



YOUR PAPER TODAY 10 PAGES

EID MUBARAK

PUCSL CHAIRMAN REFUSES TO QUIT

- Confident move to sack him will fail
Slams "stupid politicians"
Gotabaya had "no common sense"
Ready to enter politics
Fears of another tariff increase

BY EASWARAN RUTNAM
The Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL) Janaka Ratnayake launched a scathing attack on "stupid politicians" saying they were responsible for the power crisis in Sri Lanka.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Democracy is Constitutional Government and Rule of Law, not mass hysteria

- Says the Current President has a valid constitutional mandate to hold the position

With reference to the comments made by Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa on the legitimacy of the mandate of President Ranil Wickremesinghe to hold that office and the demand for a Presidential Election to seek a fresh mandate, Former Parliament Secretary General Priyaneer Wijesekera has responded with the following facts in a statement to the media.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Bill to amend laws to protect LGBTQI community: SC commences hearing

- A very progressive judgment of five judges of the Supreme Court of India had held that gay people are entitled to the same rights and protections as heterosexual people

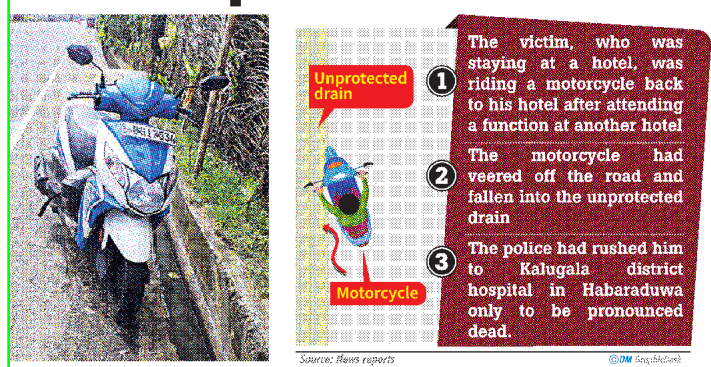
BY LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA
The Supreme Court on Thursday (20) commenced hearing into the Special Determination petition filed challenging the constitutionality of the private member's bill submitted to parliament seeking to amend Sri Lanka's penal code with the aim of protecting the country's LGBTQI community.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Five aircraft grounded owing to global shortage of engines: SriLankan

SriLankan Airlines yesterday said that the five aircraft are grounded owing to a global shortage of engines and not because of a lack of finances as incorrectly stated in some news reports. Explaining the circumstances of the five grounded aircraft reported in certain reports, the SriLankan Airlines stated "the aircraft, belonging to the Airbus A320 NEO family, are currently awaiting engines after shop visits as the global industry faces a shortage of engines and long lead times for engine repairs for this type of aircraft as a result of a technical reliability issue."

Wayside unprotected drain claims Spaniard's life



The victim, who was staying at a hotel, was riding a motorcycle back to his hotel after attending a function at another hotel. The motorcycle had veered off the road and fallen into the unprotected drain. The police had rushed him to Kalugala district hospital in Habaraduwa only to be pronounced dead.

BY SUMATHIPALA DEEYAGANAGE

A Spanish tourist riding a motorcycle had fallen into a wayside storm water drain in Ahangama town and died. Police said the motorcycle had veered off the road and fallen into the unprotected drain near Ahangama post office on Galle-Matara road. The police had rushed him to Kalugala district hospital in Habaraduwa only to be pronounced dead.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

ANTI-TERRORISM BILL WILL BE CHANGED

IN PARLIAMENT: MINISTER

- Any citizen, political party or organization is free to challenge the Bill in the Supreme Court once it is tabled in Parliament
The PTA has been misused and exploited by successive Governments since then for their personal and political advantage
The Government is cognizant of the concerns raised by the local and global community and does the needful to address them

BY SANDUN A JAYASEKERA
The highly controversial Anti-Terrorism Bill is subject to amendments and changes in Parliament and as such no one should have any fear or feeling of threat from the proposed Bill, Justice Minister Dr. Wijeyadasa Rajapakse said. "The government is aware of concerns raised by the global and the local community on certain provisions contained in the draft of the Anti-Terrorism Bill and the Government is ready to alleviate them by discussion, compromise and flexibility, he added.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>



Beware of dubious IT firms which lure Sri Lankans for employment in Thailand

- They end up in harsh working conditions in nearby countries, mostly Myanmar

The Sri Lanka Mission in Thailand has noticed recently that Sri Lankan nationals are being lured for employment in Thailand particularly for the positions in the Information Technology (IT) sector by dubious IT firms involved in call-centre scams and crypto currency fraud, the Foreign Affairs Ministry said.

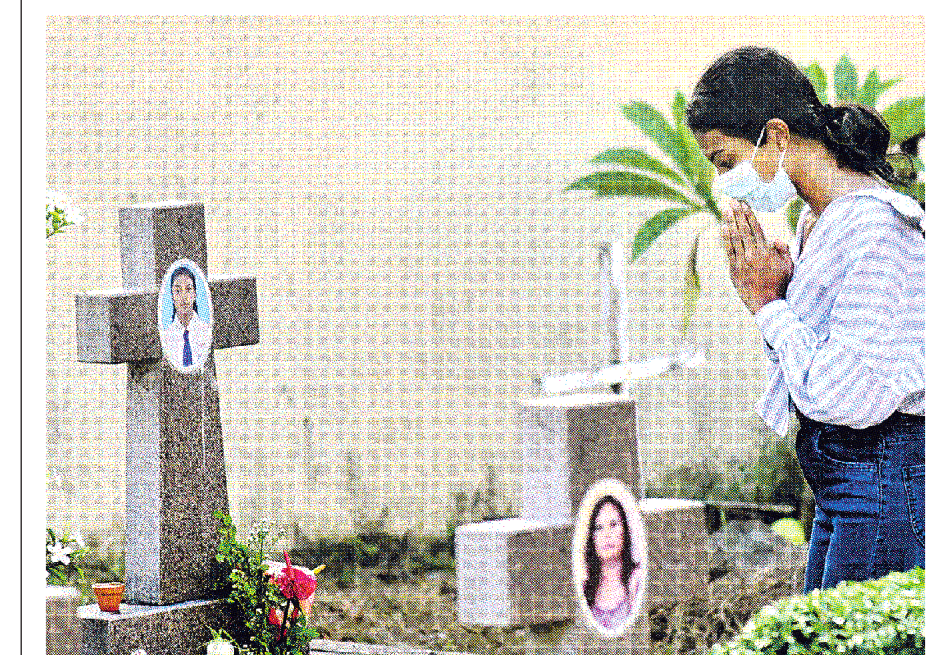
SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Surgeries at Eye Hospital halted due to contaminated drug: GMOA

- The cause has been identified as the contamination of the drug Prednisolone administered to several eye patients, who have fallen ill with a bacterial infection

Surgeries at the National Eye Hospital in Colombo have come to a halt due to a contaminated drug used to treat patients, Dr. Prasad Colombage of the Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) said.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>



Easter Sunday victims commemorated

The victims of the Easter Sunday terror attacks were commemorated at a cemetery in Katuwapiya on April 21, 2023, marking the fourth anniversary of the Easter Sunday terror attacks. Over 260 were killed in the blasts which targeted three churches and three luxury hotels in April 2019.

PHOTO BY PRADEEP PATHIRANA

SL a country without responsible rulers ? : Buddhist Monk

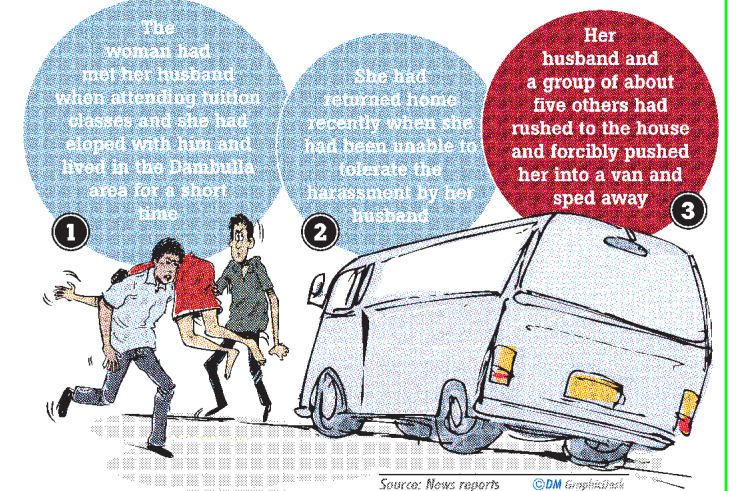
- Sri Lanka is the only country in the globe where rulers steal public funds openly,
Episodes with regard to the XPress Pearl incident have proved it

BY YOHAN PERERA

It is unfortunate that there is no one to take responsibility for the Easter Sunday attack though four years have gone since the mayhem, a prominent Buddhist monk said yesterday. Speaking during a ceremony held to mark the 4th anniversary of the Easter Sunday attack Sangha Nayaka of Southern Province Venerable Omalpe Sobitha Thera said the failure to find out those who are responsible for the Easter Sunday attack is a violation of Buddhist Principles. "Buddha preached that it is the responsibility of the rulers to see that justice is meted out to them," he said.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Husband abducts wife in Chilaw



The woman had met her husband when attending tuition classes and she had eloped with him and lived in the Dambulla area for a short time. She had returned home recently when she had been unable to tolerate the harassment by her husband. Her husband and a group of about five others had rushed to the house and forcibly pushed her into a van and sped away.

- Her mother who intervened was assaulted

BY HIRAN PRIYANKARA JAYASINGHE
A young married woman who had been living separately due to a family dispute was abducted by her husband with the help of several others. The 18-year-old woman who had left her husband recently had been living at her parental house at Manuwangama in Chilaw.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

Easter Sunday's mastermind had close links with Al-Qaeda

- The Al-Qaeda member, who is a Maldivian national, had admitted that he had connections with Mohammad Ibrahim Sadiq Abdullah Haq, who is the main suspect in the Easter Sunday terror attacks in Sri Lanka

BY NIMANTHI RANASINGHE
A leading member of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, who was arrested in Australia, had close contacts with one of the main suspects of the Easter Sunday terror attack in Sri Lanka, the Australian government had informed Sri Lanka.

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

The Catholic Church doesn't insult monks

- We will not condone insulting monks and will not associate with people who do such things. One should remember that Sri Lanka's culture is associated with Buddhism

BY YOHAN PERERA
The Catholic Church is not involved in insulting Buddhist monks and other members of clergy and will not associate with people who insult them, Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith said yesterday.

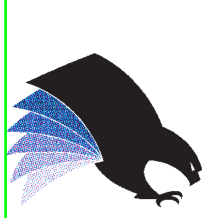
SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>

"Buddha is a consciousness beyond manifestation" - Indian Prime Minister

- The Indian government is hosting the two-day Summit in collaboration with International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) on 20-21 April 2023

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who inaugurated the Global Buddhist Summit in New Delhi on April 20, 2023 Buddha is a consciousness beyond manifestation, a statement from the Indian High Commission said. The Indian government is hosting the two-day Summit in collaboration with International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) on 20-21 April 2023. The theme of the Summit is "Responses to Contemporary Challenges: Philosophy to Praxis".

SEE REST OF THE STORY ON A2 >>>



Daily Mirror

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PUCSL CHAIRMAN REFUSES TO QUIT

● **CLAIMS MISMANAGEMENT HAS RESULTED IN THE CEB CONTINUING TO INCUR LOSSES AND BEING UNABLE TO COVER ITS COSTS EVEN WITH THE LAST TARIFF INCREASE**

He also said that the developing situation in the country has forced him to consider entering politics. Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera is pushing for the removal of Ratnayake after he had refused to back the electricity tariff hike, but Ratnayake told Daily Mirror he will not quit. He also expressed confidence that the proposal will not receive the 113 majority it requires in Parliament for him to be removed. In an interview on the programme 'On Fire with Easwaran Rutnam' Ratnayake said that the electricity tariff hike and the contraction of the economy has resulted in the demand for electricity dropping drastically. He said the drop in demand would not help the loss-making Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) which is attempting to recover its losses through the tariff hike.

"These are the basic things that these stupid politicians do not understand. They do not understand economics, they do not understand accountancy. They know only politics. And I think the present politicians don't even know how to play politics," he said. Ratnayake said that a decision taken in 2014 to reduce the cost of electricity by 25 per cent was also another "stupid, ignorant" move by politicians. The PUCSL Chairman also said that the benefit of the current improvement in the exchange rate and the drop in the cost of raw materials should be passed on to the consumers. As a result, he had requested the CEB to submit a proposal to reduce the electricity tariffs. However, he says the CEB has responded saying that another revision is likely and that it could even be another increase in tariffs. Ratnayake claimed mismanagement has resulted in the CEB continuing to incur losses and being unable to cover its costs even with the last tariff increase. Meanwhile, Ratnayake, who had backed Gotabaya Rajapaksa for the presidency, said he now regrets the decision adding that the former President had "no common sense".

Watch the full interview on Daily Mirror online

HUSBAND ABDUCTS WIFE IN CHILAW

Her husband and a group of about five others who rushed to the house had forcibly pushed her into a van and sped away. They had assaulted her mother who intervened to prevent it. Investigations revealed that she had attended a leading school in Chilaw and had

met the 19-year-old man when attending tuition classes. She had eloped with him and lived in the Dambulla area for a short time, and had returned home recently when she had been unable to tolerate the harassment by her husband. Police said only her mother had been at home at the time of the incident.

Democracy is Constitutional Government and Rule of Law, not mass hysteria

"Our Constitution, by Article 40 provides for a process of succession in the event of a vacancy occurring in the post of Executive President. This provision was used previously when the late D.B. Wijetunga was elected by the Parliament following the assassination of President R. Premadasa. On that occasion, there was not a hum of protest and the then Leader of the Opposition Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike fully supported the move. Even under the previous Constitution of 1947, it was legitimate for Mrs. Bandaranaike to be appointed as Prime Minister from the Senate. Thus she too was not elected by popular election. Furthermore, in the current situation, we should

remember that even the present Opposition accepted the validity of the Provision in Article 40 when they nominated Dulles Alahapperuma to challenge Ranil Wickremesinghe's candidature. Therefore it should be accepted that the current President holds a valid Constitutional mandate to hold the position. Furthermore, when calling for the holding of a Presidential election prematurely, attention should be drawn to Article 31(3a) of the Constitution, which states that a person who succeeds to the post of Executive President is not entitled to call for a fresh mandate after 4 years in office," Ms. Wijesekera said.

