently find ourselves in.

Using the statistics and analyses derived from the Sri Lanka Digital Readiness Index, tailored sessions will focus on the change in traditional business development and marketing processes and discuss how real-time consumer insights and data-driven, personalised needs fulfilment are impacting the fundamental delivery of goods and services to future proof businesses and seamlessly transition into the digital space.

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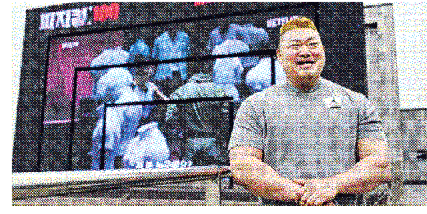


## RUBEN OSTLUND TO HEAD CANNES JURY

Swedish director Ruben Ostlund, a two-time winner of the Palme d'Or, will be jury president at this year's Cannes Film Festival in May, organisers announced Tuesday. Ostlund, 48, won the festival's top prize last year for "Triangle of Sadness", which left audiences squirming over its biting exploration of class divisions on a cruise ship, and extended display of extreme sea sickness. **AFP**

## 'WHOLESOME' SOUTH KOREAN REALITY TV PROVES A GLOBAL HIT

The challenge is straight from Greek mythology: hold a boulder aloft as long as possible. Korean car dealer Jo Jin-hyeong lasted over two hours, captivating global audiences in a reality show that could signal a new K-culture export success. "Physical: 100", the new Netflix show that gym buff Jo competed in, featured 100 men and women in prime physical condition, including South Korea's ex-Olympians and former special forces soldiers, performing absurdly difficult challenges. **AFP**



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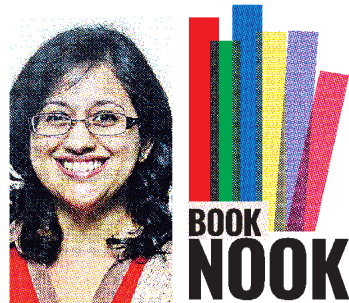


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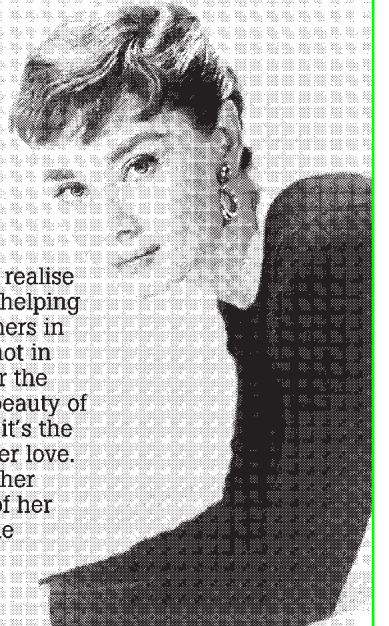
**BOOK NOOK**  
BY RIHAAB MOWLANA

If you would like to get in touch to feature books or book-related events, drop me an email at [lifedm123@gmail.com](mailto:lifedm123@gmail.com)

# THE BEAUTY OF A WOMAN

Audrey Hepburn wrote this revealing her beauty secrets which was read out at her funeral. "If you want attractive lips speak words of kindness. To have beautiful eyes, look at the beautiful things in people. To stay slim, share your meals with the hungry. To have beautiful hair, let a child put her hands on it every day. To have good maintenance, walk knowing that you are never alone. People, more than objects, need to be repaired, tamed, revived, reclaimed and saved, never reject anyone. Think about it, if you ever need a helping hand, you'll find one at the end of

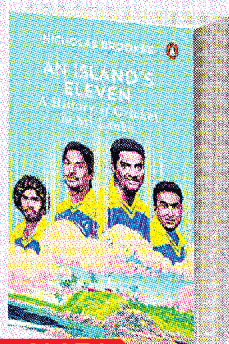
each arm. As you grow older you realise you have two hands, the one for helping yourself, the other for helping others in need. The beauty of a woman is not in the clothes she wears, her face or the way she arranges her hair. The beauty of a woman is seen in her eyes, for it's the door to her heart, the source of her love. The beauty of a woman is not in her make up, but in the true beauty of her soul. The tenderness she gives, the love, the passion she expresses. The beauty of a woman develops with age."



