



YOUR PAPER TODAY 10 PAGES

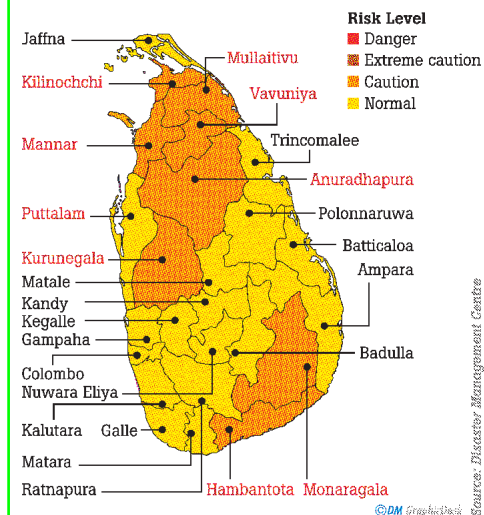
Forbes lists Sri Lanka as one of 23 best places to visit in 2023

US-based international travel influencer Juliana Broste, a 12x Heartland Emmy Award-winning travel filmmaker and host, showcasing adventures and fun things to do around the world, recommended Sri Lanka to be listed as one of the best places to visit in 2023 and as a result of her continuous effort, Sri Lanka has been listed on the Forbes list as one of the 23 best places to visit in 2023.

SEE FULL STORY ON A2

HOT WEATHER WARNING TO EIGHT DISTRICTS

The Met. Dept. advises public to remain hydrated and take breaks in the shade as often as possible



BY CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA

The Meteorology Department has issued an extreme heat weather advisory for today particularly for Kilinochchi, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Mannar, Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, Monaragala and Hambantota Districts.

According to the heat index issued by the department, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya, Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, Monaragala and Hambantota Districts would be affected by hot weather conditions.

"People may suffer heat cramps, exhaustion and continuing activity in the heat or sun could lead to heatstroke," the advisory warns.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2

Nine Ramadan fasting inmates escape; six apprehended

Prisons spokesman Chandana Ekanayake said the officials at the open prison had apprehended six escapees

BY PRASAD RUKMAL

Nine fasting inmates at the Thaldena Open Prison Rehabilitation Centre in Badulla escaped early yesterday morning.

Prisons spokesman Chandana Ekanayake said the officials at the open prison had apprehended six escapees.

The prison superintendent is conducting an investigation and a search operation has also been launched to find the remaining inmates, he said.

TOQUE MONKEYS COULD BE HEADING FOR LABS IN CHINA: CEJ

Hopes Minister will revoke decision Says Minister cannot decide on exporting animals on his own

BY CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA AND INDIKA SRI ARAVINDA

The first batch of 100,000 toque monkeys could be heading for test labs in China, Executive Director of the Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ), Hemantha Withanage said. He said these monkeys could be used for experiments and

testing of cosmetic products and medical experiments.

"As per the globally accepted criteria for the definition of zoos, there are only 18 zoos in China that fit the bill, which averages out to 5,000 monkeys per zoo, and so the claim is not credible," he said.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2

Toque Macaque

The Toque Macaque is a commonly found monkey in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan Toque Macaques (Macaca sinica) are the smallest species of Macaca, a golden-brown coloured monkey, endemic to Sri Lanka.

Weight: Male 4.0 - 5.5 kg Female 2.5 - 4.5 kg

Size: Body length 35-53 cm

Diet: Omnivore

Population Trend: Decreasing

Source: www.dilmahconservation.org



Exporting Toque monkeys AGRI MINISTER TO SUBMIT CABINET PAPER NEXT WEEK TO STUDY PROPOSAL

Ministry statement says these animals cause huge damage to agricultural crops

BY KELUM BANDARA AND CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA

Agriculture Minister Mahinda Amaraweera who briefed the Cabinet of Ministers yesterday about the proposal to send Toque monkeys to the zoos in China said he would submit a Cabinet paper next week to appoint a committee to see the feasibility of

implementing it.

The Minister told Daily Mirror yesterday that only a private entity in China submitted a proposal in this regard.

"There is no involvement of the Chinese government. It is a proposal from a private party," he said.

He said he would submit the Cabinet paper next Monday seeking

approval to appoint a committee comprising officials from the Agriculture, Wildlife, Plantation and Justice Ministries to study the proposal.

"If the proposal is viable, 100,000 monkeys will be sent in stages. It is not to send such a large number at once," he said.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2

President to attend Coronation of King Charles III

BY KELUM BANDARA

President Ranil Wickremesinghe will attend the coronation of King Charles III,

Daily Mirror learns.

All the heads of states have been invited for the event. According to

informed sources, the president will represent Sri Lanka at the coronation early next month.

Constitutionality of Bill to amend laws to protect LGBTQI community challenged in SC

The petitioners fear that the LGBT movements may promote their programmes in schools

BY LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

The constitutionality of the Private Members' Bill submitted to parliament seeking to amend Sri Lanka's penal code with the aim of protecting the country's LGBTQI community has been challenged before the Supreme Court through a

Special Determination petition.

A Retired Brigadier of the Sri Lankan Army Athula De Silva, Political analyst Shenali Waduge and prominent businesswoman Jehan Hameed filed this Special Determination petition naming the Attorney General and Parliamentarian Premnath C. Dolawatte as respondents.

This petition was filed through Attorney-at-Law Dharshana Weruduwege.

Through this petition, the petitioners are seeking a declaration that the bill requires the approval by the people at a Referendum in addition to the 2/3 approval of the Parliament.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2

Six men nabbed with heroin worth Rs. 3.5 bn brought ashore

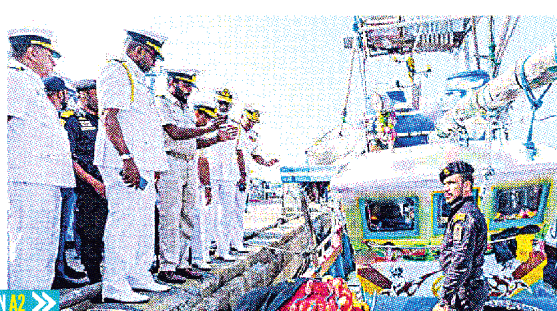
Navy suspects that the heroin stock had been smuggled from Pakistan

BY DARSHANA SANJEEWA BALASURIYA

The six suspects who were arrested along with 175 kilos of heroin during a special search operation carried out by the Sri Lanka Navy, Sri Lanka Police and other intelligence agencies in the seas south of Sri Lanka, had been brought ashore at the Galle Harbour.

The Navy said the suspects were arrested when they were carrying narcotics which had a street value of Rs. 3.5 billion in a multi-day fishing vessel.

The heroin was intercepted about 132 nautical miles (about 244km) off the Little Basses, Hambantota on 15th April 2023.



SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2

Rise in Covid-19 cases in India - reports

The new variant has mutations that may make it more transmissible and cause a higher rate of infection

India is currently experiencing a rise in Covid-19 infections, but there is no need to panic at this time India recorded 9,111 new coronavirus infections, while the active cases increased to 60,313, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated

on Monday, Time Of India reported. The death toll increased to 5,31,141 with 27 deaths. The case tally was recorded at 4.47 crore (4,48,27,226).

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2

Two returnees from SL tested positive for Covid in TN

Two returnees from Sri Lanka was among the 502 Covid cases that were reported from Tamil Nadu on Saturday, The Hindu reported.

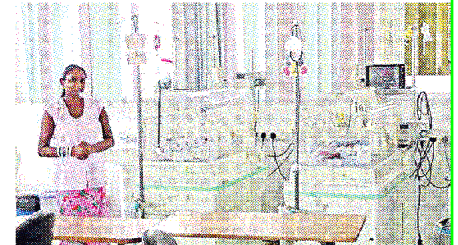
Among those who tested positive for the infection were nine persons who returned from overseas. This included two people each from the United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka and Malaysia," it reported.

Quadruplets born in Peradeniya

The babies weighing 1.3 kg and 1.1 kg at birth, were sent to the special infant treatment unit

BY K.L. SURAWEEERA-KANDY

A resident of Thorayaya in Kurunegala has given birth to quadruplets (three males and one female) at the Peradeniya Teaching Hospital yesterday.



SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2

Expressway revenue exceeds Rs. 70 mn on April 15th and 16th

BY CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA

More than Rs. 70 million in revenue was collected from expressways on April 15th and 16th Road Development Authority (RDA) Project Director L.V. Sardha Weerakoon said.

He said a total of Rs. 70,558,100 was collected from vehicles that used all expressways on April 15 and 16.

Accordingly, Rs. 34,974,100 in revenue was collected from 126,760 vehicles that used the expressways on April 15 and Rs. 35,584,000 from 129,465 vehicles that used the expressways on April 16.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2

Expressways revenue

Table with 2 columns: Date, Revenue, Vehicles. April 15: Rs. 34,974,100, 126,760 vehicles. April 16: Rs. 35,584,000, 129,465 vehicles. Total: Rs. 70,558,100.

Sajith should think and act in a sensible manner: Range

Says country would face a challenging time ahead and support of all parties are needed to overcome this

BY YOHAN PERERA

Leader of Opposition Sajith Premadasa should think twice before making remarks and should realize that it is a cruel act not to support the government at this point, UNP General Secretary Palitha Range Bandara said yesterday.

"Only those who are cruel refuse to support the government at this point of time to rebuild the country's economy. Fuel prices, bus fares and gas prices have been reduced. There are no fuel queues nor gas queues. Therefore it is a crime not to support a government which has done all these," Mr. Range Bandara told a press conference.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2

Silent protests to mark Easter Sunday mayhem

Silent protests along Negombo-Colombo and Galle Road

BY YOHAN PERERA

Whilst highlighting that the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka is to build up a human chain on April 21 to mark the 4th anniversary of

Easter Sunday attacks, Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith yesterday urged all citizens to join the church in this exercise.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2

NANKANG HAPPY EASTER advertisement with Easter eggs and a rabbit illustration.

Daily Mirror

CONT'D. FROM PAGE 1

Rise in Covid-19 cases in India - reports



India is currently experiencing a rise in Covid-19 infections, but there is no need to panic, yet High-risk groups and the elderly should take extra precautions

The Arctur variant, also known as XBB.1.16, is a type of Omicron variant that is spreading in India. Health authorities around the world are closely monitoring it because it may be able to evade the immune systems of people, which makes the next four weeks important in controlling its spread. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Arctur variant does not seem to cause more severe disease. The WHO has identified XBB.1.16 as a new variant that resulted from the combination of BA.2.10.1 and BA.2.75, with a shared mutation also found in XBB.1.5. This new variant has mutations that may make it more transmissible and cause a higher rate of infection. India is currently experiencing a rise in Covid-19 infections, but there is no need to panic at this time. High-risk groups and the elderly should take extra precautions, experts had said.

Quadruplets born in Peradeniya

The babies weighing 1.3 kg and 1.1 kg at birth, were sent to the special infant treatment unit. According to hospital sources, the obstetrician and gynecologist at the Peradeniya Teaching Hospital are providing medical treatment to the quadruplets. In the meantime, the father of the infants, Buddika Herath, said that he will look after them with great dedication and love.

Six men nabbed with heroin worth Rs. 3.5 bn brought ashore

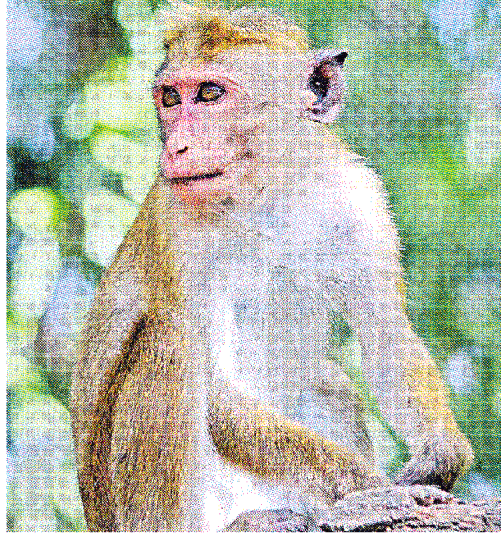
It was reported that the trawler had set sail from the Kudawella fishery harbour on March 20. The Navy suspects that the heroin stock had been smuggled from Pakistan and was handed over to the vessel in international waters. The suspects held in the operation have been identified as residents of Nakulugamuwa, Kudawella, Netolpitiya, and Trincomalee, who are from 25 to 32 years of age. They will be handed over to the Police Narcotic Bureau for onward legal action. Including the latest seizure, the Sri Lanka Navy has held drugs with a gross street value of over Rs. 4908 million during operations mounted in 2023.

TOQUE MONKEYS COULD BE HEADING FOR LABS IN CHINA: CEJ

- "We do not have 100,000 toque monkeys in zoos. Therefore, this situation cannot be justified under the law in the country"
- Says monkey population in the country will not decrease with the remaining number of monkeys

"Even though the government plans to send 100,000 monkeys to China, the monkey population in the country will not decrease with the remaining number of monkeys," he said. "If these monkeys are sent to zoos in China, they should be taken care of as zoo animals in Sri Lanka and should be born in a zoo. We do not have 100,000 toque monkeys in zoos. Therefore, this situation cannot be justified under the law in the country," Withanage said. "These animals should be captured from temple areas, such as the areas of Sri Dalada Maligawa, Anuradhapura, and

Mihintalaya. The monkeys living in these areas have the right to live in those areas just like us, humans," he said. "Therefore, it is not acceptable to send monkeys to China labs from the said religious places and torture them. "We hope that the Minister will revoke the decision. The Minister cannot decide on exporting animals to other countries on his own, but the decision can be taken by the Wildlife Director-General justifying the situation. "If not, the CEJ will take legal action against the decision under the current Wildlife Law," Withanage added.