Bill to amend laws to protect LGBTQI community: SC commences hearing

Supreme Court three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya, Justice Vijith Malalgoda and Justice Arjuna Obeyesekere took up for special determination, in terms of the Supreme Court's special jurisdiction, where the validity of the Bill titled "Penal code (Amendment) bill, which is a private member Bill moved by Member of Parliament Premanath C. Dolawatta. Attorney-at-Law Dharshana Weraduwage appearing for the petitioners informed that section 365 of the Penal Code (as amended) proposed to be amended by Clause 2(f) of the bill. He 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 Children below 16 years of age from

among others, to Sexual Exploitation. Accordingly, he argued that said Clause seriously violates several articles including the Articles 01, 03, 04(d), 12(1), 14(1)(f) 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. President's Counsel Sanjeeva Jayawardena appearing for the Member of Parliament Dolawatta, submitted that sections 365 and 365A represented grossly antiquated and anachronistic legislation which were violative of rights of gay people although such persons too are entitled to equality and equal protection of the law under article 12(1) and freedom from discrimination on their sex, gender or sexual orientation.

INFLATION REDUCES FURTHER

The headline inflation came down to 49.2 percent in March from 53.6 percent in February this year, the Department of Census and Statistics said in its latest report released to the media yesterday. According to statistics, food inflation dropped from 49 percent to 42.3 percent and non-food inflation from 57.4 percent to 54.9 percent. The prices of food items such as rice, vegetables, fresh fish, potatoes, dhal, dry fish,

chicken, chili powder, turmeric had come down in March compared to February. However, the prices of items such as coconut, eggs, coconut oil, green gram, rice flour and tea had increased, according to the statement. According to the statement, in the non-food category, the prices of textiles, footwear and housing increased. Besides, the prices of utilities such as water and electricity also increased.

WAYSIDE UNPROTECTED DRAIN CLAIMS SPANIARD'S LIFE

Investigations revealed that the 30 year old tourist staying at a hotel in Ahangama town was on his way back to the hotel after attending a function in another hotel when he met with the accident.

In the absence of any indication of external injuries on the body, the police believe that he may have drowned in the storm water filled drain. The postmortem examination was to be held yesterday afternoon. The Ahangama police are conducting further investigations on the instructions of OIC Nalaka Jayaweera.

SRI LANKA A COUNTRY WITHOUT RESPONSIBLE RULERS? : BUDDHIST MONK

Sri Lanka is the only country in the globe where rulers steal public funds openly," a prominent Buddhist monk said yesterday. Episodes with regard to the XPress Pearl incident had proved that rulers of this country steal public funds openly. "Sri Lanka is also the only country where rulers are lethargic when it comes to meting out justice. This is evident when one considers how rulers dealt with the probes on Easter Sunday attacks," he said.

Moulavi Abdul Rahman Hashim in his speech alleged that some devotees who were going to participate in Ifthar prayers at Galle face were prevented while even Catholics who were marching from Negombo to Colombo were prevented from singing hymns. "It looks like the authorities seem to think that people living in this country including Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus are violent people. It seems that this is why they are trying to bring in draconian laws to suppress rights," he added.

ANTI-TERRORISM BILL WILL BE CHANGED IN PARLIAMENT: MINISTER

● **"That is why we expect to replace the PTA which has been branded as a draconian piece of legislation with the ATA**

Addressing a news conference at the Information Department auditorium, Minister Rajapaksa said the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) passed in 1979 under President J.R. Jayewardene's rule as a temporary measure to counter the emerging separatist insurgency. The PTA has been misused and exploited by successive Governments since then for their personal and political advantage. "That is why we expect to replace the PTA which had been branded as a draconian piece of legislation with the ATA. "If there are any provisions that restrict the rights of the people, their freedom and democracy, the Government is more than happy to address them. Besides, any citizen, political party or organization is free to challenge the Bill in the Supreme Court once I table it in Parliament," Minister Rajapaksa emphasized. Responding to Daily Mirror, Minister Rajapaksa said the ATA had been drafted in

accordance with international conventions and covenants dealing with fundamental, human and political rights with the main objective of preventing attempts of terrorism in future. The Government is cognizant of the concerns raised by the local and global community and does the needful to address them, Minister Dr. Rajapaksa assured. Most of the provisions found in the PTA such as the acceptance of confessions as evidence against a suspect have been removed in the new Bill. "If a suspect is taken in under the new law and wants to confess, he or she can do it to a Magistrate voluntarily. The provision that has given the power to DIGs to issue Detention Orders (DOs) on a terrorist suspect is subject to change and retains it only with the Minister of Defence. "The government expects to use the ATA to promote reconciliation and inter-communal harmony in Sri Lanka which was also the wish of the UNHRC, EU and the UNHRC. Minister Rajapaksa stressed. "I prefer if the power to issue DOs reserved only under the Defense Minister. These laws can be used by any future government and will be counter-productive against any opposition if we introduce draconian laws for short-term exploitation," Minister Dr. Rajapaksa noted.

Beware of dubious IT firms which lure Sri Lankans for employment in Thailand

According to the statement, victims are illegally taken across the border from Thailand mostly into Myanmar and held captive to work under harsh restrictive conditions. Some of the victims have also been apprehended by authorities for illegal entry. "All these victimized Sri

Lankans have arrived to Thailand on tourist visas, with the promise of converting the same to work visa after arrival, which has not been successful. Sri Lankan nationals are therefore advised not to get enticed and entrapped in such fraudulent job offers and are requested to exercise

extreme caution and verify the background of recruiting agents as well as any company before taking up any job offer," the statement said. It is advised to obtain Thai visa details from the Thai Immigration Bureau Website. www.immigration.go.th

SRI PADA PILGRIM SEASON ENDS

Sri Pada pilgrim season 2022/2023 is scheduled to end on Vesak full moon Poya day on May 05 after the processions with the caskets of relics, the statues of the God and regalia are taken through four routes to Galpottawala Rajamaha Vihara. The meeting to make arrangements to end the pilgrim

season was held yesterday at the Nallathanniya Grama Niladhari Office under the Chairmanship of Chief Incumbent of Sri Padasthana Ven. Bengamuwe Dhammadinna Thera. The Ven. Thera said pilgrims would be permitted to pay homage to the Sri Pada till the end of the Vesak full moon Poya day and on May 06, the caskets of Sacred Relics, the statues of the God

Sumana Saman, and the regalia would be taken in four processions through Ratnapura Rajamawatha, Ratnapura Kuruvita route, Nallathanniya Bagawanthalawa route, and Nallathanniya - Laxapana-Awissawella route to Galpottawala Rajamaha Vihara in Pelmadulla. Restricting off season visits to Sri Padasthana was a focal point of the meeting.

EASTER SUNDAY'S MASTERMIND HAD CLOSE LINKS WITH AL-QAEDA

The Terrorist Investigations Unit informed the Colombo Additional Magistrate that during the interrogation of the Al-Qaeda member, who is a Maldivian national, he had admitted that he had connections with Mohammad Ibrahim Sadiq Abdullah Haq,

who is the main suspect in the Easter Sunday terror attack in this country. The TID's submission to the Court also revealed that the main suspect Abdullah Haq, who is currently under custody at the Boossa center, had received training from Al-Qaeda while he was in Maldives.

Surgeries at Eye Hospital halted due to contaminated drug: GMOA

"There were concerning reports of patients falling ill. The cause has been identified as the contamination of the drug Prednisolone administered to several eye patients, who have fallen ill with a bacterial infection," he said. Accordingly, all routine surgeries at the Eye Hospital had been suspended since

April 14, while only emergency surgeries have been performed. "There have been reports of similar cases from other hospitals and the authorities are looking into it," Dr. Colombage said, urging the Ministry of Health to ensure the quality of drugs distributed to hospitals, following a thorough quality check.

The Catholic Church doesn't insult monks

"We don't condone insulting the clergy particularly Buddhist monks. Some say Catholics are behind the repeated insulting of monks over social media but I would like to say that the church is not behind such campaigns," Cardinal Ranjith said speaking during a ceremony held at St. Anthony's Church Kochchikade. "We will not condone insulting monks and will not associate with people who do such things. One should remember that Sri Lanka's culture is associated with Buddhism.

"It seem that justice cannot be expected from the incumbent President and the government," he added. The Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Brian Udaigwe said Sri Lanka had the full blessings of Pope Francis in its efforts to mete out justice for those who were affected by the attacks. "Justice cannot be meted out through anger," he said quoting former President of USA Barack Obama.

MORAGODA MEETS WITH CHIEF MINISTER CONRAD SANGMA OF MEGHALAYA STATE

High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India Milinda Moragoda who met with the Chief Minister of Meghalaya Conrad Kongal Sangma discussed a framework for cooperation between Sri Lanka and Meghalaya, a statement from the Sri Lankan mission said recently. According to the statement, the meeting took place at the Chief Minister's office in Shillong, in the northeastern state of Meghalaya. Moragoda was in Shillong as a guest of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Government of Meghalaya. The discussion focussed on establishing a mutually beneficial framework

for collaboration between Sri Lanka and Meghalaya in the spheres of tourism and value-added agriculture. The meeting was part of High Commissioner Moragoda's ongoing programme to establish contacts with leaders at the state level for Sri Lanka. At the meeting, The High Commissioner had invited Chief Minister Sangma to visit Sri Lanka at a mutually convenient time. Meghalaya state under the leadership of Chief Minister Sangma has made great strides in protecting the environment by developing eco-tourism, and sustaining indigenous cultural practices and livelihoods.

OBITUARIES

THEVERAPPERUMA – UPUL ERASMUS (Ex KBSL JKH). Beloved husband of Shiranthi (Ceylon Oxygen Ltd), loving father of Nethaka, Sanuthi and Yenuka, loving son of late Mrs. Mary Josephine and late Mr. George Harrold Theverapperuma, loving son-in-law of Mrs. Beulah and late Mr. Anthony Ranasinghe, loving brother of Sugath Theverapperuma, brother-in-law of Renuka, Roshan, Shiromi, Ajuna and Nimali, loving uncle of Virendra, Ashvika, Shevantha, Shenali, Dulain and Ashen. **Remains lie at A.F. Raymond's Funeral Parlour. Cortege leaves Parlour at 3.30 p.m. on Saturday 22nd April 2023 for burial at General Cemetery, Madampitiya at 4.30 p.m. (R.C. Section) 117106**

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STF nabs man selling illicit fags in Haputale

A man who was selling counterfeit cigarettes in his kiosk was nabbed by the Police Special Task Force in Haputale yesterday. STF personnel attached to Haputale Camp on information raided a house in Udawala Road and took the resident man into custody, who was selling a foreign brand of cigarettes smuggled into the country. The sleuths found 200 sticks of cigarettes of the brand Zica, which the sale is prohibited in Sri Lanka. The suspect along with the illicit items had been handed over to the Welimada Police. STF ASP Nuwara Eliya W. A. S. Silva is conducting inquiries on the instructions of STF Commandant DIG Waruna Jayasundara. (K.K.K.)



HOW THE WANDA PETHI CANARD FOMENTED 2018 ANTI-MUSLIM VIOLENCE



By **D.B.S. Jeyaraj**

Five years have passed since anti-Muslim violence erupted in the Amparai/Ampara Town in February 2018. Soon afterwards, in the first week of March, there was anti-Muslim violence in Digana. Thereafter it spread to other areas in Kandy District like Teldeniya, Pallekalle, Katugastota, and Akurana.

The damage in Amparai/Ampara was very much less compared to the destruction in Kandy. Although the quantitative nature of the anti-Muslim violence was greater in the Kandy District, the Amparai/Ampara violence was in a sense more dangerous qualitatively due to the reason cited as the cause for the attacks.

It was alleged in Amparai/Ampara that a Muslim-run eatery was mixing contraceptives and sterilising drugs in the food served to Sinhala customers.

The accusation was absurd as scientifically or medically it was not possible to prevent "babies forming in wombs" through administering contraceptive drugs in food, particularly in kothu roti or meat curry.

It is not possible to weaken sperm by mixing drugs in food as any drug would lose potency when being heated to a high degree on a stove or cooker. Yet, this is what was alleged and propagated to trigger off and later justify the Amparai/Ampara violence.

I have written in detail about the anti-Muslim violence in Ampara town and Kandy District when it happened in February and March 2018.

I was however requested last week by a Human Rights Organization to compile a report on what had happened five years ago. As such I revisited those tragic events and am now focusing on the anti-Muslim violence in Amparai/Ampara in this article.

AMPARA/AMPARAI

Ampara/Amparai is an Eastern Province town situated 360 km from Colombo. It is spelt in Sinhala as Ampara and in Tamil as Amparai. Both spellings are used interchangeably by people as the pronunciation is almost identical.

Ampara/Amparai town is predominantly Sinhala with a sprinkling of Muslim and Tamil people. According to figures from the Ampara Mosque, only 104 Muslim families were registered in 2018 with the Mosque as permanent residents of the town.

The Tamil population is even smaller though a Tamil school still exists.

NEW CASSIM HOTEL

The New Cassim Hotel is a Muslim-owned and Muslim-run eatery on D.S. Senanayake Street in Ampara town.

The hotel, reputed for its egg roti, kothu roti and parotta (barotta), is patronised mostly by Sinhala customers, who relish the dishes cooked there.

Monday, February 26, 2018, was a very busy day for the hotel. Most of the food cooked on that day was consumed by a large number of customers. It was 9:40 p.m. when three Sinhala youths walked in. One of them was a known Ampara resident and a regular customer of the hotel. He worked at the National Water Supply and Drainage Board and was generally known as "Water Board Ranga".

WATER BOARD RANGA

The trio was in a state of intoxication. They wanted kothu roti and beef curry. The Manager cum Cashier Ahamed Lebbe Bharshith told the youths that food supplies were over and that they were about to wind up for the day.

Water Board Ranga had then said he was a diabetic and had taken an insulin injection. Therefore he needed to eat soon and wanted beef curry.

Since Ranga was a regular customer and pleaded for food on the grounds of being a diabetic who had injected insulin, Bharshith took pity on him. He called the elderly cook who was called Kaaka (elder brother) by the staff and asked him what could be done.

The hotel staff numbering six had stored some parottas and beef curry for their own dinner. Kaaka suggested that they could share it with the Sinhala customers.

So, the parottas and beef curry were brought and the customers including the 'diabetic' tucked in.

As the beef curry diminished, a few puffy particles were found floating in the gravy. Water Board Ranga blew a fuse and called the cashier and demanded to know what it was.

What happens in eateries of this sort is that they mix flour with the gravy in a meat curry to thicken the liquid if it was too watery.

Usually, the flour is mixed well and dissolves without a trace in the gravy. But sometimes it does not dissolve properly and thick clumps remain.

This was what had happened in this instance. So, Ranga was told it was paan piti, (bread flour or wheat flour). But he refused to believe it.

Water Board Ranga then began making a few calls on his mobile phone. Thereafter events took a dangerous turn. He started accusing the hotel cashier and staff of mixing Wanda Pethi (Contraceptive drugs or sterilising capsules) with the beef curry to prevent Sinhalese from having children.

WANDA PETHI DAMMADHA?

He began asking, Wanda Pethi dammadha? (Did you mix contraceptive drugs?) It was denied vehemently by the cashier, cooks and waiters.

When they said no, they were slapped hard. Two more Sinhala youths arrived with iron rods. Now the mood turned more belligerent.

A waiter was once again asked whether they put Wanda Pethi into the beef curry. When he said 'no', he too was assaulted with the rods and sustained head injuries.

