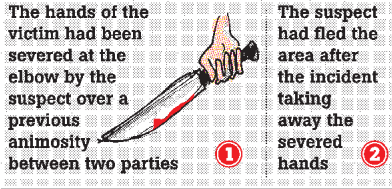




YOUR PAPER TODAY 14 PAGES

Hands chopped off and taken away

A spokesman for the hospital said the hands could have been grafted if the suspect had not taken them away



Source: News reports

BY REKA THARANGANI

The two hands of an individual had been severed at the elbow and taken away during an altercation over a previous animosity between two parties.



Ramadan fasting begins tomorrow

Muslims in Sri Lanka will begin their Ramadan fasting at dawn tomorrow (March 24) as the new Crescent moon of the month of Ramadan has not been sighted in Sri Lanka this evening, the Colombo Grand Mosque announced.

"I aspire to adopt and follow Prime Minister D. S Senanayake's vision" - President

Even before 1943, Sri Lanka was the second most developed nation after Japan as a result of Mr. Senanayake's policies

BY KAMANATHI WICKRAMASINGHE

A commemoration event to mark the 71st death anniversary of the first Prime Minister of Ceylon, D.S Senanayake was held at the Independence Square yesterday.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>



Commemorating the 'Father of the Nation'

A commemoration ceremony in view of the 71st death anniversary of Don Stephen Senanayake, popularly acclaimed as the Father of the Nation was held at the Independence Square yesterday.

PICS BY PRADEEP DILUKSHANA

LEOPARD POPULATION; WNPS RESPONDS...

With reference to yesterday's Daily Mirror article titled 'Rampant increase in wet zone hill country leopard population', the Wildlife & Nature Protection Society (WNPS) has sent the following statement.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

SC lifts travel ban on MR, BR over FR on mismanagement of economy

BY LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

The Supreme Court yesterday announced that the travel ban imposed on former Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and former Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa would not be effective any further in connection with the Fundamental Rights petitions filed over financial irregularities and mismanagement of the Sri Lankan economy.

GOVT. TO REDUCE INFLATION RATE TO A SINGLE DIGIT BY MID-2023: RW

- Opposition refused to extend their support citing various reasons
Focused on amending existing tax mechanism
Discussing with the IMF to include tax reforms in our plans at the review in June
Urge opposition to support agreement
Govt. aims to reduce primary deficit to 2.3% of GDP by 2025 and increase revenue to 14% of GDP by 2026
Standard corporate income tax rate has been raised to 30% and sectoral tax holidays have been eliminated
The PAYE tax rate has been raised from 12% to 15%, and the tax exemption limit reduced from Rs. 300 mn to Rs. 80 mn
Govt. to reduce existing tax exemptions on VAT by 2024, remove the simplified VAT system, and expedite its reimbursement
Estate Duty will be introduced as a property tax by 2025, with a minimum tax exemption allowance
Govt to publicize institutions, individuals enjoying tax concessions, holidays and securing procurement contracts

BY AJITH SIRIWARDANA

Claiming that the government will have to introduce numerous economic reforms in addition to the reforms that have already been implemented, President Ranil Wickremesinghe said yesterday that the government was aiming to reduce the inflation rate to 4-6% and bring it to a single digit by mid-2023.

Making a special statement in Parliament on the IMF report, he said the credit facility amounts to approximately USD 3 billion over 4 years, with the first tranche of USD 333 million will be received.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

We can't continue second round of negotiations, If IMF report not approved by Parliament: RW

If one has any issues regarding the IMF report, they could talk it over with the IMF when they come back to Sri Lanka

BY AJITH SIRIWARDANA

President Ranil Wickremesinghe urged the House to support the IMF agreement claiming that Sri Lanka would not be able to continue the second round of negotiations with regard to the IMF fund facility if the House failed to support it.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

10 IMF conditions

Sri Lanka needs to fulfill next

- 01 Present debt restructuring plan by April end
02 Introduce an anti-corruption law in line with UN conventions
03 Take swift measures to increase government revenue
04 Introduce a wealth tax on high income earners
05 Introduce a property tax and a gift and inheritance tax before 2025
06 Bring down inflation to 12-18% by end 2023
07 Phasing out of import restrictions currently in place by June
08 Commit to more flexible exchange rate
09 Make Central Bank more independent
10 Introduce strong social safety net

Dinesh Schaffter's autopsy inquiry further postponed

The case was postponed for April 4 due to the unavailability of the permanent Magistrate Rajindra Jayasuriya

BY T. FAROOK THAJUDEEN

The Magisterial inquiry into the death of businessman Dinesh Schaffter was once again postponed for April 4 by the Colombo Chief Magistrate Court yesterday.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

IMF Fund Facility:

SL received first tranche of USD 330 Mn yesterday: Siyambalapitiya

IMF funds can be transferred to treasury in rupees or Dollars at anytime

BY AJITH SIRIWARDANA

Sri Lanka received the first tranche of USD 330 million of the IMF Extended Fund Facility yesterday, State Minister of Finance Ranjith Siyambalapitiya said yesterday.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Advertisement for Friends Adult Diapers featuring an image of two elderly men and product packaging.

8-hour Water Board protest today: Union

There will be no breakdown repairs, and that will cause disruption of the water supply in certain areas

BY CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA

The Water Supply Professionals Trade Union Alliance (WSPTUA) has decided to continue with their trade union action today because they have not received solutions to their demands.

The union convener, Upali Rathnayake, said that they had engaged in a token strike on March 13 but did not receive an acceptable response from the responsible authorities.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Advertisement for Vogue Jewellers featuring a man in a suit and a woman, with text 'Stamp Your Status! Vogue Gent's Collection'.

Advertisement for HNB Cards featuring a group of people shopping and the HNB logo.

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Daily Mirror

www.dailymirror.lk

CONT'D.
FROM PAGE 1

Hands chopped off and taken away

The victim was a resident of Korawella in Moratuwa and an electrician by profession. Residents of the area who rushed to the scene admitted the injured to the Panadura base hospital. A spokesman for the hospital said the hands could have been grafted if the suspect had not taken them away. Police said the suspect had

fled from the area after the incident taking away the two hands.

OIC Moratuwa police CI Nihal Francis and OIC Crime Investigation Branch SI Nandana are conducting further investigations on SSP Mount Lavinia division Mangala Dehideniya to arrest the suspect.

SL RECEIVED FIRST TRANCHE OF USD 330 MN YESTERDAY: SIYAMBALAPITIYA

- After discussions with the IMF, we were able to convince the IMF that we need to provide relief to poor and vulnerable groups initially.
- Sri Lanka must make it a point to follow the IMF agreement to achieve the desired targets

He told Parliament that the IMF has granted permission to transfer the IMF funds to the Treasury to be used for the requirement of the country whereas on 16 previous occasions, IMF Funds could only be deposited in the Central Bank's Dollar account.

"The IMF has allowed the funds to be transferred to the account of the Deputy Secretary to the Treasury in rupees or Dollars soon after receiving the funds. On 16 occasions in the past, the IMF did not allow us to do so. We were only allowed to deposit the funds in the Central Bank's

Dollar account. After discussions with the IMF, we were able to convince the IMF that we need to provide relief to poor and vulnerable groups initially. Due to the government's successful intervention, we managed to obtain the approval to use the IMF funds for the requirements of the country," he said.

The Minister said Sri Lanka had discontinued the IMF agreement on many occasions in the past and added that Sri Lanka must make it a point to follow the IMF agreement to achieve the desired targets.

GOVT. TO REDUCE INFLATION RATE TO A SINGLE DIGIT BY MID-2023: RW

"Additionally, the country is expecting about USD 7 billion dollars more in rapid credit support from other parties, he said and added that "Some people consider the IMF EFF as just another loan, while others claim that the total debt of the country cannot be paid off with the amount received. He noted that these statements show either ignorance or a willingness to betray the country for political gain."

"We are now starting a new journey. We have to introduce many economic reforms throughout the process. The foundation for our success will be through this path. Some of these reforms have already been proposed and implemented through the interim budget of 2022 and the budget for 2023. We will introduce numerous other reforms," President Ranil Wickremesinghe told Parliament during his special statement.

"The government aims to reduce the primary deficit to 2.3% of GDP by 2025 and increase revenue to 14% of GDP by 2026. The standard corporate income tax rate has been raised to 30%, and sectoral tax holidays have been eliminated. The PAYE tax rate has been raised from 12% to 15%, and the tax exemption limit has been reduced from Rs. 300 million to Rs. 80

million," he said. He said the government would introduce Estate Duty as a property tax by 2025, with a minimum tax exemption allowance.

The President told Parliament that the government was planning to reduce existing tax exemptions on VAT by 2024, remove the simplified VAT system, and expedite its reimbursement.

The President stated that he had previously requested the support of the opposition in rebuilding the economy, but did not receive it. "I made similar requests during the opening of Parliament and Budget debates, but to no avail. Despite my efforts, the opposition refused to extend their support citing various reasons," he said.

He said the Government and the IMF will review the programme every six months. "The first review will take place in June. We have already focused our attention on amending the existing tax mechanism. The Treasury is already in the process of preparing amended proposals. Further, intellectuals and economic experts have already submitted their views in this regard, which we hope to discuss, and reach an agreement.

We are discussing with the IMF to include these tax reforms in our plans at the review in June. In addition, we

are discussing the other policy reforms which we think are necessary at present.

Some people try to portray that these issues can be solved through beliefs and confrontations. However, these problems have to be solved through caution, care and wisdom.

He said Sri Lanka cannot simply be satisfied with only the IMF agreement. This is not the end. This is just the beginning of yet another long journey. We have to traverse that path with vigour.

Discussing with our creditors and restructuring the loans as well as recommencing the process of repayment, is a massive challenge. Increasing the income of the country too should happen simultaneously.

The local production should be increased. More avenues of foreign income should be explored. We should not only expand our share in the world market but also in our region. A colossal economic reform process should be implemented fearlessly and continuously.

The IMF-approved plan should be implemented and completed in four years. However, depending on our strength and determination, we should be able to finish it in three to three and a half years. Let's give it a try. Let us put in the effort," he added.

"I ASPIRE TO ADOPT AND FOLLOW PRIME MINISTER D. S SENANAYAKE'S VISION": PRESIDENT

The event was graced by the presence of President Ranil Wickremesinghe. Speaking at the event, President Wickremesinghe said that the late Prime Minister's vision should be taken as an example.

"I spoke about the IMF agreement in Parliament today with much regret. We have become a bankrupt nation, 75 years after Prime Minister D.S Senanayake worked to bring independence to this country. However, I'm happy that we now have a chance to restructure debts and restore the country back to normalcy. But I wonder how we got into this situation. Even before 1943, Sri Lanka was the second most developed nation after Japan as a result of Mr. Senanayake's policies. We provided loans to England. But what happened to us? Countries such as war-torn South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Bangladesh have transformed into developed nations. China and India are developing nations. But why did we fall back?" he questioned.

President Wickremesinghe stressed on two elements Prime Minister D.S. Senanayake introduced to develop this country, one being the Sri Lankan identity. He said all religions obliged to the King at the time. When Sri Lanka achieved independence, even though the King was still the symbolic leader at the time, Prime Minister Senanayake requested all people to protect their Sri Lankan identity. He said that the rights of the majority

Sinhalese and that of minority groups should be safeguarded and to allow them to exercise their freedom. But we developed a nationalist agenda in 1956 and this was followed by an ethnic conflict. Therefore, if we are to move forward as a nation, we need to do so while keeping the Sri Lankan identity in mind."

"This country failed due to extremist and religious ideologies," he continued. "Singapore didn't allow that to happen. Secondly, Mr. Senanayake brought a proposal to establish a free market economy; to privatize manufacturing and business activities. But instead, the government imposed taxes to develop the country. This allowed us to have a free education and health system and there was a lot of money. But today, this money isn't sufficient to improve the education or health sectors. These institutions were then transformed into public and state-owned enterprises. But now we need to take one step ahead."

President Wickremesinghe further said that the government should now provide an economic support programme to provide services to the people. "Even at the time, Mr. Senanayake requested to handover these activities to the private sector. A majority of the private sector comprised Sinhalese people. However, the socialist campaign to protect the Sinhalese in fact destroyed the Sinhalese. The lands and businesses were owned by Sinhalese, they had insurance and other facilities as well.

WE CAN'T CONTINUE SECOND ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS, IF IMF REPORT NOT APPROVED BY PARLIAMENT: RW

The President told Parliament that the House was required to approve the IMF report by the third-week of April.

He said if one has any issue regarding the IMF report, they could talk it over with the IMF when they come back to Sri Lanka. "I can talk with bi-lateral, multi-lateral and private bondholders if the Parliament prepares to accept the IMF report. I urge this House to support this

report. If you have any issue, you can talk it over with the IMF when they come back. I can't force everyone to support the report. They may find reasons not to support it. The world has to know where we are and we will ask for a vote by name, you can vote whichever you want. We will not force anyone. If I don't get it, I can't go and continue the second round of negotiations," he said.



Police SOCO wins best stall at INCO 2023

The exhibition booth organised by the Police Scene of Crime Officers (SOCO) has won the best stall at the INCO 2023 Industrial Exhibition and Trade Fair held at the BMICH during January 13, 14 and 15. The winning award was presented at a special awards ceremony held at the Golden Rose last Saturday.

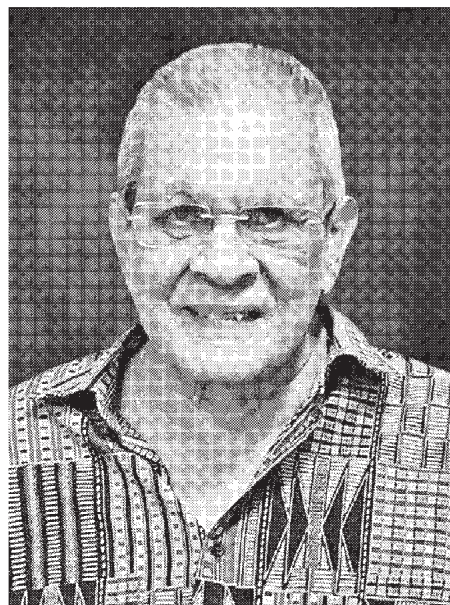
Birthday Remembrance 23rd March

Upali Malalgoda



A smile for all, a heart of gold
One of the best this world could hold
Never selfish, always kind a beautiful memory
left behind
Eternal rest grant unto him
O Lord
Affectionately remembered by your
Loving wife - Swarna

OBITUARY



5th February 1936 21st March 2023

Dr. Kethar-Has attained the Lotus Feet of Baghavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba peacefully on 21st March 2023. Dr. R. K. Has was born on 5th February 1936 in Batticaloa and studied at Royal College and Colombo Medical College.

He was a General Practitioner in the United Kingdom before his retirement in the year 2000.

Dr. R.K. Has was the dearly beloved husband of Dr. (Mrs.) Sivananthavalli Kethar-Has (Siva), retired Anaesthetist in the United Kingdom.

Dr. R. K. Has was the beloved son of late Proctor N. S. Rasiah and late Mrs. Rasiah of Batticaloa and beloved brother of late Thirumanjanam (Mrs. Thevanayagam) (Batticaloa), late Proctor Anandarajah (Batticaloa) and late Professor Ramakrishna (University of Colombo).

Viewing will take place 10 am onwards on Thursday 23rd March 2023 at Jayaratne VIP New Parlour A Ground Floor, Borella.

The funeral rites will commence at 2.45 pm on Thursday, 23rd March 2023 and cortege will leave Jayaratne Parlour at 4 pm for cremation at 4.30 pm at Hindu Section (pyre) at the Borella General Cemetery.

He will remain in our hearts forever.

Leopard population; WNPS responds...

The Daily Mirror newspaper of March 22, 2023, in an article on wet zone leopards, started with the following claim based on a statement made by an environmental organization representing the Knuckles. "The population of wet zone hill country leopards (Panthera pardus kotiya) has been increasing in large proportions..."

The Wildlife & Nature Protection Society (WNPS) strongly challenges this claim for the following reasons:

1. No comprehensive, science-based census has been carried out recently to determine the populations of leopards either in the wet zone or dry zone. 2. A single subspecies of Leopard inhabit both the wet and dry zone forested areas. Leopards inhabiting the hill country are found in the central hills, and adjoining mountain ranges, coming down to the submontane and foothill forest areas. There is no scientific evidence to support the given number of 800 leopards in these areas.

