



YOUR PAPER TODAY 10 PAGES

Missing Rs.5mn cash bundle found - Central Bank

The Central Bank today said a shortage of Rs.5 million worth cash bundle was discovered in one of its vaults during the currency operations on April 11, 2023.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

CEB ENGINEERS SAY PERKS TO REMAIN DESPITE REFORMS

Perks enjoyed by CEB employees, including employment security, employee benefits, the Employees' Trust Fund and the pension scheme will not be affected

BY KALANI KUMARASINGHE

Perks enjoyed by the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) employees are to remain, despite the ongoing reform process, according to a group of senior engineers of the Board. Ajith Withanage of the CEB Senior Engineers' Association said that the Power and Energy Minister made these assurances, following discussions on reforming the CEB.

"The Minister assured that perks enjoyed by CEB employees, including employment security, employee benefits, the Employees' Trust Fund and the pension scheme will not be affected through the reform process," he said.

Addressing a media briefing senior engineers of the state-run CEB said that it can no longer function on the present model it operates on, which has been in existence for over 50 years. Traditionally trade unions have acted to sabotage every energy project brought to Sri Lanka, with many groups opposing new power plants, Spokesman of the CEB Senior Engineers Association Nandika Pathirage said.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

HRCSL TO SUPPORT LGBTQ COMMUNITY IN ADVOCATING LEGAL REFORMS

A group of representatives of the LGBTQ community met the former to discuss the well-being of the LGBTQ people and address pressing issues

BY KURULU KOJANA KARIYAKARAWANA

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) has expressed its support to the LGBTQ community in protecting its rights as well as advocating for the legal reforms over the issues pertaining.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Easter Sunday Attack All night protest march begins to mark fourth anniversary

Prior warnings on the attack were received and the warnings were sent from one person to another but no action was taken to prevent the attack

BY YOHAN PERERA

The Catholic community in Negombo who began an all-night protest to mark the fourth anniversary of Easter Sunday attacks last evening called for the unveiling of the truth behind the Easter Sunday attacks.



The protest calling for the unveiling of truth behind the Easter Sunday attacks moves on from Negombo. Pic by Nisal Baduge

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A4 >>>

SRI LANKA RISKS LOSS OF GSP + UNLESS ANTI-TERRORISM BILL CHANGED

- EU writes to Foreign Ministry expressing concerns
- Representatives of EU member states raise it with President on April 17
- Says it will have an impact even when SL re-applies for GSP next year after EU reforms on GSP + framework
- UK, US also raise concerns

BY KELUM BANDARA

Sri Lanka risks the loss of GSP + trade concessions due to the provisions of the proposed Anti-Terrorism Bill as the European Union (EU), the United States (U.S.) and the United Kingdom (UK) have expressed their concerns over it through multiple diplomatic channels, Daily Mirror learns.

Paola Pampaloni, the European External Action Service Deputy Managing Director of Asia and Pacific, wrote to the Foreign Ministry here

expressing concerns on the new bill, according to an informed source.

The US has communicated its displeasure over the content of the new bill through Sri Lankan Ambassador in Washington DC Mahinda Samarasinghe. Also, the UK authorities informed Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Aruni Wijewardane who is there, that this bill, unless changed, will have an impact on trade relations through preferential trading.

Besides, some representatives of the EU member states raised concerns

in this regard when they were called for high tea with President Ranil Wickremesinghe and his Chief of Staff Sagala Ratnayake on April 17, 2023. During the brief discussion, they said that the spirit of the bill would have a bearing on decisions regarding GSP + concessions. According to informed sources, these envoys noted that it will have a particular bearing when Sri Lanka re-applies for the same concession after upcoming reforms of the EU's GSP + framework next year.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Toque monkey issue

A Chinese company made the request for 100,000 toque monkeys - Ministry Monkeys to China for breeding purposes

- To implement the request, the ministry opened a forum to express the views of various parties

BY CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA

While claiming that the toque monkeys are to be taken to China for breeding purposes, the Agriculture ministry yesterday said that a Chinese company called Animal Breeding Limited had requested for 100,000 toque monkeys. Ministry Secretary Gunadasa Samarasinghe said that to

implement the request, the ministry opened a forum to express the views of various parties. Environmentalists, farmers, the public, the tourism industry, religious leaders and scientists can express their views on exporting the monkeys.

"While collecting acceptable, justified and better ideas, the ministry

is hoping to take the best decision when sending the toque monkeys to China. The ministry is hoping to remove monkeys from areas where a large extent of crops are being destroyed by them. There are no intentions of removing monkeys from forests and conservation areas," the ministry secretary added.