The Cashier cum Manager Bharshith was approached again and asked, Wanda Pethi dammadha?

At the same time, the scene was being recorded by the camera in the telephone. Intimidated and perturbed, the youthful Muslim cashier got confused.

He said, Yes. Bharshith was to explain later that he had not understood what Wanda Pethi meant.

He had confused maa meaning flour in the Tamil language with the maa sound in Dammadha.

So he said 'yes' to the repeated question of whether Wanda Pethi had been put in the curry.

This was seized upon by Water Board Ranga and his accomplices. The 'cashier confession' about mixing Wanda Pethi in food was uploaded and began spreading like wildfire via the internet.

By this time a large crowd had gathered. The Police who had been called earlier arrived at 10.15 p.m.

The cops were shown the telephone confession. The Policemen also viewed the CCTV cameras and knew what had happened.

After a huge commotion, the Policemen seized the alleged Wanda Pethi as evidence and took away the cashier and cook to be questioned further about allegedly mixing sterilising drugs with food served in the hotel.

They were told that they were being locked up in the Police Station for their personal security.

Water Board Ranga went to the Police Station and lodged a formal complaint that the Cassim Hotel was serving Wanda Pethi in the beef curry to Sinhala customers.

Meanwhile, a large number of Sinhala youths arrived at the hotel in a mini-bus and on motorcycles and scooters. Soon a mob of over 60 persons gathered at the spot. The mob then started attacking New Cassim Hotel and damaged it.

They seized the CCTV cameras in the hotel and the vicinity and took them away. Two Policemen supposedly on duty at the Cassim Hotel premises saw all that was happening but did not do anything to restrain the mob.

DIGA KALLIYA

The worst was yet to come. At about 11 p.m. more than 100 Sinhala youths arrived in the Amparai town in jeeps, vans and motorcycles.

These youths joined forces with the earlier batch that had targeted the Cassim Hotel. Now there were over 200 men at the spot. Interestingly the youths identified themselves as belonging to the Diga Kalliya (Group from Diga).

Diga is derived from Digamadulla the historical name of Ampara and the official name of the Electoral District. It is suspected that the Diga Kalliya was an Ampara-based affiliate of the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) and consisted of youths from different political parties.

JUMMA MASJID MOSQUE

The mob then went on the rampage. The mob attacked another Muslim hotel Rahmaniya and a Muslim-owned grocery store named New Mahajana Stores.

The people inside both premises took refuge in the homes of their Sinhala neighbours. The mob stoned a few Muslim houses where the inmates had fled and also attacked another small eating house owned by Muslims.

The Diga Kalliya then marched towards the Jumma Masjid Ampara Mosque. A Defender Jeep was driven fast to smash the gate and break it open. The mob then moved in after assaulting the watcher.

Initially, the wall in front of the Mosque was demolished. It was rather a bizarre act. There was a suspected motive in this act of perceived madness.

The 2018 February Local Authority elections had seen the Pohoturuwa Party (SLPP) romping home as the winners in the Ampara Urban



New Cassim Hotel



Ahmed Bharshith

Council poll. When the Sri Lanka Podu Jana Party pasted Victory and Thank you posters all over Ampara town, some were affixed to the Mosque wall too. The Mosque authorities had torn down all the lotus bud posters saying they were defacing the wall.

A heated argument had ensued between the SLPP supporters and Mosque authorities.

It was suspected therefore that the demolition of the Mosque premises wall was motivated by the poster incident.

The mob however did not stop after destroying the wall. They damaged eight vehicles parked inside the Mosque precincts. Recently-planted mango tree saplings were uprooted and destroyed. The Mosque itself was attacked. Doors were broken down and windows smashed, and copies of the Holy Quran were defiled and burnt.

The Mosque office adjoining the main Mosque was also attacked and damaged.

There were also small structures with rooms within the Mosque precincts where people connected to the Mosque were staying. Those structures were also damaged and people were assaulted. The Muadhin, who conducts or leads prayers was also beaten.

POLICE PASSIVE ONLOOKERS

The Police station in Amparai was less than a kilometre away from the Mosque. The cops had been informed of the attack as soon as the mob arrived on the scene.

Besides the Police already knew of violence in the town and some cops were even passive onlookers while the attacks continued.

The mob lingered in town for several hours but the Police made no effort to tackle the violent elements.

Some cops were seen conversing with the mobsters in a jovial manner. It was as if a heroic war had been waged and a deadly enemy had been vanquished.

It would have taken the Police only three minutes to reach the Mosque from the station if they wanted to stop the attack on the Mosque. Yet, they went to the Mosque premises leisurely only 55 minutes after they had been informed by people at the Mosque.

When the Amparai/Ampara incidents occurred

the Kandy District violence had not begun. Hence, Ampara/Ampara became the focus of attention.

It was wrongly reported that Sinhalese and Muslims were clashing whereas the reality was a mob attack without any resistance.

Moreover, it was propagated that the violence was due to allegations of contraceptive drugs being served to Sinhala customers in Muslim restaurants. This again was utterly false.

PARTICLES OF FLOUR

The Government Analyst Ariyananda Weligama subsequently nailed that canard conclusively.

After examining the 'stuff' suspected of being Wanda Pethi, the Government Analyst ruled that the alleged contraceptive drugs were merely particles of flour scientifically described as carbohydrates.

Later the resident representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) and a group of eminent Sri Lankan medical professionals also went public on the issue.

They stated unequivocally that drugs or pills rendering people temporarily infertile did not exist.

PREMEDITATED VIOLENCE

There is a qualitative difference between suddenly provoked spontaneous violence and deliberately executed premeditated violence.

This is what happened in Amparai/Ampara. The Wanda Pethi false alarm was only the flashpoint which triggered off the violence that was waiting to happen.

The flour clumps in beef curry at New Cassim Hotel provided the raison d'être for unleashing pre-planned anti-Muslim violence in the town of Ampara/Amparai.

D.B.S. Jeyaraj can be reached at dbsjeyaraj@yahoo.com

NEW YEAR & RAMAZAN SALE OF CARPETS

NEW STOCKS ARRIVED



LIBERTYPLAZA & NAWALA NUGEGODA

NOTICE



The Government of Sri Lanka Seeks Transaction Advisors to Assist in Divesting Selected State-Owned Enterprises

The Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) has mandated the State-Owned Enterprise Restructuring Unit (SRU) to divest the following State-Owned Enterprises.

Sri Lanka Insurance Corporation Ltd

Canwill Holdings Pvt Ltd
(Grand Hyatt Hotel Colombo)

Hotel Developers Lanka Ltd
(Hilton Hotel Colombo)

Litro Gas Lanka Ltd including
Litro Gas Terminals (Pvt) Ltd
(LPG retailing, filling and storage)

Based on the multiple requests received from potential consultants at the Pre-bid meetings held on the 10th and 11th of April 2023, the State-Owned Enterprise Restructuring Unit and the Standing Cabinet Appointed Consultants Procurement Committee have decided to extend the deadline for the submission of the EOI and RFP, to no later than 16.00 hours (IST) on Monday, May 8, 2023.

For more info: <https://www.treasury.gov.lk/web/sru>

State-Owned Enterprise Restructuring Unit
3rd Floor, Lotus Building, Temple Trees, Colombo 03. Sri Lanka.

විජය පරිගණක (Vijaya Computers) advertisement for educational software. It features images of software boxes for 'පරිගණක' (Computers) and lists subjects like Photoshop, Word, Illustrator, and Python. The ad includes contact information for Vijaya Computers, a QR code, and mentions that the software is available on Google Play and iTunes. The text is in Sinhala and English.

EDITORIAL

"The act of voting is one opportunity for us to remember that our whole way of life is predicated on the capacity of ordinary people to judge carefully and well."
-ALAN KEYES

OUR THOUGHT

CHANGING A DISCRIMINATORY 'RULES-BASED' SYSTEM

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war is having an outsized impact on the global supply chain, fueling dramatic cost increases, and product shortages and creating catastrophic food shortages around the world.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has also triggered sanctions by the US and its allies in Western Europe on trade with Russia, a ban on Russian oil sales and the seizure of assets of individual Russian citizens, seen as friends of Russian President Putin.

Additionally, Western banks and accounting giants have pulled out of Russia over the Ukraine war. Two days after the invasion, some Russian banks were banned from SWIFT, the Belgium-based electronic fund transfer service that lets banks around the world communicate about cross-border transactions.

The US and the West are pouring billions of dollars into Ukraine's war chest. Since the war began, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy - a German research institute- the Biden administration and the U.S. Congress have directed more than \$75 billion in assistance to Ukraine.

Though not directly involved in the ongoing war in Ukraine, the US and its NATO allies (West European countries) are lobbying countries in other parts of the world to join them in imposing sanctions against Russia to punish that country for its invasion of Ukraine.

Simultaneously, the US is in a confrontation with China and is in an undeclared economic war with that country. It also sends its naval warships into the areas of the South China Sea bordering China increasing tensions with that country.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has on numerous occasions backed US involvement in conflicts in different parts of the world claiming the US has an obligation to uphold 'rules-based international system'. The US and EU are also calling on countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America to back their efforts to defend today's 'rules-based world order'.

The post-World War II, 'rules-based international system' - a creation of America and its West European allies- has produced unprecedented levels of prosperity to those countries.

For instance, Western Europe has a population of 197,907,961 (Around 2.52% of the total world population). The average annual wage for employees in the EU is approximately €33,500 (USD 36,725) according to Eurostat. This amounts to over SLR 11,825,500 annually or a monthly income of approximately SLR 985,458. The United States with around 4.25% of the total world population had a national average income of US\$ 97,962 income in 2021.

While the system has provided bountiful incomes as per incomes of the average US and West European citizen. World Bank statistics reveal almost a quarter of the global population, (23 percent), live below the US\$3.65 poverty line, and almost half, 47 percent, live below the US\$ 6.85 poverty line, as reported in the 2022 Poverty and Shared Prosperity report. The present 'rules-based international system' while proving economically good for the US and its Western allies, has had the exact opposite effect on the lives of the majority of the world's population.

It is no surprise therefore, that attempts by the US and its European allies to defend the present 'rules-based system' seem to be floundering and an alternative system based on the needs of less developed countries is beginning to emerge.

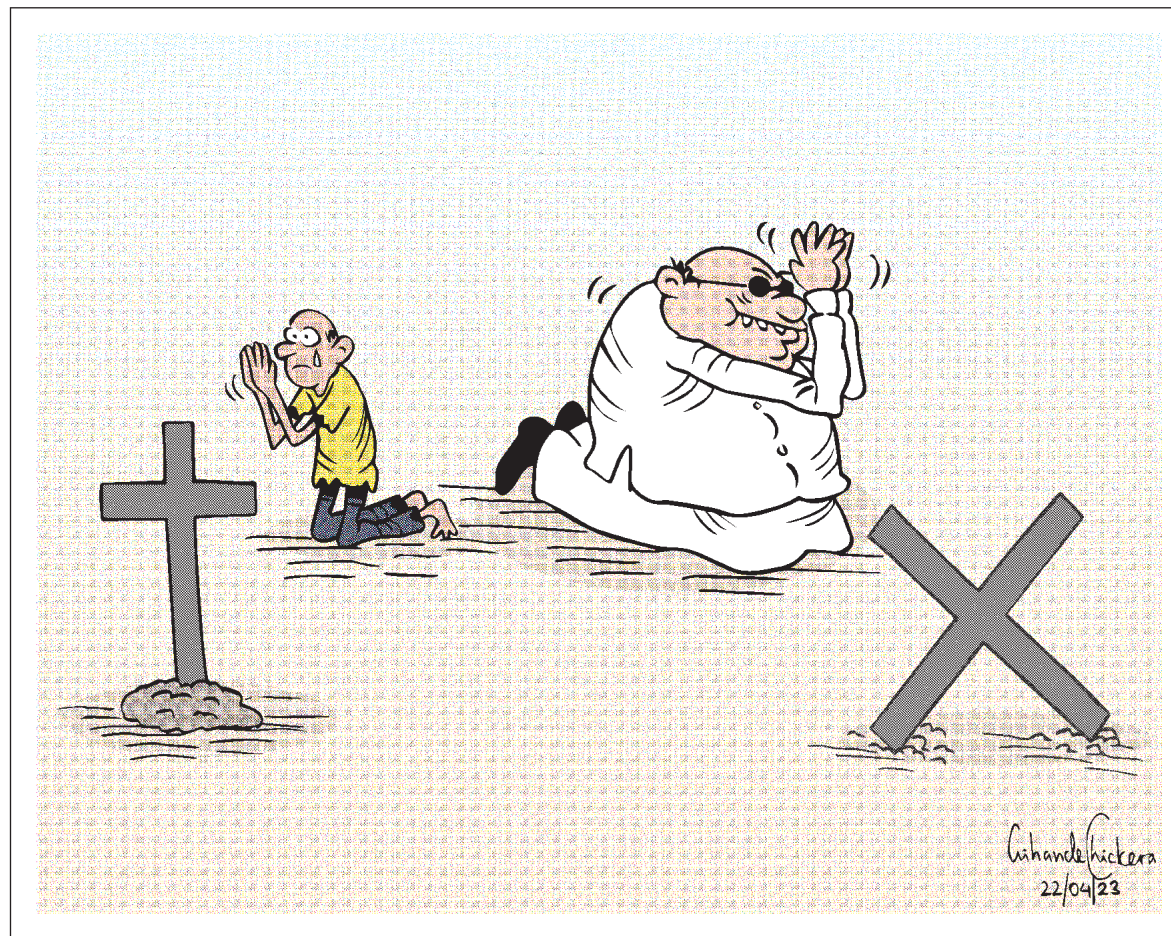
The Russo-Ukraine war with its disruption of food supply chains, fuel and gas prices and basic needs of the world over is bringing about major changes to the present world order.

Europe and America's attempt to sanction Russia as well as to cut it from the global banking system has led to many countries moving out of the US-backed Bretton-Woods petro-dollar system.

Today major economies such as India, Brazil and China trade with Russia using their own currencies. Efforts to sanction the purchase of Russian oil are also floundering. The International Energy Agency (IEA) said Russia's exports of crude oil and oil products rose in March to their highest level since April 2020, jumping by 600,000 barrels a day, while Bloomberg reported Saudi Arabia, another important US ally, is importing millions of barrels of diesel from Russia, despite having more than enough of its own.

Saudi Arabia is the world's top crude exporter and a significant seller of petroleum products.

While invasions of one country by another, as a means to settle conflict stands condemned, it appears to be leading to a positive development - the breakdown of the existing discriminatory 'rules-based international system' that keeps more than half of the global population in deprivation, while a few live in luxury.



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

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TARGETING THE SJB?



By **M.S.M. Ayub**

According to a news item published in the Daily Mirror on Monday, President Ranil Wickremesinghe is to call on all political parties on April 25 to join a National Government to resolve the current problems faced by the country.

