



1.7M Acres of State Lands Grossly Undervalued

One acre valued at Rs 500 | Some files pertaining to land acquisition lost | LRC given six months to rectify issue

By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE



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Legality of Cabinet challenged in Court

By FAADHILA THASSIM

A Fundamental Rights (FR) Petition was filed before the Supreme Court on Friday (19), seeking an Interim Order staying the Cabinet of Ministers from continuing to function in their portfolios, on the basis that the total number of Cabinet Ministers has exceeded the mandatory requirement contained in the Constitution.

Story Continued on PAGE 2 ▶

From 2011-2016 Medical supplies worth Rs 10.1B bought outside procedure - COPA

By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE

A number of 4,619 medical supplies worth Rs 10.1 billion had been purchased from 2011 to 2016 without the recommendation of the Formulary Revision Committee, the Committee on Public Accounts (COPA) revealed.

The committee met under the chairmanship of Prof. Tissa Vitarana last week.

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SLFP to seek further discussions with other Parties

SLFP General Secretary and State Minister Dayasiri Jayasekera says his Party will be seeking a further round of discussions, with political Parties that are not represented in Parliament, before the end of this month.



He said this was as part of the SLFP's programme to further broaden its political outlook with the support of its two main political allies, the SLPP and the UPFA.

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Fertiliser shipment from China HC extends Interim Order

By HANSI NANAYAKKARA

Colombo Commercial High Court Judge Pradeep Hettiarachchi, on Friday (19), extended the Interim Order issued against the Chinese company that shipped fertiliser containing harmful bacteria to Sri Lanka, its local agent and the People's Bank till 3 December.

The Judge extended the order having perused a petition submitted to...

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HC to deliver decision on Azath Salley on 2 Dec

By HANSI NANAYAKKARA

Colombo High Court Judge Amal Ranaraja, on Friday (19), said his decision on whether to release former Western Province Governor Azath Salley, without calling for witnesses from the defence, will be delivered on 2 December.



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Police Dept struggling to fill 100 OIC vacancies

By KEERTHI MENDIS

Police Department is faced with a quandary being unable to fill OIC positions of at least 100 Police Stations around the country, informed Police sources said.

During the past week, a full list of existing vacancies had been sent to the Secretary of the Ministry of Public Security.

Furthermore, it is said the Ministry Secretary for his part had brought the issue...

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New COVID Delta sublineage detected in SL

By DILANTHI JAYAMANNE

Another Delta sublineage had been detected from among COVID-19 patients in Sri Lanka. Director of Operations and Clinical Services at Allergy Immunology and Cell Biology Unit, University of Sri Jaywardenepura, Dr. Chandima Jeewandara, said on Friday (19).

Story Continued on PAGE 2 ▶

Litro to release 800,000 cylinders of gas soon

By UPATISSA PERERA

Around 800,000 cylinders of domestic gas will be released to the market during the course of the coming week to remedy the ongoing scarcity, Litro Gas Lanka Ltd said.

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No Approval for Hotels, Golf Courses or Helipads Inside Wetlands – Amaraweera

Following the acquisition of the Muthurajawela wetlands by the UDA, the Ministry of Environment has decided to preserve the wetland as a Ramsar wetland ahead of its hand over to the Wildlife Conservation Department. Subject Minister Mahinda Amaraweera, during a discussion held at the Parliament Complex, affirmed that under his

watch, no approval will be granted for the construction of any hotels, golf courses or helipads inside wetlands. He stressed that the wetlands, which is unique for its diverse ecosystem, will henceforth be used to provide information and knowledge seeking for locals and tourists alike, while maintaining its status.

Importing refined fuel won't solve crisis – CPC union

By **UPATISSA PERERA**

The head of the CPC Commercial Industries and Progressive Workers Union (CIPWU), Bandula Saman

Kumara, says that by importing refined fuel, the Government will not be able to resolve the fuel issue long term. He stated that refining crude oil would be the solution to

overcome any issues that emerge with regard to long-term supply of fuel in the country. Hence, Saman Kumara urged the Government not to unnecessarily shut down the

Sapugaskanda Oil Refinery, as its consequences will be felt by the economy and warned if it is not reopened forthwith it will seriously cripple the fuel industry.

Kandy City Wastewater Project inaugurated

Ambassador of Japan to Sri Lanka Mizukoshi Hideaki attended the opening ceremony of the 'Kandy City Wastewater Management Project' on 17 November 2021.

The ceremony was held online between Temple Trees and the newly constructed Gannoruwa Wastewater Treatment Plant in Kandy and was attended by Prime Minister Mahinda

Rajapaksa, Minister of Water Supply, Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Governor of Central Province Lalith U. Gamage, and other Sri Lankan officials.

Japan has been supporting the water sector in the Kandy region since 2001 by building water supply facilities, including a water purification plant and improving the drinking water coverage rate, a spokesman said.

The construction of the sewage treatment plant and sanitation facilities have been completed through a yen loan of approximately 14 billion, which was decided in March 2010, and the construction of house-to-house connections is now underway, which is expected to improve the living and sanitation environment through sewage treatment, a spokesman said.

Ambassador Mizukoshi stated that this project assistance would indeed imply the, "Beautiful merger of Sri Lankan tradition and Japanese technology, which stands as a symbol of historically close bilateral relations, as we prepare to celebrate the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations next year."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

1.7M Acres of...

By **GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE**

The value of nearly 1.7 million acres of land, owned by the Land Reforms Commission (LRC), has been recorded as Rs 676 million, thus the value of one acre is Rs 500, Parliament watchdog, the Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) noted.

COPE Chairman Prof. Charitha Herath instructed the Chairman of the LRC to take necessary action within six months to rectify the problem.

Prof. Herath pointed out the extent of lands acquired by the LRC

established under the Land Reforms Act No. 01 of 1972 and the lack of accurate data on the lands disposed by respective Governments was a serious concern.

The LRC Chair stated that some files pertaining to land acquisition have been lost. It was revealed that nearly 200 such files have been lost. The COPE Chairman instructed the Secretary to the Ministry to look into this matter immediately.

COPE emphasised the need to rectify this situation as land grabbing by people has become a serious problem. It was also revealed that out of the lands acquired under the Land Reforms

Act of 1972-1974, there are 260 unoccupied 50-acre lots of land due to non-submission of plans and declarations. Accordingly, the Committee instructed the Secretary to the Ministry and the Chairman of the Land Commission to open a special window and intervene to resolve this issue within the next six months as this process which has been delayed for 50 years has become a historical issue.

It was also revealed that after leasing LRC lands, it has become a problem to obtain loans by mortgaging them to banks and that this happens because businessmen are able to obtain a mortgage with

the permission of the Commission as stated in the terms of the transfer of the land they have obtained. There was also a question as to whether certain lands would be utilised effectively after being handed over to Divisional Secretaries.

The COPE Chairman said the main priority is to identify the extent of assets owned by the LRC and prepare a model for its effective organisation adding that this is a matter of national interest and that the the committee will be reconvened in future to work out a definite plan with stakeholders including the Survey Department.

Litro to release...

Marketing and Sales Director of the company Janaka Pathiratne stated that one of the main reasons for the current shortage of gas cylinders in the local market is due to an extra demand for gas caused by sudden standstill of Laughs Gas operations.

He said though Litro Gas had released a stock of 700,000 cylinders of gas to the market, this had not been enough to cover the scarcity.

However, Pathiratne expressed hope that the current shortage could be overcome within the next week.

Police Dept...

...to the attention of IGP C.D. Wickremaratne and had advised him to find a solution to the matter urgently. They further said VIPs, District Secretaries,

MPs and Ministers keen to appoint their kith and kin had been a reason why efforts made by Police Department had stalled when filling in these vacancies.

New COVID Delta...

He noted a patient with this particular variation had been identified in Matara. In addition, the particular sub-lineage AY.104 has also been detected from Hambantota, Jaffna and Kilinochchi in the Northern Province. A total 288 cases with sub lineage AY.104 have been identified.

In a tweet, Dr. Jeevandara said, "In addition to B.1.617.2.28 sub lineage, another sub lineage B.1.617.2.104 had been detected."

Thereby the delta variant has two unique sub lineages that originated in Sri Lanka, namely: AY28 and AY.104.

Fielding questions he noted that there would not be drastic changes in symptoms of the viral infection. "Also we do not expect there to be major changes in disease spread," Dr. Jeevandara added.

There is no need for any unnecessary fear that COVID vaccines would not be effective

against the sub-lineage of the delta variant, he said, "We must remember that this is only another sub lineage and all COVID vaccines that have been approved for emergency purposes by the World Health Organisation will be effective in this instance. Sri Lanka has also commenced administering the booster dose as well so there is no necessity for unwanted fear."

Dr. Jeevandara noted that there was a marked decline in the number of COVID-19 cases being detected from the Colombo City limits. "Our University receives samples for sequencing only from the Colombo City. Having witnessed the tremendous number of COVID-19 cases detected during the first, second and third waves, a marked respite has been seen in October and beginning of November to date in cases detected from the Colombo Municipal Council area which suffered heavily for several months," he noted.

HC extends...

...Court by the Colombo Commercial Fertilisers Limited (CCF).

The Court order prevents the payment to the Chinese firm on a Letter of Credit.

The respondents, who were present in Court, produced written submissions. During a previous hearing, Additional Solicitor General Susantha Balapatabendi, who appeared on behalf of the CCF, told the Court that China-based Qingdao Seawin Biotech Group Co., Ltd. had shipped a fertilizer consignment, which is a partial shipment worth more than Rs 1 billion that was procured through a tender process initiated by the Agriculture Ministry.

Although the said Chinese company was required to ship sterile organic fertilizer under the tender contract, it had admitted in its shipping advice that the consignment may contain

microorganisms, he told the Court.

The National Plant Quarantine Services (NPQS), which tested the sample sent to them, had confirmed the presence of organisms, including certain types of harmful bacteria, Balapatabendi said, adding that, in this context, the Chinese firm in question has failed to complete the accepted terms of the tender.

As per the terms of the contracts, the payment for the controversial organic fertilizer shipment was slated to be made through a Letter of Credit established via the People's Bank.

However, in September, the NPQS, which tested the fertilizer samples sent by the Qingdao Seawin Biotech Group Co., Ltd., revealed the presence of the microorganism called 'Erwinia'. Several days later, Sri Lanka decided to suspend the importation of organic fertiliser

from Seawin Biotech.

The Chinese firm retaliated, saying that the NPQS took only three days to draw a suspicious conclusion although it takes more than six days to identify Erwinia as per the ISPM27 rule in IPPC (International Plant Protection Convention).

The "unscientific detection method and conclusion of NPQ in Sri Lanka are not in compliance with international animal and plant quarantine convention", Seawin Biotech claimed further and urged that Swiss SGS group, a top third-party testing organisation, should re-test whether the samples contain Erwinia.

But, Agriculture Minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage later insisted that the ship carrying the fertilizer consignment containing harmful bacteria will not be allowed into Sri Lanka.

HC to deliver...

The former Governor has been indicted for making disparaging comments aimed at inflaming tensions among different ethnic communities here during a media conference held in early March this year. When the case was taken up on Friday

(19), the hearing of witness testimony for the prosecution was concluded.

President's Counsel Maithri Guneratne, appearing for the former Governor, urged Judge Ranaraja to release his client without calling for witnesses from the defence.

SLFP to seek...

The first round of the talks was held recently at the SLFP headquarters chaired by SLFP Chairman Maithripala Sirisena. It was attended by eight political parties that are represented in the Parliament along with another 31 parties and civil society groups.

Jayasekera stated that they had decided to conduct another round of these talks due to the overwhelming response received from these political parties.

Medical supplies...

This meeting was held to review the Auditor General's Special Audit Report dated 14 March 2018 on the Medical Supply Process carried out by the Medical Supplies Division of the Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine.

It was revealed that although the number of items consumed in respect of medical supplies by countries over the world was extremely low, 19,844 items had been consumed in the island by the year 2017.

The COPA also revealed that 8,945 'Trastuzumab' injections, 440mg with solvent in 20ml vials called 'Herticad' had been purchased from a supplier in the local market on 14 occasions in 2018 and 2019 at a cost of Rs. 891 million. The Committee had to bear an additional cost of Rs 230.9 million due to the rejection of the minimum bid relating to these transactions.

The Committee also inquired

from the Ministry of Production, Supply and Regulation of Pharmaceuticals regarding the additional expenditure of Rs 5.1 billion incurred during the period of 10 years from 2007 to 2016. This situation had arisen due to the delay in the procurement process to procure medical supplies from the local market to avoid short supply.

The National Audit Office pointed out that medical supplies are brought to the country annually without conforming to standard quality checks and its harmful effects to patients cannot be quantified. The COPA also inquired from the relevant officials with regard to their failure to improve the physical and human resource status of the Drug Quality Assurance Laboratory in 2016.

The Committee focused on a number of issues such as failure to introduce a methodology to test the quality of samples on all

purchases, deficiencies in the recovery process due to substandard medical supplies, issuance of substandard medical supplies to patients, non-printing of the emblem of Sri Lanka on medical supply containers, non-maintenance of medical supply stores, non-issuance of GRNs upon receipt of supplies, failure to store and distribute medical supplies such as donations, expiration of medical supplies and non-updating of Medical Supply Management Information System (MSMIS).

State Ministers Lasantha Alagiyawanna, Dr. Sudarshani Fernandopulle, Prasanna Ranaweera, MPs Tissa Attanayake, Ashok Abeyasinghe, Niroshan Perera, Dr. Upul Galappaththi, Cader Masthan and Weerasumana Weerasinghe were present. In addition, officials from several institutions including the Ministry of Health were also present at this Meeting.

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Legality of Cabinet...

The Petition was filed, by the President of the Association of Information Technology Professionals Sri Lanka (AITP), Kapila Renuka Perera, stating that the composition of the Cabinet of Ministers is illegal and ultra vires Article 47(1) (a) of the Constitution. He added the Attorney General had established 44 State Ministers violating Article 47(1) (b) of the Constitution.

Further it was stated upon the inspection of the 2022 budget

speech and its annexure, it was observed that there was an increase of Rs 525 billion of the total Government expenditure in comparison to the previous year (2021), which is over a 15.5 per cent increase.

He added the document however did not have exact figures of the Government expenditures, but according to the Appropriation Bill for the year 2022 there are budget allocations for over 30 Cabinet Ministers and

over 40 State Ministers, which is a clear violation of the Article 47(1) (a) (b) of the Constitution.

Thereby it was stated that the Attorney General has violated the Fundamental Rights of the petitioner and of the entire citizens of Sri Lanka, duly guaranteed by Article 12(1) of the Constitution with the establishment of two additional Cabinet Ministers and four additional State Ministers, blatantly violating Article 47(1) (a)

(b) of the Constitution.

It was thereby stated that the actions of the respondents is a blatant breach of Rule of Law of the Republic, breach of the Public Trust and a blatant breach of the Oath/Affirmation taken by them.

He further sought a Stay Order against State Ministers Sudarshani Fernandopulle, Chamal Rajapaksa, Dilum Amunugama and Namal Rajapaksa from continuing to functions as State Ministers.

All Responsible to Improve Children's Education – Sajith

By NABIYA VAFFOOR

Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa said everyone has a responsibility to improve the quality of children's education in Sri Lanka.

Premadasa said this during a computer equipment donation programme under 'Project She' initiated by his wife Jalani Premadasa.

Computer equipment was donated to Sri Wimalagnana Maha Vidyalaya, Billewa College and Dharmapala Maha Vidyalaya, all in Thanthirimale, on 18 November.

He said that it is everyone's duty to uplift the computer literacy and education level of children. We look forward to commence another project to



uplift the health of school students, he added.

Prior to the school donations, they attended Katina Pinkama at Thanthirimale Raja Maha

Viharaya where the temple's Dhathumandiraya was unveiled. Jalani Premadasa had made financial donations for that.

A kind gesture

Prof. Harendra De Silva donated a multipara monitor to Kandy Teaching Hospital and a pulse oximeter and paediatric bag-valve-mask to the Tissamaharama Base Hospital, which is operating with minimal physical and human resources. His philanthropy will enhance the quality of care received by the paediatric populations of the Central Province and farthest end of the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. This act of charity will be a trailblazer in inspiring similar acts of generosity in others.



Prof. Harendra De Silva hands over the equipment to Consultant Paediatrician Dr. Mihira Manamperi

President hosts almsgiving at Sandahiru Seya

An alms-giving ceremony was held on Friday (19) in front of the 'Sandahiru Seya' to the Maha Sangha who arrived from many parts of the country.

