

the morning



NISSANKA SHINES ON RAIN-MARRED FIRST DAY IN GALLE

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THE CHILDREN IN LOCKDOWN ARTS FESTIVAL 2021

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THE PRESIDENT'S 'BREAKOUT MOMENTS' WERE SMALL BEER

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CABRAAL REFUSES TO FLOAT RUPEE DESPITE DWINDLING REMITTANCES

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Impractical for SL to sequence all arrivals for Omicron variant

• Health Ministry cites difficulties in sending bio samples from airport to labs | • Sajith wants booster dose accelerated



Tourists arriving at the Bandaranaike International Airport earlier this month

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

The Health Ministry has stated that it is not possible to detect the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus two (SARS-CoV-2) Omicron (B.1.1.529) variant through the tests carried out at the airport, as it is not practical to send the biological samples of all those who arrive in Sri Lanka daily from foreign countries for gene sequencing.

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No SLSI standard for gas cylinder composition

- Alagiyawanna says butane and propane percentages not considered
- States only cylinder pressure gets checked
- SLSI commences standards update

BY PAMODI WARAVITA

With the gas cylinder composition being blamed for the series of gas cylinder explosions around the country this month, the Government revealed yesterday (29) that the compositional ratio of butane and propane in a gas cylinder is not considered at present when the standards of a gas cylinder are determined by the Sri Lanka Standards Institute (SLSI).

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IGP testifies against ex-IGP in Easter case

- IGP late for court; court advises accordingly
- Notes SIS info need not be 100% complete to order probe

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Chandana D. Wickramaratne yesterday (29) appeared before the Colombo High Court Trial-at-Bar where he testified in the case filed against former IGP Pujith Jayasundara over the latter's alleged failure to take action to prevent the Easter Sunday terror attacks of 21 April 2019.

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State Minister Lasantha Alagiyawanna

Alagiyawanna's gas explosions report delayed

- Moratuwa Uni declines to decide based on one report
- 233 similar incidents from 2015 to October 2021
- State Minister tables 3 probe reports from April 2021
- SJB says reports confirm 12.5 kg gas cylinder as having 50:50 butane:propane

BY PAMODI WARAVITA

Co-operative Services, Marketing Development, and Consumer Protection State Minister Lasantha Alagiyawanna said yesterday (29) that the investigative report on the series of gas cylinder-based explosions would be presented to Parliament within this week, despite earlier pledging to present it to Parliament yesterday.

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Litro sends letter of demand to journalist

BY AAZAM AMEEN

In response to a news article on a daily newspaper last week, which claimed that the Government Analyst's report on recent gas explosions stated that they were caused due to a change of the butane to propane percentage within gas cylinders manufactured by Litro Gas, *The Morning* learns that the company has sent a letter of demand to the respective journalist seeking Rs. 1 billion in damages.

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Arjuna quits UNP over lack of reforms

Former Minister Arjuna Ranatunga resigned from the membership of the United National Party (UNP) yesterday (29), expressing disappointment at the lack of reforms within the party following its humiliating defeat at the 2020 General Election.



Arjuna Ranatunga

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE Sri Lanka to back Palestinian cause further

BY PAMODI WARAVITA

The Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) joined other nations in celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with Palestine yesterday (29), by reiterating that Sri Lanka continues to support Palestine in achieving full membership status at the United Nations (UN) and diplomatic efforts to find lasting peace in the region.

In a Tweet yesterday, Regional Co-operation State Minister Tharaka Balasuriya said that Sri Lanka continues to support the "inalienable rights of the Palestinian people".

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Bar Association to help police brutality victims

- Launches legal aid unit to address torture and custodial deaths

BY PAMODI WARAVITA

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka's (BASL) Legal Aid Committee yesterday (29) launched the Anti-Torture Unit in adherence to the BASL's commitment to stopping incidents of torture, custodial deaths and Police brutality.

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BASL President Saliya Pieris
PHOTO KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM

Bi-annual Covid-19 vaccination being considered

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

Committees under the Health Ministry are currently considering the administration of Covid-19 vaccine doses on a biannual basis and are analysing the scientific data with regard to such to ascertain its feasibility and necessity, according to the

Health Ministry.

It was recently reported that certain studies have shown that the effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccines decreases several months after vaccination and that a biannual vaccine dose will, therefore, have to be administered.

Contd. on page 2

HRCSL begins inquiry on assault in Mullaitivu

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) announced yesterday (29) that it has commenced a *Suo Motu* (of its own accord) inquiry concerning an assault on a journalist at Mullivaikal, Mullaitivu on 27 November 2021 by Army soldiers.