Quoting the leader of the Tamil Progressive Alliance Mano Ganesan, the news reports said the President is to invite the political parties for a National Government while participating in the debate on the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) offered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to Sri Lanka. (The debate has now been postponed by one day) Ganesan had said that the President had told this when he and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader Rauff Hakeem met him.

Ganesan and Hakeem are said to be attempting to politically unite the United National Party (UNP) led by President Wickremesinghe and the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) under which they have been returned to Parliament. However, SJB leader Sajith Premadasa, who is also the Opposition Leader is said to be against such a political coalition.

Defining the National Government, the Constitution says "National Government means, a Government formed by the recognized political party or the independent group which obtains the highest number of seats in Parliament together with the other recognized political parties or independent groups."

Based on this definition one can argue that the President does not need to take pains constitutionally to form a National Government anew, as the current Government falls under that definition.

Still, the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) maintains the majority in Parliament, despite many members of it having broken ranks with it while the solitary UNP member, Vajira Abeywardena is also representing the Government.

Therefore, there is a National Government in the practical sense. Here, when the Constitution refers to "Other recognized political parties," the number of members of those parties is immaterial. However, what the President seems to want is to bring the SJB, the leaders and members of which were subordinates of his party till 2019, under his control again.

Certainly, he is not concerned about the Jathika Jana Balawegaya (JJB) or National People's Power (NPP) led by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) since the NPP has only three seats in Parliament and the possibility of them joining the government is extremely remote.

Rumours in recent days had it that some of the members of the SJB were keen

to join the Government. Some of those inferences seem to be not merely rumours but the people in question are not hesitant to express their willingness to cross over. SJB MPs such as Dr Harsha de Silva, Erani Wickramaratne and Kabir Hashim are supportive of the current programme with the IMF, despite their reservations on some of the reform proposals under the programme. They claim that the President is implementing the SJB policies. This has raised speculations about their possible crossover.

However, they deny those speculations. Dr Harsha de Silva told the media on Wednesday that he would not join a Government that has no mandate to govern. Besides the mandate, they might have taken into consideration the recent opinion polls which also showed a bleak picture of the SLPP and the UNP.

Despite the Government supporters having celebrated the approval of the IMF bailout package by its Executive Board on March 20, the trio who are well versed on the subject of economy know that the path ahead is bumpy and the programme is not going to resolve the economic issues soon.

As politicians, they seem to want to get assured of their political future before joining the Government at this juncture.

The trio who are well versed on the subject of economy know that the path ahead is bumpy and the programme is not going to resolve the economic issues soon

However, Kalutara District Parliamentarian Rajitha Senaratne is very keen to change sides and he already told what he wants in the Government. He had stated more than once that he would be happy to accept the health portfolio which he held during the so-called Yahapalana Government under Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. That indicates that he is willing to join the government just to get a portfolio and not "to strengthen the hands of the President."

His remarks have provoked the SLPP to renew their long-standing demand for portfolios for some of their district leaders. The SLPP had said Kalutara District MP Rohitha Abeygunawarena must be accommodated into the Cabinet if Senaratne is absorbed into it.

For them, as for the other politicians, portfolios are not responsibilities given to individuals to resolve problems faced by the people or the country based on their education, experience or talents, but an opportunity to amass wealth and live a luxurious life on public funds.

Nevertheless, it is said that President Wickremesinghe is not keen to persuade the Opposition MPs, especially those of

the SJB to cross over to the Government individually. Media reports quoted him as saying that he encourages political parties, and not individual MPs to join the Government. The idea may be aimed at bringing the entire group that left his party some four years ago under his leadership again. This is important for him as his party, the UNP, has lost its entire vote bank with the defection of the Sajith Premadasa group to form the SJB.

Despite former Minister Navin Dissanayake having said recently that Wickremesinghe wanted to dissolve the UNP after the humiliating defeat at the 2020 Parliamentary Election, with the assumption of office as the President his hopes would have revived.

Yet, without a strong vote base, he would not be able to face the next Presidential election which is due at the end of next year.

Although a small group of SLPP MPs seem to be willing to accept Wickremesinghe as their next Presidential candidate, all indications are that the Rajapaksa are not prepared to give up so easily. They are not prepared to accept that their dynastic rule has come to an end.

However, if Wickremesinghe continues to stay in office for another five years after his current term ends next year, the revival of the dynasty would be a remote reality.

According to the Constitution, Wickremesinghe as a succeeding President cannot go for a mid-term Presidential Election. Hence, the next Presidential Election would be held between September 18 and October 18 (Not later than one month and not earlier than two months before the term of the current President ends).

President Wickremesinghe and his party, despite his executive powers, are without a political support base. Also, the 17 months leading up to the next Presidential Election is sufficient for any political change - favourable or unfavourable to any party - to occur. It is hence safe for the President to strengthen his vote base from now on.

Nevertheless, the success of his National Government plan or the move to tame the SJB is not an easy task. In spite of a section of the SJB willing to join the Government, especially for perks and privileges the party knows, based on the recent opinion polls, that they have a huge support base compared to the UNP and the SLPP. They were second only to the NPP, according to those polls.

The country is not out of the woods economically. And the IMF-led reform programme might be painful and that might further erode the two ruling parties' support base.

Those factors might discourage the leading SJB members from joining the Government. But still, one cannot deny the fact that perks and privileges have a great attraction. We have to wait and see how the President as a shrewd politician is going to play the game.

DM Poll

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

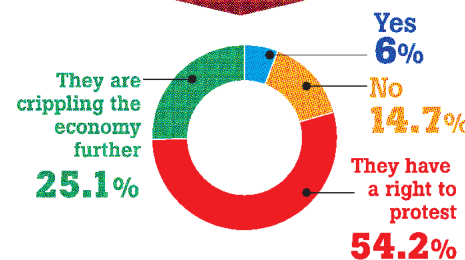
- To protect the country
- To control dissenting voice
- To respond to an urgent danger of terrorism
- To prevent any Aragalaya in future.



Scan to Vote

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Name change caused utter destruction: Astronomer

In the above-captioned news item, astronomer Anura D. Perera claims that all ills of this country are due to the malefic effects of the word 'Sri'.

Most of us Sinhalese and Tamils believe in superstitions and agree with him. To support him, it is best to mention, the original National Anthem composed by Ananda Samerakone had Namu, Namu Matha at the commencement of the National Anthem and this was changed to 'Sri' during the rule of Sirima Bandaranayake on the advice of her advisers, which was vehemently objected to by Ananda Samerakone.

It is said that heartbroken Ananda Samerakone committed suicide by taking an overdose of sleeping pills.

It could be that the curse has brought this country to this perilous state. It is suggested the present Government gives serious thought and restore the original National Anthem, to begin with, Namu, Namu Matha, worshipping Mother Lanka.

If necessary consult Indian and local astrologers along with knowledgeable composers of lyrics,
G.A.D. Sirimala
Boralesgamuwa

Doing Business: Not so Easy

So much so that for Ease of Doing Business we have now added fingerprints for documents pertaining to transfer of movable and immovable properties in addition to the signature.

Previously illiterate persons and the sick, who cannot sign were allowed to approve documents by fingerprint.

We are at number 99 in the Ease of Doing Business index comprising 190 countries.

At a time we invite foreign investors to invest in Sri Lanka advisability of adding further burdens on already existing cumbersome legal procedures should be looked at.

As we are behind modern technology in obtaining fingerprints I wonder how foreigners will react when they are asked to dip their finger onto an ink pad not to mention the ink on your finger that will take about 24 hours to fade away.

Primitive ways are back and I am sure that this will not do any good to take us up in the ease of doing business index.

-A. G. Weerasinghe.

Why is the govt? not claiming a \$6.4bn compensation for the X-Press Pearl tragedy?

WEB COMMENTS

JOHAN - Let the present leaders close the Galle Face green and sleep because they do not want people protesting against these types of fraud and corruption. No wonder system change is a must.

for non-existent damage or exaggerated damage will only harm our country. From the title itself, the matter sounds like an attempted scam. Trying to harm someone with money needlessly, on a dubious claim.

ALL SOUNDS LIKE A SCAM - Claiming money

See more web comments at www.DailyMirror.lk

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RIGHTS ADVOCATES COME FORWARD TO SUPPORT THE DECRIMINALISATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Women and Child Rights advocates come forward to support the decriminalisation of homosexuality and challenge the 'false and fictitious' petition of SLPP political activists Jehan Hameed and Shenali Waduge

Several intervening petitions have been filed at the Supreme Court supporting MP Premnath Dolawatte's Private Member Bill that decriminalises same-sex consensual relationships.

The intervening petitioners have submitted that if the proposed Bill is enacted by Parliament that it will remedy a long-standing injustice against the LGBT community.

The intervening petitioners include former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Colombo, Prof. Savithri Gunasekara, former Human Rights Commissioner Ramani Mutteewegama, former Chairperson of the National Child Protection Authority Natasha Balendra, former Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and former UN Undersecretary General for Children Radhika Coomaraswamy, Child Rights Activist Dr Tushara Wickremarajaya, Executive Director of the Family Planning Association (FPA) Thushara Ranasinghe, Director of Advocacy of the FPA and former Child Protection Advisor at Save the Children and Coordinator for the National Partnership to End Violence Against Children, Sonali Peiris, Programme Officer for HIV Services in South East Asia Jake Oorloff, Equality Director of iProbono Aritha Wickramasinghe, Executive Director of the National Transgender Network, Bhoomi Harendran and LGBT Human Rights Organisation Equal Ground.

President's Counsels Sanjeeva Jayawardena and Dilrukshi Wickremasinghe and Attorneys-At-Law Thishya Weragoda and N.K. Ashokbaran is among the senior lawyers representing the intervening petitioners.

PENAL CODE ADEQUATELY PROTECTS CHILDREN FROM ABUSE

The intervening petitions all dismiss the submissions made by SLPP political



LGBTQ+ activists celebrating an Indian court ruling in favour of LGBTQ+ rights

activists Jehan Hameed, Shenali Waduge and Athula De Silva that the Penal Code amendment bill will expose children to child abuse.

There are sufficient provisions in the Penal Code to protect children from abuse, including the following sections, none of which are being amended or repealed:

- a) 286A "Obscene Publication exhibition relating children";
- b) 288A "Hiring or employing children to act as procurers";
- c) 288B "Hiring or employing children to traffic in restricted articles";
- d) 360B "Sexual Exploitation of Children";
- e) 360E "Soliciting of a child";
- f) 363 "Rape"; and
- g) 365B "Grave Sexual Abuse".

Furthermore, the petitioners have argued that Section 365B of the Penal Code defines "Grave sexual abuse" as "any act" done for sexual gratification "by the use of [his] genitals or any other part of the human body or any Instrument on any orifice or part of the body of any other person", clearly demonstrating that the laws are sufficient to cover all aspects of sexual abuse done by a person to a child.

Section 365B includes any form of touch, including touch with hands, of any part of the victim's body; oral rape; anal rape, etc. These provisions cover all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation of children irrespective of gender or sexual orientation.

Therefore, the allegations that

decriminalisation of LGBT people will expose children to abuse with no legal recourse is malicious, unfounded and a lie.

It recycles the unfounded myth that LGBT people are child predators, despite statistics showing that the overwhelming majority of child sexual abuse is committed by heterosexual men.

BASELESS, FALSE AND FICTITIOUS MYTHS OF HIV/AIDS

The Family Planning Association has argued that Jehan Hameed and Shenali Waduge's attempt to create a "nexus between decriminalization of homosexuality, and HIV/STI is unscientific, baseless, false, and fictitious."

The Intervening-Petitioners state that, "using HIV/AIDS to fear monger people against homosexuality is an old, and outdated propaganda technique."

Several of the intervening-petitioners, including the Family Planning Association have argued that "punitive laws have been shown to block HIV service access and increase HIV risk. Countries such as Sri Lanka, that criminalize key populations saw less progress towards HIV testing and treatment targets." They further argued that "decriminalization is a critical element to end AIDS by 2030."

The intervening-petitioners also informed the Court that the National HIV/STI Strategic Plan for Sri Lanka

as prepared by the Ministry of Health's STD/AIDS Control Programme supports the decriminalisation of homosexuality and LGBT people by stating that "...the two Penal codes criminalize same-sex relations and create a barrier to MSM [men who have sex with men] and TG [transgender persons] accessing HIV/STI services. In order to prevent HIV among these groups it will be important to advocate for revisiting laws that impede service uptake..."

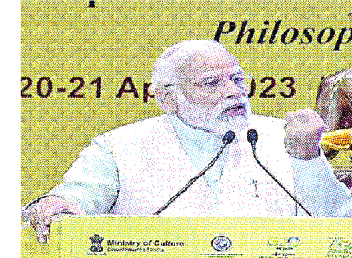
SEVERAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS SUPPORT THE LGBT COMMUNITY

The intervening petitions also highlight that several Buddhist and Christian leaders have expressed their support for the LGBT community and their rights. Recently, Pope Francis made a statement that laws that criminalise LGBT people are a sin and that countries must repeal laws that criminalise LGBT people.

SLPP political activists Jehan Hameed, journalist Shenali Waduge and former Brigadier Athula De Silva filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the Constitutionality of the Penal Code (Amendment) Bill.

The Bill, proposed by MP Premnath Dolawatte, aims to amend and repeal parts of Sections 365 and 365A of the Penal Code. These laws have been overwhelmingly used to criminalise the lives of LGBT people, including subjecting them to forced anal and vaginal examinations by the State.

Modi inaugurates Global Buddhist Summit 2023 in New Delhi



Hosting the two-day Summit in collaboration with International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) on April 20-21, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Global Buddhist Summit in New Delhi on Thursday.

Organised by the Indian Government, the theme of the Summit is "Responses to Contemporary Challenges: Philosophy to Praxis".

"The Summit is an effort towards engaging the global Buddhist Dharma leadership and scholars on matters of Buddhist and universal concerns, and to come up with policy inputs to address them collectively. It features eminent scholars, Sangha leaders and Dharma practitioners from all over the world including members of the clergy and officials from Sri Lanka," the Indian High Commission said in a statement.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that Buddha is a consciousness

beyond manifestation. He added that the presence of so many people from diverse areas at the Summit represents the expansion of Buddha that binds humanity in a single thread. He underscored the contemporary relevance of Buddha's teaching and stressed that problems of modern times lend themselves to solutions through the ancient teachings of the Lord.

The Prime Minister said that India has worked with dedication for the propagation of Lord Buddha's teaching. He talked about the development of Buddhist circuits in India and Nepal, the renovation of Sarnath and Kushinagar, Kushinagar International Airport, and India International Center of Buddhist Heritage and Culture at Lumbini in collaboration with the IBC, High Commission stated.

Noting that the Summit is taking place during India's 75th year of Independence, the Prime Minister underlined that India has a major goal for its future and new resolutions for the global good. He emphasized that the inspiration behind India achieving the recent global landmarks in various sectors is Lord Buddha himself.

The Prime Minister expressed confidence that the inaugural Global Buddhist Summit will create an effective platform for the efforts of all nations.