3. Whilst there is no evidence to support the increasing trend in population, it is evident that Leopards are becoming more visible in these areas, and appearing in human habitation, due to the rapid clearing of their natural habitat, human encroachment into forests, possible reduction of the prey animals mainly resulting from unplanned and unauthorized development and agriculture.

4. There are an even larger number of leopard deaths than those that are officially reported as discovered by recent studies.

In an attempt to address the limited data availability for conservation decision-making, the WNPS together with LOLC commenced a 5 year multiregional Leopard Research and Conservation Project covering selected human-dominated areas across the country. It will take this time, at least, to fully gain the understanding necessary to tackle identified information requirements effectively. WNPS collaborates with other researchers in the country to achieve a common objective of the conservation of this valuable keystone predator.

8-hour Water Board protest today: Union

- The protest will be carried out at all district water supply board offices in Anuradhapura, Kandy, Matara, Badulla, Ratnapura, Monaragala, and Vavuniya

Therefore, the WSPTUA has decided to engage in their eight-hour trade union action, refraining from all duties at offices and workstations from 9 a.m. today.

During the strike, employees will withdraw from all consumer services and cashier activities.

Considering the inconvenience caused to the people, all pump houses are operating. There will be no breakdown repairs, and that will cause disruption of the water supply in certain areas.

While issuing a notice, the WSPTUA requested all the Western Province employees to gather in front of the Water Supply Ministry, Pelawatta, at noon today.

The protest will be carried out at all district water supply board offices in Anuradhapura, Kandy, Matara, Badulla, Ratnapura, Monaragala, and Vavuniya.

CLASSIFIEDS

I hereby inform the Republic of Sri Lanka and the Public that I, Melanie Jasinthia Wijesinghe, residing at the address of 57, Kawdana Road, Dehiwala, 539/42 Karagampitiya Gramaseva Division, Dehiwala Divisional Secretariat Division, Colombo District, will henceforth use the name Zeena Mohamed Mazahir.
DMR 089670

WESTERN PROVINCE TAKES THE LEAD TO ADDRESS FOOD WASTAGE

'Mihilak' Fisheries Products Factory at Walpita launched

By **Katani Kumarasinghe and Vinuki Medagama**

The Fisheries Processed Products Factory at the Walpita Agriculture Training Centre was inaugurated on March 14, 2023. Initiated by the Governor of the Western Province, Air Force Marshal Roshan Goonetilleke, the project aims to benefit consumers, the fishing community and the government. The programme involves employing and training members of the community in the area, generating income for local fishermen, reducing food wastage and providing affordable processed fisheries products. The facility is currently focused on producing canned fish and plans to expand its product range in the future. Almost one and half years in the making, the programme was initially set to launch six months ago, however, increased costs and delays in the importing of equipment due to COVID and import restrictions delayed the project's launch date. The canned fish product will soon be made available to the public under the "Mihilak" brand name.

"This idea came to me some time back, when there was a situation where the gazetted price for a tin of fish was at Rs. 100. The consumer however didn't get their goods for this price. As we have not been producing our own goods, we simply cannot exercise any influence on pricing or quality. The price was fluctuating," Goonetilleke explained the inspiration behind the project.

As a solution to the pressing needs brought about by import restrictions and economic difficulties, the Western Province Governor was of the view that this project could be initiated as a model for others to follow.

"I felt that we could do a project that was not only beneficial to the consumer but also the government. My hope was that this project could also become a training facility for any entrepreneur who wishes to start a similar production on their own," he said.

"The idea here is to give a very good quality product to the consumer. As you may have seen there's a lot of good quality fresh fish that goes into the tin. We haven't decided on the price yet, but we will make sure it will be much lower than what is currently available in the market," he added.

The project will also be serving as a training centre for entrepreneurs who wish to start similar businesses. The facility employs several villagers who have sought new opportunities in the trade.



Western Province Governor Marshal of the Air Force Roshan Goonetilleke inspecting the facility. PIX BY PRADEEP PATHIRANA

It also addresses the issue of food wastage as the fishermen who have previously had to discard portions of their daily catch, can now profit from this project as well. "This brings a bit of profit to the government as well. We are not a burden to the government. We are earning some money through this project. So it's a project which has multiple benefits," Goonetilleke said.

Asked if other provinces have followed suit, Goonetilleke said he wishes to share their success once they've perfected their model. "The best thing is to first show by example. When the others see that this is functioning well, I hope that they will model after our system.

We first wanted to perfect our project, and I believe there's a little bit more to go," he said. The Total Project Cost for the initiative was Rs. 195 million (including Rs. 105 million in assets). The Annual Forecasted revenue for the project at full production is Rs. 435 million. The expected annual production capacity is 750,000 canned fish products. The facility currently employs 22 staff members who earn a salary as they are not considered government workers. Developed as a model to promote self-sufficiency and reduced reliance on imported foods, this initiative can be implemented anywhere in the country, the Governor said.



NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC



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இலங்கை மத்திய வங்கி
CENTRAL BANK OF SRI LANKA

CANCELLATION OF LICENCE ISSUED TO LOLC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE PLC UNDER THE FINANCE BUSINESS ACT, NO. 42 OF 2011, DUE TO THE AMALGAMATION WITH LOLC FINANCE PLC

The public is hereby informed that, subsequent to the amalgamation of LOLC Development Finance PLC with LOLC Finance PLC as part of the Masterplan for Consolidation of Non-Bank Financial Institutions Sector, the Monetary Board of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka has cancelled the Licence issued to LOLC Development Finance PLC to carry on finance business under the Finance Business Act, No. 42 of 2011, with effect from 31.01.2023.

Further, registration of LOLC Development Finance PLC issued under the Finance Leasing Act, No. 56 of 2000, has been cancelled by the Director, Department of Supervision of Non-Bank Financial Institutions, with effect from 31.01.2023.

Director - Department of Supervision of Non Bank Financial Institutions
Level 8, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, No. 30, Janadhipathi Mawatha, Colombo 01

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CESSATION OF BUSINESS - JB CREDIT PVT LTD (MARGIN PROVIDER)

JB Credit Pvt Ltd has decided to cease its operations as a margin provider effective 31.03.2023.

All clients of JB Credit have been contacted, providing them with alternate funding options. If you have not received this communication or wish to have further clarifications, claim or complaint please contact us on 0112400900 and speak to your investment advisor before 30th March 2023.

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No. 35, Maitland Place, Colombo 7

EDITORIAL

"A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus."
- MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR

OUR THOUGHT

MOTHER DEAREST, MOTHER FAIREST

The Popular St. Francis of Assisi, whose movie "Brother Sun, Sister Moon" turned into one of the best and most loved film ever made, says, "Praised be You, my Lord, through our sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, producing varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs." American Gaudiya Vaishnava guru, community-builder, activist, and author Radhanath Swami says "We should honour Mother Earth with gratitude; otherwise, our spirituality may become hypocritical." Tibetan Buddhist leader, the Dalai Lama says, peace and the survival of life on earth as we know it are threatened by human activities, which lack a commitment to humanitarian values. Destruction of nature and nature's resources result from ignorance, greed and lack of respect for the earth's living things.

The United Nations goes beyond these sentiments when next month it celebrates International 'Mother Earth Day' on the theme "When Mother Earth sends us a message." In a statement the UN says Mother Earth is clearly urging a call to action. Nature is suffering. Oceans filling with plastic and turning more acidic. Extreme heat, wildfires and floods, have affected millions of people. Even these days, we are still facing COVID-19, a worldwide health pandemic linked to the health of our ecosystem.

According to the UN, Climate change, human-made changes to nature and crimes that disrupt biodiversity, such as deforestation, land-use change, intensified agriculture and livestock production or the growing illegal wildlife trade, can accelerate the speed of destruction of the planet.

This is the first Mother Earth Day celebrated within the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Ecosystems support all life on Earth. The healthier our ecosystems are, the healthier the planet - and its people. Restoring our damaged ecosystems will help to end poverty, combat climate change and prevent mass extinction. But we will only succeed if everyone plays a part.

For this International Mother Earth Day, let us remind ourselves - more than ever - that we need a shift to a more sustainable economy that works for both, the people and the planet. Let us promote harmony with nature and the Earth.

The report "Making Peace with Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies" translates the current state of scientific knowledge into crisp, clear and digestible facts-based messages that the world can relate to and follow up on. Get to know the current status of the world's urgent issues and opportunities to solve them.

The UN warns that the planet is losing 4.7 million hectares of forests every year - an area larger than Denmark. A healthy ecosystem helps to protect us from these diseases. Biological diversity makes it difficult for pathogens to spread rapidly.

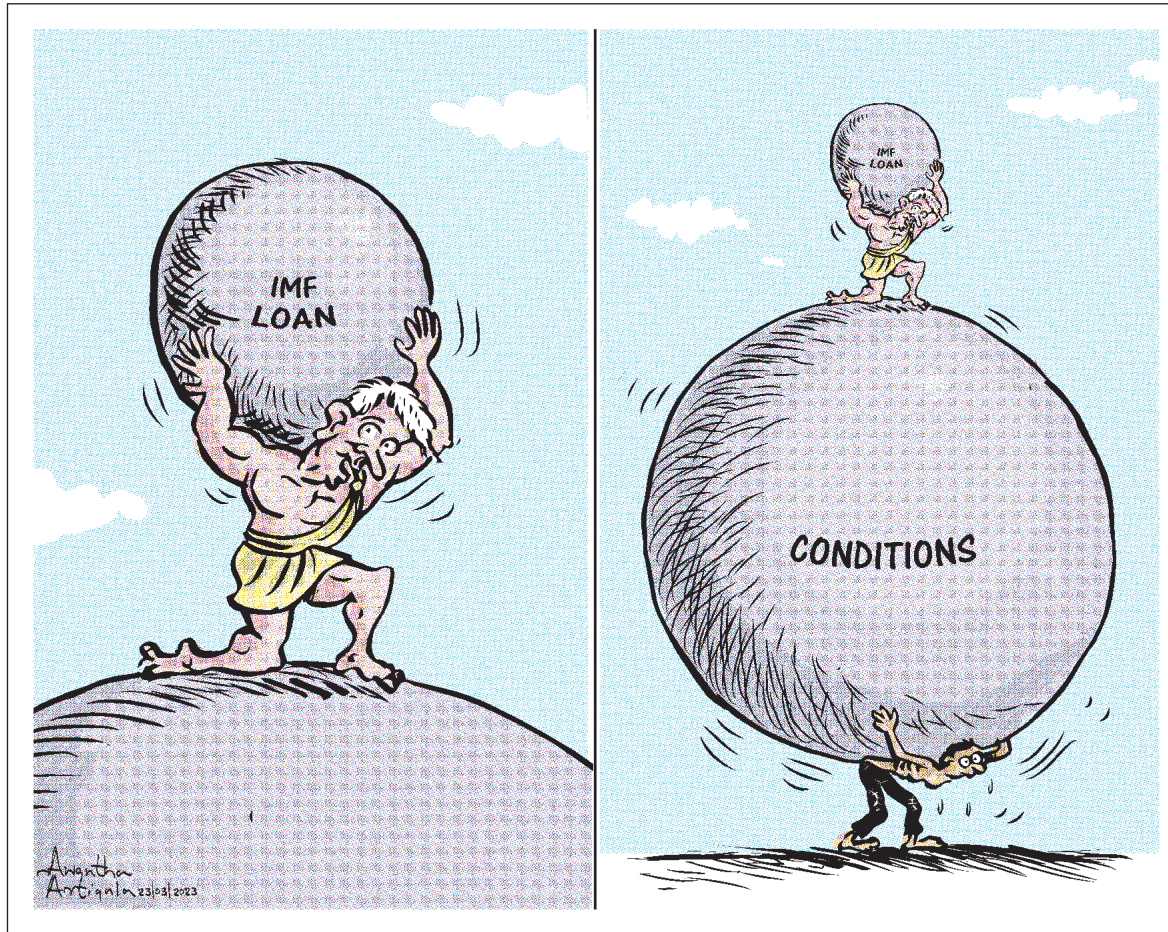
It is estimated that about one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction.

If examples are needed what of what mothers could do, here is one. Climate activist Archana Soreng belongs to the Kharia tribe in Odisha, India. Indigenous communities like hers make up only 5% of the world's population. But they protect more than 20% of our planet's land and 80% of its biodiversity.

She says, "Over the years, generations of us indigenous communities have been told that we are under-developed, we are savage, we are backward because of our own traditions, because of identities, because of our cultures. It is only now that over the years, we see that the rights of indigenous people, the perspective of indigenous people are being respected which is also incorporated in the reports of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)," she adds, referring to the science-backed report of the IPCC that for the first time in 2019 recognized the vital role indigenous communities play in preserving ecosystems and forests.

We all have a role in climate action. We must work together to meet the commitments of the 2015 Paris Agreement. But... what is exactly climate change and what does the Paris Agreement say? What actions are being taken and who is carrying them out? What are the latest scientific reports on the subject? Are we in time to save Mother Earth?

Last year, Sri Lanka declared itself bankrupt due to the debt crisis and the rising rate of the dollar in relation to the rupee - a crisis which brought about one of the biggest increases in the cost of living with millions of people struggling to find food, shelter, clothing, healthcare and educational needs. But on Monday night we saw the beginning of what would hopefully be a transformation when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the extended fund facility of US\$2.9 billion. The first tranche of nearly US\$390 million came on Tuesday. We hope President Ranil Wickremesinghe and the Government would give priority to climate change issue.



FOR MORE CARTOONS LOG ON www.dailymirror.lk/cartoon



By **Malinda Seneviratne**

ON PLUGGING THE OIL LEAKS IN CPC

We are talking here about the energy sector. We are talking about petroleum. About crude oil. Refined petroleum fuels and products. Refineries. Supply side issues. Demand side issues. Margins. Contracts. Hidden costs that are eventually reflected in the Consumer Price Index. Domestic fuel-need security or rather insecurity. Dollar costs. Tender procedures. Foot dragging. Tripartite agreements sat upon. We are talking of the Ministry of Power and Energy. The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) a state bank, relevant officials, Tier-One traders who produce oil, have their own wells and extracting and refining equipment and run their own trading operations. Tier-Two traders are, well, just traders.

First, let's consider how the CPC does and does not do business. The CPC has always shown a preference to purchase from relatively small-time, second-tier players who in reality procure from the top-tier and markup in an ungodly manner. Whether or not there are hidden costs, pocket-lining etc. included in the markup, the high-ups in the Ministry of Power and Energy and the CPC would know. Suffice to say, this is typical. Of course, such deals would include politicians, officials and of course such second-tier suppliers. In cahoots. Who picks up the bill though? The consumer!

The mismanagement and corruption (yes!) is perhaps best evidenced by the options that the CPC does not consider, despite cogent proposals with terms far more favourable not just to the CPC but the country economy, the industries and the general public as a whole.

Let's consider an alternative scenario. Suppose there is a top Middle-Eastern oil producing company that is owned by that particular government, with trading offices in the UK, Singapore and Dubai. Suppose this company proposes to supply the entire crude oil requirement of the Sapugaskanda Refinery with a, say, six month credit period, and pledges to off-take all refined products leftover after providing for domestic demand. It would not only sort out the country's energy issues and provide domestic fuel-need security but also turn Sri Lanka into a regional petroleum, oils and fuel export hub. At zero-dollar cost to the nation.

Consider capacities. As of now the full rated capacity of the Refinery is 55,000 barrels per day. Historically, the facility processes just 22-25,000 barrels per day due to technical, maintenance, procurement, and other "management" issues. The reason is well known. The output of heavy refined products like the various grades of furnace oils and marine fuels even from high grade light crude oil is around 50-60% and Sri Lanka just doesn't have sufficient domestic capacity to absorb anything more above a 22-25,000 barrels per day refining operation. Now, considering that a top tier player who is a producer, refiner and trader can off-take anything and everything produced, the Refinery can operate close to capacity without having to worry about shipping out the excess products once domestic demand is satisfied. Sri Lanka would get at least the processing margin and, if the banking system is stable, it is not inconceivable that the entire transaction be channeled through it. It would obviously make



Now what if another refinery is added using the free space at Sapugaskanda, as has been proposed? It would mean 110,000 barrels of additional capacity

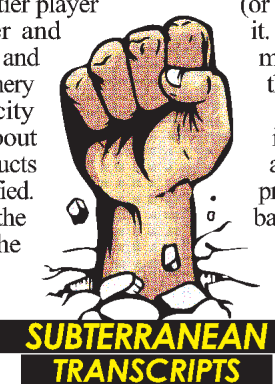
the banking system dollar-rich and infuse much needed dollars into the float.