The HRCSL has called for reports from the General Officer of the Commanding 59 Division of Sri Lanka Army, Mullaitivu, and the Headquarters Inspector of the Mullaitivu Police Station with regard to the assault on or before 3rd December 2021.

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Scotland stops training SL Police over human rights?

- Scottish media quote Police Scotland Chief on ending SL contract
- SL Police deny such reports

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

Despite the Chief Constable of Police Scotland being quoted in Scottish media stating that Police Scotland has stopped training officers of Sri Lanka Police over human rights-related concerns, the Sri Lanka Police has denied this, stating that bilateral discussions are ongoing to resume training which had been temporarily halted due to the prevalent Covid-19 pandemic situation.

According to *The Sunday Post*, the demand for a parliamentary inquiry into the services and international clients of Police Scotland came after Chief Constable of Police Scotland Iain Livingstone confirmed that



Chief Constable of Police Scotland Iain Livingstone

a controversial Sri Lankan training contract would end.

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FRs against New Fortress deal fixed for consideration in December

The fundamental rights (FR) petitions filed against the Yugadana Power Plant agreement with the US-based New Fortress Energy have been fixed for consideration on 16 December by the Supreme Court.

The petitions had been filed by several parties seeking a court order revoking the decision taken by the Cabinet of Ministers to transfer shares in West Coast Power Ltd. (WCP) – the owner of the 310 MW Yugadana Power Plant to New Fortress.

The petitions were taken up before a bench comprising Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya and Supreme Court Judges Buwaneka Aluvihare, Priyantha Jayawardena, Vijith Malalgoda, and L.T.B. Dehideniya. The five-member judge bench ordered the petitions be fixed for consideration on 16 and 17 December.

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The CMC Employees' Union staging a protest outside Town Hall yesterday (29)
PHOTO PRADEEP DAMBARAGE



CMC employees protest retirement age increase

The Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) Employees' Union staged a protest yesterday (29) in front of the CMC premises against the Government's recent increase of the retirement age, while also

pushing for several other demands, including an increase in salaries and pensions for public sector workers.

Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa noted on 14 November that the 2022

Budget would increase the retirement age of public sector workers to 65 years, citing that the average life expectancy has increased and the ageing population of the country is on the rise.

Contd. on page 2

COVID-19 CASES	
ACTIVE CASES	8,175
DEATHS	14,305
RECOVERED	540,040
TOTAL CASES	
562,520	
SOURCE: HEALTH PROMOTION BUREAU	
COVID-19 TOTAL VACCINATION	
1ST DOSE	15,927,537
2ND DOSE	13,741,196
THE ABOVE STATISTICS ARE CONFIRMED UP UNTIL 7.02 P.M. ON 29 NOVEMBER 2021	
SOURCE: PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARIAT	

{ NEWS }

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Impractical...

Addressing a media briefing yesterday (29), Health Ministry Communications Director, Public Health Services Deputy Director General (DDG), and Disaster Preparedness and Response Division Head Dr. Hemantha Herath said: "If it is needed to detect a certain Covid-19 variant at the airport, samples of all who arrive in the country should be sent for gene sequencing, but it is not something that is practical."

He was responding to a query by the media regarding allegations made by various parties that people coming to Sri Lanka from foreign countries are not properly subjected to polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests in view of the advent of the virulent Omicron variant.

Dr. Herath also said that in the current situation, it should therefore be ensured that persons arriving in Sri Lanka from foreign countries have undergone PCR tests before leaving the country where they are coming from, and that those who are not fully vaccinated, should be directed for quarantine. "We need to make sure that people coming from foreign countries have been tested before leaving those countries. In addition, it is very important to refer people other than those who have been fully vaccinated to quarantine," he added.

In view of the Omicron variant, the Sri Lankan authorities have, as of yesterday, banned the arrival of foreign travellers who have been to six countries in the African Continent, including South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, and Eswatini (Swaziland), within the past 14 days.

However, when inquired as to whether the Health Ministry was taking steps to impose a ban on travellers who have been to other countries where cases of the Omicron variant have been reported, Dr. Herath, on Sunday (28), said: "A final decision has not been reached regarding the imposition of such a ban. However, the matter is constantly being analysed."

Meanwhile, Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) and Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa said that Sri Lanka must speed up the Covid-19 ooster vaccine in Parliament yesterday (29).

"The WHO has announced that the Omicron variant is a cause of concern. I, myself, am concerned about this. I would like to suggest that the Government take immediate steps to vaccinate those above the age of 60 years with the booster dose as a matter of urgency, and also parallelly the booster dose must also be given to those below the age of 60 years and with comorbidities. This includes those with kidney diseases, diabetes, and heart conditions. This will help us prepare for another wave," said Premadasa.