The Maha Sangha included the Anu Nayaka Theras of the Tri-Sects. The religious ceremony was held under the patronage of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to invoke blessings on soldiers who died in the war as well as the nation's citizens.

Several Ministers including Chamal Rajapaksa, MPs, the Defence Ministry Secretary, Government Officials and the Director General of the Civil Defence Force were also present at the occasion.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on Thursday (18) vested the Sandahiru Seya in Anuradhapura with the Buddhist clergy amidst religious observances.

The Sandahiru Seya is the second tallest Chaitya in the country after the Ruwanweli Seya.

Construction of the shrine was initiated during the Presidency of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa when President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was Defence Secretary. It was erected in honour of war heroes who made the supreme sacrifice to end the LTTE war.

The construction of the Sandahiru Seya was initiated in 2010 by the Tri-Forces with the assistance of the Department of Archaeology and local engineers. The Chuda Manikya was placed at the apex of the sacred pinnacle on 8 November. The shrine is about 283 feet in height and has a circumference of 801 feet.



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CPC's many refurbishment plans shelved

Sapugaskanda Oil Refinery Shuts Down After Years in Limbo

By **SULOCHANA RAMIAH MOHAN**

The Sapugaskanda oil refinery was doing its best while struggling half the time. Since 1969, the Iranian-built facility had never been upgraded or replaced and this resulted in the plant shutting down for the first time. This is amidst the rapid spread of technology used worldwide for sustainable and cost cutting of importation of oil products. Certainly it did not go well with Sapugaskanda and the decaying plant needed more focus than on dollars and local politics.

According to Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila, the Sapugaskanda oil refinery will be temporarily closed for 50 days from 15 November 2021.

The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) is a State-owned enterprise established by Act No. 28 of 1961 and as amended by Act No. 26 of 2003 it is entrusted with the responsibility of providing an uninterrupted supply of petroleum fuels to the nation. The CPC is engaged in importation, refining, distribution and selling of petroleum products throughout the island.

Over the shutting of the oil refinery, Energy Minister Gammanpila said there are plans to import refined petrol and diesel which could help save the Government an unspecified amount.

Better to Import

The refinery closed due to the shortage of dollars to import crude oil as the economic plummets from USD 2.3 billion at the end of October down from USD 7.5 billion, triggering shortages of food and key commodities besides the ongoing fertiliser fiasco due to which harvests have been hampered.

The Energy Minister said, "When we refine crude oil at Sapugaskanda, we get 37 per cent furnace oil and 19 per cent aviation fuel and only 43 per cent petrol and diesel, and that has come to a halt". The politician explained that it is better to import refined petrol and diesel which are in high demand since there is no big demand for furnace oil and aviation fuel.

Visiting Iran from 24-27 September at the invitation of Iran's Minister of Petroleum Dr. Javad Owji, Minister Gammanpila went on a site tour of the Tehran Oil Refinery and Gas Station Museum in coordination with the Embassy. Dr. Owji and Gammanpila discussed issues of mutual interests and agreed to study ways and means to further strengthen energy cooperation between Sri Lanka and Iran.

Internal issues

Besides the current crisis, the old refinery has its own internal issues. From time to time, the refinery informed that it needs repairs. The internal crisis was bigger than what the public knew at the time.

The refinery can be rated as one of the best State assets Sri Lanka ever had and it faced unprecedented crisis frequently which became the talk of the town.

Back in 2013, the refinery ran out of crude oil and the Government feared that it would shut down any time as oil tankers from Saudi Arabia and Oman had not reached Sri Lanka on schedule.

The CPC union also suspected that

officials had not taken steps to have backup oil stocks because they were planning to buy crude oil on spot tender, which costs USD 7 more per barrel.

They notified that the machinery will need to be warmed up with more crude oil if this is the case, entailing additional costs for the CPC.

Then in 2017, the controversial Singapore-registered Viton Company which was blacklisted in 2009 for supplying low quality fuel, shipped in substandard fuel after re-entering the market with Cabinet approval. The second shipment of diesel worth USD 37 million was unloaded at the CPC's Kolonnawa refinery.

REOR

The refurbishment and expansion of existing oil refinery at Sapugaskanda (REOR) is like new wine in old bottles. There were several attempts to refurbish and expand the refinery but the State failed then and now.

In 2015 there was a proposed REOR tabled and the memorandum to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Management was presented.

The CPC conducted a feasibility study of the old oil refinery through KBC Advanced Technology Singapore Pvt Ltd in 2010 on expanding capacity to meet

country's total petroleum fuel requirement, identifying new refinery configuration to convert low value petroleum products to high value petroleum products, emphasising on environmentally-friendly means of transporting fuel, enhancing crude oil selection flexibility, improving refinery's operating efficiency and emission levels to meet global standards.

The study proposed a process configuration of a hydrocracker delayed coker system to meet the above criteria with an enhanced refinery capacity of 100,000 barrels per day (BPD) with cost of project estimated at USD 2,010 million.

REOR's design capacity aimed to meet the total domestic demand of the country in 2020 effecting a complete import substitution of refined petroleum products. (See Table 1)

The expanded capacity combined with reduced production of low value products expected to complete demand-supply match.

The CPC then said that the existing refinery produces heavy fuel oil and naphtha approximately 37 per cent throughout due to lack of advanced conversion processes. These products have no attractive market value, causing the refinery to operate unprofitably because most modern

facilities are designed to upgrade low value petroleum products to high value fuels that enjoy higher margins of USD 10-12 per barrel. Hydro skimming refineries such as Sapugaskanda with no process to upgrade fuel oil usually operate at a margin of about USD 1 per barrel.

Modernisation would enable conversion of low value petroleum products to high value petroleum products thus increasing refinery margins. (See Table 2)

There were four countries that wanted to upgrade the Sapugaskanda oil refinery in the past, they were Iran, UAE, India, China, UK and Russia.

Presently, the CPC owns and operates the only oil refinery in Sri Lanka that has a capacity of 50,000 BPD. Since 1969, several types of crude oil have been refined at the facility including Iranian Light, Arabian Light, Upper Zakum, Miri Light, Oman Blend and Murban etc. have been processed as a single crude oil or as a mix of two or three types of crude oils from time to time with Murban Crude oil being processed recently.

At present, the refinery is capable of supplying about 20 per cent of the present total country demand for petrol and diesel. The CPC, being the

major player, has about 85 per cent market share. However, it is the sole supplier to provide the total country demand of Jet-A1 while existing refinery production is about 40-50 per cent of the total demand.

As of 2017-18 onwards the CPC has a SPBM of 180,000 DWT capacity about 9.2 km away from Colombo Port in deep sea for unloading tankers. Crude oil is then transferred using an underwater pipeline with a diameter of 3 feet to shore and by an underground pipeline with a diameter of 2 feet to the Orugodawatta tank farm (located at a distance of about 5 km from the port), which consists of four crude oil storage tanks (197,000 m³) and/or to the storage tanks at Sapugaskanda refinery which consist of five tanks (238,685 m³).

There are about 22 numbers of Fixed Roof Floating Roof tanks (capacity - 32,612 m³; for storage of intermediate products and 30 numbers of Fixed Roof/ Floating Roof tanks and capacity - 76,579 m³; for storage of finished products).

A feasibility study to modernise and expand the existing refinery to 100,000 BPD and a configuration studies to expand the existing refinery to 70,000 BPD were carried out in 2010 and 2014 to cater to surging demand and upgrade the bottom line to improve profitability. However, none of them were implemented.

Prospects

According to CPC sources there were at least three definite offers; one from the UAE and two from the EU with several visits by their technical teams. These countries were not interested in tender processes but only wanted to proceed through the Swiss Challenge Scheme (a candidate makes a proposal for a project, which the Government puts before the public to seek more proposals).

The intended methodology of the project's financing would be Built-Operate-Transfer (BOT) basis where the CPC will hold 10 per cent of shares. The investor can suggest the BOT period with the CPC considering the most attractive offer. However, the CPC will commit to buy refined products at the Singapore Platts price only for the local demand of the country during the BOT period and the balance quantities, if any, can be exported as per investor's interests. Any investment required for expansion of the existing facilities or for installation of new facilities to export such surplus products has to be borne by the investor. However, any such modifications or expansions have to be discussed with and agreed by the CPC. Further, installation of necessary pipelines for transfer of finished products from Sapugaskanda refinery to Muthurajawela terminal will have to be included in this project.

An oil refinery at all cost is needed in a country like Sri Lanka. Due to the current financial crisis people ran out of kerosene, and Sapugaskanda which has been servicing the public at large, came to halt. Whether stocks remains or not, it's timely to upgrade the oil refinery and the recent visit to Iran by the subject minister should bring about a change or follow up many of the CPC's proposals that were shelved when the regime changed in 2019.

(amiesulo@gmail.com)

Type of Product	Current contribution of refinery to domestic demand (%)	Contribution of refinery post implementation of REOR project to domestic demand
Petrol	20	100
Diesel	33	100
Kerosene / Jet A-1	48	100

Table 1: Domestic use earmarked in 2015 - by CPC

In addition, the new refinery will be able to produce bitumen and coke whenever market conditions are favorable. Also about 60% of local demand for LPG can be produced with the new configuration

Type of Product	Existing Refinery Margin (USD/bbl)	Refinery Margin After REOR (USD/bbl)
Petrol -92 Octane	0.95	10.60
Petrol-95 Octane	(Not Produced)	11.13
Diesel	0.90	10.20
Kerosene	0.92	10.35
LPG	0.86	7.02
Average Margin	1.00	10.12

Table 2:

Modernisation would enable conversion of low value petroleum products to high value petroleum products thus increasing refinery margins

Gammanpila Questions Opposition

“Do you want me to demand USD to purchase crude oil?”

By THAMEENAH RAZEEM

The agitated Energy Minister, Udaya Gammanpila, questioned whether the Opposition expects him to stage a protest in front of the Treasury, the same way the Opposition is doing, demanding them to release US Dollars to buy crude oil.

He said this while noting the Treasury needs to allocate US Dollars required to purchase crude oil and then to re-start the Sapugaskanda Oil Refinery.

“If I could obtain US Dollars by protesting, I would gladly join the ongoing protests as I want to import crude oil and restart the refinery as soon as possible,” he added.

“I saw Ceylon Petroleum Corporation trade unions campaigning to open the oil refinery and import crude oil. We ceased importing crude oil because the country’s existing foreign exchange must be spent with caution. If they could earn foreign cash by agitating, they would have done it in Sri Lanka

rather than going to the Middle East and suffering while earning dollars,” he said.

Speaking further, he said when they made a far-sighted decision to protect the institution, it is the responsibility of trade unions who love the institution to support those decisions, adding that it is truly a miracle that they have ensured an uninterrupted supply of oil, despite the fact that the world’s most powerful nations are helpless in the midst of an energy crisis.



COPF highlights need for human index

The importance of compiling a human index, pertaining to the need for each profession in the country, was highlighted at the Committee on Public Finance (COPF) held last week in Parliament.

Emphasis in this regard was made when the Committee took into consideration whether the report on taxation, financial and economic assumptions, used as the basis for approaching the budget total expenditure and revenue and the allocation of funds from the Appropriation Bill are in line with government policy.

It was also emphasised that starting from the formulation of the

school curriculum, attention should be paid to each of the professions, thereby enabling the production of professionals covering all the fields as per the job requirements.

It was also discussed that appropriate strategies should be focused on maintaining the public service in the country more efficiently and ensuring that it does not put undue pressure on the country’s economy.

State Ministers Susil Premajayantha, MPs Prof Ranjith Bandara, Nalin Fernando, Anupa Pasqual and government officials were present at the Committee meeting chaired by MP Anura Priyadharshana Yapa.

Yohani to be felicitated at Parliament

By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE

A felicitation programme for Sri Lankan singing sensation Yohani Diloka de Silva has been scheduled for 23 November at Parliament, Kushani Rohanadeera, Deputy Secretary General

of Parliament and Chief of Staff and the Secretary to the Women Parliamentarians’ Caucus (WPC) stated.

The programme is organised by MPs’ Caucus.

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena,

Chairperson of the Women Parliamentarians’ Caucus (WPC) State Minister Dr. Sudarshini Fernandopulle and a number of Ministers are to participate on the occasion.

Rohanadeera further stated that this programme will be conducted following all health guidelines.

Dematagoda Ruwan refused bail

By HANSI NANAYAKKARA

Colombo Chief Magistrate Buddhika Sri Ragala, on Friday (19), rejected the bail application filed by suspect drug trafficker S.P. Ruwan Chamila Prasanna alias Dematagoda Ruwan and further remanded him till 3 December.

The suspect, a resident of Dematagoda, had been charged with earning billions of rupees through the

peddling of illegal drugs such as heroin.

The Magistrate also ordered the gold items seized from the suspect’s possession, to be sent to the National Gem and Jewellery Authority (NGJA) for a report.

The CID mentioned that following a probe conducted into the case thus far they had seized a sum of Rs 50 million that had been deposited in bank accounts maintained by the suspect and his wife.

Furthermore, the prosecution told the Court that they had also seized a stock of gold from the suspect valued at Rs 15 million.

The CID added that their inquiries had also revealed that the suspect had pawned 1.5 kilos of gold at a bank for Rs 10 million.

They further informed the Magistrate that they hope to inspect two lockers, at a bank situated in Colombo 9, believed to be owned by the suspect.

SLCGS ‘Suraksha’ in joint exercises with India, Maldives

By PANEETHA AMERSEKERE

Sri Lanka Coast Guard (SLCG) Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) SLCGS ‘Suraksha’ sailed for Maldives on Thursday (18) to participate in the 15th Edition of Trilateral Coast Guard Joint Exercise ‘DOSTI’ planned to be held on the seas off Male over five days to Wednesday (24).

The other two participating countries are India and the Maldives. SLCGS ‘Suraksha’ is representing SLCG for the second time in an exercise on foreign waters since being co-opted to the SLCG fleet in September 2017. The five day exercise, conducted jointly by Coastguard agencies of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives, aims at the strengthening the bonds of friendship and enhancing mutual operational capability and cooperation in the region, SLCG said.

Meanwhile, the exercise will focus on ‘maritime search and rescue,’ ‘marine pollution response’ and ‘law enforcement operations,’ SLCG said. Taking part in international maritime exercises of this nature, benefit SLCG in many ways, such as increased cooperation among coastguards, exchanging best practices and procedures in maritime operations, undertaking new challenges in the maritime domain and collectively finding solutions to overcome issues pertaining to those themselves, SLCG said.

This year marks the 30th year of ‘DOSTI,’ thus, making Exercise ‘DOSTI’ the oldest continuous exercise conducted in the Indian Ocean, it said.

Tea export earning, volumes increase

By PANEETHA AMERSEKERE

Tea export earnings in the first 10 months of the year increased by 6.58 per cent (USD 68.44 million) to USD 1.11 billion year-on-year (YoY), Forbes and Walker Tea Brokers on Wednesday (17) said.

Tea export volumes in the review period also increased by 6.58 per cent (68.44 million kilos) to 235.98 million kg. Tea prices in the review period remained unchanged at USD 4.70 per kg free on board.

Meanwhile, tea production in the first 10 months of the year increased by 14.80 per cent (33.33 million kgs) YoY to 258.61 million kg, statistics further showed.

Iraq has emerged as the No. 1 major importer of Ceylon Tea following an increase of 22 per cent in January-October 2021, Forbes said. Turkey has moved down to the No. 2 position with a decline in imports (19 per cent YoY) followed by Russia which has also declined (11 per cent YoY).

UAE has moved up to the fourth position having increased imports significantly (185 per cent YoY). Iran, which has moved down by a position to the fifth remains static in imports during January-October 2021. Other notable importers are China, Libya, Azerbaijan and Chile. Meanwhile, destinations such as Saudi Arabia, Germany and Chile have recorded a decrease in imports during the period under review. It is noteworthy that imports to China and Libya have increased significantly YoY by 10 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively, Forbes said.

According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, tea was Sri Lanka’s third largest foreign exchange earner last year.



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Yield expected to drop in coming months...

Lack of Fertiliser Casting Gloom & Doom Over Tea Industry

By **SULOCHANA RAMIAH MOHAN**

The tea industry is a significant foreign exchange earner, generating USD 1.3 billion per year, but the ban on fertiliser imports has resulted in a 40 per cent drop in yield, posing a direct threat to the tea industry. However, the Government has moved quickly to supply what it requires such as synthetic nitrogen with many plantations slated to receive it in due course, *Ceylon Today* learns.