Such an arrangement would earn Sri Lanka between 10-20% of its GDP in dollars and remove the cost of crude oil procurement altogether. Now suppose this top-tier player has a market capitalization approximate to two trillion US dollars which is greater than the sum of the next three players, and doesn't demand upfront payment? Does it even make sense to play with relatively two-bit traders? If it does, does it not mean that either there's corruption or absolute incompetence?

Just for context, consider that countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia prefer such arrangements, i.e., agreements with the top player who is reliable, reputed and don't have to impose markups simply because oil need not be purchased. As is, even India, which has its own oil reserves, does good business with this company which operates as co-owner of refining facilities.

Let's talk numbers. Let's for simplicity assume a barrel of crude oil costs US\$100. Considering yield margins of 30-35% on refined products, a barrel of crude refined will produce US\$130-135 of refined products. That would amount to at minimum a processing margin yield of US\$7-10 per barrel of refined products. If the banking system is stable, the balance US\$20-25 (or 23-27) can be routed through it. That's US\$153 million at the margin and US\$655 million at the yield margin.

Now what if another refinery is added using the free space at Sapugaskanda, as has been proposed? It would mean 110,000 barrels of additional capacity. Per day. What if someone proposes that this asset, worth around US\$1.2 billion will be built by a top-tier player but will be fully owned by Sri Lanka?



DM Poll

Which political party leader has the vision and the capability to put Sri Lanka on a recovery path and lead to sustainable development?

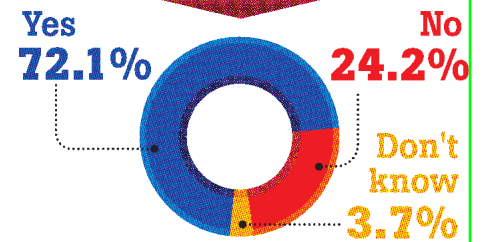
- Ranil Wickremesinghe
- Sajith Premadasa
- Anura Kumara Dissanayake
- None of them



Scan to Vote

LAST POLL

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



See web poll at www.DailyMirror.lk

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM

This is in response to your columnist DBS Jeyaraj's letter captioned 'How Lanka's National Anthem was amended due to superstitions'. Recently there had been arguments for and against, for holding the Independence Day celebration. Some say that due to the financial crisis we face, this is waste of funds, while others say, as we do not enjoy real freedom, it should not be held. On the top of these objections, our President Ranil Wickremesinghe has said 'We must show the world Sri Lanka is capable of celebrating Independence'.

Whatever it be, on this day our thoughts should go back to those who fought to gain independence - DS Senanayaka, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, TB Jaya and others.

Then I come to our National Anthem 'Namo Namo Mattha' which should be considered as a part of Independence Day celebration. I remember a very interesting e-mail received with a video clip disclosing why the composer of our National Anthem, Ananda Samarakoon, committed suicide as also commented in detail by DBS Jeyaraj. It says, when the song was accepted as the National Anthem, some advisors to then Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike had warned her of ill-effects to the government, as there are poetic flaws. These advisors had spoke to Samarakoon and had requested him to change. This made Samarakoon furious and had told them that he had studied music in India under famous teachers and that there are no flaws.

This was conveyed to Sirimavo who had contacted Ananda Samarakoon and had requested him to alter or amend the song as her advisors had told her of the ill-effects to the government. Ananda Samarakoon had refused and had told her that her advisors are not competent to advise her on this subject. Whatever it be, Sirimavo had agreed with her advisors and an altered version was accepted and sung over Radio Ceylon. The advisors had contacted Samarakoon and requested him to hear the song over Radio Ceylon that evening. Hearing it, the writer was heart-broken and sad. That night after dinner he had retired to bed and taken an overdose of sleeping tablets and committed suicide. In the morning when there was no answer, the children had forced open the door to see Samarakoon dead with yet a handful of sleeping tablets.

G.A.D. SIRIMAL

IMF Fund Facility; A step towards building better future for youth: RW

WEB COMMENTS

ROB - We need genuine majority to represent the country's future at present its difficult task due to past practices used for own benefits... one spoils apple spoils the whole cart

LANK - RW-CKB must join if they want clean politics in SL. Time now is not to do politics but be loyal to the country

GAMARALA - Put more of them in prison and help only the children of your criminal friends.

JOSHUA - Loans means repayment; how come future generations benefit?

THE HYPOCRITE - Mr. President you destroy the future of youth with your actions and talk about building a future with your words. These are just weasel words from a weak president.

See more web comments at www.DailyMirror.lk

'YOUR THOUGHT' is a space, a right of the readers to support or contradict and discuss the issues highlighted in the editorial and other articles in the editorial and op-ed pages. Designed as the reader's editorial; our readers can send in their writings, with a word count not exceeding 200, to 'Your Thought', Daily Mirror Political Features Desk, No 8, Hunupitiya Cross Road, Colombo 2 or email to dmreadersthought@gmail.com.

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A novel presentation for the traditional passion play which features the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, 'Alokayano' (Light of the World') is performed at 7 pm on Sunday, March 26 at the St. Thomas' College Kotte playground as an open-air performance.

Presented by Parishioners from and around Kotte, 'Alokayano' is scripted and directed by award-winning tele director Sunil Costa and it features renowned names in cinema and the stage. Popular actor Jehan Appuhamy plays the role of Jesus Christ while veteran cinema actress Veena Jayakody plays Mary Magdalene.

The Passion play features over 100 member cast representing Catholics and Buddhists from Kotte and neighbouring parishes like Rajagiriya, Nugegoda and Malabe.

Started by the former Parish Priest of St Thomas's Church, Kotte, Rev. Dr. Anthony Fernandopulle, the first 'Alokayano' passion play was performed in 2015. Following the success eight years later 'Alokayano' is to be performed with the guidance of the present parish priest Rev. Fr. Indrajith Perera.

With over 300 years of history, the tradition of performing passion plays in Sri Lanka was popular in the western coastal belt, especially in areas like Doowa, Pitipana, Boralessa and Chilaw.

Started with the world-renowned Oberammergau Passion Play in Germany, the culture of enacting passion plays was introduced to Sri Lanka by Fr. Jacome Gonzalvez. Originally the play was enacted with statues and this tradition received a new facelift with Kalasoori Fr Marcelline Jayakody who as the Parish Priest, Church of Our Lady of Good Voyage, Doowa introduced humans and performed in 1948.

Passion play 'Alokayano'- 'Light of the World' presented by Kotte St. Thomas' Church

A FRESH FACE TO PASSION PLAY CULTURE

The Passion play features over 100 member cast representing Catholics and Buddhists from Kotte and neighbouring parishes like Rajagiriya, Nugegoda and Malabe

The passion play is produced to strengthen faith and devotion and to experience Jesus' suffering, death and glorious resurrection

The burning issues, especially the struggle for power has not changed from the time in which Jesus lived and the present day in the world

'Alokayano' the passion play scripted and directed by veteran tele drama director Sunil Costa and presented by St Thomas' Church Kotte under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Indrajith Perera and is produced capturing the social, political and economic crisis



Jehan Appuhamy acting as Jesus



Director Sunil Costa

Sunil Costa who started his artistic career directing the passion play 'Yaagaya' at Kandawala in Negombo years ago says that the burning issues, especially the struggle for power has not changed from the time in which Jesus lived and the present day in the world. More than 2000 years later, the world needs an exactly similar mass struggle or a revolution to end this power struggle.

"In this world, leaders are trying to win this struggle by defeating others through wars and destructions," the director said.

He said that passion play is a cultural heritage that needed to be preserved and in this regard, Rev. Indrajith Perera and the devotees of Kotte and neighbouring parishes have taken a commendable endeavour.

"Another important feature of the passion play performed in Kotte is the entire cast and crew are comprised of Buddhists and Christians and also different ethnic groups like Sinhalese and Tamils. This cultural, religious and ethnic combination is a blessing to this project," he said.

Behind the screen, 'Alokayano' is joined by well-known artists from Sri Lankan theatre, mini-screen and cinema. Experienced actor Malith Peiris is the Production Manager of the passion play while Ajantha Alahakone is the art director.

Veteran choreographer Manubandu Vidyapathy handles the choreography of 'Alokayano' while Ajith Kumarasiri, Namini Panchali and Gayan Ganakadhara handle music, award-winning makeup artiste Wasantha Vittachchi joins the project while Jayantha Amarasinghe handles stage management.

'Alokayano' (Light of the World) is performed at 7 pm on Sunday, March 26 at the St. Thomas' College Kotte playground as an open-air performance

Validity of Ramadan

PREVENTING MANKIND FROM COMMITTING SINS

Muslims across the world are earnestly waiting for holy Ramadan which falls on March 22, in the current year. The prime duty of a Muslim in the month of Ramadan is to fast from dawn to dusk for thirty days. The month of Ramadan possesses numerous benefits for mankind and the almighty Allah and His Messenger Prophet Muhammad (sal) have insisted mankind to fast during the month of Ramadan except for travellers and the sick due to the rewards and respect offered by Allah and his messenger. (Allah says about the fasting person), "He has left his food, drink and desires for my sake. The fast is for Me. So I will reward (the fasting person) for it and the reward of good deeds is multiplied ten times". Allah has given his assurance to the person who fasts during Ramadan and He is so happy and proud of the fasting person and He says himself that He would reward for the fasting.

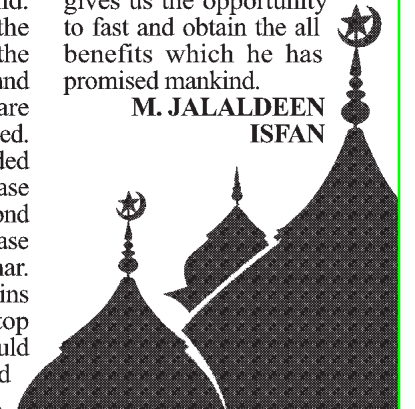
A Muslim who fasts during the month of Ramadan sacrifices his food, drink and desires for the sake of Allah and these meritorious acts will definitely reflect on the Dooms Day and he would reap the benefits of fasting on Judgement Day where Allah will be the Judge for all mankind. Prophet (Sal) said, "When the month of Ramadan comes, the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of the (Hell) Fire are closed, and the devils are chained. The thirty-day fasting is divided into three phases; the first phase is for Allah's Rahmath, the second is for Magfirath and the last phase of Ramadan Ithikum minnannar. The Muslims who commit sins for eleven months should stop committing sins and they should turn to Allah's forgiveness and involve in fasting, prayers,

reciting Quran and make charities and sadaqs during the entire month of Ramadan.

The Almighty Allah promised to give the fasting mankind a special reward for every good deed a Muslim does during this month. Unlike other months a sunnath is counted as Firl and a Firl is counted as seventy Firl in the month of Ramadan.

We should engage in good deeds, prayers, recitation and the special Sunnath prayer Tharaveeh under a proper timetable. Every Muslim who has determined to fast should also commit to recite the 30 Jews of Holy Quran during the month of Ramadan. We also should not miss the opportunity to make arrangements to breakfast for a fasting person and grab benefits from Allah. We also should make sure that we perform five-time prayers with congregational prayer every day. We should also focus on the poor and needy who are struggling to fast without meals and sustenance due to the current economic crisis in the country. We should all remember that this a holy and respectful month and we should also respect and honour this month through meritorious acts and deeds. Finally, Almighty Allah gives us the opportunity to fast and obtain the all benefits which he has promised mankind.

M. JALALDEEN ISFAN



STUDENTS ISLAND-WIDE, SET TO RECEIVE SCHOOL BOOKS FROM CERTIS LANKA GROUP



Seated from left: Deputy Chairman - Mr Vipul Hetige, Joint Group Managing Directress - Ms Minoli Wijesinghe, Chairperson - Ms Asanti Wijesinghe, Joint Group Managing Director - Mr Jeevaka Wijesinghe and Group Director / Chief Operating Officer - Major Ananda Rodrigo along with the Children of the employees.

Launching their first of many CSR initiatives for 2023 - Certis Lanka Group took a step towards showing their support to Children of its employees.

With the belief that giving back begins from within, Certis Lanka Group launched their support, primarily in the form of much needed school books, to the children of their own team members, totalling 5973.

At the launch ceremony held on Monday 13th March 2023, 150 of those children were given books by the Directors of Certis Lanka Group, at the Sasakawa Hall, Colombo.

"Providing school books for our team members' children is a small but impactful way to support our own and their families. By

investing in education, we are investing in the future of our communities and our organization. As a company, we will always strive to make a difference in the lives of those around us by providing the resources they need to succeed." Minoli & Jeevaka Wijesinghe (Joint Managing Directors - Certis Lanka Group)

Certis Lanka Group has successfully carried out various internal CSR projects in the past for their team members such as, building and renovating homes, offering scholarships, medical camps and supporting urgent emergency expenses via staff welfare & distress funds.

Certis Lanka is an instantly recognisable name, when it comes to a variety of services. Their portfolio of offerings include - physical security

services, secure logistics and healthcare services. Certis Lanka is a joint venture with Certis International (Pte) Ltd of Singapore - a wholly owned company of Temasek Holdings.

Certis Lanka Group consists of five companies - Security Solutions, Secure Logistics, Technology & Consultancy, Home Nursing & Swift Care and Courier Services - carrying on the business of Manpower Security, Cash Management, Cash Transport, ATM replenishment, Electronic Security Systems and Courier Services.



SPORTS

Sivagurunathan Trophy encounter ANANDA COLLEGE BEAT HINDU COLLEGE JAFFNA BY 81 RUNS

BY LAKSHMAN RAMASINGHE
Ananda College Colombo scored an 81-run win over Hindu College Jaffna in their annual Sivagurunathan Trophy cricket encounter at the Ananda College Grounds yesterday.
Put into bat Ananda College racked up 197 for 5 in their allotted 20 overs.
A century partnership of 112 runs for the fourth-wicket by Iruth Gilshan and Kitma Sithmal steered the Colombo 10 team towards a comfortable total.
Gilshan was unbeaten on 80 which included seven hits to the ropes and four over, while Sithmal scored a steady 69 with seven fours and two sixes.
K. Tharanisan was the most successful Jaffna bowler to capture 2 for 18.
In reply, the lads from Jaffna, except for N. Piriyanandan who top scored with 43, found some difficulty in coping with the on the spot bowling of Ayesh Shashimal and Kitma Sithmal and were 116 for 7 in 20 overs.

In the Old Boys match Ananda College Old Boys beat Hindu College Jaffna Old Boys by 43 runs in a 15-over-a-side match at the same venue played prior to the Sivagurunathan Trophy game.

CHIEF SCORES:

Sivagurunathan Trophy match - Ananda win by 81 runs
Ananda College 197 for 5 in 20 overs (Kanchana De Livera 30, Iruth Gilshan 80 not out, Kitma Sithmal 69, K. Tharanisan 2 for 18)
Jaffna Hindu College 116 for 7 in 20 overs (N. Piriyanandan 43, Ayesh Shashimal 2 for 23, Kitma Sithmal 2 for 19)
Old Boys match - Ananda Old Boys win by 43 runs
Ananda Old Boys 164 for 3 in 15 overs (Sanjaya Ranaweera 48, Sanjaya Attanayake 32, Moditha Ranatunga 26 not out, Janudika Sriyapala 22, Kaushikan 1 for 17)
Hindu College Jaffna Old Boys 121 for 8 in 15 overs (Santosh 30, Dinuk Hettiarachchi 4 for 22, Sanjeeva Ranatunga 2 for 10)

Under 23 Final MOORS SC EMERGE CHAMPIONS IN A THRILLER



Champion Moors SC team posing for a picture after receiving the trophy

BY M. SHAMIL AMIT

Moors SC emerged the Major Club Under 23 champions when they recorded a thrilling first innings win over Ragama CC in the final concluded at R. Premadasa Stadium yesterday.
The high scoring match turned into a thriller after Moors SC was well placed on 224 for 3 at the tea break in pursuit of a challenging score of 294 runs to gain a first inning win and clinch the title.
The second day's proceedings saw Ragama CC resuming from their overnight score of 258 for 8 went on to make a score of 293 runs.
Moors SC in their run chase got off to an inauspicious start as they lost the first wicket with seven runs on the board before Sohan de Livera made a quick fire 72 runs in 57 balls inclusive of seven boundaries and two sixes and skipper Dinuka Dilshan who chipped in with 44 shared a valuable 112 runs for the second wicket.
After the separation of the pair Mohamed Shamaaz and

Janishka Perera guided the side with another fine partnership for the fourth wicket.
Shamaaz cracked 73 in 87 balls which had three boundaries and three sixes while Perera hit 73 with six boundaries as the pair shared 136 runs.
With the dismissal of Shamaaz saw Moors SC losing five quick wickets for the addition of 30 runs as they slid from a healthy position of 262 for 4 to 292 for 9 before racing to a first innings win to clinch the title.