AGRI MINISTER TO SUBMIT CABINET PAPER NEXT WEEK TO STUDY PROPOSAL

Earlier, the Ministry, quoting a research paper worked out by the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute, said the population of five species of wild animals including Toque monkeys had increased. The Ministry statement said these animals cause huge damage to agricultural crops.

Constitutionality of Bill to amend laws to protect LGBTQI community challenged in SC

The Petitioners state that with the proposed amendment, it may decriminalize the Homosexual Activities (which includes Gay, Lesbian, etc) which can exacerbate the current situation of the human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic

The petitioners said the Private Members' Bill titled "Penal Code (Amendment)" was initially published in the supplement issued on March 22, 2023 to the Part II of March 17, 2023 Gazette and later re-gazetted on or around 04th of April, 2023 as Ordered by the Parliament, after the Bill was Presented by Parliamentarian Dolawatte for its first reading on the said date. The petitioners said they verily believe that the Parliament has granted leave to proceed for the said Bill. The Petitioners state that the proposed amendment has failed to look into and preserve the best interest of the children. The petitioners feared that the LGBT movements may promote their programmes in schools and impact the free decision making of the school children and may also give rise to transgender children. The Petitioners further

state that with the proposed amendment, it may decriminalize the Homosexual Activities (which includes Gay, Lesbian, etc) which can exacerbate the current situation of the human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic. The petitioners further state that there is clear medical evidence locally and globally to suggest that the majority of men People Living with HIV (PLHIV) give a history of gay or bisexual exposure. "Such situation endangers the National Security of the Republic since it has the potential to destroy the very fabric of what constitutes a state, that is the individuals, families, communities, economic and socio-political institutions, and the military and police forces which guarantee the protection of state institutions", the petitioners added. The petitioners maintained

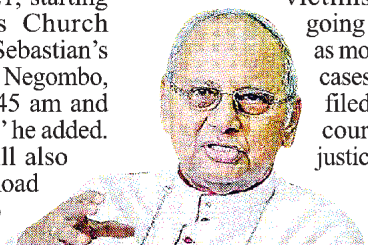


that section 365 of the Penal Code (as amended) proposed to be amended by Clause 2(i) of the bill. They alleged that the said Clause seriously removed the safeguards placed by the legislature by Section 17 of the Amending Act No 22 of 1995, to protect the Children below 16 years of age from among others, to Sexual Exploitation. Accordingly, the Petitioners state that said Clause seriously violates the Preamble, Articles 01, 03, 04(d), 12(1), 14(1) (f), 27(1), 27(2)(a), 27(2)(g), 27(3), 27(10), 27(11), 27(12) and 27(13) of the constitution and duly require the approval of the people at a Referendum by virtue of the provisions of Article 83 of the constitution.

Silent protests to mark Easter Sunday mayhem

"We call upon all our fellow citizens to join us, irrespective of differences of racial/ religious and political party affiliations to make up a human chain which will call upon our leaders to render justice to victims of Easter Sunday attacks and to strengthen the hands of freedom and justice in our motherland, which has unfortunately weakened," he said. "We invite all to gather along the side of the Colombo Negombo main road on both sides by 8.30 am on Friday April 21, starting from St Anthony's Church Kochchikade and St Sebastian's Church, Katuwapitiya, Negombo, observe silence at 8.45 am and remain there till 9 am," he added. A silent protest will also be held along Galle Road. The cardinal also

called all offices and factories to observe two minute silence at 8.45 am on April 21. Asked as to whether it is worth highlighting about the attack now since four years have passed since the mayhem, he said the effort is to prevent everyone from forgetting about the attack and seek the real truth behind the attack. "Even the present President does not seem to be interested in finding the real reason behind the attacks. Actually people including the victims are not going to forget it as more than 300 cases have been filed in various courts seeking justice," he said.



EXPRESSWAY REVENUE EXCEEDS RS. 70 MN DURING PAST 48-HOURS

No fatal accidents were reported on the expressways on both days. However, two minor injuries were reported on April 15 and 20 incidents such as causing damages to vehicles and to expressway property. Meanwhile, only one minor incident of injury to a person was reported on April 16, along with 24 incidents relating to vehicle and expressway property damages.

Sajith should think and act in a sensible manner: Range

He was referring to a remark made by Mr. Premadasa which said his party will never support this government. Responding to the reports which said President Wickremesinghe is to form a national government in the future, he said the national government is already here as many political groups are already supporting him. He said the country would face a challenging time ahead and support of all parties are needed to overcome this.

OBITUARIES

SELVARATNAM - CHANDRA. (1st February 1924 - 5th April 2023). A service of thanksgiving in celebration of Chandra's life will be held at the Cathedral of Christ the living Saviour. No. 368/3A, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7, on Wednesday 19th of April 2023 at 5.30 p.m. (Musical prelude from 5.00 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.) Chandra's entire international family of four generations will be present to honour her. 109144

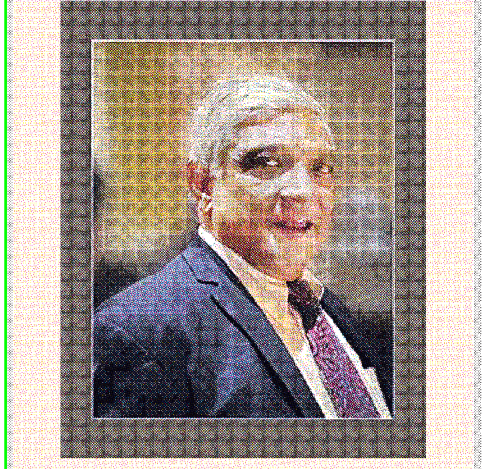
HATHARASINGHE - MAYANTHI SADHANA. Beloved mother of Kavisha, much loved partner of Dinesh Sanjeeva (Qatar), loving daughter of Odette and late H.V. Dharmadasa Hatharasinghe, sister-in-law of Janaki Punchihewa and devoted friend to all. Remains lie at Borella Jayaratne's new Parlour-A from 9.00 a.m. onwards on Monday, 17th April 2023. **Cortege leaves Parlour at 5.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 18th April 2023 for cremation at General Cemetery, Kanatta (Borella) at 5.30 p.m. 572912**

ONLINE OBITUARIES www.dailymirror.lk/obituaries

CLASSIFIEDS

Mayilwaganam Divya resident of 1/3 D 21, Kadhiranawatha, Mattakuliya, Colombo - 15 holder of National Identity Card bearing No. 965193278V do hereby solemnly affirm and declare to the Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka and its people that I have embraced Islam religion and have changed my name where I shall hereafter be known as Fathima Tahira in all purpose and documents. **DMR 109031**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



De Alwis - Ajith
"Safe in the arms of Jesus" loving husband of Nilmini (Nee Senanayake), adored father of Shane, son of late Denizil and Nesta De Alwis, brother of Sharon and Tishani, brother-in-law of Capt. Rajendra, Ramani, Anoma and Ravi, passed away peacefully on 13th April 2023. Funeral was held on 15th April 2023. A requiem mass will be held on Wednesday, 19th April at 6.30 p.m. at St. Anthony's Church, Kollupitiya.

HOT WEATHER WARNING TO EIGHT DISTRICTS

The Met. Dept. also advised the public to remain hydrated and take breaks in the shade as often as possible. They also advised checking on the elderly and the sick, who are indoors and not leave children unattended. "Outdoor workers are advised to limit their strenuous activities, find shade and should stay hydrated," it said. Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Polonnaruwa, Matale, Puttalam, Gampaha, Kegalle, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Ampara, Colombo, Kalutara, Ratnapura, Galle and Matara are also recorded as caution areas. Heat Index Forecast is



calculated by using relative humidity and maximum temperature and the condition that is felt on the human body.

Sri Lanka and UK to convene Strategic Dialogue in London

Foreign Secretary Aruni Wijewardane will participate in the inaugural UK-Sri Lanka Strategic Dialogue at Foreign Secretary level today at the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in London, a statement from the Foreign Ministry said. The statement said UK Minister of State in the FCDO Anne Marie Trevelyan will open the dialogue, which will be conducted with the participation of Sir Philip Barton, Permanent Undersecretary of the FCDO. "The inaugural Strategic Dialogue will be convened at the invitation of the FCDO at the important juncture of the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom this year. The Strategic Dialogue will provide a forum for both sides to discuss the multifaceted relations between the two countries. On the sidelines of the dialogue, Foreign Secretary Wijewardane will have a bilateral meeting with Assistant Secretary General of the Commonwealth Prof. Luis G. Franceschi and interact with members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)," the statement said.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE ISSUE REACHES A CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN INDIA

By **P.K. Balachandran**

The campaign to get the Indian government to recognize same-sex marriage has reached a critical stage. A Constitutional bench of the Supreme Court is set to hear the final arguments in the case on April 18.

Compared to other countries in South Asia, India has progressed in the matter of recognizing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) rights.

The colonial Indian Penal Code (IPC) had defined homosexual acts as "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" and made them illegal. The punishment was 10 years in jail. But on September 7, 2018, a five-judge constitutional bench of the Supreme Court invalidated part of Section 377 of the IPC, making homosexuality legal.

Though same-sex live-in relationships are allowed, same-sex marriages are not. Indian law recognizes only heterosexual marriages. Same-sex marriages are solemnized but they have no legal sanction.

Therefore, if, in the coming days, the Supreme Court rules in favour of same-sex marriages, it will be a "great leap forward" for the LGBTQIA community in India.

According to a survey conducted by the global market research organization IPSOS, in 2021, 44% of Indians approved of same-sex marriage; 15% were for legal recognition for same-sex couples without the status of marriage; 18% were totally against same-sex unions of any kind; and 25% were not sure.

International human rights organizations and Western governments keep telling countries in the Global South to give a wide spectrum of gender rights, including the right to same-sex marriage.

In a petition filed in the Supreme Court by Parth Phiroze Mehrotra and Uday Raj Anand, a same-sex couple for 17 years, their counsel, Mukul Rohatgi, argued that the recognition of same-sex marriage would only be a "sequel" to the Navtej Singh Johar judgement of 2018 that decriminalized homosexuality.

Though same-sex live-in relationships are allowed, same-sex marriages are not. Indian law recognizes only heterosexual marriages. Same-sex marriages are solemnized but they have no legal sanction

Rohatgi pointed out that Section 4 of the Special Marriage Act (SMA) permitted the solemnization of marriage between any two "persons" without mentioning that they must be of two different sexes. But other sections of the Act used terms like 'male' and 'female', 'husband/wife' and 'bride/bridegroom' thereby limiting access to marriage to heterosexual couples.

The wording should be "gender neutral" to accommodate same-sex couples, Rohatgi argued.

Denial of access to marriage to same-sex couples has serious legal implications for these couples. Without legal recognition, same-sex couples cannot adopt children or have a child by surrogacy. They do not have automatic rights to inheritance, maintenance and tax benefits. When a partner dies the other cannot avail of benefits like pension or compensation.

According to Senior Supreme Court Advocates Neeraj Kishan Kaul and Menaka Guruswamy, 15 legislations which guarantee rights like wages, gratuity, adoption and surrogacy are not available to LGBTQ+ citizens.

Since there is no legal recognition of same-sex marriage, families of same-sex couples and others in the host community threaten them with violence. Till 2018, these couples had no protection under the law. But of late, High Courts in different Indian States have come to their aid

Indian Supreme Court to hear final arguments on April 18



International human rights organizations and Western governments keep telling countries in the Global South to give a wide spectrum of gender rights, including the right to same-sex marriage

In June 2022, the Kerala High Court allowed a lesbian couple to live together despite opposition from their families. In December 2021, the Uttarakhand High Court ordered police protection for a gay couple. In November 2019, a similar order was passed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The Central Indian government has been opposing same-sex marriage on the grounds that the de-criminalization of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (homosexuality) does not give sanction to same-sex marriage. In its plea to the Supreme Court, the government said that the "notion of marriage itself necessarily and inevitably presupposes a union between two persons of the opposite sex. This definition is socially, culturally and legally ingrained in the very idea and concept of marriage and ought not to be disturbed or diluted by judicial interpretation."

Claiming primacy for parliament vis-a-vis the judiciary, the government said that "Parliament had designed and framed marriage laws which are governed by the personal laws/codified laws relating to the customs of various religious communities, to recognize only the union of a man and a woman to be capable of legal sanction. And any interference with the same by the judiciary would disturb the delicate balance of personal laws in the country and in accepted societal values."

Given the firm stand taken by the government, the Supreme Court is in an unenviable position.

GLOBAL SCENE

On the global plane, an IPSOS survey found that, in 2021, 54% were for same-sex marriage; 16% were for same-sex unions without marital rights; 16% were resolutely opposed to any kind of same-sex union; and 15% were not sure.

So far, about 34 countries have legalized same-sex marriage. There are also non-marital civil unions or partnerships between same-sex couples that are given legal recognition. These get some of the rights that come with marriage — such as inheritance, medical benefits, employee benefits to spouses, management of joint taxes and finances, and in some cases even adoption.