The severity of having no fertiliser in the last couple of months will reflect in the tea produced in the first quarter of 2022, experts say.

Although the Government aims to bring an end to agro chemicals, the ad hoc decision had a significant impact on tea bushes which require fertiliser at least three times a year.

Impact on tea crops

Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) Plantation Services Group Chairman and Hayleys Group Managing Director - Hayleys Group Plantation, Roshan Rajadurai said "from June 2021, tea began to lose its taste, colour and smell and the tea industry will eventually die with the death of tea leaves due to the on-going lack of fertiliser."

Timely and balanced plant nutrition has a direct impact on the tenderness of fresh shoots, vigour, chlorophyll content and desired chemical compounds in tea leaves that contribute to essential quality parameters on which a tea is assessed, viz., black appearance of made tea, colour of infused leaf, and tea liquor characteristics of the infusion such as colour, strength, quality, aroma and flavour.

To achieve physical and organoleptic quality parameters, it is critical to apply the recommended balanced fertiliser mixtures of the right quality and quantity, at the right frequency, dosage, method, and timing.

He further emphasised that the tea leaf, as the only raw material in tea manufacture, gets its physical conditions such as succulence and tenderness to facilitate different stages of tea manufacture and its chemical characteristics that determine tea quality through balanced plant nutrition. Lack of plant vigour makes plants susceptible to attacks by pests and diseases and to climate change effects, which have a direct impact on quality.

Diseases such as blister blight and pest attacks from mites and tea tortrix not only cause significant crop loss due to their impact on harvestable shoots they also cause a significant reduction in important natural plant precursors that determine the quality of tea.

He added that the tea trade is almost 150 years old and at a time when there is a need to revive the industry, such drastic decisions can only cause further damage.

"After chemical fertiliser ran out of stock in June, no fertilisers have been sprayed on tea bushes and the tea leaves began to turn yellowish," Rajadurai added.

Agrochemicals and organic inputs are required for vital plant physiological functions such as respiration, photosynthesis, water and nutrient uptake and distribution throughout the plant, growth and cell division, hormonal function, and to tolerate biotic stress from pests and diseases and abiotic stress from climate and weather related issues, he explained. Nitrogen is the most important nutrient for tea bushes than any other plantation crop due to the vegetative nature of its harvest every six to seven days.

Farmers started to look for chemical

Probable Financial Loss - Unavailability of Plant Nutrition & Agro Chemicals

Non-Availability	Crop Loss	Revenue Loss (Rs)	Revenue Loss (USD)
Fertilizer	Crop Loss 30 %	78 Bn	386 Mn
Weedicides	Crop Loss 20%	52 Bn	257 Mn
Fungicides	Crop Loss 25%	65 Bn	322 Mn
Pests & Diseases	Crop Loss 05%	13 Bn	64 Mn
Climate Effects	Crop Loss 10%	26 Bn	128 Mn
Quality Effect	Price Drop 30%	55 Bn	70 Mn

Total earnings from Tea -Rs. 260 Billion- US Dollars 1.3 Billion

Total Cost of Fertilizer for Tea - Rs 6 Billion - US Dollars 30 Million

The Fertilizer Cost for Tea is only 2% of the total earnings from Tea.

Impact of Glyphosate ban - Rs. 54 Billion direct Loss & Rs. 16 Billion indirect Loss.

fertilisers as crops began to fail. Currently, there is also a scarcity of organic fertiliser. Tea is the only major perennial commercial economic crop that is widely grown in all three elevations, three rainfall zones and 14 districts with varying temperatures, rainfall, elevations, topography, and terrain, Rajadurai explained.

He alluded to the fact that many warnings about what could happen as a result of the ban on fertiliser had been delivered to the highest authorities on numerous occasions. Without the now-anticipated availability of plant nutrients and agrochemicals, the impact will be irreversible and beyond comprehension.

According to Rajadurai, it is the Dimbulla Season, which runs from January to March, when tea commands the highest price in the global market, but the man-made disaster will have a significant impact on the annual revenue of USD 1.3 billion in tea trading.

The acclaimed American economist J.K. Galbraith stated that "farmers rightly sense in the counsel of any man who does not have to live by the results of the consequences of such counsel". Planters and those engaged in plantation agriculture are now compelled to work in the industry based on the decisions and advice of those who don't have to deal with the results of such advice.

The industry at a glance

Tea provides direct employment to over 600,000 people engaged in cultivation and processing and the industry further provides employment to another 200,000 people in the supply chain.

Thousands of townships and village economies in tea-growing areas are completely dependent on the industry. It supports a resident population of one million through regional plantation companies and 450,000 tea small-holder operators; with a total 1.5 million population depending on tea.

Overall, it sustains more than 10 per cent of our national population and the net foreign exchange earnings are only second to the apparel industry. It is a total home-grown export industry, from production of raw materials to finished goods, and except for fertiliser and some agro-chemicals, all inputs are local, hence all the money earned is circulated within the country. According to the estimate, Sri Lanka would have earned Rs. 260 billion from tea by 2020.

Tea requires timely use of synthesised chemicals like fertilisers, herbicides, fungicides, pesticides, growth regulators, and concentrated fertilisers. However, plantation agriculture has always practiced Integrated Agriculture Management (IAM) since no agriculture can fully rely on either synthesised agrochemicals or organic inputs. The plantations have carefully followed ecologically protective, environmentally

sustainable, economically feasible, and ethically acceptable adaptation and mitigation techniques and practices under varying spatial, temporal, climatic, and geographical conditions. The IAM in plantations requires plantations to be financially viable, agriculturally productive, ergonomically practical, and culturally compatible within a holistic framework for sustainable plantation management.

The plantations have strictly complied with the minimum use of agrochemicals because of the global certifications, compliance, and conformance standards set out by global regulatory agencies and importing countries while conforming to the very exacting, stringent, and varying Maximum Residue Level (MRL) requirements required by all buyers.

As a result, the Sri Lanka tea industry is the most certified tea industry in the world with close to 300 RPC factories having more than 625 global certifications such as Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP), Rainforest Alliance (RA), UTZ, GAP, Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), HACCP, Fair Trade (FT), Mother and Child Friendly Estates, Forest Stewardship Certificate (FSC), ISO 22000, ISO 9000 and many other environmental, sustainable and green certifications. Ceylon Tea has been declared the "Cleanest Tea" in the world by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and was the first to be certified as "Ozone Friendly Tea" in the world, with over 170 countries consuming our tea. Sri Lankan plantation companies have won Global Awards for Sustainable Environmental Practices regularly in the International Fora.

Fertiliser mandatory

Tea plants require three macro/major nutrient elements (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium), three secondary nutrients (Calcium, Magnesium, Sulphur) and 10 micro/trace elements (Iron, Zinc, Copper, Boron, Manganese, Silicic acid, Molybdenum, Sodium, Cobalt, Chloride) with Carbon, Hydrogen, and Oxygen. All these essential nutrients are required in a timely manner at the correct dosages for vital plant physiological functions and crop growth. In arable soil, 50 per cent is solid and 50 per cent is aerosol, with only five per cent organic and 95 per cent inorganic compounds like Silicates, Oxides, Aluminium, Calcium, Iron, and other minerals. The weight of soil in one acre to a depth of 6 in is 1 million kg. It works out to 15 million kg of soil to a depth of 3 ft in the root zone for one hectare.

The addition of a maximum of 750-1000 kg of inorganic fertiliser per year makes it impossible to bring about a dramatic change in soil composition. Without the addition of fertilisers, no soil in the world can continuously supply the full requirement of nutrients for the production of an economically significant crop yield. As

20-50 harvestable shoots are removed from tea bushes every week, continuously for five years, any deficiency of essential plant nutrients will retard growth and development, eventually resulting in decreased growth, structural abnormality, and death of tea plants.

The TRI

The Tea Research Institute (TRI) recommended fertiliser mixtures, after almost a century of trials and research, provide high nutritional value per unit of fertiliser, are available in highly soluble plant absorbable forms, and take into account correct nutrient ratios and other nutritional antagonistic and synergistic complexities of plant and soil. They provide plant growth-specific, seasonal, crop, soil, and site-specific formulations. They are precise, defined, and controlled with specific, need-based, and precisely targeted dosages with soil and leaf testing for specific purposes such as deficiencies and formative growth stages.

Synthetic fertiliser is consistent without batch to batch variability, predictable in its response and has a reduced presence of undesirables in its formulation. It can correct specific plant and soil nutrient deficiencies fast, and its fertiliser efficiency is high. It is easy for crop planning and all compounds in fertiliser mixtures are known and tested. There is no chance for unknown compounds, plant pathogens or soil-borne root pathogens to be incorporated in the process of manufacture. It has the ability to be used in spot applications and for any specific deficiency caused by foliar applications of micro nutrients, in particular. Synthetic fertiliser is economical, cost-effective, and convenient for collection, transport, storage, and application and is available in the required quantities at the required time. Generally, a maximum of four workers per hectare are used for ground application of synthetic fertiliser and a maximum of 60-80 kg of Nitrogen per hectare is applied.

According to the validated research findings of TRI, loss without balanced plant nutrition is a 30 per cent -40 per cent loss of the crop. Furthermore, the Tea Research Foundation of India too has confirmed more than a 30 per cent yield loss. Fertiliser recommendations and applications are highly complex undertakings and are the combined result of over 90 years of validated, painstaking scientific research and trials on fertiliser by the TRI, which has won global acclaim and recognition for its pioneering work in this area of research.

According to the TRI, chemical weeding is the most convenient and cost-effective method among various techniques under Integrated Weed Management.

Herbicide spraying creates a mulch of dead weeds on the surface and improves water retention, adds organic matter and recycles nutrients removed by weeds. When manual weeding is done, weeds physically removed from the field carry away 32 kg of Nitrogen, 40 kg of Potassium and 320 kg of Carbon from the field, reducing the organic carbon and nutrients.

Rajadurai stressed that the Government's banning of the universally used herbicide Paraquat in 2004 was solely based on the illogical reasoning that farmers ingested Paraquat to commit suicide. All other tea-growing economies competing with Sri Lanka still use Paraquat.

The Government also banned the universally used herbicide Glyphosate in 2015 and restored it in 2019, again illogically based on the unproven,

unscientific, false premise and hypothesis that Glyphosate was linked to chronic kidney diseases of unknown aetiology. This has been proved wrong beyond any reasonable doubt by the findings of the World Health Organisation, several government-appointed committees, tree crop research institutes, universities, and the Department of Agriculture, scientists, agriculture researchers, medical scientists, and nephrologists, in addition to the expert and experiential knowledge of agriculture professionals and practitioners.

Currently, Sri Lanka has only one recommended herbicide, i.e., glyphosate, and this too has not been available since June 2021.

However, presently, plantations have been compelled to use only glyphosate as a systemic herbicide, and this is not a practical method to control a wide range of weeds found in the plantations. The "Gramoxone" ban in 2004 and the "Glyphosate" ban in 2015 have had an irreparable impact on the plantation industry. Since 2016, the Sri Lankan tea crop has been reduced to less than 300 million kg per year, from 340 million kg in 2016 to 279 million kg in 2020.

"We are using both organic and non-organic fertiliser for tea" - Nuwara Eliya DS

In the meantime, Nandana Galaboda, District Secretary of Nuwara Eliya, believes that the country should transition to organic farming gradually. "The State's recent policy to introduce organic farming has been implemented islandwide, and it has also been introduced to the Nuwara Eliya District, which is an agricultural area. Farmers primarily used both agrochemical and organic fertilisers, with chemical fertiliser being the most commonly used for tea," he said.

He also mentioned that some tea estates use organic fertiliser. People have demanded chemical fertiliser, while others have demanded organic fertiliser, citing agrochemicals are causing environmental pollution, but according to the Government's new framework, we need to shift to self-sufficiency by gradually shifting to organic farming.

As the public outcry grew in response to the embargo, the Government decided to import 3.1 million litres of Nano Nitrogen fertiliser from India and 30,000 metric tonnes of potassium chloride from Lithuania. These fertilisers were made of inorganic materials. Around 200,000 litres of nano nitrogen have already been flown to Sri Lanka, and it is expected to be distributed to tea estates as well.

Further, Sri Lanka will be importing synthetic fertiliser that will be distributed to tea smallholders via factories. The Ministry of Agriculture has ordered 60,000 metric tonnes of ammonium sulphate for this purpose.

According to the Tea Board, Russia purchases approximately 30 million kg of tea per year, but this figure is on the decline. The Tea Board said that by September 2021, there would be approximately 27 million kg exported to Russia, compared to 29.3 million kg in 2020.

Tea Commissioner Jayantha Edirisinghe ruled out a fertiliser shortage, but farmers and tea smallholders were able to use organic fertiliser to keep the produce whole. "There has been no decrease in tea production, and 15,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser has been distributed to low country plantations in accordance with the Tea Research Institute's recommendation," he said, refusing to state whether the fertiliser was organic or inorganic.



Kadugannawa landslide Man-made Disaster or Nature's Wrath?

By SHANUKA KADUPITYAGE
IN KADUGANNAWA

With the current instability of land in the Pahala Kadugannawa area along the Colombo-Kandy Main Road, concerns are rising over what may have been the root cause that triggered the instability and what measures are being taken to mitigate any future disruption to this essential part of Sri Lanka's infrastructure.

Visiting the site of the landslide, *Ceylon Today* found most of the damage caused by the instability had already been cleared. However, many of the usual stalls and stops that dotted the side of the road did not survive the disaster.

Speaking with one of the locals, it was discovered that this was not the first instance of land instability that has occurred in the area, with the first happening in the early 1980s. As such, locals of the Kadugannawa area have adopted a makeshift early-warning system for any future instabilities. This is done by inserting a glass bottle into strategic locations of the rock, which would shatter as the earth becomes unstable.

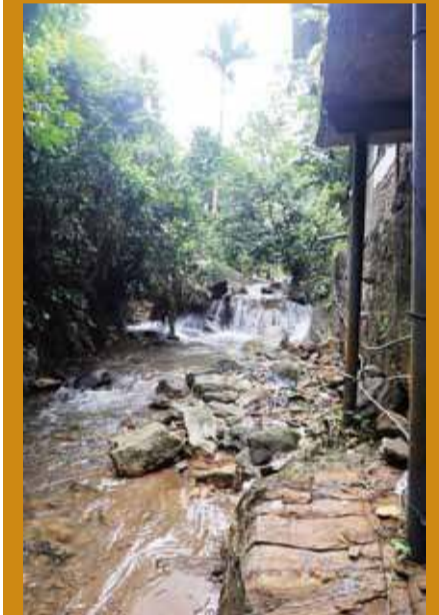
We learnt that this precaution did indeed alert the people in the surrounding area of the imminent danger, which may have helped prevent harm befalling any of the locals.

Speaking with the NBRO's emergency contact for landslide risk, R.M.S Bandara, *Ceylon Today* learnt that the cause behind the existing instability is the extensive rain which soaked the soil in between the road and railroad which are built over a solid bedrock. Although both the two remain stationary, the water-logged soil shifts under the added weight which has caused the instability. As a result, the shift has left fissures which are called tension cracks in the shifting soil, allowing more water into the soil and worsening the situation.

"We have already sealed the tension crack, which prevents the situation from worsening," he explained further, revealing that measures have been taken to direct water to flow downhill with minimal exposure to the soil using drains. Twenty-metre drains have also been inserted into the mountain to drain water trapped inside the soil mass which has also contributed to preventing further risk of damage.

Currently, one lane of the road is opened up for regular traffic under strict observation by both the NBRO and RDA.

Even so, Bandara shared that further studies and research is



needed before addressing any long-term remedies in order to identify what may be the most effective and efficient solution.

When speaking with locals, *Ceylon Today* discovered that water upstream is being directed into multiple collection points, hidden in the underbrush uphill, away from prying eyes. Supposedly, the collected water is then used later in order to wash vehicles of travellers as they stop to rest from the drive to and from Kandy.

When asked if any human interaction may have exacerbated the situation, Bandara revealed that although human interaction may have contributed to the circumstance, it would only have a marginal, cumulative impact.