RESULT:

At R. Premadasa Stadium - First innings win for Moors SC Ragama CC (258/8 overnight) 293 (Dulaj Bandara 73, Ramnith Jayasena 72, Shashika Dilshan 52, Dellon Peiris 27, Lahiru Dewatage 17, Ashan Fernando 15: Theesan Vithusan 5 for 102, Dinuka Dilshan 2 for 19)
Moors SC 298 for 9 (Mohamed Shamaaz 73, Sohan de Livera 72, Janishka Perera 72, Dinuka Dilshan 44: Dellon Peiris 5 for 102, Shashika Dilshan 3 for 92)

Summer Season Open Badminton Championship Entries open for Over 70s for the first time

BY SUSIL PREMALAL
Shuttlers above the age of 70 will be seen in action for the first time in their own age classes at this year's Summer Season Open Badminton Championship in Nuwara Eliya, the organisers of the event have announced.
The popular tournament which will

be held at the Nuwara Eliya Municipal Indoor Stadium is organised by the Central Province Badminton Association under the sponsorship of Sri Lanka Badminton from April 22 to 30.
Players above 70 will battle for a total prize bag of Rs.100,000 and they will

be offered special discounts of 50% for accommodation facilities among other privileges, organisers announced.
Apart from this veteran age class, the tournament will also see events conducted under a number of junior and senior age groups apart from the Open classes.

Rs. 100 million for 2022 National Sports Festival

BY SUSIL PREMALAL

The Treasury has given the Ministry of Sports Rs. 100 million to conduct the National Sports Festival (NSF), and the funds will be utilized to complete last year's event, Director General of the Department of Sports Development (DSD) Amal Edirisuriya told the Daily Mirror. The NSF was not completed last year, as there were inadequate funds, with only three sports events - cycling, race walking and the marathon - being completed. As it is impossible to hold two NSFs in the same year, the 2023 festival has been cancelled and funds will be utilized to complete the

remaining 30 sports, starting from May, Edirisuriya said.
The NSF was last held in 2019 but was cancelled for two consecutive years (2020 and 2021) due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The DSD had planned to hold NSF in 2022, but due to the economic situation in the country at that time, the Ministry of Sports took steps to postpone NSF 30 Sports until 2023.
In the meantime, DSD has also planned to hold the relevant events only at the Colombo Sugathadasa Stadium, Polonnaruwa National Stadium and Mataru Kotawila National Stadium, which are under the purview of the Ministry of Sports, to minimize financial expenses.

Sooriyabandara appointed Antonian Backs coach

BY SHAMSEER JALEEL

Kandy SC Full-back Srinath Sooriyabandara signed up with St. Anthony's College Katugastota ahead of the 2023 schools rugby season to coach the backline of their Under 20 team.
After leaving Isipathana, Sooriyabandara represented the national 15-a-side and sevens teams, though being considered as a specialist in the shorter version.
He has been a regular member of the national sevens squad since 2010.
At present he plays as a Full-back but originally he started as a scrum-half playing at Fly half when the need arises. The Antonians will be headed by Samedha Malawana as their Head Coach while their Trainer will be Indunil Wickremasinghe for the coming season. Hard working old boy of the Arunda Ranasinghe will be the Manager of the team.
Sahan Keerthisiri will lead the outfit with Saduka Athukorala his deputy for 2023 season.



Srinath Sooriyabandara



#LET'S TALK

with **Thushara Ranasinghe**

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VACANCY

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- Maintain a daily diary for activities
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- Assist HOIC in formulating budgets for Inbound and Outbound international tours
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- People management skills
- Knowledge of the game, experience in cricket related administration work and knowledge in secretarial functions would be an added advantage
- Should be prepared to work long hours and possibly on holidays

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**Please mention the post applied for on the subject line of the email*

**Please ensure all employment criteria is met prior to applying*

**Human Resources Dept. Sri Lanka Cricket,
No. 35, Maitland Place, Colombo 7**

Under 23 Invitational Limited Over Yesith, Ruchitha steer Antonians SC to big win

BY M. SHAMIL AMIT

An all-round performance by Yesith Kalupahana and a half ton by Ruchitha Hansana helped Antonians SC to record a massive 234 runs win over United Southern in the Under 23 Invitational limited over cricket tournament played at Galle.
In the other matches that were played Leo CC, Kalutara PCC, Kalutara TC, Old Dharmapalians SC, Dambulla A & CC and Moratuwa SC recorded wins.

RESULTS:

At Galle - Antonians SC won by 234 runs
Antonians SC 277 for 9 in 50 overs (Ruchitha Hansana 59, Yesith Kalupahana 59, Themiya Gunaratne 38, Naveen Kanishka 31: Hansaka Jayanath 3 for 46, Gishanthika Jayatileke 3 for 68)
United Southern SC 43 in 23.2 overs (Rishmi Amrith 16: Yesith Kalupahana 4 for 10, Sithuka Gunawardena 2 for 8, Dasith Perera 2 for 9)
At Welagedera - Leo CC won by 13 runs
Leo CC 218 in 49.2 overs (Menusha Perera 57, Chathura Anuradha 51: Hasindu Pramod 2 for 35, Jayadya Amaraseena 2 for 37, Wasiru Shivanhana 2 for 47)
Kurunegala SC 205 in 49.3 overs (Amesh Tennekoon 75, Pivithu Fernando 31, Chamathka Hettiarachchi 24, Jayadya Amaraseena 21, Pansilu Ranasinghe 21 n.o.: Chanuka Nirmal 3 for 21, Sithum Vimarshana 3 for 47, Nethum Basnayake 2 for 42)
At Pannipitiya - Kalutara PCC won by seven wickets
Gesto CC 101 in 30.3 overs (Randul Samarabehwa 25: Thadula de Silva 5 for 22, Waruna Peiris 2 for 11)
Kalutara PCC 102 for 3 in 19.4 overs (Thenuka Liyanage 34, Madura Gimhana 22, Thewin Amarasinghe 20)
At Maggona - Kalutara TC won by 24 runs

Kalutara TC 209 in 48.3 overs (Vishmika Costa 54, Mihiranga Fernando 51, Samudra Medisya 23, Chamindu Kavinda 20: Dhananjaya Cooray 3 for 19, Gavin Boteju 2 for 25, Manula Perera 2 for 37)
Moratuwa SC 185 in 44.3 overs (Thanuj Kaushan 65, Gavin Boteju 46, Lahiru Nadeera 21: Charith Harshana 4 for 28, Dhanuka Nishad 2 for 16, Mihiranga Fernando 2 for 27)
At Ambalangoda - Old Dharmapalians SC won by three wickets
Rio SC Ambalangoda 162 in 49.4 overs (Shehan Rashmika 45, Lakila Tehan 26, Akila Chathuranga 22: Pramoth Munidasa 4 for 35, Rasith Nimsara 2 for 17, Poorna Kalhara 2 for 17)
Old Dharmapalians SC 166 for 7 in 39.2 overs (Subhan Ranasinghe 23, Janidu Jayawardena

21, Navindu Madusanka 73 n.o.: Akila Chathuranga 2 for 24, Shakila Hansaka 2 for 38)
At Radella - Dimbulla A & CC won by eight wickets
Ratnapura CC 97 in 31.2 overs (Chamodya Rajapakse 31: Adithya Bandara 4 for 26, Shyamal Priyadharshana 2 for 00)
Dimbulla A & CC 101 for 2 in 27.2 overs (Umar Raizan 56 n.o.: Chamodya Rajapakse 2 for 14)
At Galle - Moratuwa SC won by 102 runs
Moratuwa SC 232 for 8 in 50 overs (Gavin Boteju 85, Adeesha Seneviratne 44, Thanuj Kavishan 44: Gishanthika Jayaweera 3 for 47, Pathum Shaminda 2 for 53)
United Southern SC 130 in 34.4 overs (Gishanthika Jayaweera 31, Pasindu Palipana 26: Geeth Sathsara 5 for 21, Manula Perera 4 for 36)

INVITATIONAL CLUB U23 - 2023							
Group A							
Team	M	W	L	T	N/R	PT	NR
1 Kandy Cc	8	7	1	0	0	21	1.983
2 Malay Cc	7	6	1	0	0	18	1.831
3 Kurunegala Sc	8	4	4	0	0	11	-0.312
4 Saracen Cc	7	4	3	0	0	10	-0.885
5 Dimbulla A & Cc	7	3	3	0	1	9	-0.051
6 Leo Cc	8	3	5	0	0	8	-0.351
7 Ratnapura Cc	6	2	4	0	0	4	-0.576
8 Rajarata Sc	7	1	5	0	1	4	-0.921
9 Lankan Cc	6	1	5	0	0	2	-1.209
Group B							
1 Kalutara Pcc	7	6	1	0	0	18	2.020
2 Old Dharmapalians Sc	8	6	1	0	1	17	1.062
3 Antonian Sc	7	6	1	0	0	15	1.507
4 Moratuwa Sc	7	3	3	0	1	9	0.506
5 Kalutara Tc	7	3	3	0	1	9	-0.380
6 United Southern Sc	7	3	4	0	0	9	-0.911
7 Rio Sc	7	2	5	0	0	5	-0.944
8 Ambalangoda Singha Sc	8	1	7	0	0	3	-1.169
9 Gesto Cc	8	0	5	0	3	3	-1.684



CB continues purchase of dollars from market

Has bought about a billion dollars since beginning of 2023

The Central Bank is continuing to preserve its position as a net buyer of foreign currency from the domestic foreign currency market, with the dollar liquidity conditions started easing from around early this year, following debt standstill, lower tepid imports and increased dollar inflows.

The Central Bank in February bought US \$ 287.0 million in foreign currency and sold US \$ 33.4 million, remaining a net purchaser of foreign currency so far this year.

In January too, the Central Bank bought US \$ 348.8 million and sold US \$ 137.6 million.

Meanwhile, although no official data is available yet, the Central Bank has bought dollars to the



bought about a billion dollars of foreign currency from the market.

He told the rupee appreciation began with the relaxing of the surrender rule and if they didn't buy the dollars, the rupee would've appreciated even more.

The statement approving Sri Lanka's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) this week said the Central Bank aims to buy up to US \$ 1.4 billion from the market and rebuild the external reserves to US \$ 4.4 billion by the end of the year. By the end of February, Sri Lanka had external reserves of US \$ 2.2 billion.

Sri Lanka is expected to get a 10-year time horizon to settle its bilateral creditors as part of the debt assurances the country received during the last couple of months.

This provides Sri Lanka a once in a lifetime opportunity to rebuild its external reserves to well beyond US \$ 10 billion by the end of next year. The President's Office said up to US \$ 7.0 billion worth of foreign assistance could follow the IMF Board approval for the EFF this month.

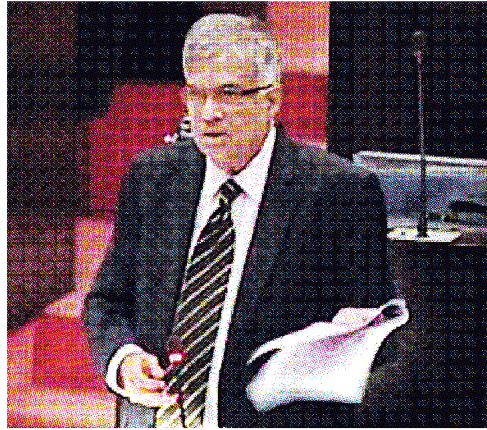
President hopeful of new financial culture following IMF deal

Says as a result of IMF programme SL's financial discipline will become legislated

Notes proposed public finance law will create much-needed fiscal discipline

Says going forward large-scale government procurement contracts will be made public

Confident SL would be able to complete IMF programme in 3-3.5 years



President Ranil Wickremesinghe yesterday expressed confidence in creating a new financial culture and environment that had not prevailed in Sri Lanka before, through the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme that was approved by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Board this week.

"... because of this agreement, financial discipline in our country will become legislated. Stringent new laws for the prevention of corruption will be introduced. A new financial culture and environment that had not prevailed previously in Sri Lanka will be created through this facility," Wickremesinghe said delivering a special statement in Parliament yesterday.

Wickremesinghe said that under the IMF programme, a new Public Finance Management bill that includes strong fiscal policies, laws, thresholds with regard to obtaining foreign loans and government securities would be drafted.

A new Central Bank, which has already been drafted, is also awaiting passage through Parliament to become law. The new law is expected to create an independent Central Bank. At the same time, Sri Lanka will become the first in Asia to have its governance come under the IMF scrutiny.

The IMF on Tuesday said it in the midst of conducting an in-depth governance diagnostic exercise, which will assess corruption and governance vulnerabilities in Sri Lanka and provide prioritised and sequenced recommendations. The report is expected to be published by September 2023.

Wickremesinghe said this assessment would allow identifying the loopholes that exist in the frameworks of Sri Lankan administration and the institutions that combat corruption.

He also said that with the IMF assistance, new anti-graft laws would be drafted, in line with the United Nations conventions.

Towards improving transparency in the country's economic governance process, Wickremesinghe further said large-scale government procurement contracts would be made public.

"The individuals who had obtained permits to import vehicles on a concessionary tax basis along with the institutions that enjoy tax concessions/tax holidays of the Board of Investment will also be made public," he said.

Meanwhile, Wickremesinghe drew Parliament's attention to the IMF Board approval for the US \$ 3 billion bailout being just the beginning of yet another long journey.

MORE ON P8

Amendments to current tax policy to be discussed at first IMF review in June

Sri Lanka is expected to amend the existing tax mechanism when the first review of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Extended Fund Facility (EFF) takes place this June.

"We have already focused our attention on amending the existing tax mechanism. The Treasury is already in the process of preparing the amended proposals," President Ranil

Wickremesinghe told Parliament yesterday.

He also said intellectuals and economic experts have already submitted their views in this regard.

"We are discussing with the IMF to include these tax reforms in our plans at the review in June. In addition, we are discussing the other policy reforms, which we think are necessary at present," Wickremesinghe said.

SL to introduce property tax and gift and inheritance tax

Sri Lanka is expected to introduce a property tax and a gift and inheritance tax by the beginning of 2025, under the International Monetary Fund programme.

"In particular, we will introduce a nationwide real property tax and adjust the system of transfers between the central and provincial governments.

We will also introduce a gift and inheritance tax with a tax-free allowance and minimal

exemptions," the IMF programme documents made public this week said.

The preparatory work for these tax reforms will commence by mid-2023, supported by the IMF technical assistance.

Sri Lanka is expected to achieve a primary fiscal surplus of 2.3 percent of GDP by 2025.

Also, Sri Lanka needs to raise the tax-to-GDP ratio to at least 14 percent by 2026 by implementing a sequenced package of tax measures.

World Bank president expresses deep concern on Zambia debt restructuring

REUTERS: World Bank President David Malpass said on Tuesday he remained deeply concerned about the debt restructuring stalemate in Zambia and that the bank is working with India and the International Monetary Fund on the G20 debt restructuring process.

Zambia meanwhile has been stuck in default since it became the first COVID-era African nation to do so in November 2020. Its finance minister has said it is pushing to finish the long-delayed Common Framework restructuring by end of March or shortly after.