In Sri Lanka, the government announced its support for the repeal of Sections 365 and 365A of the Penal Code, which criminalize same-sex sexual activity.

Responding to recommendations made by the governments of Canada, Norway, the UK and the US during the country's Universal

Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council in January 2023, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ali Sabry said: "There is a Private Members Bill initiated by Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) MP Premnath C. Dolawatte. The Government will support its position of decriminalizing same-sex relationships."

However, speaking to The Morning Star, Ali Sabry said: "We are not legalizing same-sex marriages."

Same-sex marriages are not legal in any of the SAARC countries, as of date. In Nepal, same-sex marriages are not legal, but the country is drafting laws to guarantee sexual rights. In Pakistan and Bangladesh transgender persons are recognized and given all rights but homosexuality and same-sex marriages are not allowed. These are covered by a harsh Penal Code drafted in Victorian times. The Maldives, being an avowedly Islamic country, does not allow homosexuality. But authorities turn a blind eye to same-sex couples residing in the isolated island resorts.

More than half of the countries that allow same-sex marriage or "marriage equality" are in Western Europe, says a report on the website of the Council for Foreign Relations (CFR).

Compared to other countries in South Asia, India has progressed in the matter of recognizing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) rights

Same-sex marriage has been legalized in the Netherlands (2001), Belgium (2003), Spain (2005), Norway (2009), Sweden (2009), Portugal (2010), Iceland (2010), Denmark (2012), France (2013), the United Kingdom (2013), the US (2015), Luxembourg (2015), Ireland (2015), Finland (2017), Malta (2017), Germany (2017), Austria (2019), and Switzerland (2021).

In Italy, parliament approved civil unions for same-sex couples in 2016, but same-sex marriage is not legal. Lawmakers in Andorra voted in 2022 to convert all same-sex civil unions to civil marriages and legalize same-sex marriage. The changes will take effect in early 2023.

The EU does not require its members to recognize same-sex marriage, though a 2018 ruling by the EU's top court says they must uphold same-sex couples' rights to freedom of movement and residence, the CFR report says.

In 2021, the court ruled that all EU countries must recognize children of same-sex couples, even countries that do not have marriage equality. The ruling came after Bulgaria refused to grant identity documents to the daughter of a same-sex couple.

A 2013 European Parliament report on human rights and democracy "encourages" EU institutions and member states to recognize same-sex marriage or civil unions as "a political, social and human and civil rights issue." However, the EU is not able to impose such policy changes on its members, the CFR notes.

CHICKEN AND WEDDING ALBUMS: REALITY AND DELUSION IN THE NEW NORMAL

By **Ganini Akmeemana**

There is something peculiar about human psychology. What people accept as normal can change suddenly, without warning, due to natural disasters, political upheaval, military conflicts and economic downturns. The new situation — people becoming refugees, going broke, losing touch with each other, or going hungry — becomes the new normal.

It then becomes a pointless exercise to talk about the 'good old days.' People need to adapt themselves to the new normal to survive. This happens all over the world, at both macro and micro levels. At the micro level, we can take a local typhoon, floods, drought or limited civil unrest, though nowadays floods cause so much damage (for example earlier this year in Pakistan) that they can no longer be considered micro.

People need to adapt themselves to the new normal to survive. This happens all over the world, at both macro and micro levels

At the macro level, with devastation affecting the whole nation, we can take as an example Iraq after the US-led invasion followed by the Islamic State terror, Syria in the ongoing civil war, Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover, Turkey after the earthquake, Ukraine after the Russian invasion, and Sri Lanka after bankruptcy.

I have come across some interesting views when talking to people in the 'new normal' context. These are people who refuse to acknowledge that things are worse for most people. They are not people unaffected by disasters. But they reconcile themselves to the new context by believing that some, at any rate, are able to afford what they find hard to buy. It's a strange way of assuring oneself that things are somehow all right with the world.

The wedding market sector is a good example. Like everything else, it's the victim of inflationary prices of everything from food to reception halls and wedding albums

Last year, when prices of food and consumer products skyrocketed, I met an acquaintance from a hill country town. When I mentioned that meat had become unaffordable to many, he laughed. "A chicken dealer in this town gets 200 kg of chicken daily, and

The overall picture is murky, with some sectors of the economy and society doing seemingly brisk business while others are in despair, limping along or going bankrupt

he clears it in two hours. How can you say people can't afford meat?" That town has a metro population of over 91,000. I don't know how many chicken dealers are in it. Assuming there are five, and they all sell the same amount of chicken daily, that's 1,000 kg of chicken, and assuming one kg of chicken is shared by four people, that means roughly one in 23 gets 250 grammes of chicken per day (assuming they buy it regularly).

That's not a lot. Things have turned much worse since we had this conversation, and the number would be even less now. Many Lankans can't afford any meat at all. But it's the same 'it's somehow all right with the world' complacency (or self-delusion) that makes people think, after seeing the rush hour traffic, or people queuing up to buy liquor or takeaway food and declare that things are now back to normal. But they aren't. We are looking at some of the more evident, crowd-pleasing features of the new normal, and deluding ourselves.

Politicians make capital of this universal human weakness. The most unscrupulous kind depend on their hard-core, die-hard supporters to spread lies about the real causes of a given crisis — things are never as bad as the opposition claims it to be (like the number of chicken consumers in that hill country town), and a sinister plot (homegrown or foreign, often both working together) is the root cause of the current crisis. Once those sinister elements are dealt with (usually with draconian laws and police/military action), the country will be prosperous beyond anyone's dreams.

This formula doesn't always work as well as it should, but it's stood the test of time. All that a conniving, unscrupulous leader has to do is wait for the right psychological moment to make his

A young salesman who told me he couldn't afford to hire a car for his wedding paid Rs.185,000 for the album (only still photographs, no videos). An album maker said that in Colombo people pay up to Rs.400,000 for an album, adding that the market is flooded with new photographers, with 'more wedding photographers available than three-wheeler drivers.'

well-worn pitch to the hysterical masses again. Democracy is a battle between citizens more sympathetic to the suffering of those less well-off, conscious of civil liberties and basic human rights, and those who are not.

A chicken dealer in this town gets 200 kg of chicken daily, and he clears it in two hours. How can you say people can't afford meat?

They cannot be neatly divided as liberal and conservative. In many ways, politics is similar to religion. The world has seen many 'mass conversions' of voters of one faith to another. France is a good example from Europe, though her smaller neighbours would do just as fine. Many disgruntled socialist voters turned full circle and became supporters of the ultra-nationalist Le Pen. In the last presidential election, a right-wing victory was avoided narrowly, and only after several socialist party politicians decided to back the incumbent centrist president in a bid to keep the common enemy at bay.

In Sri Lanka, the situation is highly inflammable. The ultra-nationalist juggernaut, rolled back by last year's massive apolitical uprising, is becoming restless again as harsh economic realities continue to erode people's faith in government. The 'waiting lobby' remains confident of finding that right moment to overheat the overworked reactor, knowing that reawakened demons of xenophobia, religious bigotry and ethnic hatred will override common daily survival worries.

The overall picture is murky, with some sectors of the economy and society doing seemingly brisk business while others are in despair, limping along or going bankrupt.

The wedding market sector is a good example. Like everything else, it's the victim of inflationary prices of everything from food to reception halls and wedding albums. In one place, those who offer cars for wedding hires are in despair, while others elsewhere have a brisk business.

The wedding album market has become a goose that lays golden eggs because there is always a segment of the population willing to pay any amount for what is now seen as the most important element in the wedding expenses list. A young salesman who told me he couldn't afford to hire a car for his wedding paid Rs.185,000 for the album (only still photographs, no videos). An album maker said that in Colombo people pay up to Rs.400,000 for an album, adding that the market is flooded with new photographers, with 'more wedding photographers available than three-wheeler drivers.'

When people see a good thing, everyone jumps on the bandwagon. But, just like the brisk sale of chicken in that hill country town, that isn't the big picture. This is the small frame format, but many are only too glad to accept it as the big picture. That is the frightening reality of the new normal.

The wedding album market has become a goose that lays golden eggs. Image courtesy-Social Media



EDITORIAL

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires" - WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD

OUR THOUGHT

DO NOT MIX DISSENT UP WITH TERRORISM

The term 'terrorism' always has a political connotation. It always targets the adversary of the person who uses it. Hence, the adage that "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" makes sense.

Yet, there is always a common benchmark to call the other of committing terrorism, which is mainly the violence and espousing violence. The irony is that despite dozens of countries having anti-terrorism or counter terrorism legislations, there is no internationally accepted definition of terrorism.

It is interesting to compare some of the international definitions of terrorism with that of the Sri Lanka's proposed latest piece of legislation. The United Nations Security Council, in its resolution 1566 of October 2004, defines terrorist acts as "criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act."

The definition of terrorism in the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, signed on December 9, 1999 is "any act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act."

However, according to the proposed Sri Lankan law, if a person or a group, apart from these real terrorist acts even "causes serious obstruction or damage to or interference with essential services or supplies or with any critical infrastructure or logistic facility associated with any essential service or supply" with the intention of "wrongfully or unlawfully compelling the Government of Sri Lanka, or any other Government, or an international organization, to do or to abstain from doing any act" commits an offence of terrorism.

It is clear that the definition of terrorism in the Bill is vague and covers a vast area and it empowers the State to incarcerate people up to twenty years, proscribe organizations, declare places as prohibited places, confiscate properties and send people to rehabilitation centres on charges of terrorism ambiguously cited in the Bill.

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka asked the government to reconsider the definition of terrorism mentioned in the Bill and recommend specific amendments to clarify and narrow the acts falling within the definition. Denis Chaibi, the EU Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives had told that there are some difficulties regarding the definition of terrorism.

Therefore, it is justifiable for one to infer that the purpose of the Bill is to counter agitations by the ordinary people who still reeling under a severe economic crisis, rather than countering real terrorism. Authorities must be clear that dissent is not terrorism.

The new law, if enacted will definitely have repercussions locally and internationally. Some news websites have already hinted that it would deprive Sri Lanka of Europe's GSP+ tax concessions.



Gananda Chikera 18/04/23

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

VAGUE, OVERLY BROAD TERRORISM BILL HINDERS FIGHT AGAINST REAL TERRORISTS

By Ranga Jayasuriya

A universally agreed definition of terrorism does not exist - mainly because the countries have overlooked the means of terrorism in favour of their political goals. But there is a common-sense legal consensus that an effective legal instrument to fight terrorism should be founded on an unambiguous and narrowly focused definition of what terrorism is.

LOOKING FOR TERRORISTS IN THE WRONG PLACES

The government's proposed new Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), which is intended to replace the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), is the polar opposite of this consensus. It is vague and overly-broad and, by all appearance, has lost sight of the primary evil it is meant to combat, i.e., terrorism itself.

The Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) Bill makes no reference to ideological fountainheads of terrorism and violent extremism, the kind of evil Sri Lanka confronted in the past and would likely face in the future

The Bill makes no reference to ideological fountainheads of terrorism and violent extremism, the kind of evil Sri Lanka confronted in the past and would likely face in the future.

If the makers of the new Bill took a serious look at the nature of terrorist threats that Sri Lanka is likely to encounter, it is not hard for them to gauge what sort of political, ideological or religious background such threats represent. The new Bill should focus on the ideological fountainheads of extremism and potential manifestation of terrorism, which Sri Lanka confronted in the past, and would likely to face in the future.

Instead, the new Bill is looking for terrorists in the wrong places. It risks incriminating legitimate protest and dissent as terrorist offences. In the



These ambiguous clauses would effectively categorise most trade union actions, strikes, protest marches and demonstrations as acts of terrorism

The new Bill should focus on the ideological fountainheads of extremism and potential manifestation of terrorism, which Sri Lanka confronted in the past, and would likely to face in the future. Instead, the new Bill is looking for terrorists in the wrong places. It risks incriminating legitimate protest and dissent as terrorist offences

absence of a precise and narrowly defined definition of terrorism, it has lumped together any act that might inconvenience the government as an act of terrorism: for instance, "wrongfully and unlawfully forcing the government of Sri Lanka... to do or abstain from doing any act (3, (1)(b)); unlawfully preventing any such government from functioning (3 (1)(c)); causing serious obstruction and damage to essential services; and being a member of an unlawful assembly (3 (2) i).

INCRIMINATING LEGITIMATE PROTESTS

These ambiguous clauses would effectively categorise most trade union actions, strikes, protest marches and demonstrations as acts of terrorism. Such overly broad classification would lead to dangerous abuses of the Anti-Terrorism Act, effectively impinging on fundamental rights and terrorising the citizens against exercising their legitimate right to dissent.

It does not mean that actions that seriously inconvenience the public and disrupt government services should be immune from legal action. Rather, they should be tried, as legally warranted, within the already existing legal provisions. Successive governments have rather disinclined even to resort to disciplinary action at the department and SOE levels against the deliberate acts of mass public inconvenience in the past.

The proposed new Bill also raises serious concerns over the freedom of the press - anyone who publishes any statement words or... visual representation that could be understood by the public or section of the public as a direct or indirect encouragement for them to commit, instigate or prepare for offences of terrorism is held liable as committing a terrorism-related offence.

the public does not fall under terrorism, such guarantees are at the mercy of law enforcement agencies. The very absence of a concise and dedicated definition of terrorism risks any statement that offends the officials and politicians being categorised as an act of encouragement of terrorism.