(Pix by Manjula Dayawansa)

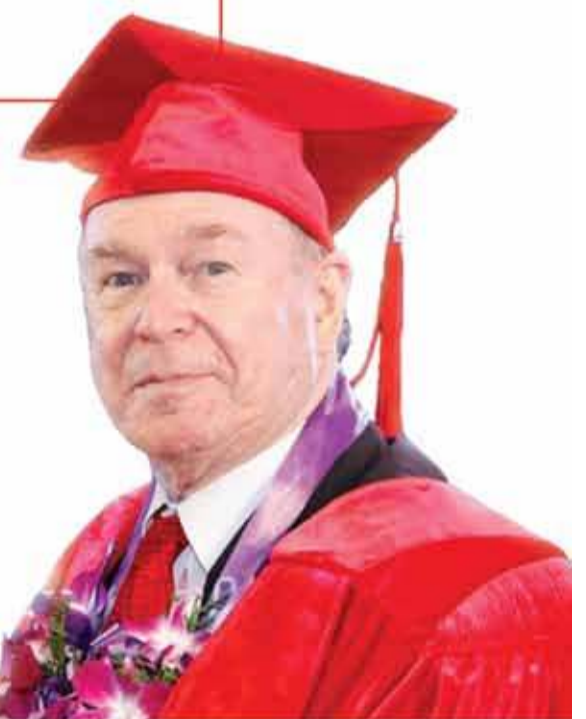


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Giving Voice to the Voiceless

Thursday marked the 10th Anniversary celebrations of this newspaper Ceylon Today and its sister paper Maubima, both published by Ceylon Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd.

The strength of these two newspapers is their being unbiased: published without fear or favour, being truly a voice to the voiceless, thereby fulfilling their mandate.

Such a free and independent editorial stance taken by these two newspapers has not only enabled them to merely survive, but to also thrive and grow, by winning the trust and confidence of the ordinary people of this country who, otherwise had no voice to take up their issues.

Undeniably, the birth and the subsequent growth of these two publications is testament to the fact that these two newspapers have filled a vacuum and met a long-felt need among the reading public of Sri Lanka that has been previously lacking, despite the fact that the country has a near 200-year history of independent journalism.

The growth of these two newspapers which had its genesis 10 years ago on 18 November 2011, in a period where the electronic and digital media were well established in the country, not forgetting the already firmly grounded and near 200-year-old flourishing print media, is proof that they filled a longfelt void among Sri Lanka's reading public, cutting across all manner of media, print, digital and electronic.

The quintessence of these two newspapers is independent journalism complemented by accuracy, appealing to the hearts and minds of the readership in Sri Lanka.

Editorial freedom firstly flourishes from within. And when further nurtured and untrammelled by its editors, it brings forth fruit, appealing to the desire, taste and satisfaction of the reader. That is the underlying reason behind the success of Ceylon Today and its sister paper Maubima.

However, when editorial freedom is trammelled, stifled, straitjacketed, doctored, made partial, biased and distorted or simply barred because it doesn't meet or is not consonant with management's thinking, philosophy, policies and politics, that sounds the death knell of a newspaper.

These two newspapers, since, its inception though going on their own independent paths as they cater to two different types of readership, one English and the other Sinhala, however had one commonality, by being bold enough to traverse uncharted paths and territories in their single minded quest to satisfy a long felt need of the Sri Lankan reader, seeking unbiased and accurate news.

The management and editorial staff of Ceylon Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd. and its publications, Ceylon Today and Maubima are humbled by the fact that they have met this need and assures its reading public that it will continue to render this stewardship expected by them.

Media freedom is the fulcrum of democracy. And Ceylon Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd. will play its part, as it has done, when it embarked on this journey, that fearless, free, independent, unbiased and accurate journalism will be its guiding light and ethos into the future too, fulfilling its two-fold mandate of meeting the wants and needs of the country's readership, whilst simultaneously strengthening the portals of democracy, freedom and social justice in the country.

Firming up democracy and its ideals, being a beacon of truth and guidance and reporting without fear or favour will continue to be the hallmarks of the editorial ethos that will drive these two publications in the future, as it has done so in the past and up to the present.

Nurturing and safeguarding the freedoms of the people of this country, a pivot of which is a free and independent Media and at the same time promoting the socio-economic levers of the island to ensure that its people would reach their fullest potential, economically and socially will continue to be these two newspapers' objectives.

Freedom of expression and freedom of progress are basic rights. Ceylon Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd. and its publications, Ceylon Today and Maubima, have been promoting these basic human rights since its beginning on 18 November 2011.

Sustained an unwavering adherence to these principles in the journalism practised by these two newspapers have endeared them since their inception to the ordinary people of this island, by being the voice, where, otherwise they would have had continued to be voiceless.

That is the secret of the success of Ceylon Today.

MR Recalls Gory Past on President Gotabaya's Second Anniversary

"May Sri Lanka never see blood baths and massacres and may the people in Sri Lanka never experience fear for their lives again" Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said on Thursday (18), at the unveiling ceremony of the Sandahuru Seya.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa vested the Sandahuru Seya in Anuradhapura with the Buddhist clergy amidst religious observances. The sacred pinnacle and the Chuda Manikya were unveiled during the ceremony. Devotees could now pay homage at the sacred site.

The Premier said LTTE terrorists never had mercy for the common people in the country. "They massacred the clergy, political leaders and innocent civilians in cold blood. They bombed public places and killed many civilians. They even attacked sacred places like the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi. They attacked political leaders, even those who tried to hold peace talks with them," he said.

The Premier recalled the supreme sacrifice made by soldiers to bring peace in the country and also others who lost their lives in the brutal war.

"We always follow the humane approach adopted by King Dutugemunu. That was how we were able to win the decades-long bloody war. We only want freedom and national security," he said.

"When I was the Prime Minister, I wanted to visit the Northern Province but the Norwegian representatives who were brokering the peace process told me to get permission from the LTTE. I said one day I would tour the Northern Province with ease. I was not prepared to get permission from the LTTE to visit a part of my own country," he said.

The LTTE had established a separate country. They had separate laws, banks, and Police Stations. Former Presidents and political leaders allowed the LTTE to secure power in the North without doing anything about it. When I met the UK Premier and told him that I want to free the country from the LTTE, he said it was an impossible task. The UK Premier said the international community would exert pressure and prevent such a move. He said the LTTE was well-fortified with suicide cadres, weapons, ships and missiles. He queried as to whether we could take the LTTE on."

Premier Rajapaksa said, future leaders should protect the freedom of the country. "Our war heroes won the freedom we enjoy today by making immense sacrifice that could hardly be imagined. I request everyone to protect this freedom," he said.

The Maha Sangha and a number of distinguished invitees attended the Chuda Manikya unveiling ceremony including First Lady, Ioma Rajapaksa and the Premier's wife, Shiranthi Rajapaksa. Families of deceased veteran war heroes and disabled servicemen who served in the war also participated in the ceremony.

Most Ven. Niyangoda Vijithasiri Anunayake Thera of the Malwatte Chapter and Most Ven. Wendaruwe Upali Thera, Anunayake of the



The Police submitted its request in 20 Police Divisions to seven Courts coming under the jurisdiction of the Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court. The requests made by the Bloemendhal, Kirulapone, Narahenpita, Bambalapitiya, Dam Street, Welikada, Gothatuwa, Mulleriyawa, Maligawatta, Wellampitiya, Borella, Mutwal, Cinnamon Gardens, Dematagoda, Grandpass, Harbour Police, Mattakkuliya and Keselwatte Police Stations have already been rejected

Asgiriya Chapter delivered *anusasana*. Defence Secretary General (Retired) Kamal Gunaratne delivered the vote of thanks. The Sandahuru Seya is the second tallest Chaitiya in the country after the Ruwanweli Seya. The construction was initiated during the Presidency of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was Defence Secretary. The Chaitiya was erected in honour of war heroes who made the supreme sacrifice to end the LTTE war. The construction of the Sandahuru Seya was initiated in 2010 by the Tri-Forces with the assistance of the Department of Archaeology and Sri Lanka Engineers. The Chuda Manikya was placed at the apex

of the sacred pinnacle on 8 November. The Chaitiya is about 283 feet in height and has a circumference of 801 feet.

Agitated Opposition

The SJB held the rally on Tuesday (16), at the Galle Face Green Roundabout. Despite the Government introducing revised health guidelines a few hours before the rally commenced, banning public gatherings and protests, the SJB mustered a large gathering. Roads leading to the Liberty Roundabout and Calle Face were blocked as protesters marched on the streets. The Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court on Monday (15), dismissed a request by 18 Police Stations in its jurisdiction to issue an Injunction to halt the protest rally organised by the SJB scheduled to be held in Colombo on Tuesday (16).

The protest rally has been organised under the banner '16th People's Power to Colombo'. The Court rejected the request to issue an injunction as the Police failed to submit the request specifying details.

The Court further said, as per the provisions of Article 14 of the Constitution, the public have the right to engage in protests or demonstrations.

It also pointed out that if anyone flouts the Circular issued by the DG Health Services to curb the spread of COVID-19, then such persons should be arrested and produced in Court.

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Meanwhile, requests made to the Nugegoda Chief Magistrate by the officers of the Mirthana, Maharagama, Kohuwala and Boralessgamuwa Police Stations to issue an Injunction preventing the staging of protest or demonstration in violation of the health circular issued by the Health Services DG to curb the COVID-19 spread in the aforesaid Police Divisions was also dismissed.

A request made to the Mount Lavinia Chief Magistrate by the Mount Lavinia Police Station and another request made to the Minuwangoda Chief Magistrate by the Minuwangoda and Katunayake Police Stations were similarly rejected.

Meanwhile, on requests made by 12 Police Stations in the Gampaha Police Division, the Mahara and Welisara Magistrates and Horana Magistrate's Court imposed Injunction preventing the staging of any protest or demonstration. Addressing the gathering, Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa ridiculed the Government for fighting the Opposition and for failing to notice the power of the people that flocked around SJB after every failure of this Government.

"We have defeated the suppression of this corrupt system by holding a protest and have rejuvenated freedom of speech. The

Government was attempting to use COVID-19 health guidelines as a ruse to suppress the Opposition and public freedom, instead of defeating the pandemic. There were many other political parties which held protests and ceremonies in the midst of the pandemic but no circulars or orders were issued to prevent them from going ahead. Those whom the Government favoured were given the freedom to hold protests ensuring their freedom of speech with no restrictions whatsoever but when it came to us they tried every means to curb the protest."

MPs Harin Fernando, Harshana Rajakaruna, Mujibur Rahman, Kavinda Jayawardena, Manusha Nanayakkara, S.M. Marikkar and other politicians attended the rally.

Attention of many was drawn towards MP Patali Champika Ranawaka who is reportedly having issues with Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa and the SJB seen walking beside Premadasa during the rally. It is reported that many were numbing to each other as to why Ranawaka stayed near Premadasa like that.

While the rally was preceding, heavy rain started to pour. A bodyguard of Premadasa gave him an umbrella. Premadasa then invited Ranawaka to come under the umbrella. The duo walked like that for at least 1 km.

Ranawaka's conduct has reportedly created confusion among his supporters. They have allegedly expressed their displeasure over Ranawaka behaving like that without informing them.

Meanwhile, party members cried foul in Parliament on Tuesday (16) over the Police posting random checkpoints in the country and turning away those heading to Colombo to participate in its anti-Government protest to mark President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's second year in office.

Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa queried, "Hundreds of roadblocks had been set up by the Police. They turned away people who were on their way to Colombo. They checked buses and it was reported that they also tried to force people not to participate in the protest. Don't the people in this country have a right to bring their agitations to the Opposition Leader? Can't they come to Colombo without being subjected to harassment?"

Speaking further, Premadasa said he does not want to insult the Police. "Our supporters have been threatened and forced not to participate in the protest. The Police had taken down the names of participants. I can provide video evidence. The Police on Monday (16) went to Court to get Injunction Orders against our protest. The Courts gave a clear directive regarding the protests. But the authorities seem to be neglecting such directives. This type of behaviour cannot be justified. Do not act in this way. It is not ethical. This is not a Police State," he said.

"You should deploy Police and military teams to find the truth about the Easter Sunday terror attacks in 2019, instead of hunting us down," he said.

SJB MP Buddhika Pathirana also alleged that the Police had stopped four buses with people coming from Matara.

"You want evidence. I will provide all the details now," he said.

MP Chaminda Wijesiri: "There are several laws in this country. The first one is Ali Sabry's Law, the second one is Gnanasara Thera's Law and the final one is Sarath Weerasekara's Law."

MP Harshana Rajakaruna: "The Police had come to my office in the morning and told our supporters not to participate in the protest. They even set up a checkpoint in front of my office in Kirindiwela. This is a violation of my privileges as an MP. The Government treats people like terrorists."

Earlier on in the Sittings, MP Nalin Bandara questioned the Government as to whether there was information that Parliament was going to be attacked on 16 November.

Bandara said that he was stopped at 10 Police checkpoints on the way to participate in the Appropriation Bill 2022 debate.

Several other MPs raised similar concerns during the Sittings. "There were 21 such checkpoints on the road and I was stopped at 10 checkpoints. The Government should give an explanation for this. Is Parliament facing a terrorist threat?" he queried.

In response to the allegations, Minister Weerasekara said the Police



have to ensure the safety of all the people in the country.

"The Police have the responsibility of preventing the spread of the pandemic. You have to understand and support that. We have ensured national security and there is no question regarding that. Police are supporting the health officials. So, you should not blame the Police. If you have any concern, you can file a complaint and it will be investigated," he said.

The SJB staged a protest in the Parliament Chamber on Wednesday (18) alleging that Police had assaulted and killed a supporter who was coming to participate in the party's anti-Government protest held on Tuesday (17).

Several SJB MPs including Chief Opposition Whip, Lakshman Kiriella and Gayantha Karunatileka said the public were inconvenienced due to the conduct of the Police on Tuesday (16). They said although the many Magistrates' Courts permitted the rally, the Police did not follow the Order.

"The IGP had told the Police not to allow anyone to park vehicles in Colombo. He even ordered Police not to allow people in other provinces to enter Colombo. As a result many people were inconvenienced," the MPs said, querying from the Government whether it is was running scared of the SJB.

The Speaker told MPs not to drag the conversation into a different debate when SJB MPs repeatedly raised Points of Order.

When MP Ranjith Maddumabandara was given time to speak on the Appropriation Bill 2022, other SJB MPs rose from their seats and some of them came close to Maddumabandara with placards having slogans such as 'Lajjal Sarath Lajjal' (Shame on you Sarath), 'Nilyanta Yata Andum, Janathawata Polupahara' (Underwear for Actresses, Assaults for People) and 'Polispathi Anduwata Kade Yayi' (The IGP in favour of Government).

Maddumabandara slammed Public Security Minister, Sarath Weerasekara claiming that the latter should be held responsible for the behaviour of the Police on Tuesday.

The Police had even killed a person who was coming to attend the rally after arresting and assaulting him, Maddumabandara alleged.

While Maddumabandara was speaking, Weerasekara was seen entering the Chamber and SJB MPs chanted slogans against Weerasekera referring to his giving undergarments to an actress.

MPs seated on the Government side, did not respond to the protest. Former President Maithripala Sirisena was seen observing the protest while MP Mujibur Rahman hurled charges against SLPP MP, Mohammed Muzammil saying Muzammil's party leader, Minister Wimal Weerawansa was also frustrated with the Government. Some MPs were seen recording the protest on their phone cameras.

Later in the day, Minister Weerasekara refuted the SJB MPs' allegation that the Police had arrested a youth and beaten him to death. Weerasekara said, "This person was Indika Jayaratne. He was a 37-year-old resident of Panamure. He was a drug addict and the Police had received complaints that he was constantly abusing his wife and children. His daughter had filed a complaint with the

The Government was attempting to use COVID-19 health guidelines as a ruse to suppress the Opposition and public freedom, instead of defeating the pandemic. There were many other political parties which held protests and ceremonies in the midst of the pandemic but no circulars or orders were issued to prevent them from going ahead. Those whom the Government favoured were given the freedom to hold protests ensuring their freedom of speech with no restrictions whatsoever but when it came to us they tried every means to curb the protest

Police that he had beaten her with a club on 12 November. She was later admitted to hospital and was still undergoing treatment. The man had gone into hiding and the Police were looking for his whereabouts. The Police arrested him around 10:30 p.m. on Tuesday so it has nothing to do with the protest. When he was attempting to take his life, a police officer had rescued him and taken him to hospital. He died before admission," Weerasekara said.

God Given Ganja

Claiming that cannabis is a 'God-given gift' to Sri Lanka, MP Diana Gamage on Tuesday (16) proposed to make it a commercial crop in Sri Lanka and start exporting products made with cannabis to uplift the country's hard-hit economy.

Participating in the debate on the Appropriation Bill 2022, Gamage said Sri Lanka should legalise cannabis.