Extreme heat warning issued to 17 districts until today

City	Temperature (°C)	
	Max	Min
Anuradhapura	35	26
Batticaloa	34	27
Colombo	33	27
Galle	32	27
Jaffna	35	24
Kandy	33	23
Nuwara-Eliya	24	11
Ratnapura	34	24
Trincomalee	35	26
Mannar	34	28

- According to the heat index issued by the department 17 districts including Colombo would be affected by hot weather conditions

BY CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA

The Meteorology Department has issued extreme heat weather advisory until today (21) particularly for Western, North-Western, Northern, North-Central and Eastern provinces and Moneragala and Hambantota Districts.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

President has no authority to threaten teachers or confiscate their property: Stalin

BY CHATURANGA PRADEEP SAMARAWICKRAMA

The President does not have any authority or power to make the examinations a compulsory service, to take the exam committee under emergency, to prosecute the teachers who are withdrawing from evaluating examination answer scripts, or to confiscate their property, the Ceylon Teachers' Union (CTU) said.

Addressing the media, CTU General Secretary Joseph Stalin said the country's economy collapsed without fuel and the examinations were delayed due to the actions of the government.

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VERITE RESEARCH
Strategic Analysis For Asia

IMF Tracker

Sri Lanka had met 25% of IMF commitments; failed one by end-March: Verité Research

'The IMF Tracker' launched to help monitor Government's progress on US\$ 2.9 billion programme

Colombo, April 20, 2023

Sri Lanka had met 25% of the trackable programme commitments of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme as at the end of March 2023 but had failed on one, according to 'The IMF Tracker', a new online tool launched by Verité Research.

Many of the commitments met were classified as 'prior actions' and met prior to the programme being approved by the IMF Board.

The Failed Commitment is the establishment of an online transparency platform. This platform is expected to publish, on a semi-

annual basis, information related to (i) all significant public procurement contracts, (ii) a list of all firms receiving tax exemptions through the Board of Investment, and (iii) a list of individuals and firms receiving tax exemptions on luxury vehicle imports. It was due by 1 March 2023, but not met even by the end of that month.

Lack of information is also a concern. As at end March, 9% of the identified commitments had their progress status in the tracker classified as 'unknown'. This means the information required to make an assessment was not available.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Sri Lanka's Performance on IMF Commitments (as of March 2023)

OVERALL PROGRESS ON THE IMF PROGRAMME

Met 25%
Not Met 1%
Unknown 9%
Existing 65%

Note: The term 'Existing' refers to commitments that have already been completed or are in progress. 'Met' refers to commitments that have been fully completed. 'Not Met' refers to commitments that have not been completed. 'Unknown' refers to commitments where the progress status is not known.

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NANKANG

HAPPY EASTER

CONTD.
FROM PAGE 1

MEMON ASSN. TO CONDUCT EID PRAYERS AT GALLE FACE

The Memon Association of Sri Lanka has informed that it has organized the Eid-ul-Fitr (Ramadhan) prayers to be held at the Galle Face Green this year as well.

The prayers will be conducted at 8.00 am either tomorrow or Sunday depending on the sighting of the new moon for the month of Shawwal in the Islamic calendar.

All night protest march begins to mark fourth anniversary

Fr Robinson Wijesinghe who was among the priests who participated in the protest and who delivered a sermon during the service before the protest said what people want is to find out the truth about the attack. "Prior warnings on the attack were received and the warnings were sent from one person to another but no action was taken to prevent the attack. We want to know why this happened," he said.

The protest march which commenced from St Sebastian's Church Katuwapitiya is expected to reach Colombo early morning today.

OBITUARIES

FERNANDO – NIHAL GEMUNU ABEYSEKERA (N.G.A) – Commander, Sri Lanka Navy (Retired). Beloved husband of Nimal, loving father of Ransith and Nalika, loving father-in-law of Varuni and Lishan and loving brother of Cecil (late), Ranjan and Cynthia (late), passed away peacefully. **Viewing from 8.00 a.m. to 2.45 p.m. at A.F. Raymond's, Borella on Friday, 21st April 2023 followed by cremation at 4.00 p.m. at the Old Crematorium, General Cemetery, Borella (Kanatte). 113569**

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REMEMBERING EASTER SUNDAY ATTACKS – THE MANY SIDES

On the eve of 4th year remembrances of Easter Sunday attacks, I remember many things.

By **Ruki Fernando**



The most vivid are the images of dead and injured, and damage to the churches and hotels. These were quickly rebuilt. Except for memorials in churches, the rebuilding may help erase memories of the tragedy from the churches and hotels.

I remember the families of those killed that I had met in Negombo, in Batticaloa, in Nuwara Eliya (families of those killed in Kochchikade Church in Colombo) and also a father of a hotel staffer killed. I also remember those injured, including those who are still seeking medical care in Sri Lanka and overseas, and their families. Their physical, emotional and financial struggles, tears, grief and pain indicate their lives are far from being rebuilt.

I also remember an image of at least one Muslim man who was killed in violence against Muslims after the Easter Sunday attacks and the Muslim shops, and houses torched at that time. I remember the asylum seekers and refugees around Negombo who were evicted, re-displaced and became homeless in the days after the Easter Sunday attacks, after having come to seek temporary refuge in Sri Lanka due to persecutions they faced in Pakistan, Afghanistan etc.