Also, the proposed Bill empowers the President to proscribe organisations on the recommendation of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) if there are "reasonable grounds to believe" that the concerned organisation has engaged in an act amounting to an offence under the proposed law or in "an unlawful manner prejudicial to the national security of Sri Lanka."

Such powers were abused in the past. Most notably, J.R. Jayawardene's banning of a host of left parties, including the JVP, forced the latter underground, leading to the Southern uprising in 1987-90. The political leadership could again abuse such powers accorded without oversight to set political vendetta.

Also, the introduction of the death penalty for certain offences, even though the death sentence by default is commuted to life sentences in Sri Lanka, is unnecessary and contributes to delegitimising the proposed Bill.

The proposed Anti-Terrorism Bill is meant to replace the much-abused Prevention of Terrorism Act. While the new Bill has done away with certain contentious measures in the PTA, such as the admissibility of the confessions made by the suspects in detention, the ambiguity and overly broad definition of terrorism have seriously compromised its legitimacy. It risks being abused by future governments.

The government's new Bill is looking for terrorists in the wrong places. Perhaps, it is guided by the short-termism of the current government's threat perception. But, it also betrays its shallow understanding of the national security challenges. It was similar misgivings and resultant oversights that led to the Easter Sunday attack.

Follow @RangaJayasuriya on Twitter

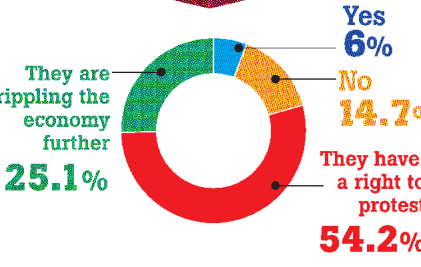
DM Poll

Government's main aim behind introducing new Anti-Terrorism Act is.....

- To protect the country
To control dissenting voice
To respond to an urgent danger of terrorism
To prevent any Aragalaya in future.



LAST POLL Do you agree with the continuous strikes by Trade Union members? Is it fair to be inconveniencing the general public in return for their demands?



See web poll at www.DailyMirror.lk

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SL needs a political ceasefire

Refer to Ranga Jayasuriya's above title article in DM on April 5. Though his columns are usually very informative and thought-provoking, I wish to point out certain incorrect information contained in the subject article. Ranga says that immediately after independence, the Northern parties scuttled progress for political expediency. I would like to point out below facts in this regard.

It was the Kandyian Sinhalese who first mooted the idea of Federalism, well before independence. Strangely Tamil parties opposed it at that time.

Immediately after independence it was DS's government that disenfranchised the upcountry Tamils, whose blood sweat & tears was and still is enriching this country. Because GG Ponnambalam supported this injustice, SIV Chelvanayagam formed a new party - The FP.

It was John Kottalawela who first proposed the Sinhala Only slogan, another political gimmick played to the gallery (later he preferred to settle down in London after losing the election - what a patriot!). Then SWRD took the slogan and implemented it, thus creating the initial spark for the nation's destruction. He tore away the Banda - Chelva pact due to the pressure from Buddhist monks and who was ironically killed by a Buddhist monk later.

Efforts by Dudley Senanayake and SIV Chelvanayagam to find a solution to the issue in the late 60's, was again ruined by the SLFP for political popularity.

When Srimavo's government was not even willing to listen to Tamil parties while drafting the republican constitution and when the Tamils were further marginalized only, the slogan for separate state was put forward by the FP (though they were not serious about it).

Even JR in his election manifesto in 1977 mentioned that Tamils have grievances to the extent of demanding separation, hence one of his priorities will be to resolve the ethnic issue! Alas he too reneged on those promises.

Therefore, it's clear that it was the Southern political leaders who created divisions since independence all for the sake of power and money (corruption), and the culmination of these disruptive partisan policies has led the country towards destruction & bankruptcy now and earned pariah status, the first in Asia!

It's good if Ranga can read the chapter on Sri Lanka from the autobiography of the great visionary leader late Lee Qwan Yew, that reveals what went wrong in SL.

N V JEN

President to call for a national govt.

WEB COMMENTS

JUDE - National government idea is, to all politicians get together and continue corruption! People, should say no to it. NG is to avoid elections; nothing should be allowed without fresh mandate from the voters!!

QUOLP - Only the government that people expect is that through an election, a leader should be elected by their mandate. Holding the President of SL under the United States' command is unpardonably wrong

JUDE - All mainstream political parties UNP SLFP SLPP and SJB know they're not going to win

See more web comments at www.DailyMirror.lk

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WILL THE PROPOSED ANTI-TERRORISM BILL SHED ITS SUPPOSEDLY DRACONIAN AVATAR?



By **Kamanthi Wickramasinghe**

The proposed Anti-Terrorism Bill which was gazetted on March 22, 2023, came under much scrutiny by civil society groups, legal entities and local and international human rights organisations. Even though the Bill seeks to replace the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act with an Anti-Terrorism Act, many stakeholders who observed the draft legislation have pointed out several concerns. Some of these include the definition of terrorism to the broader powers vested upon the Executive and armed forces, the inclusion of the death penalty and possible threats to media and trade unions. However, in response to mounting criticism, the government announced that it would delay tabling the Bill.

Problematic provisions

Attorney-at-law and senior researcher at Centre for Policy Alternatives Bhavani Fonseka observes that this proposed Bill is being gazetted in a context where there have been calls to repeal the PTA which has been in existence for 44 years. "The powers vested on the President and the armed forces in terms



Bhavani Fonseka

of arrest and search is also very alarming. This is at a time when there have been calls for the abolition of the Executive president. This Bill if enacted will bring broad powers to the Office to proscribe organisations, to issue curfew orders to restrict areas and access and many other issues. A very initial observation is that this is a very problematic bill and if this is passed as it is, it could bring in very serious issues in terms of implications to fundamental rights to dissent to minority rights and a whole host of things."

Speaking about the definition of terrorism under the new law she said that the clause in terms of the definition of terrorism is similar to that of the ICCPR. "But there are other very vague and broad definitions that could have an impact on freedom of speech and expression, freedom of movement and all of that. When we have a Penal Code, when we have the ICCPR why are some of these things being brought under a proposed terror law? This is one dimension. The other one is what is the thinking in terms of trying to introduce such a broad law on terrorism and is it not then normalising certain practices such as the role of the military, the broad powers of the Executive, the powers of the DIG to issue detention orders and so forth?" she questioned.

She further questioned as to why such broad powers to search, arrest and detain people should be given to members of the armed forces, coast guard and police. "Therefore someone arrested by the security forces for example can be kept for 24 hours before handing them over to the Police. The individual is therefore open to possible torture, and cruel and inhuman treatment. A magistrate may not have access to a person who is detained in such a manner. The powers of the security forces and others need to be critiqued and challenged because that could lead to abuse."

Fonseka further said that the powers of the President to issue regulations including on rehabilitation require a lot of attention. "This is at a time when the previous government tried to bring in regulations under the PTA on rehabilitation which several of us had challenged in the Supreme Court. There is a stay order. Last year the government attempted to bring in the Rehabilitation Authority Bill which again we challenged and then the Supreme Court actually suggested changes to ensure it is in compliance with the Constitution. It is in this context the present government is trying to bring this law and

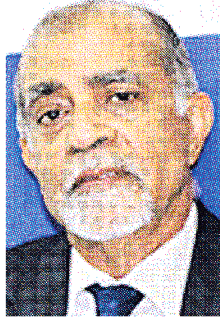


Even though the Bill seeks to replace the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act many stakeholders have raised concerns

bring in rehabilitation when the Supreme Court has looked into the matter and is continually looking into the matter under ongoing cases." However, some positive dimensions of the Bill include the fact that confessions have been struck out. "Confessions have been used for decades to extract information; forced coercion, torture has been used," she added. "There's also greater oversight by the magistrate and the Human Rights Commission. There are guarantees of access to lawyers etc., So while there are certain positive dimensions, overall the Bill is very problematic. But then again, we need to keep in mind that this proposed law is only gazetted and it hasn't been tabled in Parliament yet. But now it's a public document and the citizens need to be extra vigilant, scrutinize and debate this bill because of the problematic provisions in it."

Govt.'s response to the Aragalaya?

Political scientist and constitutional expert Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda opined that the proposed law would make Sri Lanka a police state and that it would pose serious threats to the rule of law, democracy and human rights. "This is the government's response to last year's Aragalaya. In fact, the government is expecting more protests from the people. People are facing severe economic hardships and an IMF-inspired economic recovery programme will instigate social discontent and unrest. Therefore, the government is trying its best to do that within the rule of law."



Jayadeva-Uyangoda

He further said that the Bill could be defeated in two stages, the first being the Supreme Court. "One stage is where citizens could defeat it at the Supreme Court. There is an outright violation of Constitutional provisions. But we can't predict how the SC will look at it. We hope that the SC will put people's rights and democracy first. Some clauses are a violation of the Constitution. Some would need a two-thirds majority to pass and some would require a referendum."

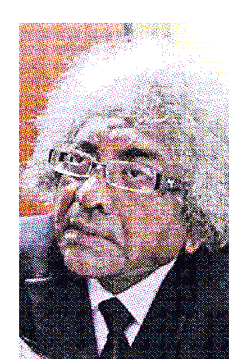
The second stage in which the Bill could be defeated is in Parliament, but Prof. Uyangoda observes that it would be a difficult task with a weak, divided and fragmented Opposition. "The government has ways and means of manipulating the Parliamentary procedures. Hence the future looks bleak," he underscored while warning that media too is under threat and that journalists will become victims of the law.

The new bill can introduce death penalty

One major concern regarding the Bill is the inclusion of the death penalty. Responding to a query on why the death penalty needs to be included in a new law when it's already included in the Penal Code, President's Counsel Tirantha Walaliyadde said that the original PTA did not contain provisions for death sentences even for causing murder; instead, it provided liability for life imprisonment. "The Penal Code is a different Act quite distinct from the Anti-terrorism Bill. The charges have to be brought under either the Penal Code or the ATA. If charges are levelled under the Penal Code then the sphere of evidence that will be admissible is limited and it will be difficult to bring home a conviction. The consequences of a conviction under the ATA are far-reaching and more deterrent than the Penal Code and include forfeiture of property."

"I have noted various international Human Rights Organizations make preposterous remarks to the effect that the death sentence is against the spirit of terrorism and its values and purposes or that it undermines human and fundamental rights etc. If these arguments were correct then that man who is convicted

for the murder of another man over a land dispute in terms of the Penal Code deserves to be hung whereas the terrorist who is convicted in terms of the ATA for the murders of innocent men women, and children, by the hundreds in one blast, does not. Oh, well!"



Tirantha Walaliyadde

He further said that this Bill is a sorry excuse for an anti-terrorist law. "It is in the main terrorist oriented, in that it gives the suspected terrorist a wealth of rights against the law enforcement system: he has access to the HRCSL at his whim, the Human Rights Commission (HRC) has the absolute right to storm the places of detention without prior notice to the relevant authorities, the Magistrate has the right of access and inspection of the suspects' holding place, for instance, the UNHCR has the right to make inquiries about the suspect's well-being, the suspect cannot be held incommunicado- which will greatly hamper investigations- it must be remembered that the investigations are levelled against a person who is suspected of having committed mass murder, destroyed public property, has engaged in money laundering for the purposes of terrorism, has conspired to overthrow the government through terrorism and so on and so forth. The suspect arrested in terms of the General law does not enjoy these privileges as a matter of right. Under the circumstances, it may be said that it is far more comfortable for a person to be arrested under the ATA than under the general law."

Mr. Walaliyadde denied claims about threats to media freedom under the proposed law. "The press has nothing to fear unless their reports fall within the intentions given in Section 3. These provisions are justified because I do not think that any self-respecting democrat would permit freedom of speech and freedom of the press to engage or indulge in the instigation of terrorist activity."

Responding to threats to trade union activities, he said that it does not affect the Trade Unions in any way so long as they confine their activities to legitimate trade union activity. "The issue has been raised by the TU's as to who will decide the legitimacy of the activity; in terms of the ATA, the Magistrate's Court will decide; so, the question of arbitrary detention does not arise," he said while adding that apart from some rough edges that need to be streamlined and adjusted, on the whole, the ATA does cater to a crying need of the times.

Criticisms and allegations are baseless: Justice Minister

On Wednesday (April 5) the Bar Association of Sri Lanka issued a statement which said that it observes that the proposed Bill has been gazetted without adequate consultations with relevant stakeholders including the BASL. The apex legal body further announced that it would not hesitate to challenge any bill that would deem to undermine the rule of law and the liberty of citizens in the country.