Mirihana Sports Club donates medicines to Apeksha Hospital

At a time when the country's health sector has been crippled by the shortage of essential drugs and devices, members of the Mirihana Sports Club recently donated much required life-saving drugs and injections worth

Rs. 300,000. The drugs included many essential medicines.

(R-L) Mirihana Sports Club members Aruna Tennakoon and Gama Ratnayaka with Apeksha Hospital staff during the donation

Dayani Mathavan

Missing a perfect host to all her friends

In March this year, we lost our beloved relative and planter's wife Dayani Mathavan a close relative of Dr Amal Karunaratna, a well-respected resident of Kandy.

Her husband Aru belongs to a distinguished lineage of highland planters primarily tea, but also coconut, rubber and cardamom.

Regarded as very attractive in her youth with a fair complexion, she made a perfect union between Sinhalese and Tamil culture through her long and successful marriage, assisting her husband as a senior superintendent, managing estates, bungalows and for the well-being of directors of foreign firms who employed estate workers and their families.

She was a fine cook and gardener and knew how to get the very best from all her loyal servants, workers and assistants and loved engaging in almsgivings and uniting people from a diversity of backgrounds – not least her growing family.

She and her siblings came from a Burger pedigree but now leave only her younger sister Shanthimala, and a brother from her family, who she was close to.

For a considerable period, Dayani was well-known in estate circles. Aru was and still is a successful planter, he and his father had both been linked to

the careers of many planters including an association with the founders of Dilmah Tea.

She was the perfect host to all her friends, associates and relatives. One of us, Rajith made a point of spending time with her and her family for wildlife research including a PhD on squirrels.

We, her relations remember wonderful times in amazing estates that she helped maintain – Wavendon, Rappahannock, and Monte Christo with Aru's family originally centred around Medetenne Estate.

She was always so welcoming and never stopped begging us to visit her and enjoy her hospitality. These estates produced not just tea, but fruit and veg, eggs and jaggery. Food and its production came naturally to her.

Dayani was an accomplished and kind communicator – preserving memories for us. We will miss her fond recollections about all our lives and the lives of our parents and grandparents. She had so many more memories and inspirations, now lost to us.

She had perfected the best of Sinhalese and Tamil cooking including giddily/thosai and vade and never tired of running some of her kitchens at an industrial scale.

She was very spiritual and engaged in almsgivings to monks and kovils

– with the help of her sister, Shanti-Mala – also a good cook. Although affected by declining health, Dayani continued to be a planter's wife to the very end, never retiring from Aru's maintenance or supervision of several estates at a time – guiding her sons who have also grown to be successful planters. She left us quite suddenly of a heart attack and still looked almost in the bloom of her youth.

Her smile, gracious speech, gratitude for past relationships, memories, cooking, hospitality, resilience, fighting spirit and capacity to bring huge numbers of people together will be missed by ourselves and many others.

We're sure that through her merit, her path through samsara will be happy. She also leaves behind a wonderful family with much promise and possibilities for both our natural environment and the plantations sector that have maintained and will help maintain the economy of the country.

Taking this time to thank her for all she has done for us and cherish those memories – We wish her husband Aru, Daughter Niroshini and sons Kaushal and Asela and their families to accrue merit through the power of the good she has done.

–Dr Rajith Dissanayake and loved ones

Not So Perfect explores an imperfect world

Rukshan Dissanayake's foray into story writing is encouraging at a time when there is a severe dearth of English writers. Aply called "Not So Perfect" the author has chosen for the ten short stories, areas which one would expect to be perfect in society but are not so perfect, having run off the expected course. Being driven by a fighting spirit, the writer has set out in defiance to weave into the stories, gross imperfections that are damaging society and the morale of the younger generation. The book indeed is an eye-opener.

In one instance, the writer challenges a decision made irrationally by the hierarchy in a prestigious educational establishment that gave no thought to the aspirations of a young student. In another, the finger is pointed out at corrupt politicians who led innocent schoolchildren up the garden path.

A common concern of those who earn a monthly salary and live off a pension is hospital bills which are growing far beyond their means. "How to Pay the Bill?" relates the agony of a pensioner, who, struck by a sudden illness, had no option left, but to be taken to a private Hospital. At the end of an enhanced stay of fifteen days, he is landed with a bill of nearly Rs. 3.7 million!

The "Z Score" is a harsh reminder made by a mother, who though not educated, enlightens her son, that he, from a poor family, was able to pass out as a doctor and end up as a cardiologist through free education and government scholarships he received. Therefore, she queried, could he support protests against setting up of a private Medical College, all because he feels that those who pass out from it, would be a threat to his profession?

Focusing on an unfortunate trend taking place in schools, "Not a Perfect" reveals the extent callous decisions made by school authorities impact on students and the grave need for them to be sensitive to their feelings and aspirations. It is a narrative of a mother's despair of her son, a schoolboy and a model student who was Junior Prefect and Assistant Prefect. His next step should have

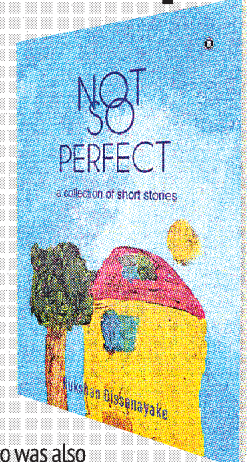
been Prefectship.

Instead, the story relates how unfairly he was denied of his Prefectship with a framed allegation of a "copying" incident given as a reason for the decision. The copying incident had never been investigated at the time it took place, despite the student requesting his school to do so.

The irony of it was that the student, who, at the examination hall, turned round and sought an answer from the protagonist and who was also responsible for an incident when some cash got misplaced in school, was made a Prefect. Violating all ethics, serving on the selection panel of Prefects had been his tuition teacher! The cause for the mother's despair in this story is the fact that despite the support of most of his teachers, the Prefects and the persistent request to reconsider the decision made by the parents, the hierarchy of this leading school with great traditions, stubbornly stood by its ground. The finale was that the dishonest was rewarded while advice was given to the deprived student that "a greater plan lays (ahead) for you. And you can learn (a lesson) from this!"

Even for the "Four Billion Tabs", the author focuses on the grief of yet another schoolboy – Sajjana from a poor family who became a victim of the infamous plan of a past government which launched the distribution of free tabs to school children. Sajjana counted himself lucky that the ceremony is to be held in his school but his joy of entering the world of electronics was dashed when he, after the fourth use of his precious tab, found it faulty. As he was afraid to inform the teacher of the fault, his parents had to part with Rs. 12,000 for its repair, an amount they could not afford.

The author's deep concern for school children is reflected in most of the stories. "Another Day at School" discusses the fact



that there still are teachers, even in leading girls' schools, who do not spare the rod, the cause of which the author suggests is their mental instability.

Not confining to the irrational behaviour of some of these "high-ups," digs are made at middle-class values taking root in urban society. "The Game of Cards" reveals how grieving takes a back seat at funeral houses while preparations such as managing the logistics, the kind of food which should be served for

the visitors, the attendance of the clergy et al take precedence.

A clash of interests in "A Journey with the Family" which is of a "hi-fi" picnic of family members and expatriates, is interesting reading. So is "9 As," as it relates to how parents coped with "examination stress" while the son, who takes life easy, took his GCE OL examination with the least fuss. Yet, he was smart enough to show the parents of the certainty of passing well and even made sure of receiving a reward for his examination success long before the results were out! Contrasting is "Would She Make It?" and "Is there a Choice?" based on two helpless women which remind the reader how vulnerable women could be and that absence of physical harassment does not necessarily mean that they are not victims of abuse.

REVIEWED BY RAJITHA WEERAKOON

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Peradeniya University Alumni Association Colombo

Office Bearers 2023/2024
 The 32nd Annual General Meeting of the Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya-Colombo Chapter (AAUPCC) was held on March 31, at the Institute of Engineers Sri Lanka, Colombo 7.
 Chief Guest was Dr Ranjith

Weerasinghe. The following office bearers were elected for 2023/2024. President: Priyath Cabral General Secretary: Palitha Siyamabalapitiya Treasurer: S M Gnanarathna Vice Presidents: Jagath Dahanayake, Jayantha Dolawatta, Indra Jayasekara, Hasantha Palihakkara and K. H.M.S. Premalal Assistant Secretaries:

Sriyani Jayasinghe and Kumudini Kulathunga Assistant Treasurer: Ranjith Karunaratne Co-Editors: P Balasingham, Neliya Fernando and Nimal Gunawardena Coordinator: W.M.H.C. Weerasinghe Auditor: S.C. Mayadunne. Another 29 members were also elected as members of the Management Council.

SPORTS

104th Hill Country Battle of the Blues

TRINITY STRONGLY PLACED

BY SHAMSEER JALEEL AT KATUGASTOTA

Trinity College were strongly placed after some poor batting by St. Anthony's College saw them shot out for a low score of 110 in their 104th Hill Country Battle of the Blues encounter which commenced at Katugastota yesterday.

In reply Trinity made a bold reply, reaching 86 for no loss, showing there was nothing wrong with the wicket at Katugastota.

The Antonians won the toss and decided to bat first on a pitch which appeared to help the seamers early on but the batsmen had a field day later on.

They lost regular wickets and never looked settled.

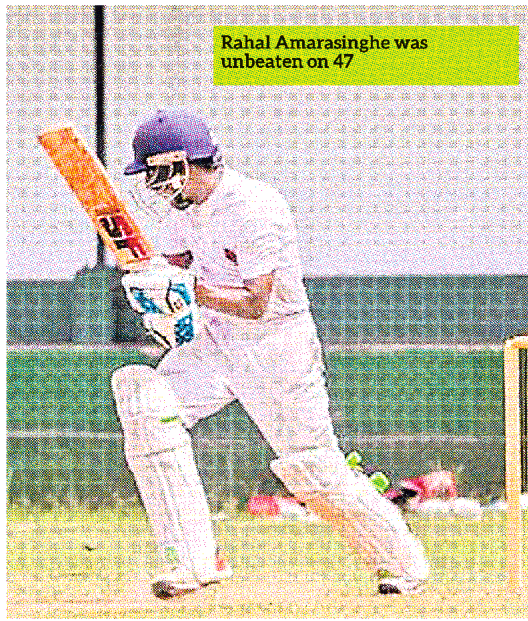
Mohamed Aaqil (12) seemed to settle down after both Kavindu Shehan and Induruwa Galapitige lost their wickets cheaply, but national youth player Theeraka Ranathunga, who bowled beautifully, had Aaqil caught by his skipper Rahal Amarasinghe and this opened the flood gates of wickets for the home team.

Skipper Lahiru Abeysinghe (35) and Thisara Ekanayake (25) are the only two to give a glimmer of hope for the home team but losing wickets at regular intervals, not finding the gaps and compounding dot balls put the pressure on the batsman to go for risky shots and in the end lose their wickets.

For Trinity Ranathunga took three wickets while Vibavith Ehelepola had two with two



Theeraka Ranathunga took 3 for 34 (Pic courtesy thepapare.com)



Rahal Amarasinghe was unbeaten on 47

unwanted run outs seeing the Antonians shot out for a low 110.

Their bowlers were well backed up by their fielders who were top class taking two runouts.

Trinity taking first lease of the wicket showed there was no rocket science in the wicket as they batted beautifully with skipper Amarasinghe (47) and Kusal Wijetunga (32) putting an unbeaten stand of 86 off only 14 overs before heavy rain prevented any play after tea.

35 overs were lost due to the heavy rain and lightning.

Skipper Amarasinghe had six boundaries and two huge sixes, and looked in complete control in his knock.

Meanwhile the Trinitians' leading scorer this season Wijetunga started off fast but settled for a longer innings in the end hitting six well timed boundaries in his unbeaten knock of 32.

St. Anthony's

1ST INNINGS	
M Aaqil c R Amarasinghe b T Ranathunga	12
K Shehan c D Thennakoon b M Kularathne	00
I Galapitige c J Liyanagama b V Ehelepola	01
T Ekanayake c R Amarasinghe b T Ranathunga	25
J Rathnasiri run out R Amarasinghe	14
L Abeysinghe b T Wimaladhama	35
R Anthonyzs c R Amarasinghe b D Thennakoon	02
R Kapukotuwa run out D Thennakoon	01
T Mathew c J Ravishka b T Ranathunga	05
C Ekanayake c M Kularathne b V Ehelepola	04
K Piyumal not out	00
EXTRAS: (wd 1, nb 2, lb 2, b6)	11
TOTAL: (all out, 35.4 overs)	110
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-1, 4-2, 28-3, 51-4, 85-5, 96-6, 97-7, 102-8, 108-9, 110-10	
BOWLING: M Kularathne 3-0-3-1, V Ehelepola 11-5-20-2, J Liyanagama 5-2-7-0, D Thennakoon 6-1-19-1, T Ranathunga 5-1-34-3, T Wimaladhama 4.4-0-12-1-21, S Waduge 1-0-7-0	

Trinity

1ST INNINGS	
K Wijetunga not out	32
R Amarasinghe not out	47
EXTRAS: (nb 3, b 4)	07
TOTAL: (no wicket, 14 overs)	86
BOWLING: L Abeysinghe (c) 7-0-50-0, I Galapitige 2-0-13-0, T Ekanayake 1-0-3-0, T Mathew 4-1-16-0	

Sanesh, Tharindu dominate proceedings on day one

An unbeaten 114 inclusive of six boundaries and two sixes by Sanesh Fernando for St. Sebastian's College and a 73 with nine boundaries by Tharindu Amarasinghe for Prince of Wales were the highlights of the first day's play in the 73rd Battle of the Golds big match played at De Zoysa Stadium in Moratuwa. Fernando was involved in two valuable partnerships, first of an opening wicket stand of 54 runs with Adesh Almeida and the other of 63 runs for the fourth wicket with skipper Sandeesh Fernando, to help St. Sebastian's taking first

lease of the wicket to make a score of 219 for 7 in the 60 overs of batting that is allotted per team for the first innings. **St. Sebastian's 219 for 7** (Adesh Almeida 31, Sandeesh Fernando 28, Manuja Chinthaka 17, Sanesh Fernando 114 n.o.; Basura Kalhara 2 for 62) **Prince of Wales 150 for 6** (Tharindu Amarasinghe 73, Rivith Jayasuriya 21, Omesh Mendis 32 n.o.; Sandeesh Fernando 3 for 38, Manuja Chanthuka 2 for 71)

Applications called for FIVB Level II Coaches Course

BY SUSIL PREMALAL

The Level II volleyball course for coaches conducted by the international volleyball federation (FIVB) will be held in Sri Lanka from June 7 to 11. Coaches who have completed two years and not more than five years since gaining Level I qualification are eligible to apply to participate in this course. Those who wish to participate should submit their application with their telephone number and email address with a copy of their Level 1 certificate before May 10 to asnalaka@gmail.com or post it to the General Secretary, Sri Lanka Volleyball Federation, 33, Torrington Place, Colombo 7.