Additionally, Premadasa took the opportunity to thank the Government for the effective roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccine drive that is currently in place.

"I want to take the opportunity to thank the Government for the effectiveness in the Covid-19 vaccine drive. Praise is due in this matter," he added.

First discovered in South Africa, the variant has now been detected in Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Israel, Australia, and Hong Kong.

No SLSI...

Speaking in Parliament, Co-operative Services, Marketing Development, and Consumer Protection State Minister Lasantha Alagiyawanna said that the SLSI considers gas cylinder pressure as its main measure.

"The measurements for the standards of gas were first declared by the SLSI in 1998. At the time, the SLSI made no mention of the composition of butane and propane present within a cylinder. The main measurement that they declared to measure the standard of a gas cylinder is its pressure. That is the marker by which we measure the standard of gas in the market to this day," said Alagiyawanna in Parliament yesterday.

He admitted that there are "shortcomings" in the current standards put forth by the SLSI, which has led the Co-operative Services, Marketing Development and Consumer Protection State Ministry to urge the SLSI to update their measurements of the standards and quality of gas in the market.

"The SLSI has started this process now and have completed their public hearings as well. We have also asked the expert committee tasked with this process to consider the current opinions on how the standard and quality of gas should be measured."

He noted that although Sri Lanka has been involved in circulating gas in the market since the 1960s, gas has still not been regulated properly.

"Although different government institutions are tasked with regulating certain aspects of gas, this has not been done properly. The Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) also has a certain amount of responsibility in the matter, but we must admit that we have not been 100% committed to this task," he added.

During this month, several gas cylinder explosions have been reported at both industrial commercial establishments as well as at the domestic household level, including two restaurants in Weligama and Colombo 7 as well as a bakery in Ratnapura. Yesterday alone, three explosions were reported from Arachchikattuwa, Kegalle, and Hatton.

Last Saturday (27), Opposition and Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Leader Sajith Premadasa said that former CAA Executive Director Thushan

Gunawardena had alleged that the propane-butane ratio in gas cylinders had been changed to 50:50, while energy expert Nimal De Silva has said that by making the ratio 50:50, the pressure would change and lead to gas cylinder explosions.

Former CAA Executive Director Thushan Gunawardena told *The Morning* earlier this year that test samples from the 18 litre gas cylinder and 12.5 kg gas cylinder of both Litro Gas Lanka and Laugfs Gas have found that they contain a 50:50 composition of butane and propane. "This is dangerous for domestic use and we are therefore concerned about the safety of the public. The usual composition is 80% butane and 20% propane. We have informed the relevant ministries regarding the matter," Gunawardena told *The Morning* at the time.

The 18 litre gas cylinder was then removed from market circulation by Litro Gas Lanka. Gunawardena, speaking to the media recently, has blamed the gas companies for the recent explosions in kitchens.

However, speaking to *The Morning* last week, Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. Chairman Theshara Jayasinghe assured that the composition of gas in the cylinders has not been changed in an unsafe manner, adding: "The composition is 30% propane and 70% butane. We are strictly in compliance with the SLSI." Meanwhile, Laugfs Gas PLC Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Chaminda Ediriwickrama told *The Morning* that there is no relationship between the product composition and the incidents of the recent explosions.

Alagiyawanna's...

He said that this is because the report was sent to the University of Moratuwa, which has said that a single report cannot lead to a proper decision on the matter.

"We took two samples on 26 November and we received one report on 27 November which we sent to the University of Moratuwa. They said that a decision cannot be taken based on one report. Representatives from the Sri Lanka Accreditation Board for Conformity Assessment (SLAB) were in the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation's (CPC) lab yesterday where 12 gas samples were collected from the Ratnapura, Colombo, Galle, Kalutara, Kurunegala, and Gampaha Districts. We are most likely to get those reports today (29). We will give them to the University of Moratuwa and within this week, we will present to the Parliament the university's decisions and ideas on the matter, including their most immediate solutions, and medium-term and long-term proposals," said Alagiyawanna, while speaking in Parliament last morning.

Alagiyawanna had said that a report on the recent incidents of reported gas explosions will be presented yesterday in Parliament, following investigations by the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC).

"The gas cylinders which are in the market now have 30% propane and 70% butane, with 5% changes either way. We have directed samples of both Laugfs Gas PLC and Litro Gas to the CPC and to a private company to test the quality of them. I will receive a report on this and I will discuss it with all the relevant institutions first. By Monday (yesterday), I will present a report to Parliament on this."

During this month, several gas cylinder-based explosions have been reported at both industrial commercial establishments as well as at the domestic household level, including two restaurants in Weligama and Colombo 7 and a bakery in Ratnapura. Yesterday alone, three explosions were reported from Arachchikattuwa, Kegalle, and Hatton, respectively.