Wijeyadasa Rajapakse

In response to mounting opposition, Justice Minister Dr. Wijeyadasa Rajapakse announced on Thursday that the government has decided to delay the tabling of the proposed Bill towards the end of April or first week of May. When asked if concerns raised by various stakeholders will be addressed prior to



Experts claim that the proposed ATA is government's response to the aragalaya

This Bill if enacted will bring broad powers to the Office to proscribe organisations, to issue curfew orders to restrict areas and access and many other issues

Someone arrested by the security forces for example can be kept for 24 hours before handing them over to the Police. The individual is therefore open to possible torture, and cruel and inhuman treatment. A magistrate may not have access to a person who is detained in such a manner

The government is expecting more protests from the people. People are facing severe economic hardships and an IMF-inspired economic recovery programme will instigate social discontent and unrest

tabling the Bill in Parliament, Dr. Rajapakse responded in the affirmative while saying that all concerns have been duly addressed. Responding to a query on whether the proposed law is the government's response to the aragalaya, he said that nobody knew about an 'Aragalaya' when the Counter Terrorism Bill was being drafted in 2015. "Then in 2018 it was brought to Parliament and the cabinet approved it thereafter. A special committee too was appointed in this regard."

Speaking about the inclusion of the death penalty Dr. Rajapakse said that older terms have been included in the new bill but that the Supreme Court had upheld that it was Constitutional. "Appellate Court Judge Janak De Silva recommended that the existing PTA should be made stringent but to also make sure that people's fundamental rights are not violated. A terrorist cannot have the privilege to breach fundamental rights. The

noise is coming from a small community whereas 99% of people want protection by law. Whatever it is, this Bill has nothing to do with the Aragalaya."

He further said that laws in countries such as the UK, USA and India have no fundamental rights at all. "The man who walked into the Capitol Building for example has been sentenced for 12 years."

Dr. Rajapakse reiterated that there's no threat to the media as the provisions clearly state that media would be taken in for questioning if they intentionally support any kind of terrorist activity as described in the law. "The media doesn't have to worry. What we have done is we have diluted 90% of powers of the Executive to the magistrate and Police. Fundamental rights jurisdiction is open. If somebody is arrested the HRCSL is allowed to go there and speak to the suspect. Therefore these criticisms and allegations are baseless."



POST OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION DIVISION, JICA SRI LANKA OFFICE

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SPORTS

Gayanjali and Dulangi named captain and vice captain for Netball World Cup



Gayanjali Amarawansa (Captain)



Dulangi Wannithilake (Vice Captain)

BY SUSIL PREMALAL

Veteran netball players Gayanjali Amarawansa and Dulangi Wannithilake have been recommended by the Sri Lanka Netball Federation as suitable appointments as captain and vice captain respectively to the National Sports Selection Committee and the Ministry of Sports at the 2023 World Cup Netball Tournament.

The 16th World Cup Netball Tournament conducted by the International Netball Federation is scheduled to be held in Cape Town, South Africa from July 28 to August 6.

Sri Lanka as 2022 Asian netball champions and Singapore as runner-up from Asia are among 16 countries taking part

in this tournament. Amarawansa and Wannithilake were Sri Lanka's captain and vice captain at the 2022 Asian Netball Championship.

The skipper to be appointed has represented Sri Lanka in three Asian Netball Championships (2016, 2018, 2022) and two World Cups (2015 and 2019).

Deputy skipper Wannithilake has represented the country in two Asian Netball Championships (2018, 2022) and one World Cup Netball Tournament (2019) and can also be called a rising star.

Sri Lanka, drawn in Group 'C' for the World Cup, are scheduled to compete against Jamaica on July 28, hosts South Africa on July 29 and Wales on July 30.

Chandrika de Silva shines at All England Senior Badminton Championships

Veteran shuttler Chandrika de Silva has made history becoming the first and only Sri Lankan to win medals at the 105th All England Senior (Masters) Badminton Championships 2023 in Hertfordshire Sports Village, England.

De Silva won two Gold medals and a Silver medal in the recently concluded All England Senior (Masters) Badminton Championships. The tournament began on the 14th and came to an end on the 16th of April.

She clinched the Gold Medal in the Over 45 Singles beating Zoe Weller in the finals. De Silva completely dominated the finals winning the first set by 21-15 and then going on to win the second set by 21-9.

De Silva went on to secure the Gold Medal in the Over 45 Mixed Doubles teaming up with Morten Eilby Rasmussen. The pair beat Mark Constable and Lynne Swan in the finals by 2 sets to 1 (21-16, 15-21, 21-14).

In the Over 45 Women's Doubles, de Silva paired up



Chandrika De Silva

with Lynne Swan. They reached the finals and was up against the English pair of Jenny Adrian and Tracy Parker. Unfortunately, de Silva and Swan had to settle for Silver as Adrian and Parker won the game by 2 sets to 1. (21-12, 17-21, 21-19) (SP)

JAYASURIYA'S FIVER HAS IRELAND STRUGGLING FOR SURVIVAL

BY M. SHAMIL AMI

Left arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya's five-wicket haul helped hosts Sri Lanka dominate proceedings for the second successive day as they had the visiting Ireland side struggling for survival, ending day two on 117 for 7 in reply to the host sides mammoth score of 591 for 6 in the first Test match played at the Galle International Cricket Stadium.

Jayasuriya along with left arm pacie Vishwa Fernando sent the Ireland batting reeling on 85 for 5.

They never recovered from there on as they were made to struggle for their runs and with no significant partnerships following, apart from the 70 runs stand for the third wicket between James McCollum and Harry Tector. Jaysuriya had them in deep trouble as he bagged two more scalps for Ireland to end the day in a bad position of 117 for 7 and they are left with a daunting task whilst trailing by 474 runs.

Earlier in the day Sri Lanka resumed from their overnight score of 386 for 4 though losing two early wickets before the lunch break for the addition of 20 runs settling down as overnight batsman Dinesh Chandimal who was on 19 found a reliable partner in Sadeera Samarawickrama and frustrating the Ireland bowlers again with the pair hosting the 50 runs stand in 67 balls which followed with Chandimal reaching his half



Sri Lanka's Dinesh Chandimal plays a shot during the second day of the first cricket Test match between Sri Lanka and Ireland at the Galle International Cricket Stadium

ton in 87 balls that included five boundaries and Samarawickrama raising to his half ton in 64 balls which had six boundaries before posting the home sides' 500 runs for Sri Lanka to go into the lunch break with the score on 503 for 6.

The post lunch session saw the two batsmen being more harsher with the pair hosting the 100 runs partnership and helping Sri Lanka to put up 550 runs on the board.

They continued their onslaught and succeeded to host their 150 runs stand for the seventh wicket and the pair reaching their tons. Chandimal was the first to

achieve which took him 152 balls which had 12 boundaries while Samarawickrama got it quicker in 112 balls which included 11 boundaries before Sri Lanka making the declaration with the score on 591 for 6 and the pair associating in an unbroken 183 runs stand for the seventh wicket. In fact it was Samarawickrama's maiden ton which he achieved having made a comeback to the Test arena after a lapse of five years and also became the first Sri Lanka wicket keeper to notch up a ton since 2016 when Kusal Perera did so against Zimbabwe.

SRI LANKA

1ST INNINGS (overnight 386-4)	
N. Madushka c Tucker b Campher	29
D. Karunaratne c Tucker b Adair	179
K. Mendis lbw b Dockrell	140
A. Mathews c Tucker b White	00
D. Chandimal not out	102
P. Jayasuriya lbw b Campher	16
D. de Silva lbw b McBrine	12
S. Samarawickrama not out	104
EXTRAS: (b4, lb3, w1, nb1)	09
TOTAL: (for 6 wickets, overs 131)	591
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-64 2-345, 3-348, 4-373, 5-390, 6-408	
BOWLING: M. Adair 24.3-3-95-1 (w 1), C. Campher 21-2-84-2, A. McBrine 40-2-162-1, B. White 22-0-119-1 (nb 1), G. Dockrell 21.3-0-112-1, H. Tector 2-0-12-0.	

IRELAND

1ST INNINGS	
J. McCollum b Jayasuriya	35
M. Commins b V Fernando	00
A. Balbirnie c M Fernando b V Fernando	04
H. Tector c de Silva b Jayasuriya	34
C. Campher c R. Mendis b Jayasuriya	00
P. Moor c Samarawickrama b Jayasuriya	14
L. Tucker not out	21
G. Dockrell lbw b Jayasuriya	02
A. McBrine not out	05
EXTRAS: (nb 2)	02
TOTAL: (7 wkts, in 45 overs)	117
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-0, 2-4, 3-74, 4-74, 5-85, 6-92, 7-108	
BOWLING: A. Fernando 5-2-9-0, V. Fernando 6-1-22-2, P. Jayasuriya 19-9-42-5, R. Mendis 14-3-40-0, D. De Silva 1-0-4-0	

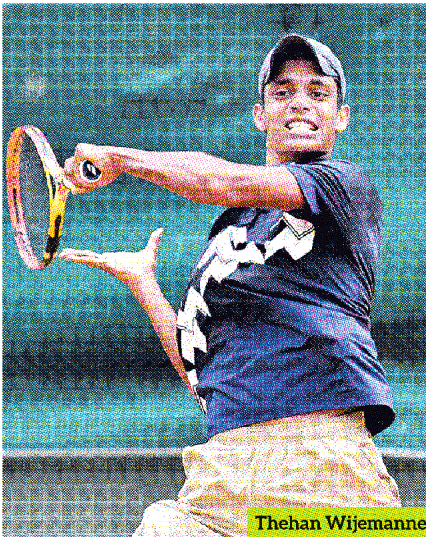
Hill Club Tennis 2023

Thehan, Neyara, Methvan, Janali bag two titles

BY M. SHAMIL AMI

Thehan Wijemanne along with Neyara Weerawansa, Methvan Wijemanne and Janali Manamperi dominated proceedings at the annual Hill Club Tennis Championship when the trio bagged two titles each at the Hill Club tennis courts in Nuwara Eliya.

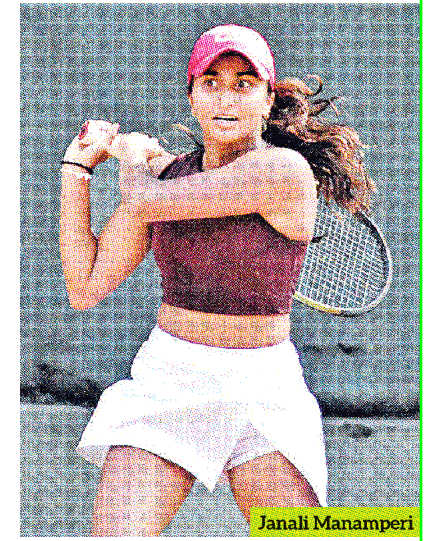
Wijemanne came out victorious in the Men's Open Singles and Mixed Doubles partnered by Janali Manamperi while Weerawansa came out on top in the Women's Open Singles and Women's Doubles partnered by Manamperi who too bagged two titles and Wijemanne bagged the Boys U18 Singles and the doubles event of the same age group partnered by Vichintha Nilaweera.



Thehan Wijemanne



Methvan Wijemanne



Janali Manamperi

RESULTS:

- Boys U12 champion** - Buvindu Jayawardena.
- Girls U12 champion** - Sahansa Damsilini
- Boys U14 champion** - Ashlin de Silva
- Girls U14 champion** - Leylan Knese
- Boys U16 champion** - Lithum Jayabandu
- Girls U16 champion** - Oneli Samarawickrama
- Boys U18 champion** - Methvan Wijemanne
- Girls U18 champion** - Hasali Gajaba
- Womens Singles Open champion** - Neyara Weerawansa.
- Mens Open Singles champion** - Thehan Wijemanne.
- Men's Open Doubles champion** - Dilvan Herath and Yashitha de Silva.
- Women's Open Doubles champions** - Neyara Weerawansa and Janali Manamperi.
- Mixed Doubles champions** - Thehan Wijemanne and Janali Manamperi.
- Boys U14 Doubles champions** - Risith Somaratne and Yudeera Aththapaththu.
- Girls U14 Doubles champions** - Devangi Sovidand Sandithi Usgogaarachchi.
- Boys U18 Doubles champions** - Methvan Wijemanne and Vichintha Nilaweera.
- Girls U18 Doubles champions** - Oneli Samarawickrama and Melesha Kavindi.

Samson, Hetmyer keep Rajasthan top of IPL table

Powerful knocks by skipper Sanju Samson and Shimron Hetmyer led Rajasthan Royals to a stunning three-wicket win over holders Gujarat Titans to stay top of the IPL table on Sunday.

Chasing 178 for victory, last year's runners-up Rajasthan depended on Samson's 32-ball 60 and an unbeaten 56 by Hetmyer to achieve their target with four balls to spare in Ahmedabad.

Rajasthan were two down for four and then 55-4 when Samson and Hetmyer put together 59 off 27 deliveries to bring alive the chase at the world's biggest cricket ground.

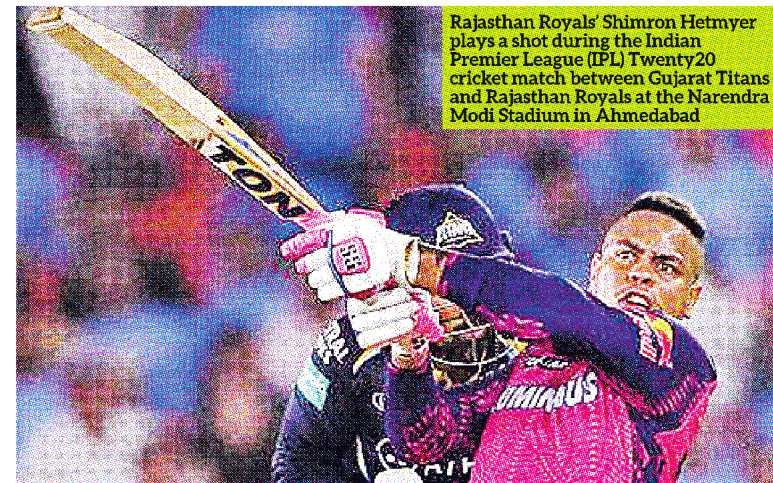
Samson took on leg-spinner Rashid Khan in an over and smashed a hat-trick of sixes and then took on another Afghanistan spinner before departing.