"Tea, coconut and rubber are considered as commercial crops in Sri Lanka. But now, we are importing all of them. Many African countries and China have started to export tea. But Sri Lanka is blessed with a god-given gift named, cannabis. We should legalise cannabis and start exporting

products made with cannabis. We can uplift the country's economy in that way," she claimed.

Gamage said she has many products made with cannabis such as toothpaste, cannabis oil and food products in her home.

"I wanted to bring some of these products to the House, but I could not. Cannabis oil is beneficial in various Ayurvedic treatments. We should not see it only as a forbidden drug. Instead, it should be seen as a medical alternative."

Even if the Government collapses it will not seek the support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Minister of Water Supply Vasudeva Nanayakkara said on Tuesday (16) in Parliament.

In response to UNP Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe who proposed that the Government should seek the support of the IMF to solve the current financial crisis, Nanayakkara said the Government should not let the people suffer the conditions the IMF could impose.

Wickremesinghe: "The economy should be stabilised. So, I request the Government to go to the IMF and seek its support. I don't think that they will tell us to reduce the number of jobs. Even if they recommend us to do so, we in Parliament could discuss it. You also have to discuss it with other countries such as India, US and China. We will give our full support for that. First we need to stabilise the economy."

Trade Minister Bandula Gunawardena: "The IMF will impose certain conditions if we go to them. Some conditions could be in violation of our principles. Also, if that happens, what will be the Opposition's response?"

Wickremesinghe: "I never said we should not seek assistance of the IMF. First we have to seek their assistance. There should be financial discipline in the country."

Nanayakkara: "If we go to the IMF, it would feel like a prison. This should be the last resort. Prisoners at least get their food, but if the IMF intervenes in our economy, we would not get even the food. They will eat us alive. So, even if the Government collapsed, we would not seek the support of the IMF. We will not let our people suffer."

Murmuring MPs

When UNP Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe visited Parliament last Saturday (13) and had a rare scene where dissatisfied ruling party MPs who gathered in small groups murmuring to each other. Wickremesinghe saw such a scenario in Parliament for the first time in his entire political career; the ruling party MPs behaving irritated like this just after the day of Budget Speech.

Wickremesinghe, who was curious, approached a group of MPs and asked what was going on.

"As a senior politician, please speak about the true situation of the country. We have no say in this Budget. How can we face our supporters in the village?" one ruling party member told the UNP leader.

"What do we have to tell to the people? Can we ask them to make more sacrifices because our pension was cut?" he said.

Another MP joined the conversation saying that although the pension of MPs was cut, they do not see how the Budget gives any benefit to the common people.

Wickremesinghe went on to say that the frustrated MPs should direct their inquiries to the Speaker, and then should consult with the Prime Minister to find solutions for their agitations. He even promised that he would intervene in it to a certain extent.

During the sitting, the UNP Leader recalled the tradition of Parliament and said that the Finance Minister should be in the Chamber during the Appropriation Bill debate. The Opposition frequently questioned as to why Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa failed to attend the Sittings during the debate. Wickremesinghe also expressed his opinions regarding the matter.

On Tuesday (16), he was given the time to deliver the first speech of the Opposition as a former Prime Minister. However, the Leader of the Opposition's office later informed him that the opening address of that day would be delivered by another MP.

Wickremesinghe's speech had been scheduled as the third after the ITAK. Wickremesinghe did not oppose this and was ready to deliver the speech as in the schedule. However, ITAK MP Siddharthan, who was nearby, said that Wickremesinghe should speak first as a senior MP.

Wickremesinghe then thanked him and joined the debate as the Opposition's second speaker for the day.

After that, Wickremesinghe went straight to the Sirikotha. When he arrived, UNP Deputy Leader Ruwan Wijewardene, General Secretary Falitha Range Bandara, and Chairman Vajira Abeywardena were also present and holding UNP's Colombo District Committee. Wickremesinghe participated in the discussion.

"We staged a successful protest after short preparation within 36 hours. Nobody expected that so many people would show up. I appreciate everyone's effort," Wickremesinghe said.

They also discussed about organising numerous more protests in remote areas.

Accordingly, protests were planned in Attanagalla, Matara, and several other cities throughout the budget debate season.

"The Police also went to court against our demonstration in Colombo, but the Police were powerless to intervene because our lawyers handled the situation with accurate facts," Vajira Abeywardena noted.

Range Bandara, who spoke after that said that the Government is ruining itself as a result of their own activities. This is what called Karma. They must face the consequences of their actions Government, he stressed.

According to Sandith Samarasinghe, the people expected to come up with a budget that would provide them essentials.

"They wanted three meals a day at fair prices and sufficient income from the budget, but now they have to stay in queues to fulfil even their basic needs like obtaining food."

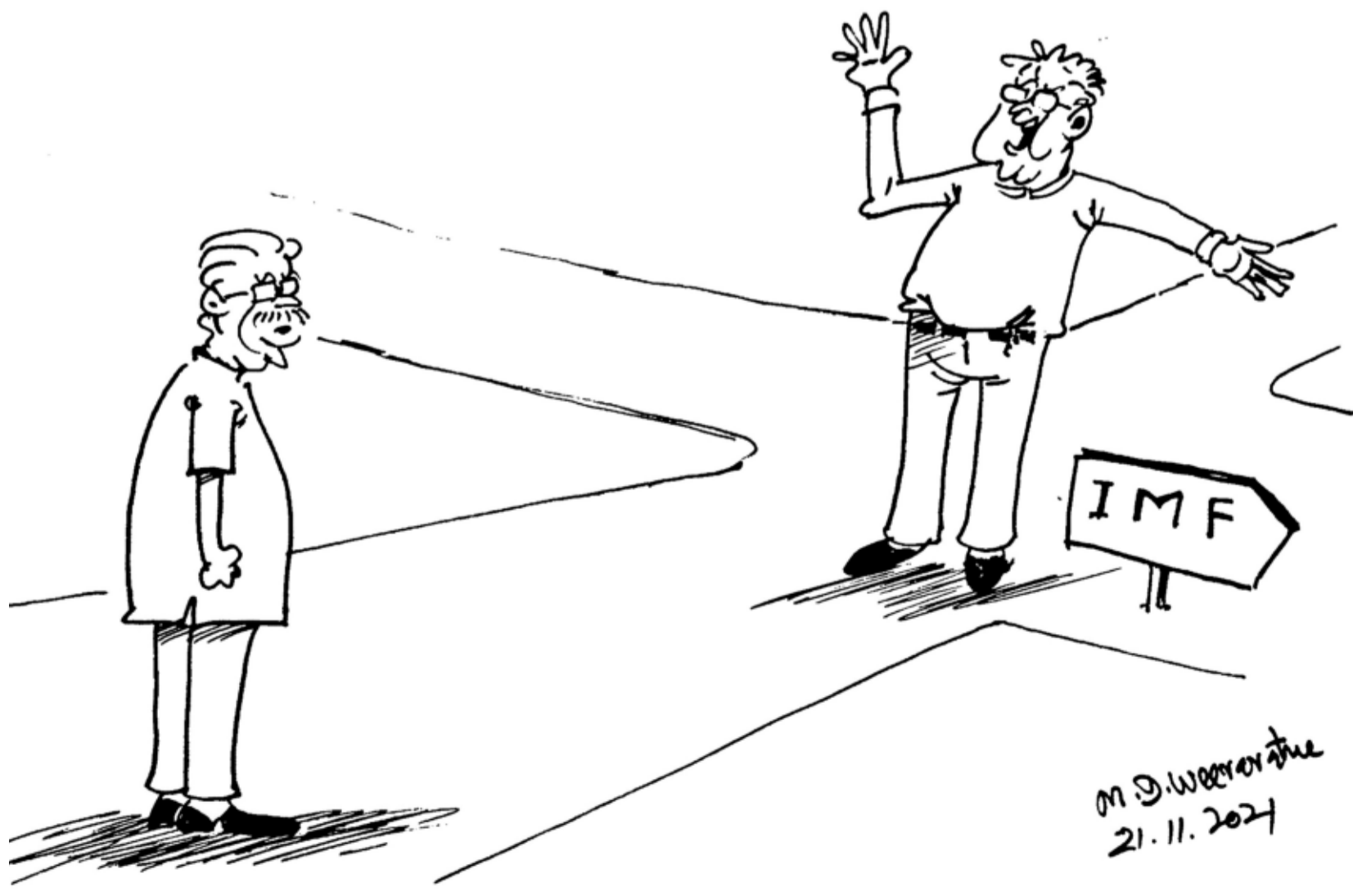
Ruwan Wijewardene said that Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa proved that CBSL Treasury bond scam did not cause any loss to the country. We might have to thank him for proving what he kept saying all the way to the people. We had 12 billion rupees at the Central Bank. They cut it down to 8.5 billion. Now we have to figure out where the rest of the money is."

There are long fuel queues and LP Gas queues on the roads everywhere in the country and that the Sapugaskanda oil refinery is closed for fifty days, former MP Saman Ratnapriya said.

Wickremesinghe, who listened to all these concerns, stated that the root cause for all of those problems is the forex crisis in the country.

That is why I emphasised in Parliament that I would meet with IMF personnel, but the Government does not appear to like it. The other thing was that I urged them to resume the projects commenced by our Government. Those projects have USD 4 billion of investment. The IMF will support us when those projects are resumed. If not, the country will be in great difficulty, he pointed out.

They also discussed holding a number of rallies across the country. Wickremesinghe directed the group to pick the nearest city in remote areas and hold protests with lesser persons. He also spent the weekend away from Colombo, while the Deputy Leader also travelled to Moneragala and Ampara for party activities.



Celebrating Ceylon Today's 10-Year Journey

Power of Print

Ceylon Today catapulted into the national Print Media industry, exactly 10 years ago, helmed by a group of talented industry veterans. On 18 November 2011, we took the first steps of our long journey with a full-fledged Sunday Edition as well as six Dailies, the first-ever English newspaper to take on such a daring and momentous task. Within a short span of just 10 years, we were able to grab the attention of the country's political, business and social leadership, for our innovative coverage as well as ground breaking marketing strategies.

Ceylon Today, along with our sister Sinhala paper, *Mawbima*, are published by Ceylon Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd., and we are proud to state that together we spearhead a revolutionary change in the contemporary media industry in Sri Lanka. And for this, today, we fondly remember the staff members who were with us at the inception and later left us, as well as those who joined our journey later on. We also applaud the editorial staff, marketing team, circulation, press and dispatch teams, as well as the administrative staff, without whom, an operation of this scale simply cannot happen.

Our coverage is comprehensive and insightful. In each edition, we encompass a gamut of topics that include hard-hitting political interviews, behind-the-scene news and human interest stories, issue-based investigations and analyses, insightful opinion pieces written by distinguished writers and extensive coverage of politics, business and sport.

Both newspapers are also interactive, with online and print space provided for open forums, debates and citizen concerns. Also, both newspapers are headed by respected and

experienced editors, and are proud to have dynamic news and features teams committed to maintaining the integrity of the craft by providing non-partisan and factual reporting.

We also aim to ensure quality writing and maintain high standards of language. Our experienced teams of journalists, sub editors and proofreaders, meticulously comb through each page painstakingly, in order to provide a high quality reading experience for our readers.

During this short journey, our journalists have received numerous accolades, the most prestigious of which is the Journalism Awards for Excellence organised by the Editors Guild of Sri Lanka. We are extremely proud to say that at the last award ceremony, held in 2019, *Ceylon Today* and *Mawbima* collectively bagged the most number of awards.

We also won a number of key awards at the first ever Presidential-Awards for Print Media held in 2019. Also, our journalists won accolades for reporting health related issues, at an awarding ceremony held by the Ministry of Health.

Ceylon Today and *Mawbima* are still toddlers in terms of age, within Sri Lanka's long and illustrious Print Media history. However, during our short lifespan, *Ceylon Today* and *Mawbima* have already received an unprecedented number of national and international marketing and print awards. This is yet another 'first' achieved by the two newspapers that no other newspaper in Sri Lanka has ever come close to achieving.

In less than a year in the field, *Ceylon Today* and *Mawbima* together, in a landmark milestone in newspaper commercials, introduced first ever talking ad with our 14 August edition in 2012.

With this saw never-ending innovations and novel experiences a newspaper placed before its readership of which most were recorded as first in the country and in the world.

On 28 May 2013, giving a novel experience to our readers we introduced QR Codes, the first newspaper in Sri Lanka to do so, which enabled any reader with a smart phone access videos related to particular news.

Our 9 June 2013, edition became special with us introducing first ever 3D experience for country's newspaper readers.

Within just two years, our sister paper *Mawbima* won the Gold Medal for the Best New Entrant of the Year at the SLIM Brand Excellence Award 2013, organised by the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing.

We became the only newspaper in Sri Lanka to offer the most valuable prize – a Micro Panda car – through a raffle draw, as a gratitude to our readers.

On 30 July 2014 paper we created another revolution in newspaper commercials by introducing a 4D newspaper, another first in Print Media history.

Same year, on 1 October deviating from our usual print style, we published a newspaper by increasing the font size by 70 per cent to coincide World Elders' Day (2014), making it more reader friendly to our senior citizens.

In 2015, as a measure to promote religious harmony, we gave another new experience by gifting a DIY Vesak Lantern, which had all four religious symbols.

Standing in solidarity with health authorities as a responsible media institution, we took another revolutionary measure on 6 April 2020 where we

published our newspaper by keeping space between each letter as a reminder to our readers to maintain social distance. This titled 'Keep social distance-save our country today'.

To celebrate our Independence Day, the two newspapers gifted a Lion Flag to our readers, which was embedded in the newspaper itself. This effort went down in the annals of newspaper history, when our innovative Lion Flag creation clinched a Cannes Lion Award, at the prestigious Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity held in France.

The marketing strategy that brought international attention to *Ceylon Today* and *Mawbima* was the printing of the world's first 'mosquito-repellent' newspaper. The campaign was initiated to raise awareness against the growing dengue epidemic in the country at the time. Then, we printed a newspaper, using ink mixed with citronella oil, a time-tested natural chemical-free mosquito-repellent.

This innovative concept caught the attention, not only of those in our country but also some giants in the international arena as well.

Tech billionaire, Bill Gates tweeted about this innovation thus: "I like the ingenuity... mosquito-repellent newspaper helps fight dengue in Sri Lanka: <http://b-gat.es/VQT4e> via @ozy"

With this, we asserted that despite the fast-growing online news industry, traditional newspapers can take the lead in doing good for the public. The innovation was not a mere marketing strategy; it was part of our campaign to spread awareness of an epidemic that was endangering a large number of lives. The editions, apart from being printed in citronella-infused ink, carried a number of insightful and expert articles

on the dengue epidemic.

Over the past decade, we faced numerous challenges, both external and internal. The most devastating events to occur during that period were the Easter Sunday Attacks and the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. We mourned with the nation when a group of terrorists detonated bombs inside churches and popular tourist hotels in the country on Easter Sunday of 2019 that killed more than 250 people. Throughout the traumatic events, we stood with the people of this country, providing them with credible and accurate information. We have also been keenly following and reporting on the proceedings of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry appointed to probe the Easter Sunday attacks. We will persevere until justice is served to the victims of that tragedy. We will watch like hawks until culprits are brought to book.

And, today, we are grappling with the worst pandemic to hit the world in a century. Every day, we provide our readers with accurate and updated information on the virus, and what the authorities are doing to control its spread.

In our unbiased and impartial reporting, we are not afraid to hold the policy-makers to the highest of standards. If they serve the public well we support them, if they falter in their task we are right behind them, reminding them of their mandate, prompting them to the correct path.

This is our duty as a responsible Media outlet, and that is what we have been doing for the past 10 years. Here's hoping that *Ceylon Today* and *Mawbima* shall persevere and continue in their efforts to give credible, authentic, verified and factual news to our readership, for many more years to come!



2011
November 18

Cannes Lions International Festival 2012

National Flag on Independence Day!
Innovative *Mawbima* Lion Flag on 64th Independence day won the first ever Cannes Award for Sri Lanka in 2012



BestWeb.Ik Competition 2014
Best Media Website



Bill Gates, openly praised *Ceylon Today* and *Mawbima* for the most astonishing innovation – the World's 1st Mosquito Repellent Newspaper.

Spikes Asia Awards 2014 in Singapore

Five Awards for *Mawbima* and *Ceylon Today* (Mosquito Repellent Newspapers win awards) Gold Medal for Public Relations category

Four Silver Medals – Media, Branded content, Healthcare, and Promotion & Activation categories.