Meanwhile, Opposition and Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Leader Sajith Premadasa requested last Saturday (27) in Parliament that Alagiyawanna table the three investigative reports prepared by Intertek Lanka (Pvt.) Ltd. in April this year, upon the Consumer Affairs Authority's (CAA) request. He claimed that the said reports show that the 12.5 kilogramme (kg) gas cylinders in the market have a composition of 50% propane and 50% butane, and not 30% and 70%, respectively.

Alagiyawanna said that he tabled the said reports in Parliament yesterday. "We have nothing to hide. We can give any information. We also want to put an end to these incidents. That is our responsibility. From 2015 to 31 October 2021, there have been 233 such incidents involving products from both companies (Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. and Laugfs Gas PLC). I am not trying to justify the current incidents. We must accept that presently, a large number of these incidents are occurring in a short period of time," said Alagiyawanna.

When *The Morning* contacted Alagiyawanna, he confirmed that these three reports were on the composition of gas in a 12.5 kg gas cylinder.

Meanwhile, SJB Parliamentarian Mujibur Rahuman claimed that the Intertek study on the composition of gas in a 12.5 kg gas cylinder, as commissioned by the CAA on 27 April 2021, shows that the composition is 50% butane and 50% propane.

"Former Litro Gas Lanka Chairman sent a letter to the CAA Director General on 28 April 2021 where he noted that the gas composition of a 12.5 kg gas cylinder is 20% propane and 80% butane. So they have indicated that this is the standard gas composition. However, the report by Intertek on 27 April 2021 shows that in a 12.5 kg gas cylinder, the composition is 50% butane and 50% propane. I demand that the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) get involved in

the matter and arrest these officials," Rahuman said in Parliament yesterday.

Speaking to *The Morning* last week, current Litro Gas Lanka Chairman Theshara Jayasinghe assured that the composition of gas in the cylinders has not been changed in an unsafe manner.

"The composition is 30% propane and 70% butane. We are strictly in compliance with the Sri Lanka Standards Institute (SLSI)."

Meanwhile, Laugfs Gas Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Chaminda Ediriwickrama told *The Morning* that there is no relationship between the product composition and the incidents of the recent explosions.

Former CAA Executive Director Thushan Gunawardena told *The Morning* earlier this year that test samples from the 18 litre gas cylinder and 12.5 kg gas cylinder of both Litro Gas Lanka and Laugfs Gas have found that they contain a 50:50 composition of butane and propane. "This is dangerous for domestic use and we are therefore concerned about the safety of the public. The usual composition is 80% butane and 20% propane. We have informed the relevant ministries regarding the matter," Gunawardena told *The Morning* at the time.

The 18 litre gas cylinder was then removed from market circulation by Litro Gas Lanka. Gunawardena, speaking to the media recently, blamed the gas companies for the recent kitchen-based explosions.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) MP Madhura Withanage claimed in a press conference yesterday that consumers are also largely responsible for gas-based explosions due to their carelessness. "Electrical units are not properly constructed or updated in most places," claimed Withanage.

Bar Association...

"Many years ago, during the 1980s, the BASL had a Legal Aid Foundation. Many thousands of people benefitted from that service then. This came to a halt some time later. After several years, we are now launching this Anti-Torture Unit. When we looked at the options we had, we realised that torture, deaths in custody, and police brutality are some things that we are seriously committed to stopping. It is an important aspect of the rule of law," BASL President President's Counsel (PC) Saliya Pieris said yesterday, during the launch of the unit.

Pieris SC said that the BASL will introduce a hotline, manned by volunteers, who will take down the complaints. The unit will also co-ordinate with the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL).

"We hope that young lawyers will also get involved in this unit and that we will be able to train them. If we are to curb custodial torture, it will also have to reach the level of magistrate's courts. Thus, we will be introducing one slot in our legal education seminars to train lawyers about this matter at that level. This endeavour is in line with the private and unofficial Bar's consistent commitment to stopping torture and custodial violence," said Pieris PC.

Supreme Court (SC) Judge Justice S. Thuraiaraja PC, who was the Chief Guest at yesterday's event, said that more accountability at the higher levels means that the more the people at the ground level are safeguarded. Thuraiaraja PC noted that torture exists at many institutions, including within the Police Department, the Prisons Department, and universities.

"Torture also takes many forms such as psychological and physical forms. Thus, this is a timely gesture by the BASL."

Arjuna quits...

Sri Lanka's former Cricket World Cup-winning captain tendered his resignation to UNP Leader and former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe where he has given reasons for his decision to quit the party and also expressed his gratitude to Wickremesinghe for the responsibilities entrusted to him under the "Yahapalana" Government.