I also remember the many Muslims who were detained unjustly for months and years after the Easter Sunday attacks, including women with children, especially from Kathankudy. One of the more famous cases was of lawyer Hejaaz Hizbullah, who had publicly condemned the Easter attacks. I also remember his family who I got to know after his detention, and families of others detained on suspicion of being involved in the Easter attacks, all of whom had suffered greatly, irrespective of the guilt or innocence of detainees.

I also remember that the Sri Lankan criminal justice system, including investigators, prosecutors and judiciary, have not been able to hold those responsible for the Easter Sunday attacks accountable for four years. **Former Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and former Inspector General of Police (IGP) were acquitted from cases filed against them, without evidence even being called from the defence.** Other criminal cases filed by the Attorney General on behalf of

the state and people are still going on. Fundamental rights cases filed by some concerned citizens led to the Supreme Court holding the former President and senior officials responsible for not preventing Easter Sunday attacks, and ordering them to pay compensation. The amounts were small compared to previous amounts awarded by the Supreme Court to torture victims and there was no directive to hold them responsible for criminal negligence. The court had ruled to remove the then Prime Minister (and present President) Ranil Wickramasinghe from the case before the judgement, citing presidential immunity.

I remember that the private plaint filed in September 2022 against former President Maithripala Sirisena in the Fort Magistrate's Court, alleging that he had failed to discharge his duties as the Minister of Defence, is still pending. **I also remember that there is still no response to the April 2022 police complaint and May 2022 letter to the police chief demanding the arrest of Nilantha Jayawardana, the former director of the State Intelligence Services (SIS).** As far as I know, no disciplinary action has been taken against him despite the Supreme Court orders to this effect in January 2023. I also remember that no action has been taken against Senior Deputy Inspector General of Police (SDIG) Deshabandu Tennakoon, despite a Presidential Commission of Inquiry recommending disciplinary action for not doing his duties to prevent Easter Sunday attacks and a Special Police Investigative Division recommending to press charges against him for negligence. I also remember that it took nearly two years for the former Attorney General to be summoned for questioning in relation to his statement to the media in May 2021 that there was a "Grand Conspiracy" with regard to the Easter Sunday attacks, and media reports today indicating his refusal to appear for questioning. And that overall, there is little interest in looking at "masterminds" or those most responsible for Easter Sunday attacks beyond those who did the attacks.

I remember the long time spent in conversations with foreign journalists, researchers, international organizations, diplomats, UN officials etc. about the Easter Sunday attacks, but that international attention has been minimal after the immediate aftermath of the attacks. After being visibly absent for two years, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had gradually increased references to Easter Sunday attacks in reports on Sri Lanka to the Human Rights



I remember the long time spent in conversations with foreign journalists, researchers, international organizations, diplomats, UN officials etc. about the Easter Sunday attacks, but that international attention has been minimal after the immediate aftermath of the attacks

Council since September 2021. The last report in October 2022 included calls for independent and transparent investigation with international assistance. I also remember the case filed in the United States of America (USA) against three suspects in relation to the Easter Sunday attacks, on charges linked to supporting ISIS. As far as I know, no other country has initiated criminal prosecutions, though the Easter attacks is the largest massacre of foreign nationals in Sri Lanka, during or after the war. **I remember that on Easter Sunday this year (April 9, 2023), police had banned the use of banners, black flags and loudspeakers, during a vehicle parade from St. Nicholas Church in Bopitiya to St. Sebastian's Church in Katuwapitiya (the church most affected by Easter Sunday bombings) demanding truth and justice.** A media report had accused three prominent Catholic Priests advocating for truth and justice for Easter Sunday attacks of conspiring against the Catholic

Archbishop of Colombo. Shehan Malaka, an outspoken youth activist who publicly made an allegation of political conspiracy related to the Easter Sunday attacks was arrested, and though he was released on bail, a case was filed against him in the Colombo High Court.

I remember the many churches I've been to in the war-ravaged Jaffna and Mannar Catholic Dioceses (Northern Province) that had been attacked by the Sri Lankan armed forces, such as Navaly Church, Gurunagar Church, the Allaipiddy Church, the Pesalei Church and Madhu Church, resulting in the killing and injuries to many Tamil civilians. There has been no criminal accountability and adequate compensation for these and many other serious crimes during the three decades-long war, including the extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances of Catholic Priests, journalists and others. Including Fr. Karunaratnam (Fr. Kili), who was killed on April 20,

2008. I also remember that Mosques and Buddhist Temples have been attacked by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leading to many deaths.

I remember that in the 11 Sundays preceding Easter Sunday in 2019, there has been some sort of disruption against a Christian worship service and that at least 13 churches and one individual have been affected in nine districts, with about 35 incidents and about 70 violations against Christians being reported in 2019 prior to Easter Sunday attacks. Violations reported include disrupting a service, assault, death threats, shouting obscenities and damage to property, forcible entry while services were ongoing, throwing stones and gathering outside places of worship in a threatening manner. Those leading prayers, hosting prayer services and participants have been threatened and obscene language

I also remember that the Sri Lankan criminal justice system, including investigators, prosecutors and judiciary, have not been able to hold those responsible for the Easter Sunday attacks accountable for four years

used against them. Such incidents have also continued in the four years since the Easter Sunday attacks.