MORE ON P8



David Malpass

Rupee appreciation recommences after IMF badge of confidence

The spot rupee, which opened around 320 against the US dollar, fell further to 317 to 318 levels by mid day trading yesterday, a day later the International Monetary Fund (IMF) opened up the nearly US \$ 3.0 billion life line to the crisis-hit country.

The rupee, which gained around 12 percent, lost some ground last week to end at around Rs.337 to a dollar. But the news on the IMF deal approval and the optimism over further inflows from other bilateral and multilateral sources improved sentiments, sending the rupee higher against the US dollar by mid trade yesterday.

By the week ended on March 17, the rupee was up about 7 percent from the start of the year but by yesterday, it extended its gains to 12 percent again.



The currency traders and economic analysts expect the rupee to continue to gain and trade in a band between 280 and 300 to the US dollar.

Sri Lanka's external sector and thereby the economy turned a corner much earlier than many would have thought and the government is mulling relaxing the remaining controls on imports to the country.

MORE ON P8

Producer prices retreat as supply chains get unclogged

The producer prices retreated for the third consecutive month in January, reflecting the easing prices in the supply chains across various sectors, as Sri Lanka is on a disinflationary track after the peak prices in the third quarter last year.

The Producer Price Index (PPI), measured by the Census and Statistics Department, showed the prices rising by 83.1 percent in the 12 months to January 2023, slightly easing from 89.0 percent through December 2022.

The producer prices measure the level of inflation through the supply chain before the products reach the end consumer.

Generally there is about a month-lag between the producer prices and consumer prices.

The producer prices measured on a monthly basis however edged up by 0.4 percent in January, from a 0.2 percent increase in December,

reflecting how stickier some prices in the supply chain are.

However, not all price pressures faced by the suppliers are passed onto the end consumer, as the consumer prices are going at much lower levels than the producer prices.

This reflects a margin squeeze for the producers and other participants in the supply chain.

The December quarter earnings season, which ended recently, showed how much the operating margins the businesses had been crimped.

The PPI for January showed that the agriculture sector prices had risen by 49.7 percent annually and by 2.9 percent monthly.

The manufacturing activities saw their prices rising by 89.4 percent measured annually but the monthly prices remained unchanged from the December levels.

MORE ON P8

Fed raises interest rates despite banking turmoil

AFP: The US central bank has raised interest rates again, despite fears that the move could add to financial turmoil after a string of recent bank failures.

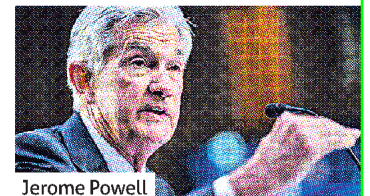
The Federal Reserve increased its key rate by 0.25 percentage points and said more action could be "appropriate" as consumer prices continue to climb.

The Fed has been raising borrowing costs to try to slow the economy and ease pressures pushing up prices.

But sharp rate rises have led to strains in the banking system.

Two US banks - Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank - collapsed this month, buckling in part due to problems caused by higher interest rates.

But authorities around the world have said they do not think the failures threaten widespread financial stability and need not distract from efforts to bring



Jerome Powell

inflation under control. Last week, the European Central Bank raised its key interest rate by 0.5 percentage points.

The Bank of England is due to make its own interest rate decision today, a day after official figures showed that inflation unexpectedly shot up in February to 10.4 percent.

In a statement, the Fed said the US banking system was "sound and resilient".

But it said the banking turmoil could drag on growth and toned down earlier statements which said higher interest rates were likely to be needed in the months ahead.

MORE ON P8

Tourist arrivals exceed 84k in first three weeks of March

Daily arrival average improves to 4,024

Cumulative tourist arrivals for year reach 294,769

China makes it to top 10 source market list

Tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka topped 84,000 in the first three weeks of March.

The provisional data from the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority showed that during the March 01-21 period, the island nation welcomed 84,585 international visitors.

Accordingly, the cumulative tourist arrivals for January 01 to March 21 stand at 294,769.

The daily arrival average for the month of March has improved to 4,027.

An analysis of the weekly arrivals shows that for all three weeks, the inflow of international visitors has been above 27,000.

In the first week, tourist arrivals were recorded at 27,573, which improved to 29,466 in the second week. In the third week, the arrivals dropped to 2,7546.

The increase in arrivals in the second week is due to the arrival of 250 female athletes from France to participate in the adventure trail Raid Amazonas 2023. The group, along with officials and crew, arrived in the island nation on March 20.

Sri Lanka also welcomed a crowd of over 150 tourism industry stakeholders from across the world in March, who arrived to take part in the first-ever International MICE Expo hosted by the island

Meanwhile, retaining the position as the largest tourist traffic generator is the Russian Federation, accounting for 22 percent of the total arrivals during the period under review. Ranking second is India, bringing in 15 percent of the total number of tourists.

Ranking third and taking over the position of the United Kingdom is Germany, which contributed to 8 percent of the arrivals.

China has moved up in Sri Lanka's list of top source markets. It is now among the top 10 tourist traffic generators and stands at the ninth position. Just last week, China was in the 13th position.



A group of tourists at Independence Square in Colombo. PIC BY PRADEEP PATHIRANA



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22.03.2023

Table with columns: SECURITY, VOLUME, VWA, OPEN, HIGH, LOW, WVA, CHANGING. Contains market data for various stocks and indices.

Exchange Rates

22.03.2023

Table with columns: CURRENCY, BUYING RATE, SELLING RATE. Lists exchange rates for various currencies.

Indices close in red

The ASPI closed in red as a result of price losses in counters such as Sampath Bank, Lanka IOC and Vallibel One with the turnover crossing Rs 1.5 Bn.



Browns Investments and LOLC Finance. Foreign participation in the market activity remained at subdued levels with foreigners closing as net buyers.

Telecommunication Services sector was the top contributor to the market turnover (due to Sri Lanka Telecom) whilst the sector index gained 6.94%.

Lanka IOC, Expolanka Holdings and The Lanka Hospitals Corporation were also included amongst the top turnover contributors.

Contd. from Page 07

President hopeful...

"We cannot simply be satisfied with only the IMF agreement. This is not the end. This is just the beginning of yet another long journey. We have to traverse that path with vigour," he stressed.

to three and a half years. "The IMF-approved plan should be implemented and completed in four years. However, depending on our strength and determination, we should be able to finish it in three to three and a half years. Let's give it a try. Let us put in the effort," he said.

Producer prices...

Meanwhile, the utility collective, which include the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning and water supply prices, rose by 69.8 percent while the monthly prices edged up 0.7 percent.

entered a disinflationary path. As Sri Lanka is seeing its foreign currency situation easing and supply chains getting unlogged gradually after months-long shortages and bottlenecks, a faster deceleration in prices across the goods and services supply chains could be expected.

Sri Lanka is expected to remove any remaining restrictions on imports shortly, further easing the supply conditions and thereby the prices.

Rupee appreciation...

Sri Lanka is no longer a bankrupt nation, President Ranil Wickremesinghe stressed this week and added that people could engage in normal transactions

from now onwards. The country also awaits a large decline in fuel prices in a few weeks, amid the sharp dip in global oil prices, which to an extent could alleviate the hardships faced by the public and small businesses.

World Bank...

Ghana defaulted on its external debts in December and has since sealed a domestic debt swap and requested a restructuring of its bilateral debts via the G20's Common Framework vehicle.

are seeking urgent IMF funds due to an economic slowdown caused by the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.

Fed raises.....

Instead, the Fed said: "some additional policy firming may be appropriate". Yesterday's move marks the ninth rate rise in a row by the Fed. It lifts its key interest rate to 4.75 percent-5 percent, up from near zero a year ago - the highest level since 2007.

expensive, the Fed expects demand to fall, cooling prices. That has started to happen in the US housing market, where purchases have slowed sharply over the last year and the median sales price in February was lower than it was a year ago - the first such decline in more than a decade.

But overall the economy has held up better than expected and prices continue to climb faster than the 2 percent rate considered healthy. Inflation, the rate at which prices climb, jumped 6 percent in the 12 months to February. The cost of some items, including food and airfare, is surging even faster.

IMF PROGRAMME #17: IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

On Sri Lanka's reform-regress-run to IMF crisis cycle



BY DANIEL ALPHONSUS

Countries never learn from others' mistakes; they only learn from their own. Sri Lanka is an exception: we don't even learn from our folly. Apparently neither does the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Sri Lanka's 17th IMF programme was approved early this week. Is it welcome? Yes. Will it break Sri Lanka's reform-regress-run to the IMF crisis cycle? Probably not.

All reforms undertaken over the past half-year to win the IMF board approval are reversible. None of them constitute entrenched changes in economic policy or governance. We are building our recovery on the shakiest of foundations. The fuel and electricity price 'formulae', tax plus interest rate increases and greater exchange rate flexibility can all be altered, more or less, at the stroke of a pen.

This is not surprising. Sri Lanka has a chequered history of cosmetic compliance: ticking the boxes of virtue and sensibility via international undertakings during desperate times and then reverting to business-as-usual once the crisis abates. We have good reason to think that, this time too, the future will rhyme with this past. Undoubtedly, post-IMF board approval, some reforms less easy to rewind will come to pass – the new Central Bank Act being the most notable.

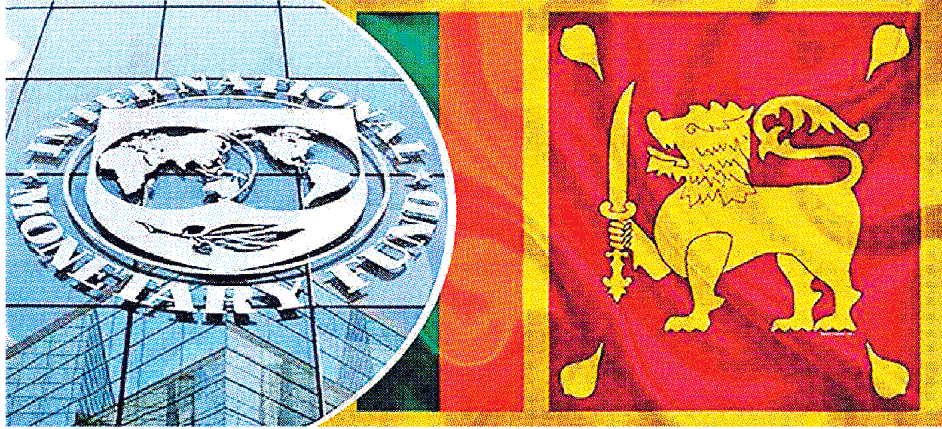
But the IMF's bargaining power peaks prior to board approval. That is the decisive point in this process. It is the pivotal moment for any attempt to use this crisis to build the foundations required for breaking the crisis cycle and going from third-world to first. If the most contentious and critical reforms are not pushed through prior to board approval, there is good reason to think they will not come to pass. Remember that of its 16 programmes thus far, Sri Lanka's has only completed two extended/structural programmes. The remainder are either relatively insignificant standby-facilities or derailed extended programmes.

Considering the unprecedented nature of the current crisis, this is a colossal missed opportunity. As argued in a prequel article, Programme 17 could have and should have broken this cycle. Public opinion was desperate, the government commanded a super-majority in Parliament and the IMF held all the aces. The distinction between what is desirable and what is feasible had, almost overnight, dissolved. The cry for fuel and electricity was so piercing and loud that a comprehensive and deep programme permitting profound economic restructuring was possible for the first time since 1977.

Moreover, even if some of the required reforms come to fruition over Programme 17's next few reviews – it will still be a missed opportunity. Reform takes time, effort and energy. These are scarce resources. As major structural reforms – such as the Central Bank Act, fiscal rules, privatisations and labour market reforms – were not completed as prior actions, it means the first few reviews will be focussed on them. This will leave little room for some of the more complex long-term reforms, especially in land, the public service and regulatory policy (e.g. competition policy).

Of course, we are a sovereign state, so primary responsibility for this failure lies in our own polity. But we find little hope in ourselves. As weary and jaded citizens, we tend to assume inertia or worse, on our side as a given; which is why this article is about the IMF's failure.

What could the IMF have done differently? Especially considering its familiarity with Buenos Aires, it should know that it takes two to tango. As Keynes famously said of the IMF and World Bank; the Bank's a fund and the Fund's a bank. Considering the creditor-borrower relationship between the IMF and Sri Lanka, as a creditor, the IMF should bear some responsibility for the failure of so many programmes over such a long period of time. The IMF's own 'kapuralas' have conceived of programme conditionality as a form of collateral. The



IMF ought to demand more conditionality as collateral prior to lending. This, of course, requires review of past country programmes and as we all know, economic history and country expertise are not exactly first-rank priorities at the Fund.

Anyone involved in economic policymaking in Sri Lanka, the IMF included of course, knows that much of the technical work was already done. When the staff-level agreement was signed in September last year, there was a great deal of reform that just required political will and nothing else. The Cabinet had approved an earlier version of the new Central Bank Bill during the last days of the Samaraweera ministry. Placing energy price formulas on a statutory footing shouldn't take more than a day's drafting. Fiscal rules legislation was already in a relatively advanced stage. Non-legislative measures could also have been mandated – the state could readily have divested its stakes in Sri Lanka Telecom and Lanka Hospitals. These firms are already listed with established valuations. Considering the 200 days between the staff-level agreement in September and board approval now, we had more than enough time to list the major state banks and Sri Lanka Insurance; maybe even privatise the East, Jaya and Unity container terminals. After all, for better or worse, remember the plantations were effectively privatised within 48 hours. These delays are all the more astonishing, due to the hypocrisy of asking for favours from our creditors while refusing to sell underperforming assets.

Primary balance vs growth

Considering the political cost of market pricing energy and increasing taxes, from a political point of view, there is tremendous incentive for the political leadership to undertake structural reform in return for less pain. Sri Lanka's future debt sustainability (or lack thereof) is a function of current and future (a) government revenue, (b) government expenditure and (c) GDP growth. By raising Sri Lanka's growth potential, both the IMF and long-term creditors could and should have been willing to trade-off revenue and expenditure targets for entrenched, high-quality structural reform. The one percent rate hike – which the central bank opposed – just before placing Sri Lanka on the board agenda illustrates this well. Clearly, this temporary, one-off one percent increase in interest rates was considered decisive for obtaining board approval. Why then was not actually passing the Central Bank Bill in Parliament – which is likely to shape inflation rates for decades? Note that in my view, the IMF's bargaining power at this juncture could be so strong that a trade-off between primary balance linked targets and structural reforms may not exist. The IMF may have been able to demand both. That is, the IMF could have had the cake, eaten the cake and called it a letter of intent.

Primary balance today vs primary balance tomorrow

Even if one does not buy the argument of reducing the primary balance target today in exchange for growth tomorrow, two strategies superior to the status quo could have been pursued.

First, instead of trading off the primary balance versus growth, we could have exchanged a primary balance improvement today for a larger primary balance improvement tomorrow. The IMF could have permitted reducing the primary balance

target today in exchange for entrenched reforms that result in a paradigm shift in Sri Lanka's primary balance trajectory for the future. For example, coming back to the Central Bank Bill, through greater depoliticisation and limitations on the Central Bank funding of government deficits, this landmark reform is likely to change Sri Lanka's medium to long-term primary balance trajectory. The 'net present value' of this change in primary balance terms – even when discounted for the probability of it being unenforced – is likely to be greater than a few percentage point changes in the primary balance today.

Optimising this trade-off would also have the added benefit of placing less pain on the public and reducing the extent of contractionary policy amidst Sri Lanka's worst economic crisis in decades.

Second, there are some measures that can improve the primary balance today and tomorrow. A good example is the sale of shares in state banks. The sale of minority stakes in BOC and People's Bank will raise money for the exchequer, boosting the primary surplus. However, especially if the banks are listed, it will also make it more difficult for the state banks to permit the government to create enormous contingent liabilities via loans to the CEB and CPC, resulting in a healthier future primary balance.

Overdiscounting the future

The argument often made in response is that the IMF cannot trade-off the certainty of hitting quantitative targets today, in return for structural reforms whose fruits may not materialise tomorrow. This view is misguided. First, deep understanding of context enables a reasonably good assessment of the probabilities of a structural reform producing a desired outcome – enabling the computation of rough expected values. For example, we know that once a privatisation takes place, it is unlikely to be easily undone. Second, even after first discounting on the basis of probabilities, a second round of discounting can take place to compensate – to some degree – for the uncertainty inherent in structural reform.