Sri Lanka Golf Trials for Asian Games Reshan edges ahead

BY SHAMSEER JALEEL

Fifteen-year-old youngster Reshan Algama continued his sensational performance to take the top spot in the overall leader board amongst Professional and Amateurs on Day three of the Asian Games 2023 qualifying Sri Lankan Amateur Ranking Tournament which took place at the Victoria Golf Resort. This event was organised by Sri Lanka Golf. Algama, shot a one over par round on the third day, for an overall score of 223 (on the par 73 course) and is leading by three strokes from Vijith Bandara (226) and Priya Hemantha (228), followed by Chanaka Perera and Uchchitha Ranasinghe jointly second amongst the amateurs with a total score of 229 each.

The fourth and final day will be interesting as Algama will need to keep his clam to maintain the lead to make it to end on top on the final day. He has a 6-shot lead from Perera and Ranasinghe. **Top 5 at end day three:** 1). Reshan Algama (223), 2). Vijith Bandara (226), 3). Priya Hemantha (228), 4). Chanaka Perera (229), 4). Uchchitha Ranasinghe (150)

Sri Lanka netball coach Jinadasa targeting second round at World Cup

BY SUSIL PREMALAL

National netball coach Tilaka Jinadasa says Sri Lanka is planning to qualify for the second round of the 2023 World Cup Netball tournament. The tournament is scheduled to be held in Cape Town, South Africa from July 28 to August 8 with the participation of 16 countries.

In preliminary round, Sri Lanka will face Jamaica on July 28, hosts South Africa on July 29 and Wales on July 30.

Out of 45 countries in the world, Jamaica are ranked fourth, South Africa (5), Wales (9) and Sri Lanka (15) according to current netball world rankings. "According to the world ranking, it is a difficult task for Sri Lanka to win during stage one with Jamaica, South Africa and Wales. Only the



Tilaka Jinadasa

Wales match we can have any hope," said Jinadasa.

"Everyone knows that Sri Lanka participates in the World Cup as a champion and not as a runner-up. Therefore, my target is to advance Sri Lanka in the world ranking. In the 2019 Liverpool World Cup, Sri Lanka were ranked 15th. I hope that this time Sri Lanka will take the 13th or 14th place and advance in the world ranking," she said.

She is targeting to win several matches in the classification round. Jinadasa was the coach of the Sri Lankan team in the 2019 Liverpool World Cup Netball tournament. All the other countries representing the World Cup Netball 2023 tournament are aiming for the championship and are well prepared by

gaining many international competitions but due to the economic situation in the country, Sri Lankan netball players have lost that opportunity.

But even under such conditions, the Sri Lanka Netball Federation is making arrangements for players to be given the opportunity of participating in several training sessions in Botswana a week before going to South Africa for the World Cup. Jinadasa says that many players from the Sri Lankan team that won the Asian Netball Championship in 2022 have been retained in this year's team, so they have the opportunity to compete in the world championship tournament as a balanced team despite minor shortcomings.

She was confident that senior player Tharjini Sivalingam who lives in Australia will also join the training tour to Botswana.

Dialog Partners 89th Battle of the Saints

Sri Lanka's premier Catholic boys' schools St. Joseph's College Colombo and St. Peter's College Colombo are set to battle it out for the Rev. Father Maurice J. Le Goc Trophy on April 28 and 29, at the SSC ground.

The encounters were played in the past two years and conducted behind closed doors but this time out due to the efforts of the joint match organising committee of the Battle of the Saints with support from the two Rectors of the respective schools, the match will be opened to the public to attend.

In the 2023 encounter, the lads from Darley Road will be led by Sri Lanka youth player Sadeesh Jayawardena while the lads from Bambalapitiya will be led by Nimuthu Gunawardena.

Rev. Fr. Rohitha Rodrigo, the Rector of St. Peter's, said, "The Joe-Pete fosters a unique sense of brotherhood, unity, peace and harmony and this year, even without spectators at the grounds the spirit will prevail and I would like to express my sincere thanks to our Principal sponsor Dialog Axiata for their support for our inspirational brand."

Rev. Fr. Ranjith Andradi, Rector, St. Joseph's Colombo, said, "We have, through divine intervention and the hard work of so many, succeeded in preparing the stage for another Joe-Pete cricket encounter which brings together a spirit of brotherhood and camaraderie that exists in an unbroken chain for generations. Our students have practiced hard, and we intend to give them this momentous opportunity to showcase their talents. I would like



St. Joseph's Rector Fr Ranjith Andradi and St. Peter's Rector Fr. Rohitha Rodrigo receiving the sponsorship package from Lasantha Thewarapperuma, Chief Operating Officer of Dialog Axiata the Principal sponsors. (Picture by Pradeep Dilrukshana)

to thank the sponsor, Dialog Axiata and wish both teams the best of luck."

The highly anticipated Joe-Pete limited overs match played for the Fr. Peter A. Pillai Memorial Trophy which was the first one day encounter among schools commencing in 1975, has always attracted the highest number of spectators for a schools 50 over cricket match, is scheduled to be played after the completion of the two day match on April 30 at the same venue.

St. Joseph's are ahead in both the versions as they have 12 wins in the two-day encounter with their last win coming under the captaincy of Ruwantha Fernando in 2008, while St. Peter's has ten wins and their last win was achieved in the year 2016 under the leadership of Vinu Mohotty while in the limited overs the Joes have 24 wins under their belt to the 21 by the Peterites.

The two schools have produced many national caps, current Sri Lanka Test skipper Dimuth Karunaratne, Angelo Mathews, Chaminda Vaas, Thisara Perera, Ashley de Silva, Michael Van Dort, Roshen Silva, Priyamal Perera, Duniwell Lallage and Sadeera Samarawickrama are Josephians who represented Sri Lanka while the Peterites who have played in the big match being Roy Dias, Ramesh Ratnayake, Vinodhan John, Amal Silva, Russel Arnold, Kaushal Lokuarachchi, Malinda Warnapura and Angelo Perera.

As the principal sponsor, Dialog Axiata has made arrangements to LIVE stream the match via Thepapare.com in the interest of all present boys, old boys, parents, supporters, well-wishers and the cricket-loving public who are encouraged to watch the match in safe and secure locations and ensure all safety protocols are maintained. (MSA)



NOTICE

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) wishes to issue this notice for the benefit of the general public, including those who have been invited to make submissions to the purported Committee appointed by the Minister of Sports supposedly to draft a new Constitution for SLC.

SLC is an association composed of members who exercise rights under the Constitution, including that of amending the Constitution, which is a matter left to the sole prerogative of the members.

In these circumstances, there is no purpose to be served in an external body drafting a Constitution for SLC, as the said body has no power or authority to prepare any such draft, and the entire process is in breach of the Constitution of SLC.

SLC strongly opposes all such illegal moves to interfere with the Constitution and due functioning of Sri Lanka Cricket. We will take all necessary action to protect the Constitution of SLC, the rights of its members and the well-being of Sri Lankan cricket.

SLC has already appointed a ten-member independent committee of eminent personalities to suggest constitutional amendments to the membership, in the interests of Sri Lankan cricket. The said committee will be chaired by renowned President's Counsel, Mr. Navin Marapana, PC., and the recommendations of the committee will be forwarded to the members for appropriate action in terms of the Constitution.

ASHLEY DE SILVA
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SRI LANKA CRICKET



Sri Lanka to build South Asia's largest logistics complex in Port of Colombo

China Merchants Port Holdings leads consortium of investors in US \$ 392mn South Asia Commercial and Logistics Hub

SLPA and Access Engineering to each hold 15% equity in venture

8-storey, 5mn square foot complex with design storage capacity of 530,000 CBM to be built



Dignitaries at the signing of the milestone agreement with Ports, Shipping and Aviation Minister Nimal Siripala De Silva and China Merchants Group Chairman Miao Jianmin (sixth from left) and (from left) Access Engineering PLC Director Business Development Dharshana Munasinghe, SLPA Managing Director Susantha Abeyseriwardena, SLPA Chairman Keith Bernard, Ports, Shipping and Aviation Ministry Secretary K.D.S. Ruwanchandra, China Merchants Group Executive Vice President Deng Renjie, Access Group Chairman Sumal Perera, China Merchants Group Executive Vice President Feng Boming, China Merchants Ports Holdings CEO Wang Xiufeng and Colombo International Container Terminals CEO Jack Huang

Agreements for the construction and operation of the South Asia Commercial and Logistics Hub (SACL) as a 50-year

Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) project were formally signed in Colombo by the representatives of the three investing entities, with China Merchants Port Holdings (CMPort) holding a 70 percent stake and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) and Access Engineering PLC each holding a 15 percent stake in the venture.

A public-private partnership project, the SACL will be built in the centre of the Port of Colombo and will have 530,000 CBM of storage capacity via an eight-floor building. The investment in the project will bring in the much-needed foreign investment into Sri Lanka.

Construction of the complex is expected to begin in the second half of 2023, with a target of completion by end-2025. Adjacent to the Port City and CBD, it will be directly linked with the airport via the Port Access Elevated

Highway. The five million square foot complex will offer the full gamut of logistics-related facilities and services such as less than container load (LCL), multi-country consolidation (MCC), container freight station (CFS), general warehousing and various other value-added services.

A spokesperson for CMPort said the project would result in an infusion of US \$ 126 million, in addition to an upfront payment of US \$ 26 million, after the agreement is signed. The project is also expected to provide direct employment to a minimum of 1,800 people and create 10,500 other indirect job opportunities.

The project aligns with Sri Lanka's national development strategy to transform the country into a major logistics centre, identified as a key sector and a driving force for economic development in the National Policy Framework 2019.

March national prices fall below 50% after eight months of runaway inflation

Sri Lanka's inflation, measured by the National Consumer Price Index, fell below 50 percent for the first time since July last year, reinforcing that the prices are on a fast descent this year, which is expected to accelerate further from April, due to the higher base effects last year, after the weaker rupee sent the prices of everything from essentials to discretionary through the roof.

Sri Lanka reported inflation of 49.2 percent in the 12 months through March this year, easing from 53.6 percent through February.

The monthly prices, which provide more credible information if the prices are in fact declining, decelerated to 0.3 percent in March, from a 1.1

percent increase in February.

The food prices are coming down faster than the non-food, due to the relative stickiness in inflation in the services, the index data showed.

However, inflation barring the often-volatile items such as food, energy and transport, referred to as the so-called core-prices, rose by 44.2 percent year-on-year (YoY) in March 2023, substantially down from 50.1 percent YoY in February.

The core inflation is the widely used measure of prices by the officials to gauge the pace of underlying prices in the economy and thus is often used for policymaking such as to determine the interest rates in the economy.

MORE ON P8

SLT eyes U.S. grant to establish cutting-edge submarine cable construction and deployment training facility

Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT) is in negotiations with the United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) for a grant to set up a cutting-edge

submarine cable construction and deployment training facility, at its training centre located in Welisara.

MORE ON P8

Virtusa expands Sri Lanka HQ to accommodate growing team



From left: Executive Vice President and CTO Ram Meenakshisundaram alongside Business Head APAC and Country Head Sri Lanka Naresha Supramaniam officiating opening of new office premises

Virtusa added 13,000 sq. ft. of new office space to its Colombo facility as part of its ongoing expansion strategy to support the company's growing headcount.

The opening of the new space was graced by Virtusa Corporation Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Ram Meenakshisundaram, Senior Vice President Human Resources Rahul Sahay, alongside Virtusa Sri Lanka's leadership, including Country Head Naresha Supramaniam and other executives.

"Virtusa Sri Lanka remains one of our most significant



advanced technology centres and has continued to steadily scale its operations in line with our global expansion strategy," Meenakshisundaram expressed at the opening.

MORE ON P8

Ceylon Chamber mobilises corporate sector support to adopt 105 Suwa Seriya ambulances



The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce successfully facilitated the adoption of 105 Suwa Seriya ambulances, valued at Rs.525 million, to support Sri Lanka's healthcare system.

Suwa Seriya is a pioneering ambulance service launched by the Government of Sri Lanka to provide swift emergency medical care to those in need, especially in rural and remote areas. Recognising the importance of this service, the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce took the lead in mobilising support from the corporate sector to contribute towards the adoption of these ambulances.

The 105 ambulances adopted at a value of Rs.525 million through the Ceylon Chamber's membership, through corporate as well as individual donors, will be deployed in various regions across the country, providing critical medical assistance to those in need, thereby enhancing the emergency healthcare services

in Sri Lanka.

Ceylon Chamber of Commerce Chairman Vish Govindasamy expressed his gratitude to the corporate partners for their generous support.

He stated, "We are delighted to see the corporate sector come together to support this noble cause. The adoption of these Suwa Seriya ambulances will undoubtedly save lives and provide the much-needed healthcare access to remote areas. We sincerely thank our corporate partners for their commitment and generosity in making this initiative a success."

The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce remains committed to facilitating partnerships between the corporate sector and social causes that contribute to the wellbeing of the Sri Lankan community. This adoption of Suwa Seriya ambulances is a testament to its efforts to drive positive change and create a meaningful impact on the lives of people in need.

Aitken Spence Travels welcomes 4,000 cruise passengers for April 2023



Aitken Spence Travels welcomed 4,000 cruise tourists to Sri Lanka on the eve of the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. The luxurious cruise ships MSC Poesia and MSC Magnifica

docked into the Port of Colombo, with the atmosphere filled with excitement and celebrations.

The shore excursion teams from Aitken Spence Travels

were on site, ready to delight these visitors with an array of experiences that showcased the very best of Sri Lanka during the holiday season.

MORE ON P8

SL's rice output projected to recover to pre-fertiliser ban levels next year

Direct result of farmers regaining access to imported chemical fertilisers with approval of IMF loan

USDA estimates SL's paddy harvest in 2023/2024 market year to increase by 23% to 4.65 MMT

Rice imports are projected to decline to 25,000 MT in 2023/2024 market year, from estimated 150,000 MT in current market year

By Nishel Fernando

Sri Lanka's rice output is on track to fully recover to the pre-fertiliser import ban levels next year, as the farmers regain access to imported chemical fertilisers with the approval of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan, according to the latest report published by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

The USDA predicted Sri Lanka's paddy harvest in 2023/2024 market year (October-September) to increase by 23 percent to 4.65 million metric tonnes (MMT) from the estimated 3.77 MMT in the 2022/2023 market year.

"With the approval of the IMF loan, Sri Lanka will have the means to again procure imported fertilisers for



improving MY 2023/2024 production volumes and yields. With access to foreign chemical fertilisers, FAS Colombo forecasts Sri Lanka's MY 2023/2024 paddy rice (unmilled) production at 4.65 MMT, up 23 percent from the MY 2022/2023 estimate of 3.77 MMT and on the road to recovery from the precarious MY 2021/2022 production drop to a then low of 2.57 MMT," the USDA said.

Accordingly, rice (milled) production is projected to reach 3.16 MMT in the 2023/2024 market year, coming from a planted area of one million hectares, with yields of 4.26 metric tonnes (MT)/hectare (rough rice).