And finally, I remember the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), under which I and many other critics of the state have been arrested and detained, and many Tamils were subjected to prolonged detention, torture etc. **The PTA had failed to prevent the Easter Sunday attacks, despite the availability of information, but it was quickly deployed to subjugate Muslims. The Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) proposed as a replacement to the PTA is unlikely to prevent or address terror attacks such as Easter Sunday attacks, but likely to terrorize ordinary people, especially ethnic and religious minorities and dissenters.**

There is indeed a lot to remember about the Easter Sunday attacks. As I remember these, I'm conscious I may be forgetting some. My prayers are for all these.

CMU joins in the call for Human Chain protest against inaction over Easter Sunday attacks

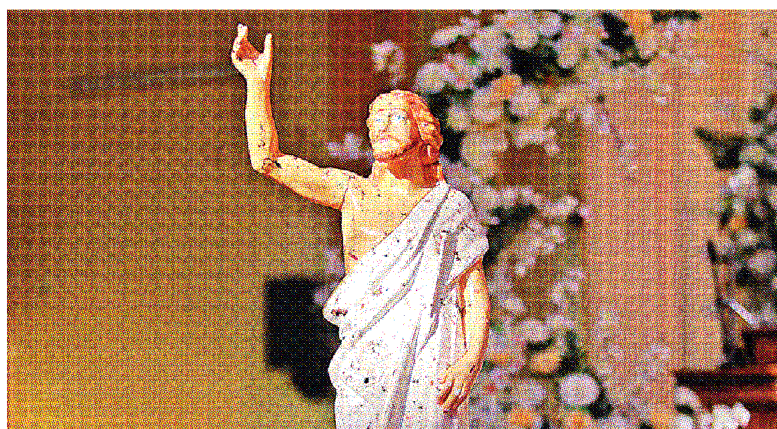
Human Chain to be formed along the side of the Colombo-Negombo Main Road on both sides by 8.30 a.m. starting from St Anthony's Church Kochchikade and St Sebastian's Church, Katuwapitiya, Negombo; observance of silence at 8.45 a.m.

The Ceylon Mercantile, Industrial and General Workers' Union (CMU) said that it supported the call made by the Catholic Church upon citizens to create a strong human chain today (Friday, April 21), demanding truth and justice for the victims who died in the 2019 Easter Sunday bomb attacks.

In a media communiqué, the CMU said that the CMU had always stood for justice, especially for the oppressed and the exploited.

"We have consistently called for the prosecution of perpetrators of crimes against the people. In keeping with this proud tradition, we call upon our members to support the democratic protest action, wherever they can, on April 21 and to observe two minutes of silence at 8.45 a.m. at their workplaces to express their solidarity with the call made for justice for the Easter Sunday victims," the CMU said.

"Despite the recommendations of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) to institute criminal proceedings against former President Maithripala Sirisena and others, no action has been taken by the Attorney General to do so. Neither has the Police Department adhered to the recommendations of the PCoI to initiate Departmental Investigations into the conduct of several senior



Police Officers.

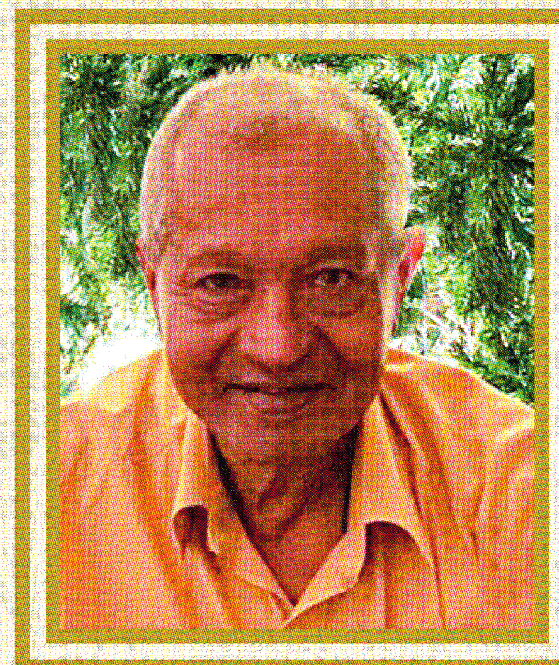
"What is especially disturbing about the Easter Sunday attacks is that it is now widely suspected that these horrific attacks could have been callously engineered to gain political advantage electorally.

"In Sri Lanka, successive Governments have over the years sought to brazenly protect perpetrators of acts of violence by politicians, State agencies and individuals against the people, even when there has been overwhelming evidence of such crimes. For too long they have got away with this. "It is utterly hypocritical of this same government that has failed

to pursue the truth behind these brutal terrorist attacks to now be in a great hurry to bring an Anti-terrorism Bill. The efforts of the Church to confront this abuse of state power must be lauded and supported," the CMU said in its statement.