Bailamos

There are two dancers in this toxic tango. They both need to take stock of the past, break with it and dance a new dance. Introspection is a good start. The IMF and our government should get together and commission a review of all past programmes to inform the design and implementation of the current programme. In the meantime, the priority should be to ensure as many structural reforms as possible are pushed through prior to the first review. If we are able to use entrenched, high-quality structural reforms to credibly improve Sri Lanka's medium-term growth and primary balance trajectory, we should be able to avoid some of the short-term pain and contraction that we would otherwise experience. Then, maybe instead of toxic tango, we can look forward to a solid baila session. With the president, as he did with Iranganie Serasinghe, accompanying the IMF's managing director for a round of kaffirhina. After all, compared to austerity, structural reform is a 'sumhiri pane'.

(Daniel Alphonsus is Director at Advocata Institute. The opinions expressed are the author's own views. They may not necessarily reflect the views of the Advocata Institute or anyone affiliated with the institute)

Japanese investors keen to explore investment opportunities in Sri Lanka

A group of Japanese investors along with Japan Deputy Head of Mission Katsuki Kotaro recently called on the Board of Investment (BOI) to discuss investment opportunities in Sri Lanka.

The investors had a productive discussion with Investment Promotion State Minister Dilum Amunugama, BOI Director General Renuka M. Weerakone and other officials on key investment opportunities in Sri Lanka, where the investors conveyed interest in investing in diverse sectors such as medical equipment manufacturing, pharmaceutical, travel and tourism industry especially cultural tourism, the hotel industry, property development and real estate.

Speaking at the meeting, Amunugama opined, "Sri Lanka has come a long way in making reforms and progress since



the economic crisis. The approved IMF programme will definitely help enhance investor confidence, creating a conducive ecosystem to do business, thereby attracting the much-needed FDIs to the country."

Also, Amunugama explained the delegates about the special investment policy, which is in progress to ease doing business where the BOI would be empowered to further facilitate investors. Moreover, he invited the investors

to invest in five new industrial and privately managed zones to be established in the Northern province and Trincomalee district. Further, the discussions are underway to grant tax benefits to investors in future.

Meanwhile, answering the queries of delegates Weerakone stated, "Investor Facilitation Centre will be a single window to conduct businesses where each investor will get an individual official to look into matters until the investor commences operation in the country." "Sri Lanka is making great progress as a country and has strong economic sectors and companies that are strongly looking forward to establishing and investment partnerships with countries like Japan. In this context, the BOI is looking forward to increasing and developing cooperation with Japan through novel investment projects," she added.

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Colombo Port City Economic Commission releases semi-annual progress report for FY2022

The Colombo Port City Economic Commission, the Single Window Investment Facilitator authorised to assist investors, businesses and residents in conducting their activities seamlessly and efficiently in Port City Colombo, recently released its semi-annual progress report for FY2022 from July to December 2022.

The Port City Colombo Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is designed to be a prestigious, strategically located city in the heart of South Asia, with sustainable high-quality public spaces and infrastructure, providing top-quality commercial, entertainment, medical, education and lifestyle. International destinations such as DIFC, DMCC, Labuan, Singapore and Mauritius were studied for their regulatory frameworks, fiscal incentives and operational efficiency to identify the most competitive processes and policies for Port City Colombo. The benchmarking study was done by global consultants such as Boston Consulting Group, PwC, KPMG, EY, Pinsent Masons, Zico Law, JLL, etc., for the SEZ's thrust sectors, supported by market feedback on both fiscal and non-fiscal parameters.

Overall project update

The Port City Colombo SEZ Regulations for the registration, licensing, authorisation and other approvals of Authorised Persons, were published by extraordinary gazette in September 2022, bearing number 2299/46. The SEZ's Regulations for the registration and licensing of Authorised Person Fees were also gazetted in September 2022, bearing number 2299/47. The registration of offshore company regulations were gazetted in the month of November 2022, bearing number 2306/54.



PCC Retail Centre

Agreements have been signed between the commission and Registrar General of Companies and Controller General of Immigration and Emigration in order to streamline services offered to Authorised Persons. Technical Certificates of completion for 64 out of the 74 plots of the Port City Colombo SEZ have been received by the commission.

Sectoral progress highlights

Banking – The Finance Minister issued licences under the Colombo Port City Economic Commission Act to four banks during the first half of 2022. The commission has since received requests from three more banks during 2022. Additionally, 10 Financial and Banking Regulations were also drafted under Sections 44 and Sections 45 of Colombo Port City Economic Commission Act No. 11 of 2021 and are awaiting review with the Monetary Board of Sri Lanka.

Security – The Sri Lanka Police opened a Post on-site for visitor protection, with water access control and lifeguard services being handed to the Sri Lanka Navy. CCTV networks were also installed in public areas.

Social infrastructure – In addition to an internationally-reputed hospital and school, the commission has identified

the need for a world-class university within Port City Colombo and modified the Master Plan accordingly.

Commercial infrastructure – With the retail mall infrastructure complete, the commencement of the interior work has begun. The mall will showcase premium merchandise, with an array of cuisine options and entertainment and is set to commence operations by 2Q of 2023.

Immigration and visa arrangements – In collaboration with the Immigration and Emigration Department, the commission has introduced three new visa categories for Port City Colombo. These three visa categories are - the Investor visa for 10 years, Employment visa for up to five years and Resident visa for five years. Port City Colombo visas allow supplementary benefits, such as visas for the spouse, kids and other support staff members, which can be obtained under the primary visa applicant. The visa fee is US \$ 200 per year for each applicant. Visas are renewable as required and applicable only to foreign investors.

Master plan implementation – A planning committee consisting of key stakeholders was created to expedite the approval of building plans submitted under the Development Control Regulations (DCRs) for each plot of the Port City Colombo SEZ. The DCRs provide a clear framework for the development of buildings, land use, green spaces, utility networks and sustainability measures, among other factors.

Preliminary designs for the Marina Development and Villa Project have been submitted by two investors, with several more plots in the final stages of discussion for lease.



PCC Centre Park South landscape

Adfactors PR expands facilities and capacity to help Lankan enterprises gain global exposure

The nation's leader in knowledge-driven communications, Adfactors Public Relations Lanka, crossed another significant milestone with the opening of its expanded Parkway Building premises in the Park Street Mews neighbourhood.

Entering its ninth year of operations, the agency has emerged as Sri Lanka's most trusted, multi-specialist public relations consultancies and is now gearing up its capabilities, capacity and technical expertise, in order to support Sri Lankan enterprises to effectively share their stories with audiences both locally and globally.

"Over the past three years, Sri Lanka's economy, enterprises and its people have been challenged like never before. However,



our experience has proved that effective and authentic communication can help to build opportunity and enhance resilience.

"Our continuing growth during such an unprecedented crisis is testament to the

knowledge, expertise and resolve of our team. Together with the wealth of specialised resources that we are able to draw on from our principals, Adfactors PR aims to empower Sri Lankan enterprises to better navigate crisis and

capture the business opportunities needed to help revive the national economy," Adfactors PR founding CEO Rezani Aziz stated.

Adfactors PR Lanka is a fully-owned subsidiary of Adfactors PR (Pvt.) Ltd, India's largest PR consultancy. Headquartered in Mumbai, Adfactors offers strategic, knowledge-driven communications to India's largest corporate and financial groups.

"Even as Sri Lanka faces its most difficult economic hardships, our belief in the powerful underlying potential that this nation and its people have to offer remains unshaken. It is that belief that guides our continuing investments into all of the resources, networking, training and development necessary to keep elevating Adfactors PR

Lanka and its ability to support the vital aspirations of Sri Lanka's corporate sector," Adfactors PR CEO Nijay Nair said.

Adfactors PR, a full-service public relations firm, is India's largest PR firms by revenue. With over 1,700 staff across key cities in India and Sri Lanka, Adfactors PR serves more than 500 retained clients, including some of the largest corporations and financial institutions – both Indian and multinational.

The consultancy has market-leading practices such as corporate communications, capital market communications, issues and crisis as well as in several sector verticals. It is a member of PROI Worldwide, the largest global partnership of independent public relations firms.

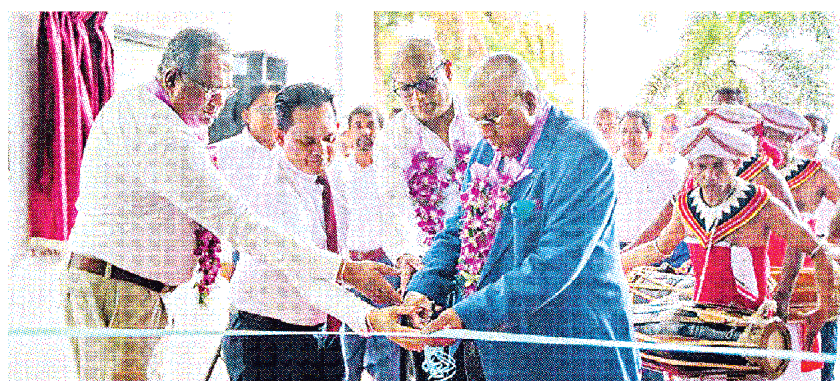
DPL unveils automated central warehouse facility to optimise export market service delivery

- New facility built on significant investment
- Facilities designed to support integrated data tracking, warehouse automation
- Streamlined logistics to drastically enhance global delivery times

Dipped Products PLC (DPL), a member of the Hayleys group, commissioned an automated central warehouse facility at the Biyagama Export Processing Zone, to enhance its service delivery excellence to meet the critical global export demand.

The state-of-the-art new warehouse facility will enable DPL to consolidate storage facilities across its Hanwella, Kottawa and Biyagama factories, by streamlining operations, reducing transportation and logistics costs and increasing visibility and control across DPL's supply chain.

The extensively automated 23,000 cubic metre facility represents a new technological milestone for the company's digitalisation drive and was



From left: Dipped Products PLC Deputy Chairman Rajitha Kariyawasan, Dipped Products PLC Managing Director Pushpika Janadheera, Hayleys Group Executive Director Sarath Ganegoda and Hayleys Group Chairman and Chief Executive Mohan Pandithage commission new Biyagama warehouse

commissioned by Hayleys Chairman and Chief Executive Mohan Pandithage in the presence of DPL Deputy Chairman Rajitha Kariyawasan, Hayleys Executive Director Sarath Ganegoda, DPL Managing Director Pushpika Janadheera, directors, together with the members of the Hayleys Group Management Committee and DPL employees.

"Given the ongoing economic challenges, it is now more imperative than ever to strengthen Sri Lanka's position as a vibrant export hub by developing local products to the

highest global standards. As a leading global player in the protective hand wear industry and a member of the Hayleys group, we take pride in DPL's continuing contributions to our nation's development.

"Our latest investments are part of our strategy to expand global reach, ensure supply chain resilience and enhance service delivery to our key export markets. With our centralised warehousing facilities, we are also optimising our service capacity, speed and customer value to help secure our



New DPL central warehouse

next wave of growth," Janadheera said.

Equipped with a state-of-the-art US National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)-compliant safety system, which covers 4,200 pallet racks, the new facility provides DPL with an extensive storage capacity.

Combined with robust technologies, including modern articulated truck technologies and product management systems and an integrated data tracking system that streamlines DPL's logistical operations, that enables systematic tracing of containers from the loading point to the pallet rack. Moreover, the new central warehouse significantly reduces the need for internal transportation, reflecting a 30 percent decrease in inter-factory transport-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Hemas celebrates 21 wins at NCQP Awards for operational excellence

Hemas Consumer Brands has emerged as the big winner at the National Convention on Quality and Productivity (NCQP) Awards 2023, organised by the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Quality and Productivity (SLAAQP).

The event aimed to recognise outstanding achievements in quality and productivity within the manufacturing and services sector, under the theme 'Sustainable Development Through Innovative Quality Solutions'.

Competing in the Continuous Improvement category as part of the Cross Functional Teams (CFT), Hemas Consumer Brands secured an impressive 25 awards. The company won 15 Gold awards, seven Silver awards and three Bronze awards, demonstrating its unwavering commitment to quality and productivity by adopting a Lean Journey. Through its philosophy of continuous improvement, with a focus on 'fool-proof' quality systems and waste elimination, Hemas has empowered teams on the shop floor to innovate and solve problems by challenging the status quo and using a scientific framework.



In Sri Lanka, the NCQP Awards stands out as the sole local accolade exclusively dedicated to recognising non-executive staff. The competition boasted 400 participating teams across various categories this year. The NCQP Awards plays a crucial role in promoting operational excellence and empowering employees to implement best practices towards a sustainable future. Hemas takes pride in being one of the winners. In the past 12 months, Hemas held an internal competition with 100 teams and the top 25

teams comprising of non-executive staff earned the privilege to compete in the NCQP Awards. Hemas Consumer Brands Manufacturing Director Viraj Jayasooriya expressed his appreciation for the historic win, stating, "We are honoured and humbled by this significant recognition for operational excellence, which underscores our unyielding dedication to our customers, partners and stakeholders. This year's achievement is particularly significant for the FMCG sector and we are proud of the enthusiasm and commitment

of our valuable employees who have played a pivotal role in enhancing operational efficiencies. Hemas Consumer Brands is dedicated to providing its customers with innovative and sustainable quality solutions, while simultaneously pursuing growth and profitability for the company. Its unwavering commitment to its core values will continue to guide it as it strives for excellence in operational excellence. It is excited to embark on this journey and look forward to the future.

Uber Eats brings e-cycles for delivery in Sri Lanka

Uber Eats, Sri Lanka's most loved food and grocery delivery platform, recently brought on board 100 electric cycles on its platform.

The e-cycles launched as 'Voltage Edition' are manufactured by Lumala, the country's largest cycle manufacturer and have been especially designed for deliveries. They have a range of up to 100 kilometers and top speed of up to 30 kilometers per hour. Uber Eats was the first platform to introduce cycle deliveries in Sri Lanka last year.

The e-cycles can cover longer distances than regular bicycles and are easier to maintain than traditional motorbikes. The cycle battery charges in four hours; this makes delivery downtime minimum and reduces expenses versus fuel costs. By making it easier to cover a bigger delivery distance radius with lesser effort, delivery partners will be able to potentially make more deliveries and earn more. The initiative is a step forward towards Uber Eats' global vision of moving all trips to sustainable mobility by 2040.

The announcement was made at an event held recently where



Uber Eats sponsored e-cycles worth Rs.42 million for 100 most engaged delivery partners. Ninety of these delivery partners were previously using petrol-powered motorbikes while the other 10 were using regular bicycles. The company will also facilitate a 30 percent discount on the purchase of Lumala e-cycles and 15 percent discount on spare parts for delivery partners on its platform.

Power and Energy Minister for Sri Lanka Kanchana Wijesekera graced the occasion as the chief guest, congratulated Uber Eats on its sustainability focus and gave away the e-cycles to select delivery partners. He was joined by guest of honour US Ambassador to Sri Lanka Julie J. Cheng along with Uber

Senior Director Public Policy and Government Relations Asia Pacific Region Mike Orgill and Uber Eats Sri Lanka Interim General Manager Pivithuru Kodikara, among others.

Commenting on the announcement, Orgill said, "We're committed to Sri Lanka and are continually bringing the best that Uber Eats has to offer to the country. After becoming the first platform to introduce cycle deliveries, we're onboarding customised e-cycles today in line with our global vision to move to sustainable mobility by 2040. We will soon add e-scooters and e-motorbikes for deliveries as part of our efforts to promote sustainable mobility in the country."