### Non Fiction

## AN ISLAND'S ELEVEN

BY NICHOLAS BROOKS  
From Sathasivam to Sangakkara, Murali to Malinga, Sri Lanka can lay claim to some of the world's most remarkable cricketers - larger-than-life characters who thumbed convention and played the game their own way. More so than anywhere else in the world, Sri Lankan cricket has an identity. This is the land of pint-sized swashbuckling batsmen, on-the-fly innovators and contorted, cryptic spinners.



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The Island from above

BY DOMINIC SANSONI, SEBASTIAN POSINGIS, RICHARD SIMON  
Sri Lanka is surprisingly a hard country to photograph from the air. Look up on a sunny day from almost anywhere on the island and you will notice that, more often than not, the bowl of blue sky is at least partially obscured by clumps of low broken cumulus, typical of weather above tropical islands. A beautiful journey through Sri Lanka.



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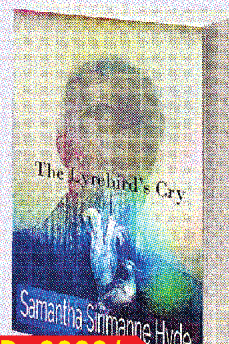
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### Fiction

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BY SAMANTHA SIRIMANNE HYDE  
Jagath, the main protagonist returns home to Sri Lanka from Sydney on holiday, only to have his emotions and passport held hostage by his parents. He can't return to Australia, at least not until he marries the woman they have chosen. But they are not aware of his beloved boyfriend who is in Sydney! Written by Sri Lankan-born Samantha Sirimanne Hyde.



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## GEORGE KEYT

Nursery Rhymes For My Daughter Diana

BY GEORGE KEYT  
George Keyt perhaps Sri Lanka's best-known painter presented his daughter Diana with a collection of nursery rhymes and drawings. Now for the first time, Diana has printed it in book form so that it will be available to the children of the world and to those who knew him and others who admire his paintings. The hardcover book in colour is printed on high-quality 170 gsm art paper.



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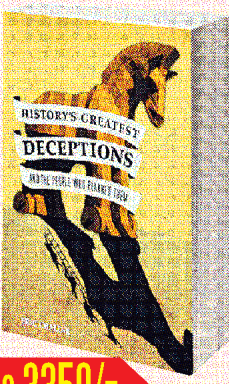
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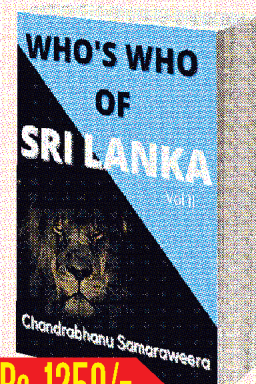
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Ever wondered where you can find facts on eminent Sri Lankan personalities of the recent past? Well, look no further. Veteran journalist Chandrabhanu Samarawera's significantly revised version of this book sees him producing a bumper volume featuring biographical sketches of 400 Sri Lankans from Aviators and Artists to Merchants and Magicians to Surgeons and Statesmen.



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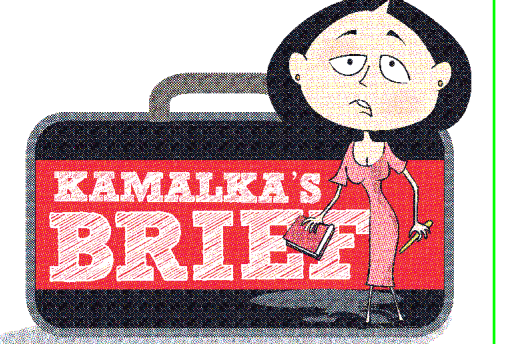
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# HER DEATH LEAVES A VOID IN ME

My week began in deep shock and inconsolable sorrow when I heard that my close, dear friend of over 60 years had passed away. The shock was greater as I had spoken to her the evening before she died, she told me she had a cold and sore throat, I asked her to rest, not to talk. She insisted on sending me dinner from the Galle Face Hotel, but I declined as I didn't want her to worry about me. I first met Mavis one of Sri Lanka's great beauties through her late husband Cyril when he was courting her. I promoted the romance as I felt she was the right one for him, wasn't interested in his wealth as she had her own and loved him for himself. When she accepted his proposal, he drove her straight to my house to tell me, the first outside their families to be told.