During the current market year, rice (milled) production is forecasted to reach a partial recovery, with a 47 percent increase in output, due to the incomplete or partial application of the full basket of fertilisers (that also includes muriate of potash - MOP) required for the rice crop to thrive.

"Imports of triple superphosphate (TSP) fertiliser did not arrive in sufficient quantity and time for application to the Maha 2022/2023 (September-March) season (major crop).

MORE ON P8



SARVODAYA DEVELOPMENT FINANCE PLC

1319 www.sarvodayafinance.lk



21.04.2023

Table with columns: SECURITY, VOLUME, VWA, OPEN, HIGH, LOW, VWA TODAY'S, CHANGE. Lists various stocks and their market performance.

Week ends in red

The ASPI closed in red as a result of price losses in counters such as Expolanka Holdings, Hayleys and SMB Leasing...

S&P SL20. High net worth and institutional investor participation was noted in Hemas Holdings, Hattion National Bank and John Keells Holdings.

Expolanka Holdings and Tokyo Cement Company whilst retail interest was noted in Blue Diamonds Jewellery Worldwide (voting and nonvoting), Browns Investments and SMB Leasing.

Capital Goods sector was the top contributor to the market turnover (due to Hemas Holdings and John Keells Holdings) whilst the sector index gained 0.50%.



highest contributor to the market turnover (due to Dialog Axiata) whilst the sector index edged down

by 0.09%. The share price of Dialog Axiata gained Rs 0.10 (0.93%) to close at Rs 10.90. Expolanka Holdings and Tokyo Cement Company were also included amongst the top turnover contributors.

Contd. from Page 7

Sri Lanka to...

It will provide better logistics and warehousing facilities and services, enhancing the port's competitive advantage and consequently strengthening its hub status.

The Port of Colombo is currently ranked among the top 13 ports in the world, in terms of shipping network connectivity. Despite its ideal location on the international trading route, the port still lacks a modern, state-of-the-art logistics facility.

Additionally, since the Port of Colombo was declared as a Freeport by the Government of Sri Lanka, the project will enjoy the associated Freeport advantages in its operations, such as no customs clearance for transshipment and MCC cargo, resulting in reduced paperwork and associated costs.

The project is expected to help the Port of Colombo to strengthen its competitiveness against other competing ports in the region. Furthermore, the improved services and cost benefits provided by the project are expected to attract more business and container volumes to the Port of Colombo, benefitting all its terminals and generating higher revenues for the port and port-related companies in Sri Lanka.

CMPort, the major shareholder in the SACL, is the parent company of Colombo International Container Terminals (CICT), which manages the South Terminal of the Port of Colombo. CMPort is the largest and a globally-competitive public port developer, investor and operator in China, with investments in Mainland China, Hong Kong and overseas.

SL's rice...

The TSP fertiliser that landed in Sri Lanka in March 2023, however, is now available for application during the

upcoming Yala 2023 (May-August) season (minor crop)," the USDA noted.

Consequently, rice imports are projected to decline to 25,000 MT in the 2023/2024 market year, from the estimated 150,000 MT in the current market year and from a record high 820,000 MT reported in the 2021/2022 market year, amidst the massive production drop, as a direct result of the short-lived ban on chemical fertilisers.

Despite the favourable forecast, the USDA pointed out that high production costs continue to be a challenge for the rice farmers. The aggregate average paddy rice (rough) production cost per hectare has doubled to Rs 200,000 (US \$ 544) in the current market year, from Rs.100,000 (US \$ 508) in the previous year.

"As a result, during the Maha 2022/2023 season, many smallholder farmers, especially those in the country's wet zone, reduced their paddy rice cultivation extent, due to the high cost of agricultural inputs, machinery and labour. Many limited their rice production efforts to cover just their own household consumption needs. Some farmers, those with better access to agricultural inputs, however, did attempt to expand rice cultivation (taking over previously barren paddy rice fields) to take advantage of higher rice prices being paid out," it elaborated.

Meanwhile, rice consumption is predicted to rise by 7 percent year-on-year to 3.1 MMT in the 2023/2024 market year, from the estimated 2.9 MMT in the current market year. However, on a per capita consumption basis, the USDA noted that rice consumption is down about to 102kg per annum.

Rice provides the population with about 45 percent of its total calories and 40 percent of the total protein requirements, although rice consumption has been steadily declining over the past decades, due to a drop in household member numbers, changing lifestyle and shifting consumption patterns.

Amidst the economic crisis, Sri Lankans cut down meals consisted of rice, vegetables, oil, sugar and animal protein.

Aitken Spence...

From exploring the vibrant local culture through traditional dance shows, enjoying the wonderful tuk-tuk rides, experiencing the city life and visiting a variety of attractions to enjoying an unforgettable trip to Sri Lanka were on offer to the visitors. "Sri Lanka was recently ranked in the Forbes list as one of the 23 best places to visit in 2023 and it's crucial that we maintain our position and become one of the most popular

destinations not just in South Asia but in Asia. I am delighted that Aitken Spence Travels (destination management segment of Aitken Spence) has played an instrumental role in growing the cruise tourism operation, which has evidently had a positive impact on other key industries such as hospitality, shipping, ports businesses to support the economy," commented Stashani Jayawardena, Executive Director Aitken Spence PLC, Head of the Tourism and Leisure Sector for the company.

Further commenting on this significant contribution to Sri Lanka tourism's annual numbers, Aitken Spence Travels Managing Director Malin Jayasundera stated, "We are delighted to be in the forefront of bringing in a large volume of tourists to Sri Lanka. As a leading DMC, we will continue to work directly in convincing cruise operators to dock in Sri Lanka to enjoy the natural beauty the country has to offer.

Needless to say, these are efforts that are seeing results today, due to the active role we played in building confidence of the destination whilst ensuring the shore excursion itineraries were attractive and unique. We are thankful for the support extended by all the stakeholders for a smooth operation and for our cruise guests to have a positive experience of Sri Lanka."

One delighted visitor on an excursion exclaimed, "I did not know Sri Lanka was this beautiful. I was thrilled to see how my favourite spice, cinnamon, is made in Sri Lanka. I have always used cinnamon as a powdered product but didn't know that it's mainly a bark of a tree."

Aitken Spence Travels enjoyed a tremendously successful 2023 cruise season, with over 10 cruise calls that have docked at all the ports of Colombo, Galle, Hambantota and Trincomalee.

Virtusa expands...

"This latest office space expansion supports Sri Lanka's rapidly scaling advanced research capabilities, so that Virtusa continues to deliver deep technology solutions that drive digital transformation and innovation for Fortune 500 clients across global markets." As Virtusa continues to scale its Sri Lankan operation, the company is creating many new job opportunities, playing its part as an industry leader to retain top-class local IT professionals, while also contributing towards stabilising Sri Lanka's economy.

"Virtusa's rapid expansion and increasing headcount is a reflection of the local IT industry's potential to nurture high-quality tech talent supported by globally benchmarked work environments," Supramaniam commented during the event. "As Sri Lanka's largest tech employer, Virtusa plays a crucial role in future-proofing our tech talent and will

continue to transform the nation's technology industry by creating progressive job opportunities and new, technology-driven careers in the coming years."

Sahay further commented on the benchmarked quality of Sri Lankan talent, stating, "Virtusa's growth also shines a spotlight on the quality of Virtusa's growing talent pool and the strategic planning and effort behind Virtusa's human resource function, to attract and retain the top Sri Lankan tech talent."

The new floor will also be utilised by Virtusa's Global Technology Office, enhancing engineering excellence through greater focus on research and development, innovative product development and globally-benchmarked delivery quality assurance. Furthermore, the new space will house a fully-equipped, state-of-the-art auditorium, which promises to be the preferred venue for industry-related events and conferences. Virtusa's expanding team will continue to enjoy the facility's employee-friendly amenities such as electric vehicle charging ports, parking, fully-equipped gym and cafeteria.

SLT eyes U.S. ...

"The U.S. government, through the USTDA, is in discussions for a possible grant. If we secure this grant, we will try to set up a training facility for submarine cable construction, deployment and so on. Nothing has been finalised; we hope it will come through," a top SLT official told Mirror Business.

Meanwhile, SLT Group Chairman Rohan Fernando revealed to the shareholders that SubCom, LLC, a U.S.-based industry-leading supplier of undersea communications systems and services, had agreed to source the latest telecommunication technology knowledge through SLT's training centre in Welisara.

SubCom last year won the US \$ 600 million contract to build the Southeast Asia-Middle East-Western Europe 6 (SEA-ME-WE 6) submarine telecommunication cable. SLT, which is a consortium partner of the SEA-ME-WE 6 submarine telecommunication cable, has invested US \$ 40-50 million in the project.

"We have started to invest in the SEA-ME-WE 6 submarine cable system as a consortium partner, whilst constructing a cable landing station in Matara, with the planned project completion to be in 2Q of 2025," SLT CEO

Janaka R. Abeysinghe said.

This three-year construction period includes the process of laying 22,000 km of undersea fibre cables, construction of land network and equipment installations in all participating countries, from Europe to Singapore.

According to SLT, the SEA-ME-WE 6 is estimated to provide an additional 12 Tbps of capacity, further boosting Sri Lanka's regional competitive advantage as a business hub.

Meanwhile, SLT last year commenced development, expansion and enhancement of the training centre in Welisara, to upgrade it to an institution of technology and obtain the 'University' status from the University Grants Commission.

Upon completion, SLT expects to increase the number of students to an average of 2,000 per annum and to engage the staff and youth of Sri Lanka in high-end IT education. (MF)

March national...

The Central Bank in April left its key policy rates steady, indicating that the rates could ease faster in the back half of the year, in lockstep with inflation, further relaxing the financial conditions in the economy.

Easing financial conditions are expected to further accelerate the declining path of inflation, as the firms could again start borrowing to ramp up their production.

Sri Lanka's inflation was caused by only three factors i.e., global commodities price boom, free fall in the rupee and the dampened supply conditions, due to foreign exchange shortages and tight financial conditions.

Sri Lanka had no demand-driven inflation precursors, as claimed by certain sections but the officials crushed the demand anyway to bring it to balance with the remaining supply.

Meanwhile, the national food inflation eased in March to 42.3 percent YoY, from 49.0 percent in February, while the prices measured monthly continued to decline by 2.1 percent for the second month in a row.

The non-food inflation meanwhile rose by 54.9 percent, slower than 57.4 percent in February, while the monthly prices rose by 2.3 percent, compared to 3.7 percent a month ago.

The reduction in the fuel prices had a positive impact while the increase in the electricity tariff partly offset that in March.

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BY CHANDRI PERIS

The 60's was a time when our country had one of its greatest periods of artistic creativity. The 43 Group which was formed decades earlier had paved the way for yet another generation of artists and designers who broke the mold and took Sri Lankan art and design to a position from which it was instantly recognisable as something that was uniquely our own. Ceylon had indeed carved its place in the world of art with the emergence of the giants who consisted of the initial 43 Group, and this was ably supported by a set of budding artists who followed their footsteps many years later. This younger generation matched their skills equally and excelled by moving into the other realms of creativity such as sculpture, handlooms, theatre, film, architecture, batik and fashion design. For those who aren't aware, the '43 Group was a 20th-century modern art group established in August 1943 in Ceylon. This group was essentially an association of like-minded artists who had broken away from the Ceylon Society of Arts. They were led by photographer and critic Lionel Wendt and originally included nine painters as key members: Geoffrey Beling, George Claessens Aubrey Collette, Justin Daraniyagala, Richard Gabriel, George Keyt, Ivan Peries, Harry Pieris (the first and only Secretary of the Group), and the Ven. Manjusi Thero.

The group were influenced by Charles Freegrove Winzer to whom Keyt and Beling had been pupils. The paintings by this group constituted a historic break in Sri Lankan and more generally, South Asian traditions of painting.

What members of the 43 Group held in common was not a style but a conviction that Ceylonese art could be modern without sacrificing the values and traditions of our island. They showed that Ceylonese life, and values, with its deep roots in ancient tradition, could be portrayed in a twentieth century manner. Their works created an atmosphere of confidence, which opened the eyes of many who realised that there was such a thing as modern Ceylonese art and gave them the license to be creative with it.

Many younger artists who were inspired by the 43 Group were incorporated and accepted by them because they showed similar convictions to the thinking behind this particular creative process. This marked the start of the Young Artists Group whose creativity extended beyond that of painting. A few of them with interests and talents in the arts tried new and unprecedented things and had remarkable, far-reaching success in such areas as designing handlooms, weaving, applique, tie-dye and creating fashion accessories. Chiefly among them was the remarkably talented Swanee Jayawardene.

Even though most of us remember Swanee as a designer of the most exciting and exquisite fashion garments, her craft, her skill, and her love were embedded in her paintings.



**FULL
FRONTAL**
BY CHANDRI PERIS

Suvenithi De Mel was born on the 22 June 1930. She was a student at Good Shepherd's Convent, Kotahena. Her passion for painting was fostered by some of the best-known art teachers of that era, namely Cora Abraham, K.S. Perera and Harry Pieris. Her progress as a recognised artist was cemented when she started exhibiting her work alongside other members of the 43 Group and this led to her paintings being shown at the Venice Biennale in 1950. She married Harold Jayawardena (a journalist and musician) and had three children. Manel, Menik and Rohan.

Even though I never had the privilege of meeting her I used to be constantly amazed at the works she exhibited on the window of her boutique on Galle Road.

Swanee had taken the art of tie-dye to new heights. She used the most unusual colour combinations to tie and dye fabrics and then she batiked over it. This unique innovation, aptly named 'Explosion batiks' by the creator herself, were an absolute sensation! Swanee taught art at Bishops College Colombo for a period of 19 years. At the time the new Bishop's College auditorium opened, her former pupils officially requested that some of her paintings were displayed in the foyer. She donated as many as 25 of her vibrant and colourful paintings which used to adorn the walls on the new hall making it look rather like a retrospective of her work. Some of her pieces were even hung along the dressing room corridors. These were an inspiration to the younger generations who looked at them in awe. Mysteriously, none of them seem to be around anymore!

Then there were those amazing fashion shows that displayed Swanee's creations, vividly. The supermodels of yesteryear Tamara Subramaniam, Mano and Vidya Wanigesooriya and Akushala Selliah and many more, wowed us with stunningly beautiful outfits all of which were made only with local fabrics, threads and dyes. "Implosion" a fashion show curated and choreographed by Swanee's younger daughter Menik has stayed in my mind ever since I saw it because of its sheer, bold and audacious use of colour!

At the start of her creative life, Swanee worked mostly at home and started selling whatever she made from there itself. The overwhelming demand for her products meant that she had to give up her career as a teacher. It was then that she realised that opening an outlet for her creative ventures was the way to go. Her three children supported her every step of the way as their mother's artistic genes had been inherited by them too. Her son Rohan managed the boutique until he sadly passed away. It was Rohan's initiative and business acumen that made his mother's products be seen all over the world. Swanee's crafts and creations have been exhibited at several Trade Fairs all over the world including in countries such as Germany, France, Egypt, Japan the UK and many more.