He also stated that the reason why he joined the UNP was to serve the nation as he felt was for the common good of all people, whereas after the party members left the UNP, Ranatunga still remained loyal to the UNP but his service served no purpose.

Additionally, Ranatunga's statement mentioned that after the 2020 election defeat, he had many hopes for the UNP to learn from the past and improve as a party, but to no avail. It was also mentioned that he felt it was not suitable for him to continue within the UNP and would like to tender his resignation effective today.

"I sincerely appreciate the leadership qualities that you promoted for the betterment of the nation," he informed the Party Leader in conclusion.

IGP testifies...

When the case was called up before the Trial-at-Bar Judges Namal Balalle, Adithya Patabendige, and Mohamed Irshaden last Friday (26), Senior Deputy Solicitor General (SDSG) Dileepa Peiris, appearing on behalf of the prosecution, requested the court to summon current IGP Wickramaratne, who is named as a witness in the case, to give evidence.

Accordingly, he arrived at the court at around 10 a.m. yesterday but the court had commenced its proceedings at 9.30 a.m. Therefore, the court advised the IGP that witnesses should appear before the court at the correct time.

When questioned about the responsibilities of the IGP regarding national security, the witness said that as a member of the National Security Council, the IGP has the powers to maintain law

and order. "It is a heavy responsibility. It cannot be confined to a framework. The IGP has a huge responsibility regarding national security," he said.

However, he stated that the actions taken by him as the IGP in any case may be different from the actions taken by the previous IGPs. He added that there was no rule that the actions taken by one IGP should be taken by all other IGPs.

Meanwhile, when queried as to whether the information provided by the State Intelligence Service (SIS) to the IGP should be 100% complete in order for an investigation to be commenced, Wickramaratne said that there was no need for the information to be 100% complete. "The IGP should investigate and act on the information received. The IGP should always think that there is an invisible side and therefore, make decisions in consultation with other officers. There are also times when individual decisions have to be made. The IGP should be prepared for such," he said.

The case is to be taken up again on 18 January 2022.

Sri Lanka...

"Sri Lanka has consistently supported the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to a sovereign State. The GoSL supported the UN Resolution granting Palestine "non-Member Observer status" in 2012. Sri Lanka continues to support full Member status for Palestine in the UN. Sri Lanka's long-standing position on the issue is that we support the diplomatic efforts to find a lasting solution and request both parties (Israel and Palestine) to engage in dialogue to achieve lasting peace. We believe that two states living side by side in harmony with one another within secure borders is key to achieving long-term security and prosperity. Thus, we reiterate the importance of an early implementation of the UN Resolution regarding the two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders," Balasuriya said in Parliament last Saturday (27).

The two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict seeks to establish an independent Palestinian State alongside the Israeli State.

"Since 1968, as the Chair of the UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, Sri Lanka has been one of the most significant voices in the UN on the subject of the unfortunate conditions of the occupied territories. We support Palestine in many multilateral forums," noted Balasuriya.

Meanwhile, Water Supply Minister Vasudeva Nanayakkara stressed the importance of uniting against western imperialism as a measure to achieve freedom in Palestine.

"Your neighbour is your biggest enemy – Palestine's biggest enemy is Israel. The biggest enemy's (Israel's) biggest supporter is the US. Palestine's freedom depends on the weakening of western imperialism. Western nations destroyed Iraq and Libya. We should unite against western imperialism and this is the only way of achieving Palestinian freedom," claimed Nanayakkara in Parliament said last Saturday.

CMC...

As they are also able to engage in active service for a longer period of time, it is essential to make use of their experiences and maturity, he added, proposing to extend the age limit for public servants' pension.

Accordingly, the two relevant Bills in this regard – the Minimum Retirement Age of Workers' Bill and the Termination of Employment of Workmen (Special Provisions) (Amendment) Bill – were endorsed by Parliament Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena on 16 November.

Accordingly, the "Minimum Retirement Age of Workers" Act No. 28 of 2021 and "Termination of Employment of Workmen (Special Provisions) (Amendment)" Act, No. 29 of 2021 came into effect from 17 November.

FRs against...

Meanwhile, the court also ordered the Attorney General to present any objections before 6 December while the petitioners were given until 13 December to file counter objections.

The FR petitions were put forward by Archbishop of Colombo His Eminence Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, Ven. Elle Gunawansa Thera, the Samagi Jana Balawegaya, former parliamentarians of Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Sunil Handunnett and Wasantha Samarasinghe, and a group including Ven. Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera, Dr. Gunadasa Amarasekara, and Dr. Wasantha Bandara.