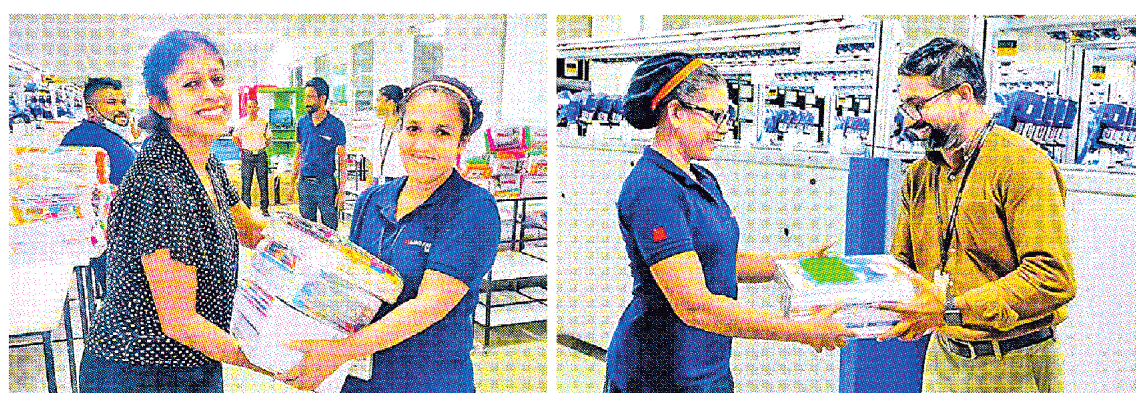
MAS makes employee welfare a top priority amid economic crisis

Reiterating its commitment to employee welfare, Sri Lanka's largest exporter and South Asia's largest apparel tech manufacturer, MAS Holdings, has stepped forward once again to support the struggling communities in the apparel sector.

The company's latest employee welfare and benefit programmes are rolled out as the nation collectively faces one of its most challenging inflationary cycles in history.

As an immediate measure, MAS notably responded to the elevated cost of living, paying several ex gratia payments to all employees, collectively amounting to 125 percent of their monthly wage in 2022.

MAS has embarked on countless other initiatives to ease the difficulties its employees and communities faced and continue to face during the ongoing economic crisis and pandemic. MAS Holdings Director Human Resource Operations Charaka Gunawardhana highlighted its people-first approach that has uplifted the livelihoods of its employees and their families. "It gives me great pride and honour to be part of a team that follows its people-first sentiment with action – action which is not just good on paper but helps our employees put food on their table, provide books for their



Through the Sisu Diriya scheme, MAS provided the much-needed school supplies to the children of employees across all grades, including third party service providers

children and peace of mind when it comes to their financial wellbeing." "We adjusted our employee wages in January 2022 and then again in April. In the face of rising economic challenges, we promise to keep a close watch on the situation and consider yet another wage adjustment to help ease the burden. We see that these difficult times show no sign of slowing down soon and we will do what is needed for our people in 2023," mentioned Gunawardhana.

As a response to severe economic challenges and the imminent threat of food shortages in the country, MAS was a first respondent for its people as it took multiple approaches to ensure food security. A notable donation was

the provision of dry rations to over 80,000 employees, their families and third party service providers by MAS.

Standing true to its commitment to uplifting livelihoods, MAS went beyond addressing physical needs, catering to the educational necessities for its employees' children. The apparel giant recently announced the MAS 'Sisu Diriya' scheme through which it will provide the much-needed school supplies to the children of employees across all grades, including third party service providers. Extending benefits to the communities in which MAS operates, during the fuel crisis in the country, MAS used its fuel supplies for a fleet of 80 buses to

provide transport for schoolchildren to attend the Ordinary Level examinations earlier in 2022.

Giving equal attention to its employees' mental health, MAS took measures to increase the availability of mental health counsellors at their plants, offering guidance and counselling as and when required. MAS has now joined hands with the nation's leading businesses in the 'Manudam Mehewara' initiative, which is a humanitarian aid programme, which benefits 119,000 families to which MAS made a striking Rs.100 million investment to assist low-income segments of the country through the Sarvodaya movement.

Astron wins Gold at NCE Export Awards 2022



Astron Director/CEO Sirimal Fernando (centre) receives award in the presence of other Astron and NCE officials

Sri Lanka's pioneer pharmaceutical manufacturing company Astron Limited was presented the Gold award in the pharmaceutical products, including medicinal-related Ayurvedic and herbal products sector, recognising its outstanding performance in overseas markets, at the 30th Annual Export Awards of the National Chamber of Exporters of Sri Lanka (NCE).

The ceremony was held at Shangri-La, Colombo recently, under the theme 'Recognising, Inspiring and Strengthening'. The annual ceremony

organised by the NCE recognises and rewards Sri Lankan exporters of products and services on their performance in international markets.

"We are delighted to be recognised for our exemplary performance in international markets, underpinning our commitment to quality healthcare solutions. This award goes to further inspire and encourage our journey as a key exporter in the pharmaceutical industry in Sri Lanka," said Astron Ltd Director/Chief Executive Officer Sirimal Fernando.

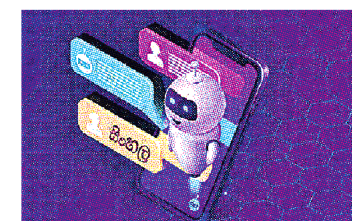
Kapruka launches free Sinhala language interface to ChatGPT

The Sinhala version of ChatGPT, the popular chatbot from OpenAI, is now available free to the Sri Lankan community on Kapruka Free Community Tools and APIs, making it an invaluable tool for creating content in Sinhala.

Kapruka, the leading e-commerce brand in Sri Lanka and the country's largest online retailer, through this initiative, further solidifies its commitment to the Sri Lanka community. Kapruka.com founder and Chairman Dulith Herath is the brains behind this project, ably supported by his team of IT specialists. When promoted by Herath launched this free service, he reiterated, stating, "I wrote the Sinhala interface for ChatGPT and my work here is not a big deal."

He further went on to state, "I only wrote the necessary transformers and translators using existing open-source tools. But it does open up ChatGPT to Sri Lankans with limited English knowledge."

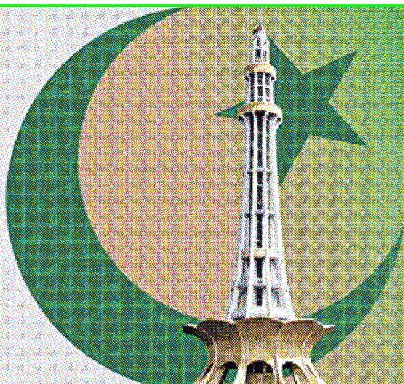
Using ChatGPT on Kapruka in Sinhala is incredibly easy. Anyone can go to kapruka.com and use the search bar to look up Sinhala ChatGPT. The users are then brought to the Sinhala ChatGPT



page. In the 'Start Your Chat' column, one can type a brief sentence in Sinhala about their preference. One can also type in Sinhala, which is becoming more and more popular among young people. Finally, click the submit button and the results will appear at the top of the page. In response to prompts, ChatGPT in Sinhala can produce articles, essays, jokes and even poetry.

Just two months after its global launch, ChatGPT, a well-known chatbot from OpenAI, is thought to have amassed over 100 million monthly active users, making it the fastest-growing consumer application in history. Kapruka believes that its recently launched Sinhala ChatGPT will significantly aid students, content creators and anyone else in need of additional encouragement in Sinhala.

23 MARCH
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PAKISTAN DAY

DailyMirror Daily
Thursday March 23rd, 2023



Message by the High Commissioner on the occasion of National Day of Pakistan 23rd March 2023

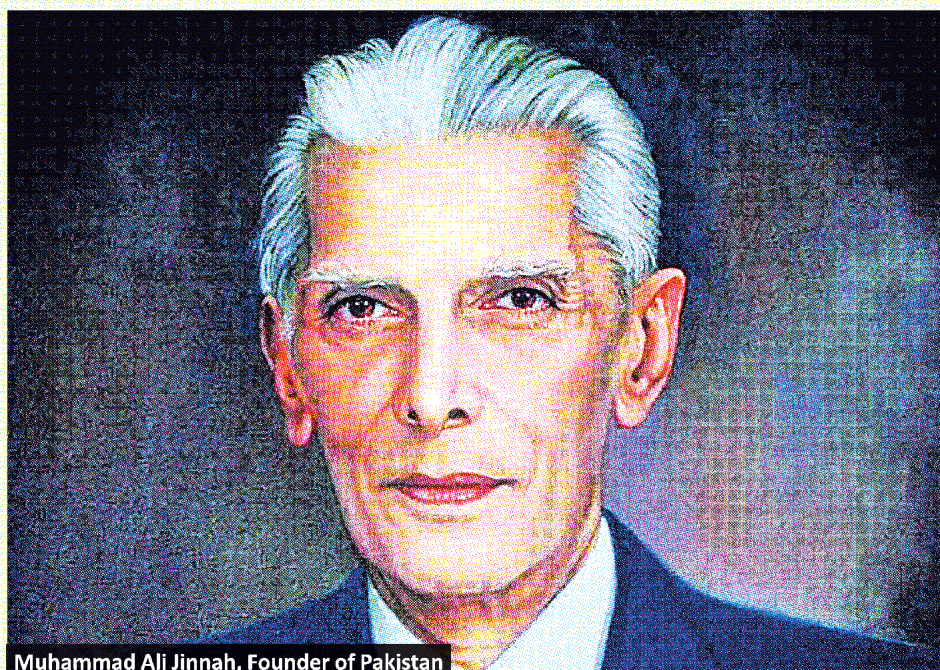
It is with great pleasure that, on the auspicious occasion of the National Day of Pakistan, I am conveying a message of peace, harmony and best wishes to all Sri Lankans from the people and Government of Pakistan.

23rd March 1940 is the most significant day in the history of Pakistan. On this day, the Muslims of South Asia launched their struggle for obtaining an independent homeland Pakistan.

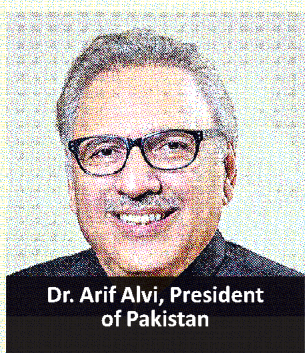
Since her independence, despite several challenges, Pakistan has steadily progressed. The Government of Pakistan, cognizant of our enormous national potential, has consistently pursued the country's journey to peace and prosperity through an elaborate social and economic development agenda. Sri Lanka is one of the first countries with which Pakistan established diplomatic relations. This historic relationship has nurtured into a strong friendship in seven and half decades, as this year 2023, marks 75th year of friendship between Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that mutually beneficial relations, rooted in history, have become truly multi-dimensional, covering fields of public diplomacy, economy, defence and security, culture, education and sports etc.

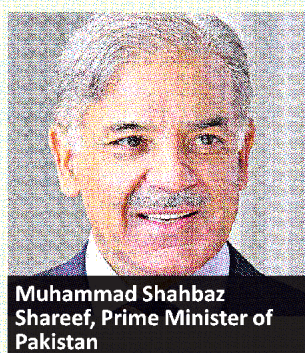
I would take this opportunity to invite Sri Lankan investors to integrate themselves in the unfolding socio-economic revolution in Pakistan. It is an ideal opportunity for Sri Lankan entrepreneurs to explore new vistas of cooperation between the two countries. This will be a bilaterally beneficial venture for both countries especially given the need of the hour to develop sustainable economic activities. On behalf of the Government and people of Pakistan, let me reiterate Pakistan's continued commitment and support to the Government and people of Sri Lanka in



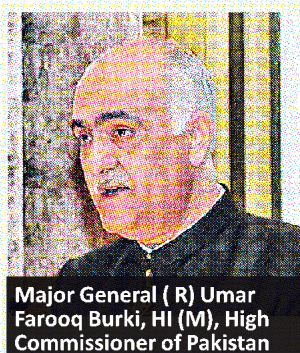
Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Founder of Pakistan



Dr. Arif Alvi, President of Pakistan



Muhammad Shahbaz Shareef, Prime Minister of Pakistan



Major General (R) Umar Farooq Burki, HI (M), High Commissioner of Pakistan

their endeavours for achieving a bright and prosperous future for their beautiful country.

Availing this opportunity, I would like to extend our best wishes to the people, its

leadership and the Democratic Government of Sri Lanka a continued progress, peace, national unity, reconciliation and harmony in the years ahead.

Long Live Pakistan-Sri Lanka Friendship!

Places to visit while in Pakistan



Saiful Muluk Lake, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



Rohtas Fort, Punjab



Mohatta Palace, Sindh



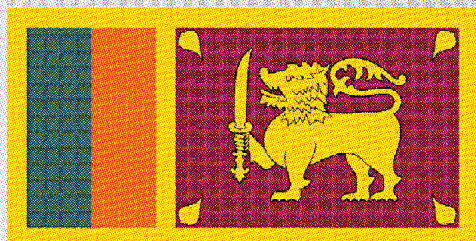
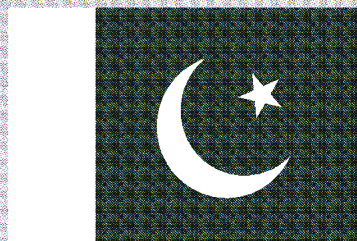
Hanna Lake, Balochistan



K2 Mountain, Gilgit-Baltistan



Monument park, Islamabad



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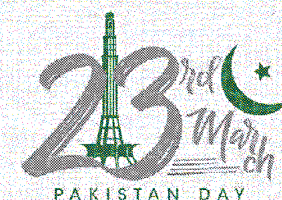


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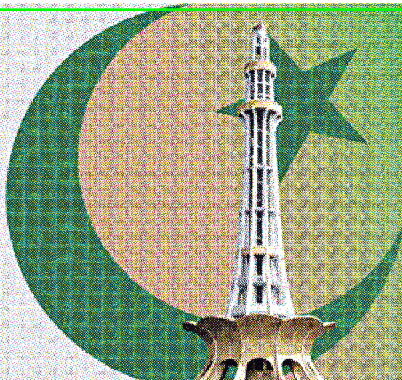


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75 years of Pakistan - Sri Lanka Friendship — An Overview

The year 2023 marks 75 years of friendship between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Both Countries have maintained a friendly relationship for the past 75 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations. This friendship is based on shared values of democracy, diversity, and the desire for regional peace and stability.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka have several MOU's and agreements in place whereby both have enjoyed fruits of joint ventures as well as bilateral delegation exchange programs in variety of sectors like trade and business, education, defense and security, culture and tourism to name a few.

To further enhance the bilateral ties, Pakistan High Commission in Colombo has been doing a lot of welfare work for the friendly people of Sri Lanka. The activities mainly include ration distribution for deserving people, sewing machines for skilled women who want to support their families from home, computers and IT labs for schools, and business centers, fresh water pumps, sports equipment and time to time sports tournaments, are also organized to engage the youth in healthy physical activities.

The Government of Pakistan through its High Commission in Sri Lanka is awarding Jinnah Scholarships to bright Sri Lankan students on merit every year. Since its initiation in 2006, it has benefitted over 2000 Sri Lankan students.

The Government of Pakistan also offers "Allama Iqbal Scholarship" to Sri Lankan Students. It is a prestigious fully funded scholarship program for all Sri Lankan students who wish to pursue higher education in Pakistan. The scholarship aims to promote

academic excellence and cultural exchange between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Under this program, selected Sri Lankan students are offered scholarships to pursue graduate, postgraduate and doctoral studies in various fields, including medicine, engineering, and social sciences etc. By providing opportunities for Sri Lankan students to study in Pakistan, the program helps foster mutual understanding, cultural exchange, and goodwill between the two countries. This program is a commitment of Pakistan to promote the values of education, knowledge, and international cooperation.

Trade has been a key area of cooperation between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Pakistan signed its first ever FTA with Sri Lanka in 2002. Ever since, both the countries have been doing bilateral trade in multiple sectors. Pakistan exports a wide range of products to Sri Lanka, including textiles, cement, and sugar, while Sri Lanka exports tea, rubber, and coconut products to Pakistan.

Defense and security ties between the two countries are also commendable. Pakistan has provided military training to personnels of Sri Lankan armed forces from different tiers, and both countries have participated in joint military exercises. More than six hundred senior military officers undergo training in different categories in Pakistan annually. Likewise, officers from all Pakistani armed forces also come to Sri Lanka for joint exercises and training courses etc. Bilateral high level delegation visits are also a common feature of our defense ties. In the 1990s, Pakistan provided military support to the Sri Lankan government during the civil war against the LTTE. Pakistan also played a key role in the development of the Sri Lankan Army's

Special Forces. Additionally, both countries have signed several defense agreements, including a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on military cooperation, training and exchange programs, and defense industry cooperation. Overall, the defense cooperation between Pakistan and Sri Lanka has been a key aspect of the bilateral relations and has strengthened the partnership over time.