Four years have elapsed since the terror attacks carried out by suicide bombers against families gathered in Churches and hotels on Easter Sunday of 2019 across Sri Lanka that saw the deaths of 272 people. The dead included 45 children, while scores were seriously injured, and 179 children lost one or both parents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

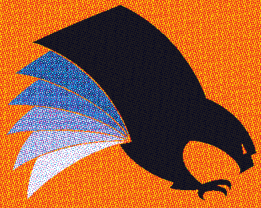


PANDITHAGE, ANANDA CHANNA

Dearly beloved husband of Hannelore, adored father of Michaela and treasured grandfather of Jasmin, passed away peacefully on 17th April 2023.

Son of late P D Alexander and late Mrs Gunawathie Pandithage, and loving brother of Malkanthi de Silva, Ranjith, Mohan, Manthri Mendis, Gahanath, Kishan and late Anil.

Dear brother-in-law to Tikari, Jeevani, Rohinie, Sunil, Harshi & Nadi. Funeral was held on the same day, in accordance with his final wishes.



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Full Stock Market **POB**

World could face record temperatures in 2023 as El Nino returns

REUTERS: The world could breach a new average temperature record in 2023 or 2024, fuelled by climate change and the anticipated return of the El Nino weather phenomenon, climate scientists say. Climate models suggest that after three years of the La Nina weather pattern in the Pacific Ocean, which generally lowers global temperatures slightly, the world will experience a return to El

Nino, the warmer counterpart, later this year. During El Nino, winds blowing west along the equator slow down, and warm water is pushed east, creating warmer surface ocean temperatures. "El Nino is normally associated with record breaking temperatures at the global level. Whether this will happen in 2023 or 2024 is yet known, but it is, I think, more likely

than not," said Carlo Buontempo, director of the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service. Climate models suggest a return to El Nino conditions in the late boreal summer, and the possibility of a strong El Nino developing towards the end of the year, Buontempo said. The world's hottest year on record so far was 2016, coinciding with a strong El Nino - although climate change has fuelled extreme

temperatures even in years without the phenomenon. The last eight years were the world's eight hottest on record - reflecting the longer-term warming trend driven by greenhouse gas emissions. Friederike Otto, senior lecturer at Imperial College London's Grantham Institute, said El Nino-fuelled temperatures could worsen the climate change impacts countries are already experiencing - including severe

heatwaves, drought and wildfires. "If El Niño does develop, there is a good chance 2023 will be even hotter than 2016 - considering the world has continued to warm as humans continue to burn fossil fuels," Otto said. EU Copernicus scientists published a report yesterday assessing the climate extremes the world experienced last year, its fifth-warmest year on record.



MORE ON PB

Tea exports down 22% in March, 15% in first quarter

- Declining trend both in tea production and exports continues
- Türkiye, Iraq, and Russia emerge as largest importers of Ceylon Tea
- For Jan-Feb period SL earned US\$ 204.1mn from tea exports, up by 6.3% YoY
- CB says increased export earnings due to price increases as volumes registered decline



Sri Lanka's tea exports dipped 22 percent year-on-year (YoY) to 17.97 MnKgs in March continuing the declining trend seen in both tea production and exports in recent times, the data released by Forbes & Walker Tea Brokers showed. Among the categories, bulk tea showed a substantial decrease, while packeted tea showed a significant increase, and to a lesser extent tea bags when compared to March 2022. Cumulative exports for the January-March 2023 period too contracted by 15 percent YoY to 54.08 MnKgs. Here again, tea in bulk showed a substantial decrease in export quantities, whereas packeted tea showed a significant increase and tea bags to a lesser extent when compared to March 2022. Meanwhile, FOB value in March 2023 recorded an increase of Rs.973.73 to Rs.2, 018.87 compared to Rs.1, 045.14 in March 2022.

FOB value of US\$ 6.10 per kilo in March 2023 was the highest ever FOB value for a calendar month in US dollar terms surpassing the previous best of US\$ 5.74 recorded in October 2022. This was a gain of US\$ 1.97 compared to March 2022.

In terms of markets, Türkiye has emerged as the biggest importer of Ceylon Tea with an increase of 102 percent YoY in January-March 2023. Iraq, which had decreased its imports by 54 percent YoY, secured the second position.

MORE ON PB

SLT to save Rs.300-400mn per year with relocation of Mobitel offices to new HQ

Mobitel operational offices are scheduled to move into a new state-of the art operational headquarters located in Welikada in May by bringing an estimated savings of Rs.300-400 million per annum on rent for Sri Lanka Telecom PLC (SLT). "The construction of our nine-storied SLT-Mobitel headquarters building in Welikada phase 1 was completed within one year, and was made ready for occupancy. Mobitel operational offices are scheduled to move into the new building,



Rohan Fernando

MORE ON PB

Rs.5mn cash bundle goes missing at Central Bank

The Central Bank said yesterday a shortage of Rs.5 million worth cash bundle was discovered in one of its vaults during the currency operations on April 11, 2023. "An internal probe into the matter was commenced immediately, while a complaint was also lodged at the Fort Police Station.