Noor Ahmad, a left-arm wrist spinner, came in as impact player for Gujarat and after getting smashed for a six and four got Samson caught out.

But the dismissal only fired up the left-handed Hetmyer who kept up the charge as he and Dhruv Jurel, who hit 18, got 20 runs from an Alzarri Joseph over to near the target.

Hetmyer finished off the chase with a six off Ahmad, an IPL debutant who was given the final over by skipper Hardik Pandya.

Mohammed Shami stood out with figures of 3-25 for Gujarat, who won



Rajasthan Royals' Shimron Hetmyer plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Gujarat Titans and Rajasthan Royals at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad

the title last year in their fairytale debut season in the T20 tournament.

Earlier Shubman Gill (45) and David Miller (46) guided Gujarat to 177-7 after being invited to bat first in the second match of the day.

Gill started strongly despite losing partners including Wriddhiman Saha to a dramatic mid-pitch catch by Trent Boult off his own bowling after the ball bounced off Samson's gloves following a near collision between three fielders.

Gill put on a 59-run stand with Pandya to take the attack to the opposition.

Sandeep Sharma denied Gill

Rajasthan were two down for four and then 55-4 when Samson and Hetmyer put together 59 off 27 deliveries to bring alive the chase at the world's biggest cricket ground

his fifty but the left-handed Miller smashed boundaries in his 30-ball knock and got help from the other end with Abhinav Manohar hitting 27 off 13 balls.

Central Asia Women's Challenge Cup Volleyball Sri Lanka take on Uzbekistan in opener

BY SUSIL PREMALAL

The Central Asia Volleyball Association has decided to start 2023 Central Asia Women's Challenge Cup Volleyball Championship with the Sri Lanka vs Uzbekistan match.

Central Asia Volleyball Association and Nepal Volleyball Federation have arranged to hold this tournament from May 22-28 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Eight countries in the Asian region are set to compete in the tournament with Sri Lanka drawn in Pool 'B' with Uzbekistan, Maldives and Kazakhstan.

Host nation Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, Bangladesh and India are in Pool 'A'. In the preliminary round, Sri Lanka will play Uzbekistan on May 22, Kazakhstan on May 23 and Maldives on May 24.

Joes well placed

BY SHAMSEER JALEEL

St. Joseph's College were well placed in their Under 19 Inter School cricket encounter against Trinity College which commenced at the Asgiriya Stadium in Kandy yesterday.

Batting first Trinity were in deep trouble at 151 for 8 shortly after tea when rain halted any further play taking away more than 25 overs of days play.

Trinity 151 for 8 in 64.1 overs (Janith Ravishka 45, Manula Kularatne 40, Supun Waduge 24, Lahiru Amarasekera 5 for 52, Geban Chamodh 3 for 31)

Lanka Woman

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SL's official unemployment rate masks true labour market conditions

Sri Lanka ended 2022 with an official unemployment rate of 4.8 percent, a figure which masked much of the anomalies in the country's labour market, as many people either migrated or gave up looking for work when the economy fell into its worst slump in the country's post-independent history.

The fourth quarter jobless rate came in at slightly better than the third quarter's 5.0 percent but some economic analysts said the unemployment rate was misleading

because they could not reconcile the number with the 7.8 percent decline in the economy in 2022.

The 4.8 percent unemployment was quite close to near employment level in an economy but this was hardly true for those in Sri Lanka, who lost thousands of jobs in the three years through 2022.

A better gauge of employment condition in an economy is the so-called labour force participation rate (LFPR), which further fell to

48.9 percent by the end of the fourth quarter, last year, from 49.0 percent in the third.

The LFPR measures both those who are employed and unemployed but looking for work, in relation to the working age population.

In the OECD countries, which comprise of high-income developed economies, the LFPR stands above 60 percent level, reflecting the higher participation rate of people in employment.

MORE ON P8

Asiri Group plans US \$ 100mn hospital in Port City Colombo

■ Enters agreement with Colombo Port City Economic Commission to lease land for 99-year period

■ Hospital to have over 500 rooms; to partner with "an international corporation globally renowned for its innovative treatments"

■ Softlogic Chairman Ashok Pathirage says major step towards developing medical tourism

Sri Lanka's largest private sector healthcare provider Asiri Hospital Holdings PLC, a unit of Softlogic Group, in a landmark announcement yesterday disclosed its plans to set up a state-of-the-art hospital within China-backed Port City Colombo (PCC).

To this end, Asiri Port City Hospital (Pvt.) Ltd, a fully-owned subsidiary of Asiri Hospital Holdings PLC, has entered into an agreement with the Colombo Port City Economic Commission to lease government-owned land in PCC for a period of 99 years.

A media statement from Softlogic Group said a lease agreement was entered into for a hospital with "500 plus bed capacity, with an estimated investment of US \$ 100 million" within PCC, in line with the master plan of the Colombo Port City Economic Commission.



Softlogic Group Founder Chairman and Managing Director Ashok Pathirage, Colombo Port City Economic Commission Chairman Dinesh Weerakkody and Port City and Softlogic officials after agreement signing

"The proposed hospital will be one of the four main strategic and large-scale social infrastructure development projects identified within PCC," it said.

It also said the project company Asiri Port City Hospital (Pvt.) Ltd had partnered with "an international corporation globally renowned for its innovative treatment options, who will provide strategic and/or operational consulting services to Asiri Port City Hospital (Pvt.) Ltd."

According to the media release, the proposed hospital is intended to deliver innovative and state-of-the-art healthcare solutions and unique patient care services in promoting health through integrated clinical

practice, education and research.

It will also engage local and international medical experts and specialists who will be supported by internationally trained and experienced nursing and medical care staff.

"This new venture by Asiri Hospitals of Softlogic Group in Sri Lanka is a significant milestone in the country's journey towards developing and attracting medical tourism," Softlogic Group Founder Chairman and Managing Director Ashok Pathirage said.

"It is pivotal for Sri Lanka at this juncture to aspire and be bold in taking the initiative to help revamp the country's healthcare sector to newer heights and

MORE ON P8

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Forbes lists Sri Lanka as one of 23 best places to visit in 2023

US-based international travel influencer Juliana Broste, a 12x Heartland Emmy Award-winning travel filmmaker and host, showcasing adventures and fun things to do around the world, recommended Sri Lanka to be listed as one of the best places to visit in 2023 and as a result of her continuous effort, Sri Lanka has been listed on the Forbes list as one of the 23 best places to visit in 2023.

This was a result of her visit to Sri Lanka in 2022, under the Visiting Blogger Programme of SLTPB 2022. Juliana, who explored the destination on a photo tour, says that even with inflation, visitors will find Sri Lanka a spectacular, affordable destination worth the long haul.

"Loop around the island and you'll see why this land will keep you guessing—from the hustle and bustle of capital city Colombo to beautiful beaches, rice fields, waterfalls, plains and mountains. There's a lot to see in a relatively short distance, so have your camera at the ready. Spotting the wildlife in Sri Lanka is really



US-based international travel influencer Juliana Broste

special," says Juliana. "You can go on safari to an elephant sanctuary, go whale watching on the Indian ocean and spy on birds, lizards, jellyfish and monkeys in a mangrove."

Juliana has selected spotting leopards at the Yala National Park on her bucket list for next time.

MORE ON P8

Lanka IOC gets new Managing Director

Lanka IOC PLC (LIOC) has announced the appointment of Dipak Das as the new Managing Director from April 14, 2023.

He replaces incumbent Manoj Gupta, who is relinquishing, having assumed the post in May 2019.

Das is a mechanical engineering graduate from prestigious NIT Silchar and also has a certificate in petroleum management. He was working as State Retail Head of Kerala before his appointment as LIOC Managing Director.

He joined Indian Oil Corporation in 1996 and since then has worked in varied assignments, including retail sales and operations. He has worked in key positions in Indian Oil Corporation, including as Divisional Retail Head and also as State Retail Head. He has headed two very strategic and high-volume divisional offices namely Secunderabad and Ajmer.

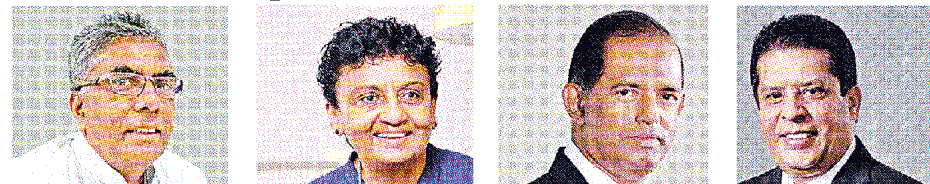
As Head of Retail of the State, Das focused on creating a more enabling and inspiring workplace, leveraging technology and infrastructure augmentation and capability building of Channel partners. With in-depth knowledge and acumen of retail sales, he had been closely associated with different government organisations, including Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TSIIC), Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC), etc.

Under his leadership, many government sites were procured and state-of-the-art retail outlets were developed in the State of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

Das has worked in various capacities, covering vast geographies in India, including in the State of Kerala, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal and the North Eastern states of India.

MORE ON P8

Finetech Consultancy appoints two renowned professionals to its board



Director/CEO Clehan Pulle

Director/COO Sujatha Nadesan

Chairman Dumindra Ratnayake

Director Lakshman Silva

Sri Lanka's single largest multi-cloud solutions provider Finetech Consultancy (Private) Ltd (FCPL) recently welcomed two eminent professionals to its board.

The company has appointed Lakshman Silva as a Director and Dumindra Ratnayake as Chairman. Ratnayake presently

serves as Chairman of the 1990 Suwasariya Foundation and was former CEO of Etisalat Lanka (Pvt.) Limited, Sri Lanka's first mobile telecommunications network and a former Chairman of the Board of Investment.

Ratnayake also has served on the ICTA board.

He holds an Electronics and Telecommunications Degree, with First Class Honours, from the University of Moratuwa.

Silva is currently Chairman of Panasian Power PLC, its subsidiaries and serves as an Independent Director at Seylan Bank PLC.

MORE ON P8

Chinese engineer in Pakistan police protection after blasphemy accusation

AFP: A Chinese supervisor at a dam construction project in Pakistan is under police protection after workers accused him of blasphemy against Islam, officials said yesterday.

Blasphemy is a hugely sensitive issue in Muslim-majority Pakistan, where even rumours of sacrilegious remarks can incite lynch mobs and deadly violence.

Officials said the engineer at the Dasu hydropower project in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was accused of blasphemy after he highlighted the "slow pace of work" during the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. "The labourers said they were fasting but denied that work had slowed down,"

MORE ON P8

Christine Lagarde says has 'huge confidence' that US won't default on its own debt

CNN: Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank, said she has "huge confidence" the US will not allow the country to default on its own debt during an interview on CBS' "Face the Nation" Sunday.



Christine Lagarde

first-ever default as early as this summer or as late as the fall. Lagarde said she understands politics but "there is a time when the higher interest of a nation has to prevail".

The former International Monetary Fund Managing Director remained optimistic about the recovery of the global economy, despite the Federal Reserve indicating a mild recession later this year.

"If you look at all the forecasts at the moment, it's all positive," Lagarde said. "It's been slightly downgraded but overall, we have a recovery."

Lagarde cited Russia's war in Ukraine, banking sector instability in the US and Switzerland and inflation as creating "a hollow of uncertainty around a recovery that we want to embed".

MORE ON P8

March Purchasing Managers' Index gets festive boost and sends signals of an economic rebound

■ Manufacturing PMI records index value of 51.4; services 55.1

■ Expectations for next three months improve amid positive developments in economy

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) turned positive in March, after a months-long contraction, particularly in the case of manufacturing, due to both the festive demand and the signs of an end to the economic contraction, which set off last year.

The manufacturing PMI returned to a positive index value of 51.4 in March, after nine months of contraction, as new orders and productions rose for mainly food and beverages, ahead of the New Year season.

In February, the PMI recorded an index value of 42.3. An index value of 50.0 splits an activity between



Despite the hardships, Sri Lankans celebrated Avurudu this year with the hope that things would turn better, as the country's economy appears to be on the path towards recovery

PIC BY NISAL BADUGE

expansion and growth. The PMI remains one of the most-watched gauges of economic activity, which particularly provides clues to the

economy's future direction.

"Expectations for manufacturing activities for the next three months indicated an improvement with the

developments observed in the current economic environment," a statement from the Central Bank said.

Meanwhile, the services PMI too returned to 55.1 index points in March, after briefly falling into a contraction in February, with 48.7 index points.

The financial services, insurance and professional services sub-sectors drove the March services PMI.

"Accordingly, the financial services sub-sector continued to improve with the increases in deposits, while the other personal activities sub-sector also exhibited a significant improvement," the Central Bank said.

"However, business activities related to the wholesale and retail trade sub-sector continued to deteriorate, despite some improvements seen ahead of the festive season," it added.