When I met up with Menik recently she talked about her mother, "Amma was always working" she said to me and continued to affirm her mother's conviction to the creative process. "From the time she came back after teaching at school, she used to put on her rubber gloves, tuck her sari pota onto her waist and keep experimenting with the dyes or she would paint". Menik continues to create wonderfully exotic batik saris whenever she gets the chance to do so as she has clearly inherited her mother's gift as a colourist, however, her passion is for creative dance. She remains a respected teacher in Colombo.

Manel, her elder daughter made a similar observation in an article she wrote for a programme honouring her mother by

AN UNSUNG GENIUS

The Immeasurable Talent of
Swanee Jayawardene

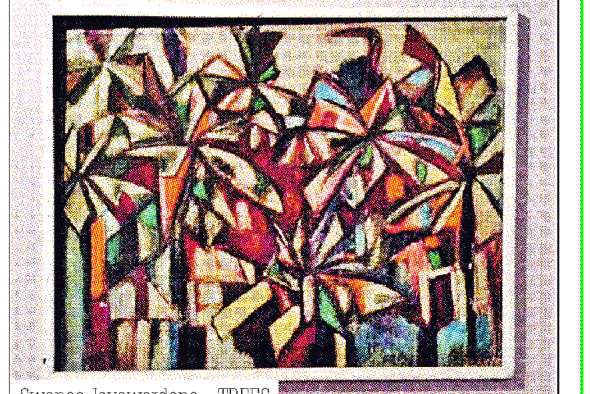
stating, "Painting was her life. It was like she lived for it." Manel who was married to the famous theatre Director, Dhamma Jagoda, continues to be create exquisite works of pottery. Porcelain Art as her works have been termed can be found at selected boutiques in Colombo. She also creates stunning wall hangings made in the similar style as her mother's unique applique' work

Speaking of her late son Rohan, Swanee recalled "When my son was just five years old, and he would help me with my tie and dye. He would abandon his friends who played various games with him on the staircase of the Bambalaptiya flats and join me to hold a sari or a piece of fabric for me".

This is proof indeed as to where her three children inherited a wealth of talent themselves. After all, one just has to glance at the extent of Swanee's creativity to fathom the array of ideas from which one could take a leaf and expand from. Yes, she was a painter, she also created fashionable clothes mostly in tie and dye/batik. She made macrame and batik tablecloths, cushion covers, carry bags, handbags, and other accessories.

Applique' wall-hangings were another highlight of her work demonstrating the fact that nothing was ever wasted. Saris and cloth and jacket ensembles with applique work was a favourite at her very own earlier fashions shows titled "Vilasitha." Her men's clothing range included t-shirts, shirts, and sarongs, as were the unusual (batiked stretch fabric) leggings which were a favourite among teenage girls!

She even created batik infused fibre glass tables. Her daughter Manel was instrumental in blending beerulu lace with cheese cloth and amu redi to make dresses which was quite the rage in those days. It was her son Rohan who had the brainchild of tie-dying waterproof fabrics and making umbrellas with them. All of this contributed to the uniqueness of the brand that was 'Swanee.'



Even though most of us remember Swanee as a designer of the most exciting and exquisite fashion garments, her craft, her skill, and her love were embedded in her paintings. Many of her works that can be seen today are pieces that she created during the latter part of her life. Which makes one wonder about what happened to her earlier works? Especially the paintings done when she was moving as one with those key figures of the 43 Group. It is when those questions are asked that we realise that Swanee stopped painting from 1970 to 1977 and this was because over 400 early pieces by this great woman were collected by an unscrupulous person who promised to mount an exhibition for her, and that was the last she or anyone saw them! Devastated by this betrayal of trust her recovery was painstakingly slow, yet she gradually came out of it and painted until she passed away in 2010.

The loss of these paintings has left a yawning gap in Swanee's legacy, which I think most Sri Lankans and her family ought to see and know about. Ceylonese artists who thrived in the mid and late 20th century are now fetching record breaking prices for their works and most of them are sold through the likes of Sotheby's and Christie's. Surely, Swanee's work needs to be found, recognised, and valued simply because she was a genius of our time and quite definitely of our country.

Swanee's crafts and creations have been exhibited at several Trade Fairs all over the world including in countries such as Germany, France, Egypt, Japan the UK and many more.





BY RISHINI WEERARATNE

On this week's edition of *She Can*, I speak with the elected Councillor of the Milton Keynes City Council, UK. She has also just been invited to be the Governor of a local school body in Milton Keynes. She worked in the Colombo Municipality Council prior to moving to the United Kingdom and joined the Conservative Party to contest in the local government elections. She has worked at J Wunderman Thompson and at MAS whilst living in Sri Lanka. She is armed with a Post-Graduate Diploma (PGDip) in Development Management from the Open University, UK, and a Master of Business Administration, Management and Operations, from Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK. An alumna of Ladies College, Colombo, she is also a Senior Project Manager at the Open University, UK and overlooks a GBP 60 million project. She is also a Trustee of the Five Trees Community Trust in Milton Keynes and is also the Head of Media of the Conservative Party committee: Conservative Friends of NHS. She is also the Chair of the Milton Keynes Conservatives Women's Organisation and Secretary of the Milton Keynes Conservatives. She is also the Head of Media of the Conservative Friends of NHS, and on the committee of Conservative Friends of Sri Lanka.

She is an advocate for women's rights and education. She is a strong voice for the voiceless and has dedicated her life to empower and uplift disadvantaged children, youth, and women. She shattered the political glass-ceiling and became the first female Sri Lankan to occupy a seat at the Milton Keynes Council. She is an absolute go-getter, and nothing stops her from achieving her goals in life. From Rugby to Politics, she succeeds in all her endeavors. She is kind, generous, courageous, dependable, and diplomatic; Shazna Muzammil.

Who is Shazna Muzammil? What experiences in life has shaped her as an individual? My life experiences have instilled within me a deep sense of compassion and resilience. Despite facing various challenges and obstacles, I've learned to persevere and overcome them with grace and determination. As a mother to two adult boys, a sister to four somewhat 'adultish' boys, and a daughter to very compassionate parents, family has always been at the core of my life. Growing up, my brothers and I were raised very differently, and I often felt like I led a sheltered life. Despite this, I excelled in school, but I was unable to pursue higher education due to societal expectations. Instead, I was given away in marriage, which was not uncommon in my culture. However, I refused to conform to the expectations placed upon me, much to the horror of my parents. Instead, I found solace in my love of reading and travel. These experiences broadened my horizons and allowed me to see the world from a different perspective. My professional experiences have also broadened my network and allowed me to connect with individuals from diverse backgrounds. But it's my political experiences and activism that have provided me with an outlet where I can make a difference on a much larger scale. By championing the underdog, I've been able to have a greater impact on many lives. Throughout my life, I've held onto the values instilled in me by my parents, treating everyone with respect and kindness and looking out for those who are not as privileged as myself. My experiences have made me resilient, strong, and unafraid to reach for the stars.

Share with us a summary of your professional journey? My professional journey started with me helping my dad's business. Ramona was instrumental in helping me carve out something for myself when things were bad, and for that I am truly grateful for her. I subsequently went on to help my father when he was elected as the Mayor of the Colombo Municipal Council, and that experience, his work ethics, the way he dealt with the opposition, collaborative way he worked with the officers and government when the government was not his own party, and the opportunities he provided for me to learn, grow, and build relationships has been priceless. After which I went on to join J. Wunderman Thompson and subsequently, MAS before I moved to the UK. I feel hugely privileged to be working at The Open University in UK. Recently, I was appointed by the Vice Chancellor's Office to lead one of the largest projects at the Open University, which involves facilitating the transition of our lecturers onto permanent contracts and analysing their workload based on the new contracts. In this role, I lead a team of academics, work closely with unions, review new and old policies, ensure a smooth transition of lecturers to permanent contracts, and minimize disruptions in students' educational journeys. I am passionate about volunteering and making a difference in my community. I started volunteering as an Appropriate Adult, where I supported young people in custody and mentored children with a parent in prison. During the pandemic, I trained as a Vaccinator to help with the government's vaccination rollout. I also fundraised for a young people's mental health charity (YIS) by auctioning art works created by children about their experiences during lockdown and giving them an outlet to share their stories through art.

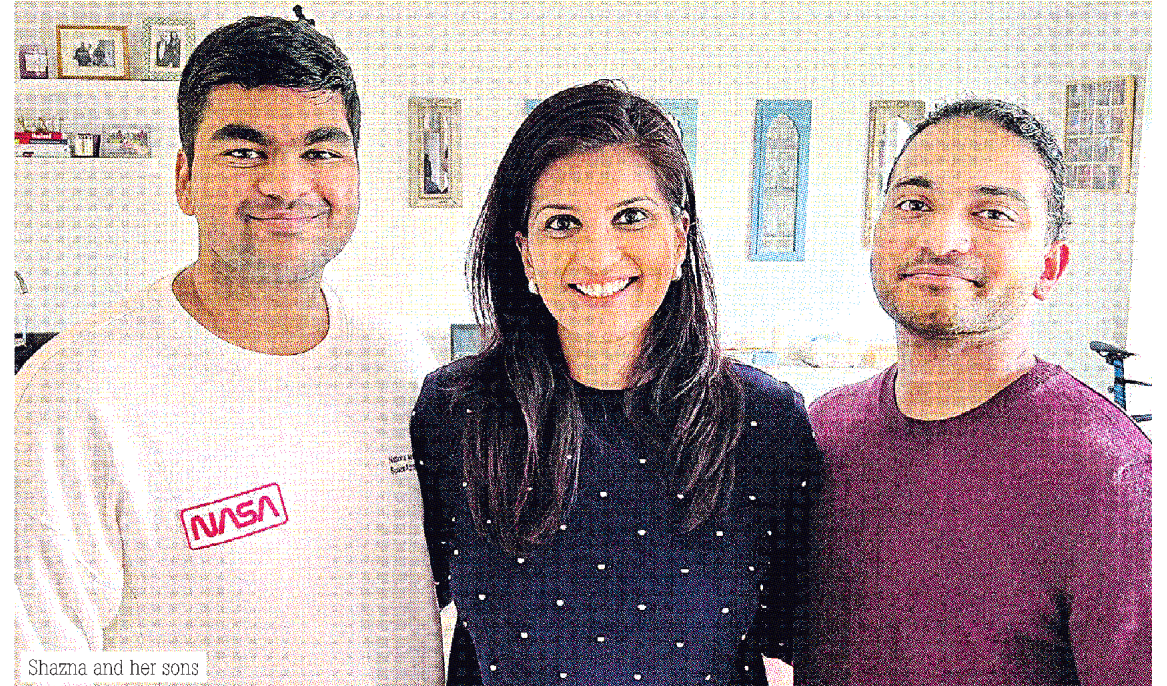
What inspired you to join politics in UK? It is difficult to pinpoint just one thing that inspired me to join politics in the UK, as it was a culmination of different experiences that led me to this path. Growing up in Sri Lanka, I saw the struggles that women faced in having their voices heard and recognized the urgent need for greater gender equity and representation in politics. When I moved to the UK and began volunteering with young people in custody, I saw first-hand the power of community engagement and support in creating positive change. This experience reinforced my desire to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children and communities. As a local councillor, I have been able to use my platform to advocate for those who may otherwise go unheard and to push for greater support and resources for our most vulnerable citizens. I believe that everyone, regardless of their background, deserves to have a voice in our political system and that it is our duty as elected

Shazna Muzammil

She Can
BY RISHINI WEERARATNE

officials to ensure that their voices are heard. I am deeply committed to making a positive difference in the lives of those in my community and beyond, and am grateful for the opportunities that my upbringing, my volunteer work, and my political involvement have given me to do so.

You have worked in both the Colombo Municipality Council and the Local Council in Milton Keynes. How different have both experiences been? Working in local councils, both in Sri Lanka and the UK, has been an incredible journey for me. In Sri Lanka, navigating the complex political environment was incredibly challenging, especially as a woman. The tension and uncertainty of the political landscape made it difficult to make an impact. People only hear what they want to hear and sadly more for political gain rather than to make a real difference. Moving to the UK and working in the Local Council in Milton Keynes was a breath of fresh air. The open and inclusive political culture allowed me to have a greater impact, and I was able to work on issues that I am truly passionate about, such as supporting children, social care, and mental health concerns. Despite the differences between the two settings, I found many commonalities. Both required creative problem-solving and collaborative efforts to achieve goals and make a positive impact in the community.



Shazna and her sons

In both cases, the council played a huge role in supporting communities, improving infrastructure, traffic and highways, parking, planning, licencing among others. However, here in the UK, the local council also play a large role in education, mental health, and disability support and most importantly, providing care for young vulnerable children and looking after them. In Milton Keynes we look after nearly four hundred children who have come from very difficult backgrounds, and we have foster carers that are also supported by the council to help these young people. Through my experiences in both councils, I have gained unique insights into the complex world of local politics. I am proud to have applied these insights to my work in the UK and to have made a significant and positive impact on the lives of the people in my community. I believe that local politics is a powerful tool for change, and I am committed to using it to create a better world for all.

Was it difficult to enter politics in the UK? When

How do you want to be remembered one day? I would like to be remembered as a dedicated and ethical parliamentarian, committed to serving and representing my constituents with the highest level of integrity.

you first joined the Party was it difficult to adapt into the British Political Culture? Is it different to the Sri Lankan political culture?

When I decided to join the Conservative Party, I was eager to learn from them and get involved in politics. I contacted our local association, expressed my interest in helping, and was hoping to join the women's arm. Soon after, they asked me to run as a councillor and even supported me in launching the Milton Keynes Conservative Women's Organisation, of which I have been the chair since 2021. In this role, I have been able to grow the membership, find candidates, and provide training for those interested in running for office. Coming from Sri Lanka, the political culture in the UK was quite different. The most significant difference I have noticed is the emphasis on accountability and transparency.

If someone does something unlawful or morally wrong, they can be forced to give up their position, including a parliamentary seat. Even Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, was required to resign for similar reasons. This accountability and willingness to put the country first is refreshing. Additionally, the party membership plays a large role in selecting both local MPs and the leader of the party. This process ensures that the voices of members are heard and valued. Another aspect of British politics that I admire is their campaigning approach, where each candidate is given a fixed budget and everyone's leaflet looks the same. This equality in campaigning is monitored closely, which promotes fairness and prevents wealthier candidates from having an unfair advantage.

Do you ever think - "Am I crazy?" Most times especially when I'm about to go for a swim in a wet suit in 4 degrees cold icy waters.

Who do you look up to for inspiration or mentorship? My dad - he is my inspiration. I guess in a way I'm still trying to make him proud.

What has been the highlight of your career so far? Being selected as an approved parliamentary candidate. The selection process was strenuous and tedious, but it has been the most wonderful experience.

Have you been harassed or discriminated against? Not really harassed or discriminated but I do have the odd security guard following me around the supermarket probably assuming I may run out without paying.