The police investigation is in progress," a brief Central Bank statement said. The Central Bank said it is taking necessary measures to thoroughly investigate the incident and strengthen the internal controls, processes, etc. It also said it will continue assisting the Police to carry out investigations.

Asian markets swing as inflation, rates worry investors

AFP - Asian markets fluctuated yesterday following a tepid performance in New York and Europe as traders fret over the inflation outlook and central bank plans to hike interest rates to tame rampant prices. Wall Street closed relatively flat following mixed corporate results, and as a Federal Reserve report said that the US economy was "little changed" in recent weeks. A mixed bag on corporate earnings also provided little motivation for traders, while results from US regional banks is coming into focus after last month's turmoil in the sector that saw three go under and Credit Suisse taken over. Markets have in recent days been optimistic that central banks, and particularly the Fed, will be able to wind down their rate hiking drive soon after data showed inflation coming down, even if at a slower pace than wanted. However, investors were jolted by news that UK prices were still elevated, rising more than 10 percent on-year last month owing

to soaring food costs, fanning bets the Bank of England will have to keep tightening monetary policy. It also showed that inflation remains stubbornly high and that officials still have their work cut out to bring it down. "Broader markets are likely still in hawkish shock after the hotter-than-hot UK CPI (consumer prices index) brought back into focus that global inflation is proving more difficult to stamp out amid underlying solid demand," analyst Stephen Innes, of SPI Asset Management, said. The BoE has hiked rates 11 times since late 2021 in an unsuccessful bid to keep inflation close to a two percent target. In the United States, the Fed said in its quarterly Beige Book update on the world's top economy that it had stalled in recent weeks and that liquidity was tightening in the wake of the banking upheaval. "Several districts noted that banks tightened lending standards amid increased uncertainty and concerns about liquidity," the report said,

MORE ON PB

Hambantota Port breaks new ground in RO-RO transshipment

- Sees slow growth of RO-RO cargo coming in from the West and going to the East



BMW's waiting in the RO-RO yard for transshipment

The Hambantota International Port (HIP) last week handled over 900 units of the latest BMW's transhipped from the Port of Koper - Slovenia to the Port of Pyeongtaek in South Korea. While usual traffic for transshipment at HIP is in the East to West direction, this operation proves that there is a slow growth of RO-RO cargo coming in from the West and going to the East. "The fact that these high-end vehicles are now coming our way is a clear indication that HIP's efficiency, reliability,

quality of service and capacity for transshipment has now reached 'best in the world' standards," said Tissa Wickramasinghe, Chief Operating Officer, Hambantota International

Port Group (Pvt) Limited. "While it is the most convenient port of call for transshipment for both the Pacific and the Indian ocean, HIP's services are top notch.

MORE ON PB

Seylan Bank raises Rs.5bn via debenture issue

- Says not exercising option to raise further Rs.2bn

Seylan Bank said yesterday the initial tranche of its Rs.7 billion Basel III-compliant convertible debenture issue was oversubscribed on the opening day. The bank last week

revealed plans to issue 50 million fully-paid Basel III-compliant, Tier 2, listed, rated, unsecured subordinated redeemable debentures, with a non-convertibility conversion, at a par value of Rs.100 each, with an option to issue up to a further 20 million of such debentures in the event of oversubscription of the initial tranche.

MORE ON PB

Treasury bill yields rise for second week

For the second week Treasury bill yields rose across all three tenors at Wednesday's auction, the data released by the Central Bank showed. Last week, the Treasury bill yields rose bucking a months-long declining trend, which many considered as a blip. However, this week too, Treasury bill yields rose: 3-month yields by 85 basis points, 6-month yields by 87 basis points and 12-month yields

by 32 basis points. The Public Debt Department (PDD) of the Central Bank offered Rs.90 billion via bills and raised the full amount—Rs.54.7 billion in 3-month bills at 25.65 percent, Rs.9.9 billion in 6-month bills at 24.97 percent and Rs.25.3 billion in 12-month bills at 22.96 percent. PDD offered Rs.40 billion in 3-month bills and Rs.25 billion each in 6-month and 12-month bills.

MORE ON PB

People's Bank self-banking units facilitate over Rs.7.5tn worth transactions during Avurudu season

People's Bank recently announced that it had facilitated over 8 million transactions worth over Rs.7.6 trillion during this year's Sinhala and Tamil New Year festivity period from April 1 to 15, through its island-wide network of self-service automated machines. People's Bank is committed to offering an unparalleled level of convenience and flexibility

to customers via its self-banking units network across the country which is further complemented by its range of seamless digital banking services. The bank's digital banking apps People's Wave, People's Wyn and People's Pay have transformed the digital banking landscape in Sri Lanka. People's Wave, the country's most downloaded banking app with over

1.6 million active users provides digital access to 50 different types of financial transactions. At present, People's Bank has 743 branches and service centres located island wide and over 14.7 million customers. People's Bank has 290 SBUs comprised of ATMs, CDMs and CRM, allowing customers to bank at their convenience 24/7, 365 days a year.