The Cabinet of Ministers including Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, West Coast Power Ltd., New Fortress Energy, and the Attorney General were among those named as respondents in the case.

It was previously notified that the Attorney General would appear on behalf of the Prime Minister and the cabinet members, except for three ministers, namely Udaya Gammanpila, Vasudeva Nanayakkara, and Wimal Weerawansa, who were represented by President's Counsel Uditha Igalahewa.

On 12 November, the Attorney General requested the Supreme Court to hear the FR petitions filed challenging the Yugadanavi Power Plant deal before a full bench.

Litro sends...

In the letter dated 26 November 2021, Litro's attorney informed that materials maintained by the company at all times are kept at high standards

of safety ensuring that cylinders, cylinder filling operations, storage and use of LPG and LPG-related accessories are on par with internationally recommended standards.

Further, it was outlined that Litro Gas meets the safety recommendations published by Sri Lanka Standards Institute (SLS), setting out the specifications for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) published as Sri Lanka Standard 712.

"In the said context, my clients have at all times material taken necessary precautionary measures to ensure the end consumer is very well protected from the general hazard posed by the use of LPG," the letter stated.

Accordingly, the attorney states that as per her client's instructions, the article concerned has misled the general public of Sri Lanka and the users of LPG gas, including that of both commercial and industrial scale customers of Litro Gas.

It was also pointed out that the Government Analyst's Department, by its communication dated 25 November 2021, had informed that the said assertions contained in the impugned article are false.

"I am instructed by my clients that you have carried out and/or caused to carry out the aforementioned publication containing blatant lies with a view to tarnish the good name, reputation and the goodwill of my clients in the eyes of the buying public of Sri Lanka," the letter informed.

As a result of the serious loss and damage caused to the company due to the article, it estimates that loss to be in the region of Rs. 1 billion. Therefore, the letter demands the journalist to cease and desist the "malicious campaign" intended at defaming Litro Gas.

"In the event of your failure to do so, I have instructed by my client to institute legal action for recovery of damages and cost of suit thereof," the letter concluded.

Bi-annual...

Accordingly, when contacted by *The Morning* to inquire as to whether the Health Ministry would consider the administration of a biannual Covid-19 vaccine dose any time soon, the Health Ministry's Communications Director, Public Health Services Deputy Director General and Disaster Preparedness and Response Division Head, Dr. Hemantha Herath said: "A decision has not yet been taken to administer a biannual dose. However, there are committees under the Health Ministry which are looking into these matters and such committees are currently analysing the scientific data with regard to the matter."

In response to reports that the effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccines decreases several months after vaccination, Dr. Herath, on an earlier occasion told *The Morning* that it is more important to adhere to the preventive health guidelines in order to control the Covid-19 pandemic, since it was known from the beginning that the Covid-19 vaccines do not provide 100% protection against the virus.

He further said that the contraction of Covid-19 would not be prevented merely because someone has got the vaccines, and therefore urged the public to follow the Covid-19-related health guidelines properly.

According to the Epidemiology Unit, as of 8.30 p.m. on 28 November, a total of 29,668,731 Covid-19 vaccine doses have been administered in Sri Lanka, including 2,898,224 doses of the Oxford AstraZeneca Covishield vaccine, 22,868,499 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine, 314,911 doses of the Sputnik V vaccine, 1,999,514 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, and 1,587,583 doses of the Moderna vaccine. In addition, 521,483 Pfizer-BioNTech doses have been administered as booster third doses.

HRCSL begins...