Effie Awards 2014
For Dengue Campaign

SLIM Brand Excellence 2014

Innovative Brand of the Year at the SLIM Brand Excellence 2014.



Media Excellence Awards organised by the Ministry of Health 2019



10th Anniversary

Adstar Awards 2014, South Korea



World's first 4D Newspaper -2014 & Sri Lanka's first 3D Newspaper -2013

2019

Presidential Awards for Print Media 2019



Journalism Awards for Excellence 2018/2019



Presidential Sports Award for the Most Outstanding Sports Page 2016, 2017/18



APAC Cristal Award China, March 2016

Award for 'Big Respect' on Elders Day Agency TBWA Sri Lanka *Mawbima* and *CeylonToday*



Abby Awards 2016, Singapore



Global Cristal Award-2015 December in China
Agency TBWA Sri Lanka Award for Friendship on Sinhala New Year *Mawbima* and *CeylonToday*

The latest innovation, World's First Mosquito-Repellent Newspaper published on World Health Day 2014 attracted the eye of international media and got shortlisted at Cannes in 2014.

Spikes Asia 2015 in Singapore – Gold Award
The Mosquito Repellent Newspaper to combat the fast spreading Dengue fever.

SLIM Brand Excellence 2013

Gold Winner
The Best New Entrant of the Year at Sri Lanka's biggest and most recognized Marketing Branding Award Ceremony, SLIM Brand Excellence 2013. *Mawbima* was the first newspaper to win an award in the 13 year history of the awards show.

Student's Brand of the Year 2013

Presented by D.S Senanayake College, Colombo. Student's Magazine of the Year & Student's Newspaper of the Year.

Collate Award 2014

Sri Lanka Association of Printers
Ceylon Today won the silver award for Sri Lanka's best Produced Newspaper at the Collate 2014.

Global Brand Excellence Awards 2014

Singapore
Emerging Brand of the Year

Mosquito Repellent Newspaper receives global accolades

Two Gold and Two Silver awards at the Adstar Awards in South Korea and a Bronze at the Clio Awards in New York.

Sri Lanka Railways Crying Out for Attention

Sinkholes appearing underneath rail tracks along Main Line

By THAMENAH RAZEK

Sri Lanka Railways (SLR), the country's largest transport sector and the one and only rail transport service provider, which had been closed for almost a year, resumed its operations once the COVID-19 pandemic was mitigated to some extent.

Despite the fact that SLR provides both passengers and freight services from its inception, the railway carried more freight than passengers. However, of late it is focused more on passenger services. It has a 6 per cent market share in passenger transport and a 0.7 per cent in cargo transport.

SLR was recently compelled to curtail passenger transit and cease operations. This was solely due to the inclement weather experienced throughout the country causing severe damages to the SLR.

Sinkholes beneath railway tracks, landslides, and pits have made headlines over the last week, and it is no longer a concern of the SLR alone; it has evolved into an urgent and a broad issue that needs to be addressed at all costs. SLR's role of transporting daily commuters to reach their workplaces goes unabated. It operates approximately 396 trains per day, including 67 long-distance and 16 intercity trains, transporting approximately 3.72 million passengers.

It owns and operates 1,561 kilometres of rail tracks as well as 72 locomotives, 78 power sets, 565 carriages and the signalling network. Currently, it employs over 17,000 people.

However, commuters can no longer rely on public transport, particularly travelling by trains, due to poor management, a lack of expertise, and a lack of attitude to provide a worthy service.

Wreckage caused by inclement weather

The Railway Department decided to suspend eight train services between Colombo Fort and Kandy indefinitely in the first week of November due to landslide warnings as many rail tracks were under water due to the inclement weather.

According to Kasun Chamara, General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Railway Station Masters' Association, the workforce is now attempting to restore the tracks despite the adverse weather conditions. "We are working hard to get the trains back on track as soon as possible. The tracks on the Kandy line have taken the brunt of the damage."

A landslide has destroyed two sections of the railway line on the major Colombo Fort-Badulla route between Rambukkana and Kadigamuwa. Massive rocks tumbling on the railway tracks have also caused damage to it. We have estimated that reconstruction of some of the landslide-affected areas could take several days, and the main line will only run from Colombo Fort to Rambukkana till the stretch of damaged tracks are repaired," he added.

Chamara said, due to the overflowing of the Deduru Oya reservoir to the roads near the Madurankuliya substation and the Bangadeniya railway station, limited train services from Colombo Fort to Chilaw on the Puttalam line would operate till the water recedes.

"Landslides have also heavily damaged several sections of the railway line between Ihala Kotte and Balana railway stations as a result of massive rocks and boulders falling on the railway track," he said.

The SLR later issued a warning stating that the train services on the Main Line had been limited to Veyangoda due to a sinkhole emerging beneath a rail track at the



SLR's role of transporting daily commuters to reach their workplaces goes unabated. It operates approximately 396 trains per day, including 67 long-distance and 16 intercity trains, transporting approximately 3.72 million passengers

Wijayarajadahana Railway Station.

Chamara said that a deep hole beneath the track near Wijayarajadahana Station caused trains from Mirigama to Colombo to stall, and that the sinkhole had affected the connecting railway lines prompting a decision to curtail the train services on the main route to Veyangoda.

"Passengers were greatly inconvenienced as a result of the Main Line train delays in the backdrop of steps being taken to limit operations to the Veyangoda Railway Station, and urgent maintenance work on the single track," he explained.

Train services beyond Veyangoda had been suspended while maintenance was carried out.



Chamara said railway tracks which were rebuilt in the midst of heavy downpour could be used for operations from 15 November.

On 13 November, an old culvert across the railway line had broken and a pit appeared on the railway line between the Mirigama and Wijayarajadahana railway stations on the major road in the Ambana area. As a result, train services between Mirigama and Pallewela railway stations were disrupted.

A large number of passengers were disappointed due to delays on all trains on the main line caused by single track traffic. Due to urgent maintenance work on the single track on 14 November, services were restricted at the Veyangoda Railway Station.

The Roads and Industries Division of the Railway Department accelerated maintenance work and built a temporary bridge to allow trains to run on one track while the work on progress was inspected by the General Manager of Railways. Much to the laborious work of the derailment and maintenance crews, the bridge was completed by evening and the single track trains are now operating on an *ad-hoc* basis effecting changes to the usual time table. For the next couple of days, the train will also operate on the second track consequent to necessary repairs, restoring normal train services.

Continuous breakdowns

According to the Internal Ministry

of Transport sources, a disaster is no longer limited to a railway accident, but has widened to include other occurrences and natural disasters. There were several projects assigned to investigate train accidents and natural disasters and make recommendations for improvements.

Sources also claimed that several actions were taken on the SLR to investigate Disaster Preparedness. The Department's mandate was to examine and make changes to the current disaster management system over SLR-related railway accidents and natural calamities. Despite the inclusion of a 'Natural Disaster' in the preceding Terms of Reference, the expertise has been focused on the disaster management system over Railroads related to train accidents; natural disasters were barely considered for a review of relief/rescue arrangements with the railways. One of the key recommendations for natural disaster management was the creation of a proper entity to regulate and monitor the situation.

Noting that the concept of a disaster had previously been inadequately and comprehensively defined on SLR, it is now understood that a disaster situation on the railways includes only incidents of serious rail/train accidents.

With this emerged the concept of the ministries as well as the State institutions working together to extend support in the event of a disaster to provide relief/rescue and mitigation.

"The interprovincial railways must make certain that this term is understood in the future."

"While this Disaster Management Plan is a complete document, more specific rules on individual topics will be written down as needed under the overarching disaster management philosophy set forth in this document," sources stated.

Types of disasters

Disaster was previously defined in the railway context as a serious train accident caused by human/equipment failure, which disrupted normal train operations and resulted in loss of human life, property, or both. This has now been expanded to include both natural and man-made disasters.

These include trains washed away in a cyclone, derailment of a train carrying explosives or highly combustible material, collapse of a tunnel on a train, fire or explosion in trains, and other related occurrences.

Climate change

Landslides and floods are among the most common disasters causing social, environmental, and economic damage as well as loss of life. In order to develop mitigation techniques, appropriate responses, and firm recovery plans, the time, location, and severity of the impacts of natural disasters must be defined.

Railway infrastructure is important for transportation and contributes to economic and social well-being.

However, transportation is frequently affected by natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and landslides. Climate change has caused an increase in rainfall, raising concerns about an increase in cyclones and floods. While expanding civil-engineering infrastructure projects, the resistance of these structures to external forces such as natural disasters should be validated.

Rivers may overflow depending on the duration of the rainfall, causing water to flow onto roads and railroads. Floods can have a negative impact on the structure and operation of a railroad network, causing travel delays, service cancellations, and major fines to the railroad company.

(Pic by Kasun Chamara)



Dwindling Nakolagane Forest Pushing Elephants Towards Human Settlements

By EUNICE RUTH

Wild animals live in their habitats without disturbing anyone and they eat what they find in the forest. So do elephants. But they do not know whether their habitat belongs to the Government or to any other private individual. Even though people fight over the ownership of lands, the poor wild animals remain calm. But, if people interfere and encroach on their habitats, the wild animals will have no space to survive and will be forced to enter the surrounding villages to find food.

Background

Nakolagane is a natural habitat for elephants and their movement is high in the area. In addition, several other surrounding places have also been identified as natural habitats for elephants. Palukadawala, which belongs to Nindagama, is also an elephant corridor used by the pachyderm to move to Palukadawala where they roam at noontime.

According to records, Palleriyawa is another location that is rich in elephant habitats and corridors. There are six routes through which the elephants enter the Nindagama forest. Wilpattu, Rajanganaya, Giribawa, Gallewa, and Huntugallewa are the routes that elephants use to enter the forest and from there they travel to Palukadawala. This elephant movement is a very old pattern and elephants have followed this for decades. But now due to the recent deforestation activities wild animals have been severely affected and the elephants' movement pattern has been disturbed.

More than 50 acres of the Nakolagane forest has been destroyed and another 700 acres have been given to businessmen. However, that forest land belongs to the Department of Buddhist Affairs. Although it belongs to Department of Buddhist Affairs, neither they nor other responsible authorities have stood against, but have illegally handed over the forest to businessmen.

This forestland is a well nurtured land that has more than 25 small and large tanks. Small tanks get filled with rainwater. Due to the water catchment in the area, around 5,000 acres of land in this forest have been used by the elephants as their habitat and also as a corridor. Of the 5,000 acres 2,700 acres belong to the Nakolagane Rajamaha Viharaya.

The forest lands belonging to two ancient temples in Galgamuwa have been damaged on a large scale under the guise of agricultural ventures. The lands belong to Nakolagane Rajamaha Viharaya and Thorawamayilawa Rajamaha Viharaya. They are being destroyed with bulldozers these days. The forest lands in the catchment of the Palukadawala reservoir, which belongs to Nakolagane Rajamaha Viharaya, is a leading elephant home



range in the area and forest lands around Thorawamayilawa Rajamaha Viharaya act as a corridor for the elephants to move from Thabbowa and Galgamuwa to Inginimittiya.

Nearly 60% of the free-range elephants, in the Northwestern wildlife administrative region, live outside the protected areas and they use forest patches for their survival and movement paths. Therefore, it is essential to protect such forests to mitigate human-elephant conflicts and preserve the elephant habitats in the area.

About 2,700 acres of Nindagam land belong to the Nakolagane Raja Maha Viharaya, which is located on it. It contains tanks, forest areas, and settlements. In addition, the entire area is home to a wide variety of ecosystems, chena plantations, paddy fields, tank systems, dry mixed evergreen forests, thorny scrubland, and riverine forests.

Thabbowa and Kahalla-Pallekele are two protected areas in this region administered by the Department of Wildlife Conservation. Previously too, a number of attempts were made to drive these elephants into the protected areas surrounded by fences. However, attempts to encroach forest lands by individuals and large-scale businessmen have not been stopped.

Human-Elephant Conflict mitigation action plan

The 'National Human-Elephant Conflict Mitigation Action Plan' also emphasised on the importance of protecting the elephant home range outside the protected areas for the long term conservation of elephants and mitigation of the human-elephant conflict. Receiving Cabinet approval to gazette the 'Managed Elephant Range' in Hambantota is huge encouragement in this connection. The same method should be implemented in Northwestern wildlife administrative regions to conserve elephants and mitigate the problems.

Meanwhile, the Human-Elephant Conflict in the Kurunegala District is high and the major reason for this is the destruction of elephant habitats. In addition, elephant and human deaths have also increased. Even though measures have been taken to minimise the impacts of conflicts, still nothing has changed and it is increasing day by day.

Speaking to the Convener of Biodiversity Conservation and Research Circle (BCRC), Supun Lahiru Prakash, noted that there are four villages in Nindagama and more than 204 families live there. Elephants live in the forest and due to the large-scale deforestation; the risk for the residents of Nindagama is increasing speedily. The opportunities for human-elephant conflict could arise and the impacts will severely affect both, humans and elephants. Due to the deforestation activities, the current status of the forest is very bad and the elephants can't survive in the forest. Also people can't make use of the forest.

He also said that the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) had taken a policy decision, to discontinue large-scale elephant drives after considering issues raised following the driving of more than 300 elephants from the Walawa left bank area to the Lunugamwehera National Park in 2006.

Researchers and also the DWC know that elephant herds comprise females and calves which are not problem-causing subjects to them. They have been chased away over long distances and many elephant calves die on the way due to lack of water and exhaustion. The herds restricted to the protected areas and fenced in also face a lot of difficulties after the drives and starve to death as the final result. The elephant populations already living inside the protected areas are also affected as they have to compete with newcomers for food. Therefore, it adversely affects elephant conservation in Sri Lanka.

The problem-causing adult males are difficult to drive away and they escape when the drives take place. Just after the drive they return to their old locations and continue to cause damage to life and property. Furthermore, the young males in the herds repeatedly face such drives, get adapted to human pressures such as fire, loud noises, elephant crackers, and even gunshots, and become more aggressive towards the human; therefore the human-elephant conflict escalates

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Meanwhile, DWC Director-General Chandana Sooriyabandara, noted that the ownership of the land belongs to the Department of Buddhist Affairs and they have no intention to declare it as a protected land under the DWC. The general public or the surrounding residents needs to request the DWC to take the forest land under the DWC and then only can they proceed with

taking decisions. Also, while commenting on the current destruction activities, he noted that the relevant authority needs to take action against the illegal activities.

Acts against the illegal deforestation

Even though there are several Acts against deforestation and illegal forest clearings, deforestation continues without the knowledge of the relevant authorities.

According to Section 23b of the National Environmental Act No. 47 of 1980, as amended in 1993, if any forest land, which is more than one hectare, needs to be used for a project, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) needs to be done and the approval is compulsory to commence the project. Therefore, the Central Environment Authority has the power to take action against these harmful and illegal projects.

In addition, this deforestation is also against the North Western Province Environmental Statute No. 12 of 1990 and the National Environment Act. Accordingly, a Statute to provide for the establishment of the North-Western Province Environmental Authority, to make provision with respect to the powers, functions, and duties of the Authority and to make provision for the protection, management, and enhancement of the environment and for the regular maintenance and control of the quality of the environment.

Meanwhile, an official, of the Kurunegala Regional office of Department Of Buddhist Affairs, was asked about the illegal clearing of forest land, but she refused to make any comment.

If the necessary steps are not taken to protect these forests, elephants will have no other alternative, but to invade the villages in search of food and this will lead to the escalation of human-elephant conflicts.

Without solving the existing and arising problems, the Government is planning to drive the elephants to the Wilpattu National Park, as discussed in the 'Gama Samaga Pilisandara' in Karuwalagaswewa. If the government tries to drive the elephants in this area to the Wilpattu National Park it will once again escalate the problem and affect the conservation of elephants.

"All previous attempts to drive elephants out of the protected areas completely failed when it was repeatedly practiced in the North-Western Wildlife Administrative region. Also, several attempts were made to drive the elephants to the Thabbowa and Kahalla-Pallekele sanctuaries and Wilpattu National Park over the past decades. But still, the majority of elephants in the area are living outside the protected areas," said Prakash.