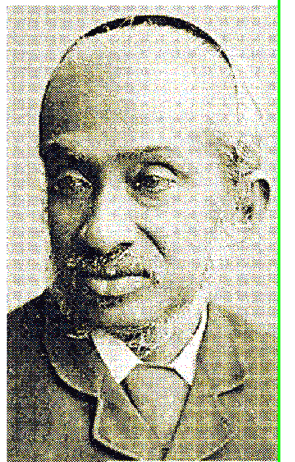


When Sanjeev was born, they sent the car for me to come to hospital and I always tell Sanjeev that I was the first to see him outside the family. We spoke to each other often on the phone, she was most concerned about my health problems always praying for me. I have so many happy memories of time spent with both of them at the GFH, in their home and Mavis asking me to dance with Cyril when she wanted to have a break. Her death leaves a void in my life which will never be filled. I can think of no better words to describe Mavis than the following from Lord Byron's famous poem. 'She walks in beauty like the night of cloudless climes and starry skies. And all that's best of dark and bright meet in her aspect and her eyes'. May she rest in Peace.



# COMMEMORATION CEREMONY

This year the Commemoration ceremony for the late Charles Henry de Soysa's birth anniversary will only be the Garlanding of the statue at De Soysa Circus on the 3rd March. There will be no meeting or fellowship. The money spent for this will be used to buy shoes for poor students at Prince of Wales College who are unable to attend school for lack of shoes. All descendants who would like to contribute towards this please do as our revered ancestor would want us to do it. The amount required for each pair of shoes is Rs 4000/ and should be sent to Prince of Wales College Old Boys Association Sampath Bank 00316000030 Moratuwa Branch.



## An exceptional person

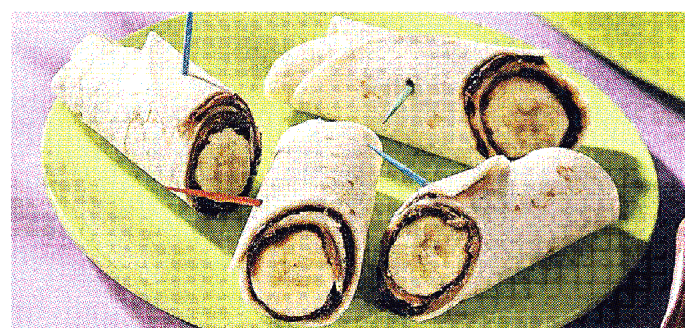
A memorial service for the Late Lilanthi Goonewardene organized by her friends was at the Ladies College Chapel. It was a fitting thanksgiving service for one who gave all her time to reaching out to others. She founded LC Cares for past pupils of LC and the Community Kitchen in Bloemendhal which feeds

mothers and children in need. The most touching tribute to Lilanthi came from her cousin Nelum who was very close to her and read messages from other cousins too and from friends Preethi Adhihetty and Niurupa, a friend from childhood. Lili was an exceptional person in more ways than one and will be missed by family and friends.

# HERE ON VACATION....

My brother Wij and wife Irmi are here on vacation from the icy climes of Zurich where they live. My daughter and I had dinner with them, and we talked about both old times in our childhood, our parents, all they did for us and amusing incidents too, like when my paternal uncle Ted, who was tough unlike my much gentler father, had to use fisticuffs on their stepfather for holding back their own money to prevent my father from going to the UK for medical studies.

# BAKED BANANA ROLLS



### INGREDIENTS

- 6 SLICES Ham
- 1 tsp ground mustard
- 6 firm bananas peeled
- 3/4 pint white cheese sauce

### METHOD

1. Spread each ham slice with mustard and wrap a banana in each.
2. Place in dish pour sauce over and bake for 10 mins.