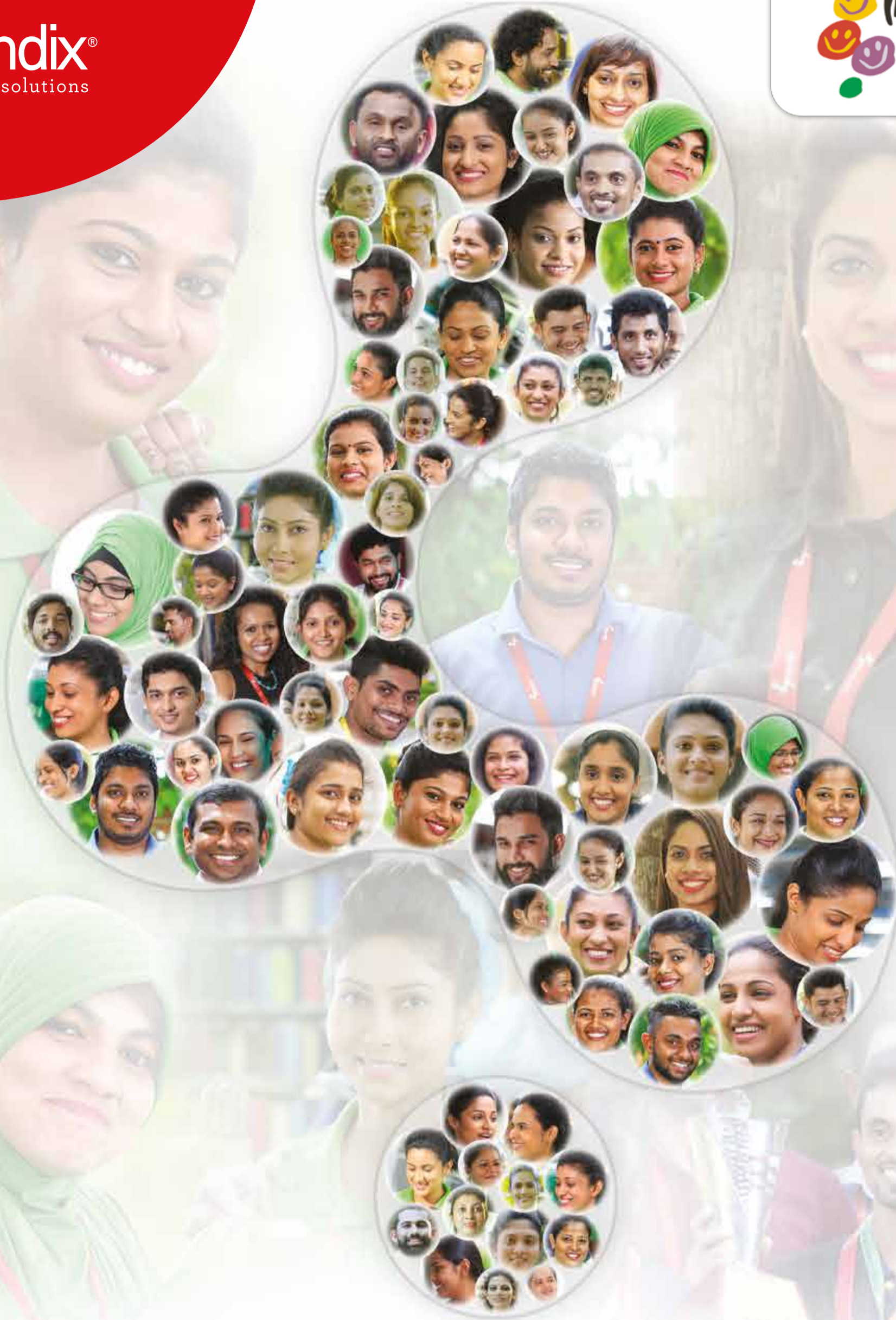
The Mullaitivu Press Club engaged in a wide range of protests on Sunday (28), condemning the assault of the individual by the name of V. Vishwachandran Mullaitivum last Saturday (27), a freelance independent journalist, who was assaulted by three officers attached to the 59 Brigade of the Sri Lanka Army.

Video footage showed Vishwachandran claiming that he was merely taking a photo of the "Mullivaikal" road sign when he was assaulted using "barbed wire". Pictures of Vishwachandran's hands show injuries, and he had later been admitted to hospital for treatment.

Three army officers attached to the 59 Brigade of the Sri Lanka Army, who were allegedly involved in the said assault, were reportedly arrested by the Police on Sunday (28) and later released on bail.

"He was beaten with palmyrah fronds wrapped with barbed wire. He suffered serious injuries and was admitted to the Mullaitivu District Hospital for treatment. Journalists in Sri Lanka, especially those in the war-affected North and East, are subjected to serious challenges amidst severe threats to their lives and profession. Despite 44 Tamil journalists being abducted or subjected to forced disappearances or killed, none of the perpetrators have been brought to justice," the Mullaitivu Press Club said in a statement on Sunday.

The assault had occurred on the day of "Maaveerar Naal", a commemorative day observed across the North and East as a mark of respect and remembrance of those who died during the civil war. Although reports show that several courts denied requests by the Sri Lanka Police to ban the planned commemorative events, many media outlets detailed the heavy military presence during the events last Saturday.



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We are proud to have been recognized for the seventh time as Sri Lanka's
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for sustaining thousands of livelihoods, for our contribution towards the
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Responsibility in festivity

To most of us, December is special – while those who celebrate Christmas do not want to miss the biggest festival of the year, those who do not celebrate it still decide to enjoy their long holidays, nights out, family gatherings, and the end of another year. However, as has been experienced in the earlier part of this year, the country is not really at a time it can freely and happily celebrate as before, because despite how much we want to think that the Covid-19 pandemic situation is getting better, the virus is not done with us yet and clearly has other plans of an expansionist nature.