Some respondents nevertheless raised concerns about the higher electricity tariffs and the tax rates, which bode negatively on their bottom lines.



Table of stock market data including columns for SECURITY, VOLUME, VWA, OPEN, HIGH, LOW, and various stock names like LANKEM DEV, AMBEON HOLDINGS, etc.

Exchange Rates table with columns for CURRENCY, BUYING RATE, and SELLING RATE. Includes rates for Australian Dollar, Canadian Dollar, etc.

Week begins on a mixed note

The ASPI edged down as a result of price losses in counters such as Sampath Bank, John Keells Holdings and Hatton National Bank with the turnover crossing Rs 1.2 Bn.



Investments, Marawila Resorts (rights) and SMB Leasing nonvoting. Furthermore, foreigners closed as net buyers.

contributor to the market turnover (due to Expolanka Holdings) whilst the sector index gained 6.38%. The share price of Expolanka Holdings increased by Rs 10.50 (6.39%) to close at Rs 174.75.

2.25 (1.64%) to close at Rs 135.25. The share price of Aitken Spence recorded a gain of Rs 1.75 (1.37%) to close at Rs 129.75.

Contd. from Page 7

Asiri Group...

becoming Asia's preferred medical tourism destination and in the process contribute to re-engineer the economic and social development in Sri Lanka," he added.

Lanka IOC...

He was pioneer in commissioning the first all-women retail outlet in Chanchalguda Women Prison in Hyderabad in Telangana, which is operated by the Prisons Department and managed by released women prisoners.

Forbes lists...

"Be sure to pack an all-white outfit that covers your shoulders and legs when visiting religious sites," says Juliana.

with the ruins of an ancient stronghold located atop a dramatic rock outcrop. It's wild to think how an entire civilisation lived here centuries ago.

Finetech Consultancy...

Silva is a member of the Stakeholder Engagement Committee of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and a Committee Member of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.

Chinese engineer...

which led to an exchange of heated words" with the supervisor, a police official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Christine Lagarde...

Governments and central banks have a "narrow path" to navigate, Lagarde said and they have to "adopt the right policies".

Ceylinco General Insurance crowned as 'People's General Insurance Brand' for 17th consecutive year

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Understanding customers' needs, DFCC Bank credit cards provide a generous 1 percent guaranteed CashBack feature for all cardholders 365 days a year. Unlike other card loyalty programmes, this CashBack can be channelled to any DFCC Bank account, making for tangible savings. DFCC Bank credit cards also provide year-round offers, promotions and savings, helping you to save more while you spend, particularly during festive seasons. Various Mastercard and Visa, International card products are available to suit your every need. DFCC Pinnacle cardholders enjoy a 3 percent guaranteed CashBack on fuel, dining, utility bills and overseas transactions, DFCC World Mastercard cardholders enjoy a 1.5 percent guaranteed CashBack on overseas transactions, Visa Prestige cardholders enjoy a 3 percent

guaranteed CashBack for fuel and utility whilst Visa Salary Partner cardholders enjoy a 3 percent guaranteed CashBack for fuel. This is not all; they earn an additional 1 percent guaranteed CashBack on all other transactions. While each type of card may provide different benefits that will be more suited to your lifestyle, all DFCC Bank cardholders are entitled to a minimum of 1 percent CashBack on every transaction, a range of deals and offers, the latest contactless and Chip payment technologies making it an all-inclusive card that benefits a customer when used. The CashBack amount can be credited to a DFCC Bank savings or current account of the cardholder's kith and kin. Additionally, interest is offered on the CashBack amount when credited to a DFCC savings account, making it a double reward.

Ceylinco General Insurance expresses its heartfelt gratitude to the people of Sri Lanka for being crowned the 'People's General Insurance Brand of The Year' at the 2023 SLIM Kantar People's Awards, for a record 17th consecutive year. As these awards are based on people's perceptions about brands, the selection process is determined on the results of a survey rather than an application or an evaluation process - and it reflects the true voice of the people of Sri Lanka. The People's Award is the most coveted award for corporates because it reflects the voice of the people and indicates the brand they love and respect. Commenting on the achievement by the company, Chairman, Dr. Jagath Alwis said, "We are truly humbled to receive this award for the 17th consecutive year and are deeply grateful to the people who vote for us year after year. During these difficult times, our key priorities were to provide more value and benefits that are relevant to ease the burden on people. Similarly, our unique insurance solutions, customer-



Rex Gunatilake, Director Chief Executive Officer (second from right) and Ajith Perera, Director (extreme right) of Ceylinco General Insurance accepting the award

centric culture and our unconditional support to people in times of crisis are the pillars of our success. I believe we were able to get even closer to our policy holders and the people of Sri Lanka with the uninterrupted services we provided them even during the height of the fuel scarcities and other challenges amidst a difficult year for all. I have no doubt that this award will really inspire our stakeholders both internal and external."

Rex Gunatilake, Director / Chief Executive Officer opining said "Winning the 'People's General Insurance Brand of The Year' over and over again demonstrates that Ceylinco General Insurance touches the lives of people across Sri Lanka, earning their trust and loyalty for being a partner that delivers its promises. During 2022, Ceylinco General Insurance recorded a premium income of Rs. 24.4 billion and paid

claims to the tune of Rs. 10.7 billion. The unprecedented amount of money provided in lieu of claim settlements and benefits reflects the company's continuing commitment to ensuring timely claim settlements to all customers, as Ceylinco General Insurance has always maintained an undisputed and unsurpassed reputation for speedy settlement of claims, most of them On The Spot."

The selection process for these awards consists of a nation-wide survey carried out by Kantar Group, UK, deploying a rigorous data collection and analysis process covering all the provinces with over thousands of respondents interviewed one-to-one, making it representative, unbiased and relevant. Therefore, the winners of the People's Awards reflect the true voice of Sri Lankans from across communities, regions and social segments. Also, in an exclusive survey carried out on service providers by LMD magazine amongst the general public for over a period of 12 weeks in 2022, Ceylinco General Insurance was chosen as the most popular insurer in terms of 'Service Excellence' in the general insurance industry. Ceylinco General Insurance, over the last three decades, pioneered many innovations, spearheading the growth of the insurance industry towards a brighter future, while raising the bar and setting new benchmarks for service excellence and product innovation to ultimately benefit the people of Sri Lanka.

LOLC Al-Falaah honoured for regional excellence in Islamic Finance

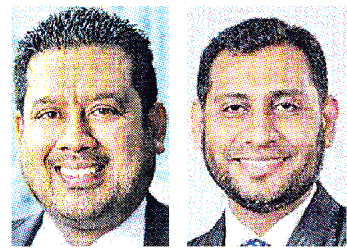
LOLC Al-Falaah was honoured with four awards at The Islamic Finance Forum for South Asia (IFFSA) for their achievements and exceptional performance in expanding the frontiers of Alternate Finance in the domestic and global financial arena.

The entity was bestowed with a Gold award for Islamic leasing company of the year, a Silver award for Islamic Window/unit of the year, two bronze awards for Islamic Finance Entity of the year and for Islamic Finance Product of the year, at the awarding ceremony held at Shangri-La, Colombo.

The Islamic Finance Forum for South Asia (IFFSA) began in 2015, to recognize the Islamic Banking and Finance industry practitioners and to develop its network across the South Asian region. IFFSA motivates players within the region, that are specifically active from Pakistan, Maldives and Bangladesh to step up their game when competing for global awards.

"It is our distinct honour to be the recipient of these awards over the years," said Shiraz Refai, Head of Alternative Financial Services of LOLC Finance PLC. Further, he added; "The Islamic financial industry has experienced a pace of growth and development that has been unprecedented over this recent decade. This honour however, represents recognition to the entire LOLC group and for all those who have travelled on this remarkable journey with us as employees, partners, customers and well-wishers.

As we continue this journey, we now need to venture into new frontiers towards bringing greater value to the economy, to society and to the



environment. In recent years, it has also been dynamic and evolving to meet the rapidly changing requirements of the modern economy, yet, these repetitive honours demonstrate the customers' confidence in our products and services, also indicating the well-orchestrated team effort behind these offerings".

The jury of IFFSA has executed a very stringent and rigorous selection process before arriving at the front-runners. The final winners were chosen based on the overall company's 2021/22 audited financial performance, the values and achievements of each nominee throughout the pertaining year.

"Our creative efforts have been translated into an unmatched customer-centric experience for our clients and solid financial results for the parent company. At LOLC Al-Falaah, we are driven by a devoted pursuit of excellence, and innovation in our product advances and service offerings.

We are penetrating the non-banking segment through new product development. Over the last financial year LOLC -Al Falaah has managed to record portfolio growth, deposit growth and recorded an industry low NPL, setting an example to all who practise this product in the industry," said Ihsam Awfer, Chief Manager, Alternative Financial Services of LOLC Finance PLC.

Sri Lanka Insurance felicitates MDRT top performers at 'MDRT Day 2023'



Sri Lanka Insurance held its 'MDRT Day 2023' to honour and recognise the MDRT winners of Sri Lanka Insurance for 2022.

The event was held on March 29 at Cinnamon Grand in the presence of the Chairman, Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officer and the senior management of SLIC.

MDRT achievers for a year 2022 were felicitated at the award ceremony. The congregation consisted of TOT members, COT members and MDRT Life members.

The certification of MDRT membership is

the pinnacle of Life Insurance salesmanship. Achieving MDRT membership endorses the commitment and dedication of the sales teams to achieve professionalism in the filled of Life Insurance salesmanship.

Chairman, Ronald C. Perera speaking at the occasion said, this achievement comes at a time most challenging in the history of Sri Lanka amidst a political, social and economic unrest. This demonstrates the will and grit of the Sri Lanka Insurance sales professionals.

The Chief Executive Officer Chandana L Aluthgama in his speech stressed the importance of taking the message of protection through insurance to all Sri Lankans in these challenging times. He also stated that the parameters of Insurance are changing with the competition from the insurance and non-insurance industries specially in the digital spectrum where insurance is just a click away. Modern consumer is looking for insurance protection and as an Insurance sales professional one should be equipped with knowledge and expertise to cater to the customer need and requirement.

NDB boosts remittances with Western Union

National Development Bank PLC (NDB) recently re-launched one of its iconic campaigns - "Salli Ratin - Thagi Apen" to promote and encourage the channelling of foreign remittances through the Western Union money transfer platform.

The campaign features incentives for customers who partner with NDB for foreign remittances in the form of gift vouchers from Cargills Ceylon PLC. The campaign coincides with the ongoing festive season and will be available until April 30.

This incentive is expected to boost remittances of foreign funds through formal banking channels, which make a valid contribution towards enhancing the official foreign reserves of Sri Lanka, which is critical to the country at this juncture.

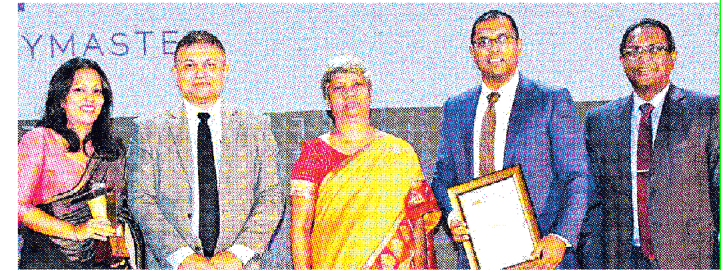
Additionally, NDB brings the utmost convenience to

customers, as they can receive money via Western Union with just one phone call or by sending a message through the NDB NEOS app.

The incentive offered features gift vouchers worth up to Rs. 1,000, varying upon the amount remitted via Western Union, and can be redeemed at any outlet of Cargills Food City, Food City Express, KFC, TGI FRIDAYS and Regal, Majestic, or Empire Cinemas.

This marks the second instance in which NDB launched a similar campaign, the first being during the last quarter of 2022. Incentives worth Rs. 1 million were distributed among customers who received foreign remittances via NDB Western Union. The campaign was a success, with exponential growth seen in the particular customer engagement.

PayMaster wins big at LankaPay Technnovation Awards



From left: PayMaster Solutions (Pvt.) Ltd Chief Product Officer Nimanthi Dissanayake, LankaPay Chairman Kenneth De Silva, Central Bank of Sri Lanka Deputy Governor T.M.J.P. Fernando, PayMaster Solutions (Pvt.) Ltd Director/Chief Executive Officer Ranjitha De Silva and Lanka Pay Institute CEO Channa De Silva

Leading home-grown one-stop payment app PayMaster has won two awards at the recent LankaPay Technnovation 2023 Awards. The app won the Gold Award for Best Mobile Application for Retail Payments in the Fintech sector and a Merit Award for Most Popular Digital Payment App of the Year.

The PayMaster app has quickly gained the trust of Sri Lankan consumers in just four years by providing a wide range of financial technology services to meet the daily payment needs of Sri Lankans. The app is powered by JustPay, Sri Lanka's national mobile payment processing network, which operates under the full supervision of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

Through the PayMaster app, users can easily fulfill their online payment needs, including local currency exchange, 18 types of bill payments, doctor channeling, medicine search (Medi Search), sending money to Sri Lanka from abroad, paying for goods and services in Sri Lanka, and donating money to help Sri Lanka from abroad, among many other services.