Monthly producer prices decline breaking months-long streak of increases

- Supplier prices ease by 75.5% in February from the 89% in January

Producer prices finally bucked the months-long inflationary spiral as prices declined in February from a month ago, signalling disinflationary impulses on consumer prices. Producer prices declined 0.5 percent in February from January after relentless advances across the supply chains pushing prices at one point to surpass 100 percent

and briefly at those levels there for a couple of months last year. On an annual basis, the supplier prices rose by 75.5 percent in the twelve months to February 2023, easing notably from the 89.0 percent through January. The Producer Price Index measures the price pressures through the supply chain before such prices are felt by the end consumer, and hence such prices provide a bellwether for future consumer prices. Consumer prices slowed to 50.3 percent in the twelve months to March, down from a near 70

percent back in September last year, according to the Colombo Consumer Price Index. The Central Bank remains confident that the consumer prices would relapse to single digits by the end of the year. In February, prices in the agricultural sector supply chain made an about turn to decline 0.5 percent from January while the manufacturing sector inflation was zero between the two months. However, the utility category which includes electricity, gas, steam, air conditioning and water supply increased by 1.5 percent

as the power tariffs rose for the second time in six months. Sri Lanka's disinflation path is further supported by the appreciation seen in the rupee against the dollar and the improvement in the foreign exchange conditions in the domestic market which will relax remaining import controls and thereby increase the supply conditions in the market. The recent bout of inflation was largely produced by supply constraints and global inflation and not from unrestrained demand.

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P-09

CANNES SET FOR WOMEN DIRECTOR RECORD, A-LIST LINEUP

A record six women directors will compete for the Palme d'Or at Cannes in May, organisers announced Thursday, with the film festival promising a who's who of Hollywood A-listers and award-winning filmmakers. The world's top cinema shindig had already secured some glitzy Hollywood premieres, including the new Indiana Jones and Martin Scorsese movies, as well as Johnny Depp's comeback film. **AFP**



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AVURUDU

We are in that time of year where we are awoken to the sounds of the Asian koel's mating call at wee hours in the morning, signifying to us all that it is the month when Sri Lankans celebrate their New Year. Generally on 13th or 14th of April, the Sinhala and Tamil New Year marks the beginning of the traditional calendar according to astrology and is a national festival of the country. Also known as the sun festival, the Sinhala and Tamil new year is a ritual performed to honour the Sun God for hundreds and hundreds of years now.

However, as there are many other holidays related to the week of Easter, many enjoy a long vacation away from their homes where they participate in all the rituals connected to the New Year celebrations since most holiday resorts follow the traditions.

Though tourism is booming in the country, the incoming tourists are not splurging at the fancier hotels in the

country. Instead, they are shackled up in cheaper accommodation like Airbnb, home stays and smaller hotels/guesthouse, who seem to be earning a good income. Since most local credit cards and hotels are offering attractive discounted rates, the locals spend their vacations in the bigger hotels.

Colombo is a great time to stay in during this period as everything is so quiet and

As there are many other holidays related to the week of Easter, many enjoy a long vacation away from their homes where they can participate in all the rituals connected to the New Year celebrations since most holiday resorts follow the traditions.

oh!! Colombo

relaxed with no traffic or people. Owing to the New Year customs and the tradition of lives being guided by auspicious times, nothing functions in the island until the auspicious day of beginning work dawn. The joy of celebrating Avurudu, especially in the villages where traditions are followed, is an event to look forward to. The auspicious colour this year for clothing was multi-coloured. Let us all wish for a kaleidoscopic year moving forward for all of us.

Wishing you all a Happy New Year.

A RETROSPECTIVE

tracing the artistic journey of artist and feminist Kamala Vasuki

BY NUZLA RIZKIYA

A Retrospective - an exhibition tracing the artistic journey of Kamala Vasuki, a woman-artist and feminist activist coming from north and east is took place in Batticaloa. Through multiple mediums of individual and collective art, Vasuki's work bears witness to the scarred histories of pain, hope and healing of her home Sri Lanka, over the past thirty years.

Sitting with Daily Mirror Life, Vasuki gives us an insight to her story and the evolution of her work.

"I was obsessed with colours and shapes since my childhood; collecting colourful beads in various shapes, chocolate covers and seeds and creating shapes with them on my study table" she relates. Her journey with art starts in the context of war with bombings, shellings and darkness bearing the daily vibe throughout her childhood.

Q GENDER, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. ADDING TO SCARRED HISTORIES, TELL US HOW DID THESE SUBJECTS COME INTO YOUR LINE OF WORK?