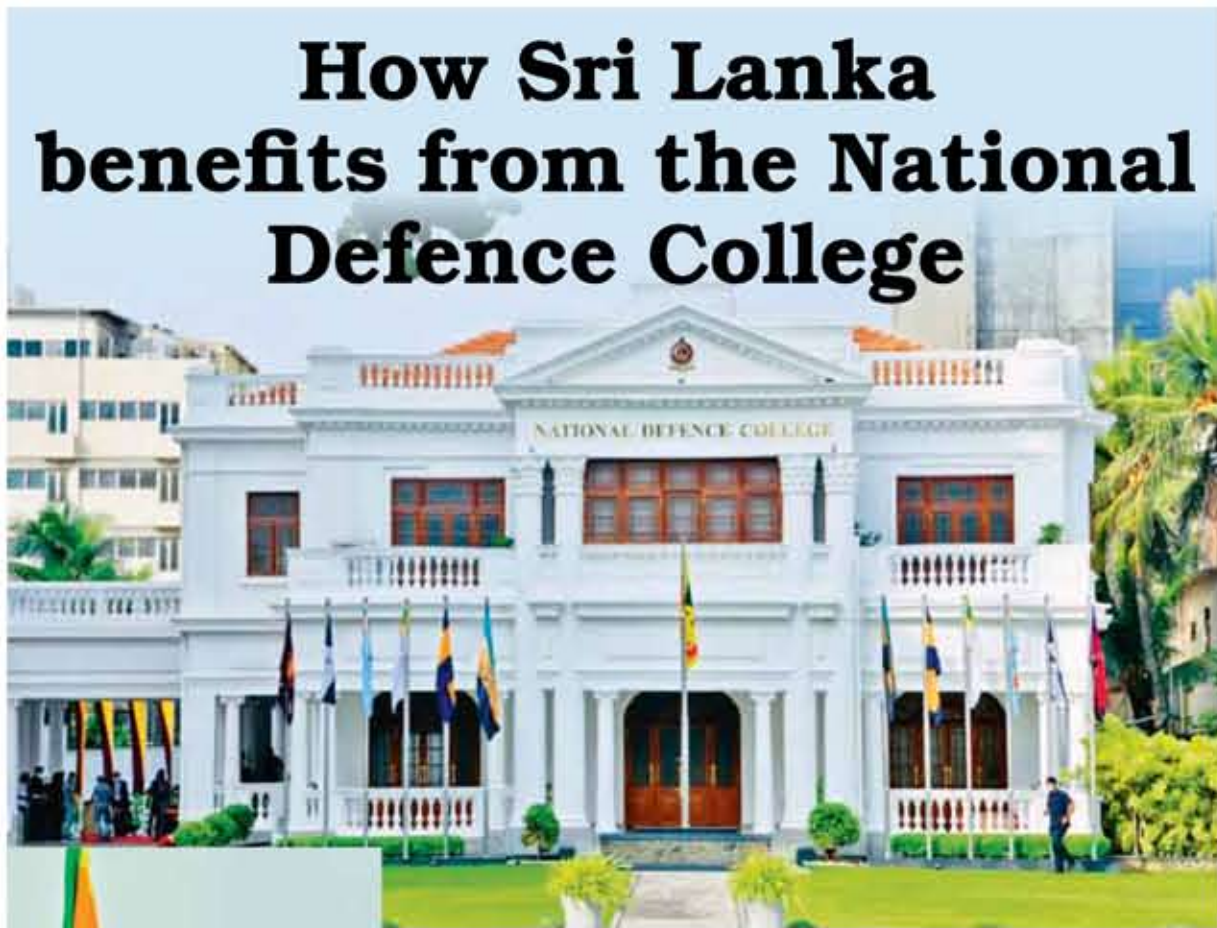


By MANOHARI KATUGAMPALA

The establishment of the National Defence College in Sri Lanka fulfils a long-felt need. Even though the Army consisted of several professional military training establishments to groom military officers, the requirement for a national defence college was a long term need. Among those military training establishments, Diyatalawa Military Academy, Kothalawala Defence University, Army Training School- Maduru Oya, Combat Training School- Ampara, Officer Carrier Development Centre-Buttala, Defence Service Command and Staff College etc are some of the Army establishments which groom brilliant and keen military officers for the nation. Therefore, this concept of Defence College became a reality.

Sri Lankan military officers benefit greatly from foreign courses every year. They receive opportunities at world-class military training establishments such as the Indian Military Academy, United States Military Academy, Republic of China Military Academy, Bangladesh Military Academy, Royal Military Academy in the United Kingdom etc. But a large number of officers are deprived this opportunity as they enrol a very limited number of officers. The establishment of the National Defence College therefore greatly benefits senior military officers who will receive the same exposure in their own country. Senior military officers who follow high-level defence and strategic courses at the National Defence College will get the opportunity to assume senior command positions in the armed forces in the future.

The National Defence College was established as the sole institute that promotes strategic thinking for the senior officers of the tri-service, police and public service to provide holistic knowledge given developing highly qualified strategic



decision-makers in the realm of national security, statecraft, diplomacy and public policy to ensure national security and national development of Sri Lanka. Major General (Rtd) Amal Karunasekara was appointed as the first Commandant of the National Defence College-Colombo.

How Sri Lanka benefits from the National Defence College



Moreover, the curriculum for the new degree programmes were resourced by the University of Colombo, Kothalawala Defence University, Australian Defence Training School, United States of America and Pakistan Defence School.

The absence of higher-level national security and strategic educational establishment in Sri Lanka has created a significant intellectual gap in developing strategic leaders in the realm of

national security, statecraft and effective decision-making. This has created some problems also within the field and has brought several miserable situations. Sri Lanka has opted to look out for foreign educational establishments to obtain strategic education opportunities to develop selected strategic military and senior public officials to meet the organisational demand of the respective institutions. However,



the limited opportunities available for the higher-level defence and strategic courses have considerably deprived many potential senior officers in the armed forces. Therefore, The National Defence College is the best place to give rise to all officials at the highest level to study National Security, which creates a joint environment with civil-military cooperation.

To develop future policy-makers on national security and strategic studies the defence college degrees will aim to create strategic thinkers in the realm of national security, statecraft, diplomacy and

public policy to uphold national interest. This is a critical requirement for Sri Lanka to address the issues, which cannot be obtained by sending senior officers to foreign NDCs. Therefore, it is a necessity to furnish the best possible higher-level of politico-military strategic exposure and degree programmes in line with subjects related to International Security, Strategy, statecraft, Research Methodology, Geopolitics and Strategy, National Security and Policy etc, which would influence to reach global context over different aspects.

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By NABIYA VAFFOOR

Adolescent fertility is a main indicator of the Sustainable Developmental Goal (SDG) three. Although Sri Lanka is exemplary in maternal health, the utilisation of Sexual and Reproductive Health services (SRH) by adolescents is less documented. The hidden burden, associated biological and psychosocial factors and utilisation patterns of preconception services among pregnant adolescents in rural Sri Lanka is a topic that needed more attention.

A study from the BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth quoted in their recent research reports that one-fifth of the women in their first pregnancy in this study population are adolescents. 'Nulliparous' adolescents exert poor social stability and compromised physical and mental health effects. The underutilisation or unavailability of SRH services is clearly associated with adolescent pregnancies.

Adolescent fertility is considered as a challenging public health problem in the context of the growing adolescent population in South East Asian and African regions. There are substantial inter-country, as well as intra-regional disparities in adolescent fertility rates. While universal health care is a key to reduce inequalities in health, even countries with successful public health systems have failed in reducing the adolescent pregnancy rates.

United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA), Sri Lanka, is partnered with the Perinatal Society of Sri Lanka to host a Panel discussion titled 'Socio Economic Impact of Teenage Pregnancies' at the Annual Scientific Congress of the Perinatal Society of Sri Lanka. Dr. Asiri Hemamalage-Community Health Specialist of the Child and Family Health Bureau, Prof. Rasika Herath-MBBS (C'bo), MD (Obstetrics and Gynaecology) (C'bo), MRCOG (UK) Professor Head, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Madhu Dissanayake-Social Anthropologist, Former Attorney General Palitha Fernando also joined the discussion to explain the details such as Social inequalities, as a result of diverse individual, socio-cultural, environmental, economic, and health system related- factors, could lead to high rates of adolescent pregnancies and how the teenage pregnancies underpin social inequalities, in health, education, environmental and economical factors in a country? How far is it an issue in Sri Lanka? Perinatal Society of Sri Lanka narrated few case studies during the discussion to elaborate regarding the topic.

Unaware of the long journey and hardships

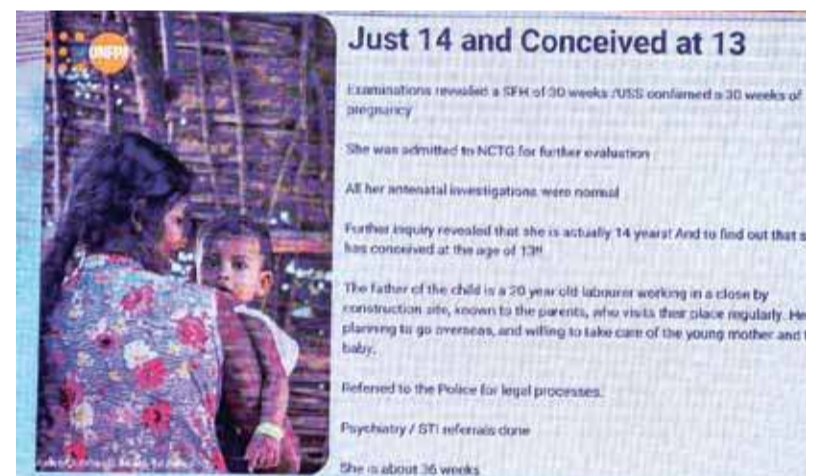
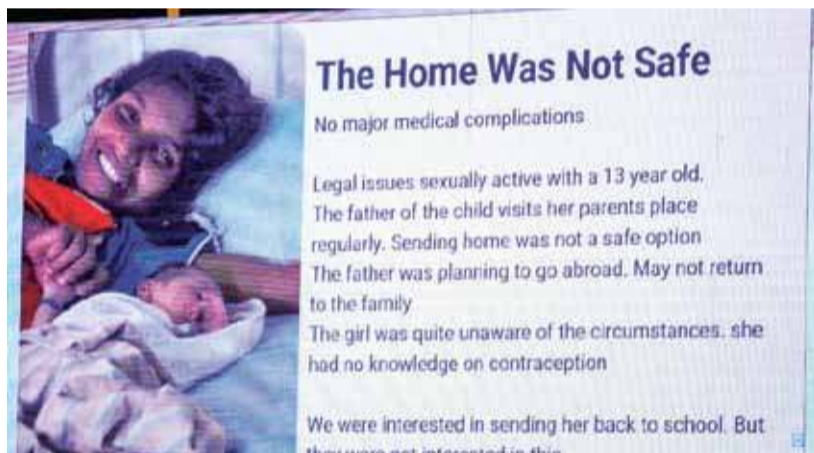
Kumari said that she is 15 years old. The pregnancy was confirmed with a urine pregnancy test. She walks into the clinic with apparent 'sister'. Just to find out that's her 29-year-old mother. Kumari looked pretty relaxed and smiling, probably unaware of the long journey and hardships ahead otherwise, healthy. She is a daughter of a painter and a housewife.

Examinations by the Society of Family Health (SFH)/Ultra Sound Scan (USS) confirmed a 30 weeks of pregnancy. She was admitted to Neonatal Clinical Trials Group (NCTG) for further evaluation. All her antenatal investigations were normal. Further inquiry revealed that she is actually 14 years and found to have been conceived at the age of 13.

The father of the child is a 20-year-old labourer working in a nearby construction site, known to the parents, who visits their place regularly. He is planning to go overseas, and willing to take care of the young mother and the baby.



Taking a Close Look at Causes of Teen Pregnancies



The girl was quite unaware of the circumstances. She had no knowledge on contraception. We were interested in sending her back to school. But her guardians were not. In this case we have two children to look after, their teenage mother and the child.

We have to refer to the Police for legal formalities. Thought there are no major medical complications. By law it is illegal to be sexually active with a 13-year-old. The child should be given her childhood back and establish continuous care. Important to secure the child and the need to nurture in safe environments and discuss the option of legal adoption / probationary care but because of illiteracy and because of the lack of information regarding SRH and the legal system and not knowing the importance of education, many do not understand the depth of this issue.

Teenage pregnancies

National data on teenage pregnancies reveal a prevalence of 4.4%, which has

shown very slow improvement over the past few years amounting to around 20% of teenage pregnancies occurring among adolescents below 17 years. This data reveals that a majority of the youth is going through what Kumari is undergoing knowing or unknowingly. During the past two decades, several changes to the legislative framework were made concerning the adolescent health and educational systems.

Prof. Rasika Herath- MBBS (C'bo), MD (Obstetrics and Gynaecology) (C'bo), MRCOG (UK) Professor Head stated, "Lack of exposure to information regarding Sexual and Reproductive health and many adolescent pregnancies that we evidence are situations where even the social background of the child is unaware about the blunder their child has gone through because even the parents of the child have done the same thing and they believe the situation is

something normal. Such situations were often witnessed from the socially deprived backgrounds.

Lack of exposure to information regarding Sexual and Reproductive health and many adolescent pregnancies that we evidence are situations where even the social background of the child is unaware about the blunder their child has gone through because even the parents of the child have done the same thing and they believe the situation is something normal. Such situations were often witnessed from the socially deprived backgrounds

Adolescent pregnancies are associated with maternal and foeto-infant complications, such as low fat or lean body mass, risk of iron and calcium deficiency leading to maternal anaemia, hypertensive disorders, as well as poor fetal growth, and low birth weight of newborns.

The effects on maternal and fetal nutrition depict childhood stunting as well as poor complementary feeding practices leading to a vicious cycle of intergenerational malnutrition. Prevention of adolescent pregnancies needs multisectoral resources and human development. Hence, adolescent fertility rate is identified as a major indicator of Sustainable Developmental Goal."

Marriageable age

Former Attorney General Palitha Fernando (Marriage Law scene) said,

"Sri Lanka has various marriage laws such as the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act, Kandyan Marriage and Divorce Act and Marriage Registration Ordinance. In these different Ordinances we have different ages as the marriageable age and the Marriage Registration

Ordinance is where the people who wish to get married and who are covered by it should be 18-years-old but according to the law, the age for the consent of intercourse is 16

years. There are cases where the child was found pregnant at the age of 17 with her lover and the parents want to take legal action against the male but since the consent was given by the female child there's nothing much that we can do. Yet, nobody can protest against it because it is the right of every individual. Due to this many fall prey in different forms including becoming pregnant at an early age. But in our country there are many marriages which are not even registered i.e. marriages by habitant repute. There are many cases where we find that the couple has gone through a marriage by habitant repute just like Kumari we spoke of earlier with the blessings of parents who don't even know that they are committing an offence and ruining her future too. Doctors go through severe problems when they deal with such issues but as per the prevailing law there is nothing much that can be done just because a girl becomes a teenage mother as it cannot be considered as having committed an offence. Then there are victims of assault, who get discriminated in schools and then forced to be terminated from schools. It's not the law that needs to be changed in such cases but it's the society that must to be educated."

Main aspects to act on

In order to effectively address the public health issue of adolescent pregnancies, the health, education, and social care sectors need to act on two main aspects: prevention of unintended adolescent pregnancies and empowering adolescents that intend to be pregnant (considering the cultural influences) or optimising the health status to prepare for pregnancy and childbearing. Since adolescent pregnancies are not amenable to simple interventions as they have short term or modest effects, multisectoral complex approaches are suggested in global literature.

The adolescent fertility rate has been stagnated around 30 per 1,000 adolescents during the past four decades in Sri Lanka, which raises concerns about the effectiveness of the existing interventions.

Provision of Adolescent and Youth Friendly Health Services (AYFHS) were mediated by the national focal point of maternal and child health, the Family Health Bureau, Ministry of Health Sri Lanka. Initiated in 2005, the AYFHS has been strengthened during the past decade to establish a network of routine public health services including clinic and field care by primary health care officers. Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education was incorporated into the school curriculum commencing from early adolescence.

Although the policy guidelines and implementation are initiated at the central level by the educational and health authorities, the effectiveness of these services on promoting adolescent SRH is not well evaluated. There is a gap in the local evidence base in assessing the implementation and the effectiveness of the impact of these changes. Further, the level of utilisation of newly added educational and health service resources by adolescents are poorly documented and needs more attention.

Sri Lanka should definitely stand for all the Kumari's who are being pushed to that state due to lack of information or we as a country would have to face higher rate of neonatal deaths. Lower level of literacy, adolescent mortality and a youth with many psychological traumas due to social discrimination are burning issues that are faced due to an early pregnancy.