One of the PayMaster app's unique features is the PayMaster Money Transfer service, which provides

customers with the convenience of transferring money through a single app, even if they have several bank accounts with different banks. This service has gained great popularity by avoiding the inconvenience of switching to separate apps from bank to bank and providing fast and reliable service. In addition, the PayMaster app offers an in-app credit service to pay bills in case of a cash emergency. Customers can easily access credit for bill payment, and there are many convenient payment methods available to them. It's worth noting that the Medi Search service, introduced last year, is a completely free service and is a social responsibility initiative by PayMaster. This service has become very popular among Sri Lankans, allowing customers to easily find the nearest pharmacy that has the medicines they are looking for from the comfort of their homes.

This year, the PayMaster app has introduced a new service that allows users to send money from abroad to Sri Lanka easily. Users can add their credit or debit card to send money, even if they don't have cash on hand. This feature enables users to send money from any country around the world to any bank account in Sri Lanka in just two seconds.

HNB and Browns Agriculture empower farmers with convenient access to farming equipment

Following up on recent efforts to support the agricultural sector despite the challenges they face today, HNB PLC partnered with Browns Agriculture, the pioneer of agricultural machinery in Sri Lanka.

"We are all undoubtedly aware of the agricultural crisis that has been affecting Sri Lanka in the last couple of years. It has had quite the adverse impact on the industry, on national food security, as well as the export market. We are committed to helping better the situation in the country and as such have partnered with Browns Agriculture to provide farmers with convenient access to leading tractor and harvester brands," HNB Deputy General Manager - Retail & SME Banking, Sanjay Wijemanne said.

"We hope that the solutions offered will do their part in helping fuel the resurgence of



From left: HNB DGM - Retail and SME Banking, Sanjay Wijemanne; HNB Asst. General Manager - Personal Financial Services, Kanchana Karunagama; HNB Head of Leasing, Susith Perera; HNB Senior Manager - Micro Finance, Pujitha Jayawardena; HNB Asst. Manager - Leasing, Roshan De Silva; HNB Asst. Manager - Business Development-Leasing, Mahesh Rathnayake; Browns Chief Cluster Operating Officer, Sanjaya Nissanka; Browns Business Development Manager, Chanaka Chandrasekara; Browns Service Operations Manager, Anton Perera; Browns Executive - Brand & Administration, Menaka Wijesinghe

the agricultural sector in the nation and remain dedicated to doing our part in contributing to Sri Lanka's economic revival."

In the current conditions, unexpected breakdowns and repairs can be particularly challenging for farmers, as they may not have the funds readily available to cover the costs. Together with HNB, Browns Agriculture is now offering a 2-year (or 2000 hour) warranty

period for the sale of Tafe tractors.

In addition, customers who purchase a tractor under the HNB/Browns leasing promotion will receive 4 labour-free doorstep services. HNB customers will also receive free registration for all tractors, with the first year insurance premium waived for specific models. They are also offering a 6-month

warranty for specific brands of harvesters, along with 3 labour-free doorstep services with the purchase of Yanmar and Sumo harvesters.

Browns Agriculture Sanjay Nissanka -Cluster Chief Operating Officer said. "The trust we have gained through top quality products, best after sales services and the long term relationship has undisputedly made Browns Agriculture the

first preference among the farming community.

We are proud to partner with HNB for this endeavour, as someone who shares the same values towards empowering the agricultural sector at such a crucial time. Through this partnership, we hope to offer valuable benefits and convenient leasing solutions to help them supplement their business."

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JAMIE FOXX HOSPITALISED WITH 'MEDICAL COMPLICATION'

Oscar-winning US actor Jamie Foxx has been hospitalised with an unspecified medical complication but is in recovery, his family says. Foxx, 55, is under observation at a medical facility in the state of Georgia, where he is filming a Netflix movie, according to CNN.

"We wanted to share that, my father, Jamie Foxx, experienced a medical complication yesterday," his daughter Corinne Foxx posted on Instagram Wednesday. "Luckily, due to quick action and great care, he is already on his way to recovery." **AFP**



FREE BIRD: INDIAN MAN ASKS ZOO FOR FEATHERED FRIEND'S RELEASE

An Indian farmer whose extraordinary bond with a large bird made him a social media star has asked for his feathered friend to be set free after it was captured by wildlife authorities. Mohammad Arif rescued the injured Sarus crane, a crimson-necked wetlands species that can grow up to 1.8 metres (six

feet) in height, and nursed it back to health. He set it free six weeks later, but the crane remained near his home in the city of Amethi, trailing the farmer when he went for bike rides and eating out of his hands. "The bird would stay with its family during the day and return in the evenings." **AFP**



BY KAMANTHI WICKRAMASINGHE

The Sri Lankan government's plan to send 100,000 toque macaques to China has been frowned upon by animal rights groups, conservationists and the nature-loving fraternity. While the government states that this plan is a remedy to minimise crop damage, conservationists believe that funds and resources that will be utilised to capture and transport the animals to China could be allocated for better purposes such as looking at alternative means of controlling populations of pest animals such as toque macaques, peacocks, wild boar and so on.

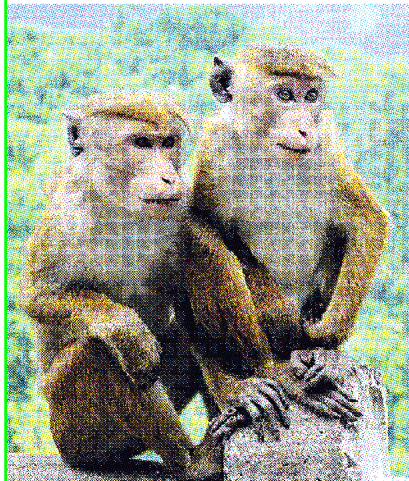
TOQUE MACAQUES AND THEIR ROLE IN NATURE

To better understand the role of toque macaques in maintaining the ecological balance, the Daily Mirror Life spoke to Dr. Wolfgang Dittus, primatologist at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute who has been studying the ecology and behaviour of wild monkeys in the dry forests of Polonnaruwa since 1988. "Monkeys spend 20% of their activity each day eating insects that damage forest trees and shrubs. That's a removal of about 3000-3600 pest insects on plants per monkey group per day in a small area of 10 hectares. By competing with langurs (gray and purple-faced) for natural food items they keep these populations in check, i.e., reduce other monkey numbers that potentially feed on human crops. They also eat rat pups," he said.

Responding to a query on alternative approaches to control the toque macaque population, Dr. Dittus said that there needs to be an uphill re-education of a culture used to their ways of dealing with animals. "Historically speaking, in heavily populated areas of Sri Lanka people have eliminated macaques in large areas of the lowland wet zone rainforests that were converted by agricultural expansion to a point where the macaque subspecies there is on the international IUCN endangered subspecies list. In the highlands, agricultural expansion, housing developments, and dairy farms have encroached on natural ecosystems risking extinction of the Critically Endangered highland loris as well as the subspecies of toque macaque in these areas. The dry zone with less intensive agriculture has been spared some of this but the pace towards competition with animals is increasing, especially in the north where langur removals have been undertaken under pressure from agricultural lobbies."

VARIED SOLUTIONS

"The Buddha reminds us that to solve a problem you must understand its cause and then address the cause," he added. "First and foremost we must remember that monkeys come to human habitation only in search of food or water. To find a solution requires a change of mind set; it is not how best to repel inquisitive monkeys, but what we humans need to do in order to not attract monkeys to our premises in the first place. Think rationally as a start. The solution varies depending on the property that we want to safeguard."



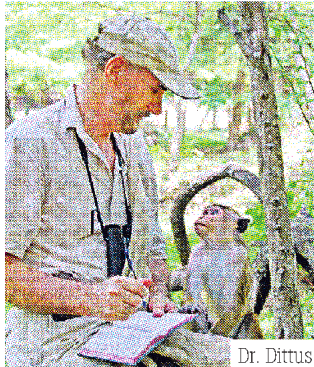
CROP DAMAGE IN SRI LANKA

Does sending Toque Macaques to China solve the problem?

The Buddha reminds us that to solve a problem you must understand its cause and then address the cause"

BARREN LANDS KEEP MONKEYS AWAY

Another barrier that keeps monkeys away is barren lands. "Larger agricultural plots such as coconut estates can be easily protected against visiting monkeys. A perimeter of 50 to 100 meters of barren land surrounding an estate plot acts as a barrier because monkeys don't like to cross open ground for natural fear of predation. The monkeys' fear can be reinforced by human guardians to chase monkeys whenever they come near: it's a dawn to dusk job for 2-3 guardians depending on the size of the estate. Monkeys learn to avoid, they are not stupid! For the estate holder it is a matter of balancing cost and benefit. The estate may lose a few trees to create a barrier and may need to pay 2-3 guardians daily to prevent monkeys from coming. That is the cost of doing business in a country where its inhabitants have the privilege (taken-for-granted) of having inherited a diversity of wildlife. The benefit to a coconut estate manager is that more coconuts are available to cover the cost of protection. The benefit far outweighs the cost. But it needs to be implemented, not merely discussed, complained about, and not decided or acted upon! The challenge is for coconut growers to assume a different responsibility for their properties," Dr. Dittus explained while adding that smaller land holders can protect their vegetable gardens with approaches such as netting as is done regularly in some upcountry estates. Dr. Dittus is planning to collaborate with agriculturalists to produce a video programme showing how people can protect their properties from visiting monkeys.



Dr. Dittus

DON'T FEED MONKEYS

One of the solutions suggested by Dr. Dittus is to stop feeding monkeys. "At the level of the household stop attracting monkeys by throwing unwanted food (vegetable and table scraps, food for domestic pets) into the garden where monkeys have easy access," Dr. Dittus explained. "Monkeys very quickly learn to visit such houses on a regular basis and if there is a vegetable garden it is not spared. Don't feed monkeys anywhere at any time, including at religious sites where monkeys learn to depend on easily acquired human sourced food: humans teach monkeys to become dependent on human food and create pest monkeys! There is sufficient food in the forest for monkeys. Monkeys are naturally lean as arboreal acrobats, skinny monkeys are not unhealthy and don't need human food if they are not as fat as some of us humans. Don't throw food waste on the roadsides when traveling."

Speaking further, Dr. Dittus said that the human-monkey conflict has been created by human ignorance and misbehavior. "Monkey populations have not increased everywhere on the island. "The national parks and protected areas have small populations because monkey groups cannot grow feeding on only natural foods. But, where monkeys have learned to access human foods their populations have expanded locally, as evident around towns with lots of garbage in the open. With the expansion of tourist sites, thousands of guest houses in the last 30 years with daily garbage (monkey food), monkeys have flourished, for example in the towns of Kandy and Dambulla where monkeys are fed constantly by humans. The public needs to be educated to not feed monkeys. Singapore and other developed areas have succeeded because citizens have been taught in school and in public programmes to not feed monkeys. Offenders are fined heavily if they are caught doing so. The fine is to discourage people from creating pest monkeys that are troublesome to other people - like traffic laws. Monkeys don't "steal", rather they help themselves to what people have taught them is theirs to feed on."



Mahinda Amaraweera

NO FINAL DECISION YET

- MINISTER

However, when contacted Agriculture Minister Mahinda Amaraweera said that this is only a proposal that was presented to the Cabinet. "The request came from the Chinese government where they want to accommodate toque macaques in around 1000 zoological gardens for display. This request was presented to the cabinet. But prior to taking any decision a special sub-committee will be appointed to discuss on this matter further. We will be consulting all stakeholders including animal rights groups prior to arriving at any final decision," the minister affirmed.

LOOK TO SCIENCE & RESEARCH

A further question was raised as to whether it would not be better to use the resources available to instigate a thorough study of the problem, by qualified researchers and scientists, to find solutions through the understanding of macaque behaviour and habitat rather than looking to earn 'blood money. Sri Lanka has some of the finest in this field, such as Dr. Wolfgang Dittus, who has devoted much of his life to the study of these fascinating animals, and is renowned the world over for his expertise. The Agricultural extension units in our rural areas would be best suited for such studies. Financial resources are saved by the implementation of effective ways to safeguard crops. If immediate remedy is needed, and as referred to earlier, would it not be better to set up mechanisms for the payment of fair compensation for those who lose their crops to macaques? After all, resources are available to capture 100,000 of them!"

AN ATTEMPT TO EARN BLOOD MONEY?

The WNPS further questioned whether the toque macaques are destined to live a life of torture and brutality in the guise of being sent to zoos in China. "The Covid-19 pandemic had a devastating effect on China's trade in wild species for medical tests, for products destined for human use; particularly drugs and cosmetics. Macaques, with their human-like qualities have been particularly popular, especially with medical testing facilities in the USA and Europe. The potential income from such a trade would be far greater than that from the sale of this species to Zoos. Is this where these macaques are headed?"

PERPETUATING FALLACIES

Issuing a statement, the Wildlife and Nature Protection Society (WNPS) said that there are several claims being made by the government. "One is that the populations of toque macaques, elephants and other species have increased without any comprehensive island wide consensus being carried out to justify this claim. Whatever Sri Lanka does, some species of Macaques are on the IUCN's critically endangered list. As per globally accepted criteria for the definition of Zoos, in China, there are just 18 that fit the bill. This averages out at 5,000 macaques per Zoo. This is not credible. Capturing 100,000 macaques will take considerable effort and financial resources. Why have such funds been unavailable for research into the causes and the formulation of preventive measures to deal with human-monkey conflicts, and for the payment of compensation for those who do suffer losses?" the statement read.

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