My first inspiration to become an artist came from, an art exhibition of 3 women (Arunthathi, Nirmala and Suguna) organised in Jaffna in 1986. I enrolled in the same art classes where these 3 women artists were studying. This is also where I met my 'guru' of work Mr.A.Mark. In 1988 the Women's forum in the University of Jaffna, organised an exhibition of 5 women artists. This was my first exposure to a feminist space allowing me to meet strong feminist women. By the early 1990's my artwork gradually had become a strong part of my feminist activism within the context of the brutal war. My art was the medium of the questions that I wanted to ask adding to my reflections of the everyday violence I witnessed. This was my voice of documenting what was happening around me.



Kamala Vasuki - Artist and feminist activist

Q YOUR EXPERTISE OVER THE YEARS, ESPECIALLY YOUR WORK PUBLISHED IN THE A TO Z OF CONFLICT, TRI-LINGUAL ARTISTS' BOOK DEMONSTRATES HOW A COMMONPLACE CHILDREN'S ABC BOOK WOULD LOOK LIKE IF ALL THE ENTRIES WERE CHOSEN IN RELATION TO WORDS ABOUT CONFLICT, AND WORDS BORN OUT OF CONFLICT. WE KNOW THAT YOU HAVE DEFINED YOURSELF AS AN ACTIVIST. HOW DO YOU POSITION THIS ROLE IN RELATION TO YOUR ROLE AS AN ARTIST?

I was once part of a student protest against the intrusion of military persons, when I was studying at the University of Jaffna. The students who were doing a roadblock were attacked by the Indian Peace Keeping Force and two of my colleagues were killed that day. In a context where we

couldn't protest, couldn't speak out, couldn't organise, I expressed my anger through painting. The painting titled 02.02.89- the date that my friends were killed, emerged from this experience.

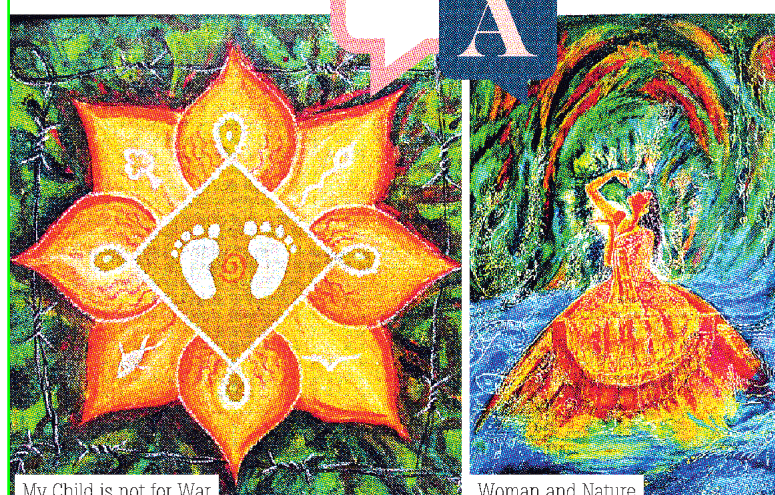
I ask my questions through my paintings. With my involvement in feminist spaces my art became questions of not only war but also of patriarchy, injustice, discrimination, and violence against women, where they challenged culture, religion, marriage, dress, motherhood and all power relations I was living through.

As an artist I have been part of art spaces in Colombo and internationally. However, my art is inspired through my activist work. I understand the importance of art that could help in processes of truth seeking, justice, and collective healing. As activists we are constantly responding to crisis situations. Every day, we step forward to challenge discrimination and oppression. My art has shaped many activist spaces that I have been part of just as my art has been shaped by my role as an activist.

Q YOUR LATEST EXHIBITION, "A RETROSPECTIVE 1989-2023" TRACES YOUR ARTISTIC JOURNEY AS A WOMAN-ARTIST. VIEWERS GOT TO WITNESS SCARRED HISTORIES OF PAIN, HOPE AND HEALING OUR HOME ISLAND EXPERIENCED OVER THE PAST YEARS. IT IS INTERESTING THAT, WHILE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND IDENTITY ISSUES OF WOMEN ARE ADDRESSED AT THE EXHIBITION, LOT OF THE WORK ON DISPLAY WAS ALSO CONCERNED WITH WIDER SOCIAL ISSUES, SUCH AS THE PANDEMIC FIGHT AND CIVIL PROTEST....

Art can be inspired from learning different techniques and can be exposed to a diversity of styles, while simultaneously originating from personal experience or from one's context. Since early 2000, my connections with the South Asian regional feminist networks and feminist activists had expanded my thinking and critiques about society and culture. This had a deep influence on my style as well. I had been mainly doing washed drawing with dark shades, expressing the pain of violence. When I was exposed to feminist activism around the power of nature and power of women, my art also started to reflect a different energy. I started using vibrant colours and oil pastels. Aspects of nature such as plants, the lagoon, fish, slowly became part of my paintings.

Presently, I try to take my art to my collective spaces. For example, currently the discussions around the economic crisis and the collective art processes help everyone to express their stories.



My Child is not for War

Woman and Nature

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