Pix by Kelum Chamara



SL Football is About to Rise From The Ashes

We are looking at a real proper football stadium for SL- FIFA President

By MUSTAQ SYDEEN

It is a well-known fact that Sri Lanka is lacking in world class football stadiums. The Island nation has many international standard cricket stadiums, but football stadiums are scarce. And the ones that do exist have served their purpose and are not up to the mark anymore.

However, football in Sri Lanka is about to rise from the ashes, where Football Sri Lanka (FSL) are going ahead with plans on a much-needed project - building of a new international-standard football stadium, FIFA President Gianni Infantino revealed.

The President of Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), Gianni Infantino, arrived in Sri Lanka on Friday morning (19) for a two-day official visit. Infantino was accompanied by five high-level dignitaries of FIFA.

Addressing the media in Colombo after his arrival, Gianni Infantino revealed that discussions are being held to build a football stadium in Sri Lanka and FIFA are fully committed to lend a helping hand for the project.

"We have been speaking about grass root football, club football, more generally about the structures and of course, about the infrastructure. We are looking at a proper, real football stadium for Sri Lanka, because a stadium today is not just a place where you play; a football stadium is an icon for a country. We are working on this and we have the commitment of the Government and would like to thank the President and Prime Minister for their commitment to help us find the right place for a stadium - to either refurbish or build from scratch. We are here to invest; we are here to help," said the FIFA President.

Unfortunately, the Sri Lankan soccer fan base has traditionally been let down by earlier administrations, and its 'pathetic efforts' at improving quality. There is a tremendous yearning to see Lankan players make the international cut. However, the Four Nation



FIFA President Gianni Infantino



FIFA President Gianni Infantino (L) and Football Sri Lanka President Jaswar Umar (R)

Tournament for the Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa Trophy will definitely boost Sri Lanka's performance in the future.

Football in Sri Lanka had its own glory days in the '90s where Sri Lanka became the best team in Asia when they emerged as South Asian Champions in 1995, but a lack of infrastructure and planning led to its eventual snake-slide down the board. Still, where there was a past, surely a future can be recreated, and at the very least from the way things are beginning to look, we're fairly certain that we can expect great surges forward in the world of Sri Lankan football.

The positive implications of a potential

merger, if well-designed, will appear over time as football keeps on growing in the island nation. The potential is huge, it just needs to be assessed and harnessed in the best possible way.

Ceylon Today reliably learns good infrastructure will help accelerate Sri Lanka football's growth. And it will prove to be good for the Super League and many top domestic tournaments, where several international stars are slated to play. Sri Lanka should use the upcoming events as opportunities to demonstrate a positive image to the football world. The countdown has begun.

(Pix by Kelum Chamara)

RUGBY SCRAPBOOK

Schools Rugby comes to town, while the Advisory plays Santa

By VIMAL PERERA

The Rugby Advisory Committee of the Ministry Sports is in a festive mood singing: you better watch out, better not cry, better not pout; Schools Rugby is coming to Town. So many messages to Santa have been, "can you give my rugby ball back." The Advisory Committee has been generous to listen and guide according to sources of School Rugby. The Initial meeting of the Schools Rugby was with the Chairman of the Advisory Committee, Asanga Seneviratne and Secretary Dilroy Fernando. The President of Schools Rugby, the Secretary and the Treasurer represented schools Rugby. Heads of marketing and Dialog TV, the sponsor, and their teams were a party to the discussion.

Schools will start Rugby possibly on the weekend of 11 December with a Sevens, according to Nirodha Wijerama, the Secretary of Sri Lanka Schools Rugby Association. The newly appointed Rugby Advisory Committee has pushed schools to jumpstart.

The tournaments will be regional. Western Province will play two days grouped as two tiers as 24 teams will play. After that, it will be Central, Wayamba, Southern and Sabaragamuwa. They are expecting to finish all games using three weekends.

The schools section hopes to encourage friendly matches followed by traditional fixtures. Inquiries made by Ceylon Today revealed that many teams have started to get onto the field in preparation for the sevens.

The pandemic starved schools Rugby for almost two years and had its repercussion for school's players, who could not get into their testimonial they participated in Rugby. Many expected to add value to their resume as Rugby has helped many to gain employment in the past. Equally affected were the coaches at different levels who lost a source of income. Coaches of the more significant provinces have got back to Rugby. The affected are the rural schools where the lack of Rugby has directed some to seek other employment.

Wijerama said that the initiative of the Rugby Advisory committee led by Asanga Seneviratne and the support of the Minister of Sports Namal Rajapaksa helped very much to get to where they are. That is, there is a green light to start Rugby in the schools.

Up to the time of involvement of the Advisory Committee, it was like getting a set of batteries for Christmas, and the card says no toy included? School's section is grateful to the President of the Advisory Council, Asanga Seneviratne, Secretary Dilroy Fernando, and the Director-General Sports Medicine Unit, Dr Lal Ekanayake, for providing the batteries. The toy in the hands of the schools will make the best use of the batteries, according to Wijerama.

The schools appreciate the Rugby Advisory guiding discussions with the sponsors Dialog, The Medical Division, the Ministry of Sport, the Health Authorities and the Ministry of Education.

The Minister of Sports input to get Rugby off the ground was very helpful. However, the cost of the Rapid Antigen test was a worry for the Schools Rugby Section. Therefore, the Minister of Sports will step in and take all action required to get the antigen test done without burdening the schools, according to Wijerama.

Fernando of the Advisory Committee and Wijerama of the schools section said that the commencement of Rugby would be under the strict guidelines issued for playing sports.

The protocol will include an antigen test on Thursday and a second antigen on the eve of the matchday on Saturday or Sunday. The sanitisation and other areas such as keeping distance have to be covered.

An awareness programme will be on 24 November with active support from Dr. Ekanayake, the Advisory Council Member and Director General of the Institute of Sports of the Ministry of Sports.

The schools have been given the thumbs up to practice since the go-ahead for tournaments is expected.

Coaches who I spoke to confirmed practices have started, and the boys are very enthusiastic. First, however, Western and Central Province schools should build teams to play in the proposed sevens. The coaches of these provinces say they are making the path methodically. The other areas are in a gradual approach as they find coaches have found other employment.

While some parents have a degree of apprehension, the coaches said that attendance improves with explanation and education of the need for youth to be involved in social interaction and sport.

The most important, according to coaches, is the adaptation to a new norm. Boys have been at home more with their digital screen and less interaction. The approach recognising the two-year gap and the realisation that Rugby will help is a passage of learning. If and when the two chief provinces start, the rest should follow a natural extension of the herd theory, which will help play Rugby through patterns and connections.

Rugby brings back memories. They also add more to the memory. The love of Rugby, which is in itself an extension of the spirit, will become a reality by Christmas time. The new year then will open to others who have lost the time of Rugby and apply to all ages of students playing the game.

Coaches also believed that the school principals have a significant role in the participation of the youth in their care in sport. Some coaches explained that school heads had supported the resumption while extending setting foot into ground areas that were not the domain of rugby players. Of course, going to the sea in this rough weather is not easy. But if you know how you could, was how a coach summed up the Initiative.



Sri Lanka Vs Malaysia



China Vs Sri Lanka



Japan Vs Sri Lanka

Dialog Asian Rugby Sevens Series Action from the first day

Sri Lankan ruggerites (Men and Women) were seen in action on the first day of the Dialog Asian Rugby Sevens Series being held in Dubai.

(Pix by photography.lk)



Sri Lanka Vs Malaysia



Japan Vs Sri Lanka



China Vs Sri Lanka



Victorious Seychelles team

Four Nation Tournament for P.M. Mahinda Rajapaksa Trophy

SL's Wait for a Major Trophy Continues After a Heart Break Defeat

Seychelles turn tables to beat Sri Lanka on Penalties

By **MUSTAQ SYDEEN**

Sri Lanka Football's wait for a major Trophy continues as Seychelles came from behind to break Sri Lankan hearts in the penalty shootout (3-1) to clinch the inaugural Four Nation Tournament for Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa Trophy at Race Course Stadium on Friday.

The game kicked off amidst grand fanfare and Sri Lanka got the perfect start when Marvin Hamilton took a fierce long range shot which deflected off a Seychelles defender to his own net to go up 1-0 in the 7th minute.

The experienced striker has been a vital player for Sri Lanka during the Four Nation Tourney, and is also rapidly emerging as one of the most exciting talents seen in the country for years.

Predictably, Seychelles enjoyed the majority of possession, but Sri Lanka were gritty and disciplined, as well as being lethal on the counter-attack, as they troubled the visitors defense on a number of occasions.

Through such an effort Waseem brought the Sri Lanka camp to their feet, when he took a thundering shot at goal which just clipped the crossbar and was cleared by the Seychelles defense.

Just one minute away from the first half whistle, however, Sri Lanka were clearly shaken out of their stride and looked frail at the back as Seychelles threatened on the counter-attack and succeeded, when Emmanuel Jean equalized with a brilliant header to end the first half on equal terms.

Into the second exchange Sri Lanka had over 80% of possession in the early exchanges and it looked like being a



Sri Lanka skipper Sujan Perera looks dejected

long evening for Sri Lanka in the rather surreal surroundings of a fully packed stadium.

Seychelles were clearly shaken out of their stride and looked frail at the back as Sri Lanka threatened on the counter-attack and succeeded when the Golden Army netted their second goal through M. Aakib in the 60th minute when he dribbled the ball past several defenders and tapped in with ease to double their lead.

Just 8 minutes later Sri Lanka added another goal to the tally, this time by evergreen Waseem Razeek through a penalty after the 27-year-old was fouled inside the box. With this goal

Waseem registered his seventh goal, which is the highest in the tournament.

Seychelles were gifted a own goal in the 85th minute when Sri Lanka defenders made their first error of the night, and the visitors once again shell shocked the Sri Lankan camp with a late equalizer through Woodley Tamboo in the 86th minute to head the match into penalties.

Into the penalties, Sri Lanka missed all their penalties except skipper Sujan Perera, while Seychelles netted three out of four penalties to clinch the Four Nation Tournament for P.M. Mahinda Rajapaksa Trophy.

(Pix by Kelum Chamara)



Dialog Asia Rugby Sevens Series

Tuskers end up with three loses

Only women's team registered a victory

By **ASANKA GAMMANPILA IN DUBAI**

Inexperienced Sri Lanka Sevens team lost all three matches on the opening day of the Dialog Asia Rugby Sevens series played here at the Rugby Stadium in Dubai Sports City on Friday.

After losing all three games, first outing to defending champions Japan (31-14), second to vastly improved UAE (29-7) and third game to China 37-0, they have been demoted to play in the plate semi-final against Philippines, which is will scheduled for Saturday evening.

Sri Lanka managed to score only three tries against all three opponents and it was our worst performance in the recent past in the Asian Sevens series.

Sri Lanka's chances of entering the Cup segment was first ruined after UAE handed an unexpected one-sided defeat, and later by China in the last game. Of course, Sri Lanka were underdogs against mighty Japan, but UAE was a match we had won in previous tournaments, but the lack of match experience was the key reason that showed on the field for the losses.

In the opening game, Japan scored 5 tries, while Sri Lanka managed to score two tries through Sajith Silva and Nishon Perera, with one try converted by Nuwan Perera.

In the game against UAE, our only try came from Janidu Dilshan which was converted by Ishara Madushan, while UAE responded with five tries.

Defending champions Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea and UAE reached the Cup semi-final.

Sri Lanka women down Malaysia

Sri Lanka women's rugby team kicked off the tournament in style registering a hard-fought 12-10 win against Malaysia, before going down to China and Hong Kong in the last two group matches.

The two defeats demoted Sri Lanka to play in the plate semi-final against Philippines which is scheduled for Saturday.

The game against Malaysia was a close battle as the scores were level five-all at the short whistle. Nimesha Wijewardana scored Sri Lanka's winning try in the second half, dashing 60 metres to touch down under the posts, and Anushika Samaraweera added the vital 2 points to take a 12-5 lead, before the opponents fought back with a try, which went unconverted to hand a two-point victory for Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka skipper Dulani Pallikondage scored the first try in the first half before Malaysia fought back with an unconverted try to level the scores 5-5.

In the second game, China handed Sri Lanka women their worst defeat of the day. The lasses were completely outrun by the Chinese who scored seven tries to seal a 47-0 victory. It was a lesson for the Sri Lankan women and showed how strongly they prepared for the tournament. China led 26-0 at short whistle and outsmarted the Sri Lanka defense completely, and were excellent with power play and fitness.

Later Sri Lanka went down to Hong Kong 38-05 in the last group match. The winners bagged six tries, while our only try came from skipper Dulani Pallikondage who scored her second try of the day.

Defending champions Japan, Hong Kong, China and Kazakhstan booked their berth in the Cup semi-finals.

(Pic by Sports Photography Lk)



SL fielding coach McDermott tests COVID-19 positive

Mickey Arthur, Grant Flower in isolation

Sri Lanka fielding coach Shane McDermott has tested positive for Covid-19 days out from the start of the first Test between Sri Lanka and the West Indies in Galle starting 21 November. He is now self-isolating, away from the team hotel.

McDermott's was the only positive result from a round of testing that saw all players and staff tested. However, he is understood to have been in close contact with head coach Mickey Arthur, batting coach Grant Flower and physio Brett Harrop - all of whom are self-isolating as well.

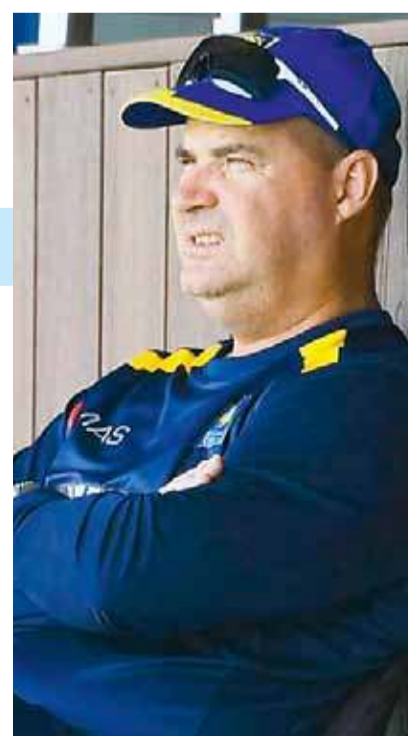
While the coaching staff had been training with the national team in Galle in recent days, according to the head of Sri Lanka Cricket's Medical Committee Prof. Arjuna de

Silva, none of the players are being considered as close contacts.

"There have been no direct contacts when it comes to the players," de Silva confirmed. "Anti-body tests will be done on the close contacts tomorrow, while another round of testing will be conducted prior to the start of the first Test." All of Sri Lanka's players and coaching staff are double vaccinated, and as such there is little chance of the start of the first Test being impacted, he added. This is not Sri Lanka's first run-in with COVID-19. Ahead of their tour of the West Indies at the start of the year, Arthur and three players tested positive, while a video analyst and Flower tested positive ahead of a home series against India in July.

The latest case comes amid a gradual reopening of the country in recent weeks following a largely successful vaccination drive that, according to Government estimates, has seen over 90% of those over 20 years of age double vaccinated.

It also follows the end of a near six-week long lockdown implemented at the height of Sri Lanka's third wave midway through August. Nearly 5,000 daily infections were being reported at the time. However, by the time the lockdown was lifted on 1 October that number had dropped to around 1,000, before dropping to as low as 500 by mid-October. Recent weeks however have seen case numbers slowly creep up, with the adherence to health guidelines growing



increasingly lax among the public - particularly in the densely populated Western Province.

(ESPN)

Major Club 50 over Tournament

Moors beat Kurunegala YCC and climb to 2nd position

Moors SC recorded their second win and climbed to second position in Group 'A' when they beat Kurunegala YCC by 53 runs according to the D/L method at MCG Katunayake yesterday in their Major Club 50 over Tournament fixture conducted by Sri Lanka Cricket.

Moors now have 13 points from 9 matches (2 wins). However, Army CC continue to lead the points table with 17 points

At MCG Katunayake (Moors won by 53 runs - D/L)

Moors SC: 160 (33.3) (Dushan Vimukthi 45, Kavindu Kulasekara 32, Thilan Prashan 25 n.o., Sameera Sandamal 4/29, Lahiru Jayaratne 2/40, Gihan Anjana 2/28)

Kurunegala YCC: 70/7 (20.5) (Dinushka Malan 18 n.o., Chanuka Dilshan 2/16, Dilsh Gunarathne 2/17) (IR)