Although it is 75 years of our friendship, yet both nations enjoy deeper connection through centuries old Gandhara civilization homed and well preserved in Pakistan out of which many have been declared "World Heritage Sites" by the UNESCO. Buddhism in the region produced a rich heritage of Buddhist art and architecture, which included the creation of intricate stone carvings and sculptures. Sri Lanka, which is predominantly a Buddhist country, has been deeply influenced by the Gandhara Civilization's Buddhist heritage. Many of the old temples in Sri Lanka also feature intricate stone carvings and sculptures that are similar to those found in Gandhara, Pakistan.

The vibrant and diverse culture of the two nations is another commonality between Pakistan and Sri Lanka where both the countries have a vast opportunity to explore bilateral exchanges and joint ventures. The 75 years of Pakistan-Sri Lanka friendship has been marked by cooperation in various fields, including trade, defense, education, culture, and sports. The future of Pakistan-Sri Lanka relations is bright, and both countries have much to gain through this cooperative relationship. May our future generations enjoy the fruits of this love, respect and bilateral relations for centuries to come.

Long Live Pakistan - Sri Lanka Friendship

Activities undertaken for Strengthening People to People Relations between Pakistan & Sri Lanka in 2022

Pakistan High Commission in Colombo has been doing a lot of welfare work for the friendly people of Sri Lanka on behalf of the government of Pakistan. The activities mainly include

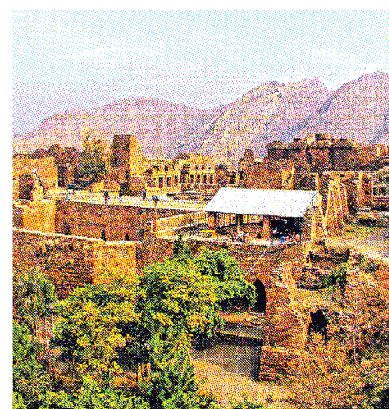
scholarships for Sri Lankan students, ration distribution for deserving people, sewing machines for skilled women who want to support their families from home, computers and IT labs

for schools, business centers and libraries, fresh water pumps, sports equipment and time to time sports tournaments, are also organized to engage the youth in healthy physical activities.



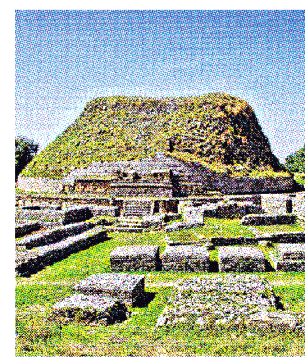
Famous Buddhist Sites in Pakistan

Takht-i-Bahi



Takht means "throne" and bahi, "water" or "spring" in Persian/Urdu. The monastic complex was called Takht-i-Bahi because it was built atop a hill and also adjacent to a stream. Located 80 kilometers from Peshawar and 16 kilometers Northwest of the city of Mardan, Takht-i-Bahi was unearthed in early 20th century and in 1980. It was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list as the largest Buddhist remains in Gandhara.

Taxila



The modern town of Taxila is 35 km from Islamabad. Most of the archaeological sites of Taxila (600 BC to 500 AD) are located around Taxila Museum. For over one thousand years, Taxila remained famous as a center of learning Gandhara art of sculpture, architecture, education and Buddhism in the days of Buddhist glory. There are over 50 archaeological sites scattered in a radius of 30 kms around Taxila. Some of the most important sites are; Dhamarajika Stupa and Monastery (300 BC - 200 AD), Bhir Mound (600-200 BC), Sirkap (200 BC - 600 AD), Jandial Temple (c.250 BC) and Jaulian Monastery (200 - 600 AD).

Zar Dheri (Gold Mound), Hazara



It is a large monastic complex on the old Silk Route some 26 km from Mansehra (Hazara). It is located on a hillock which was in visual contact with other hill retreats in the area. The complex had a monastery and a stupa resembling Jaulian. There are two caves-cum-tunnels which were possibly used for meditation. It was a fortified place, with bastions and a protective wall made of diaper masonry. It was later used as a citadel. It yielded more than one hundred stone sculptures and architectural panels besides other artifacts.

Mingora


Mingora is a city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa yielding magnificent pieces of Buddhist sculpture and the ruins of great stupa. Buddhist remains and carvings have been discovered near Mingora in the Jambil River Valley. At Panr, a stupa and monastery dated to the 1st century CE has been excavated. At Loe Barr, Butkara II and Matalai, Italian archaeologists unearthed 475 Aryan graves dated between 1520 and 170 BC and two horse skeletons. On the opposite side of the River Swat at Aligrama, near the Saidu Sharif airport, a site of Gandhara grave culture was discovered by Italian archaeologists and dated to 1000 BC.

Swat

The Lush-green valley of Swat District. Swat was once the cradle of Buddhism of all its schools- Little Vehicle, Great Vehicle and the Esoteric sects where once 1,400 monasteries flourished. It was the home of the famous Gandhara School of Sculpture which was an expression of Graeco-Roman form in the local Buddhism tradition. Archaeologists now know of more than 400 Buddhist sites covering an area of 160 km in Swat valley alone. Among the important excavations of Buddhist sites in Swat an important one is Butkara-I, containing original relics of the Buddha. A stone carved statues of Buddha, are still existent in the village Ghalegay and Jehanabad Manglawar. There is also a big stupa in Shingardar Ghalegay and other ones are located in Amlukdara near Bankot and Shnasha stupa near Batora village.

Thul Mir Rukan

Stupa of Mir Rukan is one of the few surviving Buddhist monuments in Sindh. Thul Mir Rukan is a 22 m high cylindrical structure, a stupa. It is divided into five sections. The capitals of the pilasters in the circular casing are decorated with cut-brick work and moulded panels at the top.




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Happy Pakistan National Day to all





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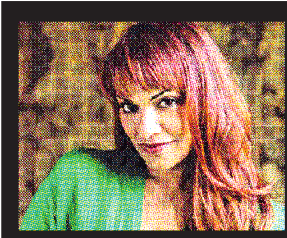
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DE NIESE TO STAR IN WEST END PLAY

Danielle de Niese is to star in a West End play revival of *Aspects of Love*, the Telegraph reports. She is said to be performing as Giulietta in the Andrew Lloyd Webber play. She was to perform in the Glyndebourne Festival but pulled out after opting to perform at the West End play instead, it was reported.

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The Aluth Pola, a Justice for Animals fundraiser is being organised for the fifth time and will take place on Sunday, March 26th from 10:00am – 6.00pm at Body Bar, No. 3 Jawatte Avenue, Colombo 05.

The March 2023 Aluth Pola features over 25 home businesses that practice sustainability, local manufacturing and sourcing, and most of which are run by women. Vendors will be selling many unique and exciting products: plants, food, baked goods, batik, upcycled clothing, pre-loved

Aluth Pola

books, jewellery, art, and more. While they usually organise the market to fundraise for our beloved homeless cats and dogs they wanted to do something to combat the loss of Sri Lanka's biodiversity. Therefore they are raising funds for a 2-day

educational nature conservation programme for unprivileged children in partnership with Ceylon Wild Safaris, a sustainable safari operation in Yala.

This is a collaborative project that intends to nurture fascination and give them basic knowledge

about our beautiful local wildlife, conservation and sustainability.

Additionally they have invited other conservation groups such as SCAR (Small Cats Advocacy and Research), Pearl Protectors and the BIO Diversity Project to join the market this year to raise collective community awareness about ongoing projects and animal welfare and conservation.

Justice for Animals core programme is population control [and Rabies eradication] via spay-neuter-vaccinate-treat programmes.

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On Sunday, March 26th from 10:00am – 6.00pm at Body Bar, No. 3 Jawatte Avenue, Colombo 05.

Mad Curry Skills

By Chari presents 'Live Cooking' Workshops

Text Panchali Illankoon

Home-based food business, Mad Curry Skills by Chari, run by home cook Charindi Meegasthanna together with her husband Chinthaka Dharmakeerthi is a known household name among the foodie community. Chari's mad curry skills have made her famous for her signature lamprais and yellow rice and over the years, with a steady clientele in the build, the husband-and-wife duo have grown their business to cater to various lunch and dinner orders of their customers in Colombo on a pre-order basis.

This year, Mad Curry Skills by Chari is embarking on an all-new venture at the request of their clients - live cooking workshops where Chari, along with culinary guests, will share their personalised recipes for their signature dishes.

The debut live cooking workshop will be done together with none other than Chari's very own father, Chef Ranjith Meegasthanna. Chef Ranjith has over four and half decades of experience in the hotel industry both locally and internationally, having worked abroad across Europe and the Middle East as a chef in some of the most prominent 5-star hotel chains such as the Inter-Continental and Holiday Inn.

In Sri Lanka, Chef Ranjith is well known for his stint as the Executive Chef at the Kingsbury Hotel (the then Continental Hotel). Many on F&B in the hotel industry have learnt, grown and succeeded under the watchful eye of Chef Ranjith. For Chari, food and cooking is in her blood, and she too developed a love for creating gastronomical delights from the master himself. At the workshop, participants will learn how to whip up industry standard dishes, including appetisers to the likes of the warm and hearty up-country vegetable and egg drop soup and the classic tower of cucumber, tomato, pineapple and beet salad to a main course meal that combines the best of Sri Lankan and Sri Lankan-Chinese cuisines such as savoury rice, chicken stew, stuffed capsicum, veggie stir fry and everyone's favourite - hot butter cuttlefish.



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The workshop will kick off with a welcome drink and amuse bouche as participants get briefed and ready for the session and thereafter it's all about sharpening knife skills, balancing flavours and learning how to perfect some of Sri Lanka's best comfort dishes. Once the knives are down and the meals are plated up, participants can kick back, relax and enjoy the food they whipped up.

Join Mad Curry Skills by Chari and Chef Ranjith on 1st April 2023 at Wild Flowers Restaurant, Pannipitiya for a live cooking workshop you don't want to miss! Only 8 spots left to grab. Tickets are priced at Rs. 10,500/- per person. For more details, visit @madcurryskills bychari on Instagram.

Instagram

@candiedclicks



Simple pleasures

@candiedclicks



Cheesy, spicy Tteok-bokki

@myculinary_clicks



The morning meal or the breakfast is one of the most important meals of the day

@myculinary_clicks



Who isn't a fan of sweets? And when you see gulab jamuns

WHAT DID YOU EAT THIS WEEK?

Here are a few photos sent by our readers.



COMPILED BY
PANCHALI
ILLANKOON

CELEBRATE FRANCOPHONIE 2023 IN SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka is set to celebrate Francophonie during the month of March 2023 with a multidisciplinary programme hosting over 20 events. Every year, on March 20, the International Day of La Francophonie is celebrated world over, in French speaking countries as well as in those where the French language has made its mark as they celebrate the French language and Francophonie cultures. Sri Lanka will host Francophonie 2023 together with the International Organisation of la Francophonie, the diplomatic missions of France, Canada, Switzerland and Egypt together with the Alliance Française of Colombo, Matara and Kandy, the French Teacher's Association and the International French School of Colombo.

The month-long celebration will feature events centred around cinema, music, exhibition, gastronomy, literature and workshops on the French language. Here's a glimpse at what's in store for Francophonie 2023 in Sri Lanka:



CINEMA

SHORT MOVIE SCREENING

French short movies in the frame of La Fête du Court Métrage and Canadian short movies

- WHEN: 28th March 2023
- WHERE: Alliances Françaises of Colombo, Matara and Kandy

ENTRANCE FREE

SCREENING - FRENCH MOVIE EDMOND

Alexis Michalik, 2018: the movie which tells the story of the writing of one of the most famous French theatre plays: Cyrano de Bergerac was screened on the 20th March 2023 at the National Film Corporation

MUSIC

TOUR OF LES MONSIEUR MONSIEUR

Performance by the famed duo, Laurent Brunetti and Mario Pacchioli from the French-speaking Switzerland.

- WHEN:
- 24th March 2023 at 7.00pm (Garden Nuga - Sri Lanka Foundation Institute)
- 26th March 2023 at 7.00pm (Kailasapathy Auditorium, University of Jaffna)
- 28th March 2023 at 6.00pm (Engineering Faculty Auditorium, University of Peradeniya)

ENTRANCE FREE

EXHIBITION

FABIENNE FRANCOITTE

Celebrate French language through arts with the Belgian artist Fabienne Francoitte who will conduct workshops with a group of Alliance Française members and a class of the International French School of Colombo.

- WHEN: 30th March - 30th April 2023
- WHERE: Alliances Françaises de Kotte a Colombo

GASTRONOMY

FRANCOPHONIC CUISINE DAY AT GALLE FACE HOTEL

A Francophonie cuisine day with a special menu for the dinner buffet organised by the Embassy of Egypt at the Galle Face Hotel, featuring different recipes of the countries that are part of the International Organisation of Francophonie.

- WHEN: 23rd March 2023 at 7.00pm onwards
- WHERE: Galle Face Hotel

LITERATURE

OPENING OF THE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE LIBRARY

Official opening of the library of the Alliance Française of Colombo with the presentation of Yasmin Rajapakse's book.

- WHEN: 22nd March 2023 at 3.00pm
- WHERE: Alliance Française Colombo

WORKSHOPS ON THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

ACROSTICHE AND DRAWING WORKSHOP

A fun filled workshop for students to brush up their French and have fun at the same time and get creative with the 10 selected words.

- WHEN: 25th March 2023 from 10-11am.
- WHERE: Alliance Française Kandy

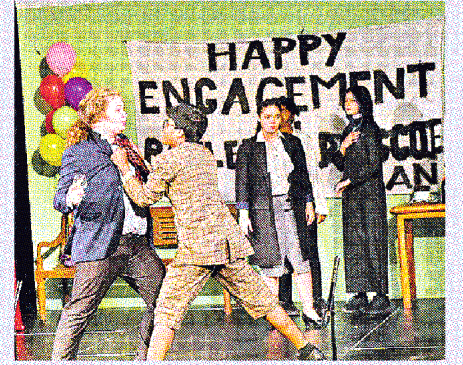
For the detailed programme and information on Francophonie 2023, visit @francophoniesrilanka on Facebook.



BSC THEATRE UNVEILS 'ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS'

The British School in Colombo (BSC), in their endeavour to unearth hidden talents among the students, presented the world acclaimed award-winning verbal and visual comedy 'One Man, Two Guvnors' successfully at the School Auditorium recently.

A cast of over 25 actors, representing the senior school of BSC, were able to delight a packed audience for nearly one and a half hours after they had begun their rehearsals in 2020 but were interrupted due to COVID-19 pandemic. The whole crew was outstanding as they rallied around through some excellent teamwork throughout the play to become instant stars with their huge amount of talent on the stage.



Francophonie 2023 - Performance by "Les Monsieur Monsieur"

The Embassy of Switzerland to Sri Lanka and the Maldives together with the International Organisation of la Francophonie will be hosting a theatrical performance of French and Swiss songs across three key cities in Sri Lanka with the view of celebrating Francophonie 2023, the annual celebration of the French language and Francophonie cultures with "Les Monsieur Monsieur", the famed duo Laurent BRUNETTI and Mario PACCHIOLI

from the French-speaking Switzerland. The tour is comprised of original and popular songs, also referring to the great works of the French and the Swiss composers, creating and bringing back memories through their unique theatrical interpretation. The language barrier disappears, and the audience is propelled by the words, emotion and energy of the Artists. The duo will also conduct master classes at selected University venues and for its

students. Laurent BRUNETTI was exposed to music and theatre from a young age marking his career path. Accompanied by a solo piano or a symphony orchestra, BRUNETTI brings to life the lyrics and melodies to a theatrical performance. With five albums to his credit, he also writes for other artists and is actively working to link theatrical art with musical performance. Mario PACCHIOLI began his classical training as

a pianist and opera singer at the age of 7. With a Golden record in Switzerland and four albums to his credit; it is at the Musicians Institute of Technology of Hollywood (Los Angeles) that PACCHIOLI developed his art, having also trained as a theatre actor in France. His latest musical creation "Remas" pays tribute to his mother tongue Romansh. PACCHIOLI is recognised for his symphonic work for orchestra, voice and choir.



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