According to those working to rid the world of Covid-19, the new normal is the only normal we can live in, for the foreseeable future.

During the past few weeks, local health authorities have reiterated many times that the severity of the pandemic in fact is not getting better, and that even though the number of Covid-19 cases and related deaths are lower than what we saw before the most recent lockdown was lifted, they are still at an alarming level for a tiny country like Sri Lanka. The country still records 600 to 700 Covid-19 cases every day, and according to the Health Promotion Bureau (HPB), our fatality rate is higher than that of countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and India, which recorded an unimaginably large number of Covid-19 cases.

The world is now dealing with a new Covid-19 variant, named Omicron, which many health experts say is more dangerous than the previously identified variants, and in a context where Sri Lanka has opened its borders to tourists, we cannot rule out the possibility of this new variant entering Sri Lanka. This calls for more attention and responsibility.

In this context, holding celebrations, which are essentially gatherings, are not very advisable. Even though the health authorities can impose a lockdown or other restrictions to prevent people from gathering, what they can do is limited and the people almost always find a way to do what they want. Therefore, the change should begin from the society, and since individual behaviour is not something the laws and regulations can easily govern, the change should come from the people. The people should remember how the Sinhala and Tamil New Year led to Covid-19 cases and related deaths despite Covid-19 safety guidelines having been issued.

Therefore, this is high time for attitudinal changes, also because the measures we relied on, predominantly lockdowns and vaccines, starting to prove that they are not as effective as we envisioned them to be, and that what can save us again reverts to the initial, most rudimentary measure of limiting physical contact with others. On the one hand, the vaccines, which were first said to be capable of preventing infections, were later reduced to a measure that can prevent Covid-19-related deaths and severe complications; and on the other hand, lockdowns is not something a nation can continue indefinitely due to the social and economic challenges they entail.

Also, it would not be wrong to say that we are entering an era that calls for attitudinal changes – the people should understand that the severity of the virus is changing for the worse and that the importance of human lives outweighs the importance of holding celebrations. Most importantly, we have lived with the pandemic long enough to know that being vaccinated is not really a license to move about and meet people freely.

No one wants another lockdown, as we just started rejoicing at the lifting of the lockdown. However, whether Sri Lanka has to go for another lockdown or not largely depends on the people. In this context, in this festive season, let us limit celebrations to immediate family members and friends, to make it a smaller but meaningful Christmas and end of year celebration.

The President's 'breakout moments' were small beer

BY RAJPAL ABEYNAYAKE

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has said that he totally banned the import of ethanol and substituted local produce, as a result of which the sugar cane cultivator is now in business. He has also said that he banned saffron imports and successfully substituted the locally cultivated variety. The same was done with pepper, he has said.

He was reciting some of the achievements of his Government in a recent speech. No doubt these were steps in the right direction – and nobody would have previously thought of these import substitutions that generated jobs, and spurred local production.

If these were the signal achievements of this Government, how was it that there was very little ground-level appreciation of his efforts? We hardly hear anyone say what a stupendous achievement Gotabaya Sir made possible with ethanol, or what a master stroke that was with saffron – never mind black pepper.

Why are the most touted achievements of the President apparently under a bushel? Are our people rank ingrates? Don't they know that a revolution is turning on ethanol, even as he speaks?

Instead of raucous celebrations on ethanol or cheers about a "saffron revolution", what the people have been vocalising is a litany about difficulties, shortages, and a forex crisis.

What gives? Why are this Government's signal achievements going unsung?

It's because, though the President may have his heart in the right place, there is no transformative change in the economy just because a few commodities have been produced at home.

In other words, the President has eminently got the small beer flawlessly right, but in the big picture, we are veering on near-disaster.

There are some countries that are having a bigger breakout moment growing poppy furtively; there is marijuana tourism in the Seychelles, making a bigger buck than we made on tourism since we embarked on that industry. No, this writer is not advocating marijuana hedonism (or tourism for that matter) in this Buddhist country, even though the maverick MP Diana Gamage



Import substitution has to be done with export in mind, in particular. Then again, even when there is minimal import substitution, it's the export sector that matters. Open and nimble is not about import substitution. It is about opening up breakout export opportunities and thinking big. There is no place in that equation for complaining how badly we were hit by Covid-19

suggested something to that effect in Parliament recently.

She made statements alluding to the fact that Sri Lanka is blessed with cannabis and its time to grow extensively, so that there can be a lucrative cannabis export industry. She said it wasn't a drug and was all medicinal, and she had enough cannabis products at home, which she's afraid to bring into Parliament.

This writer is not advocating a revival based on cannabis, but the lesson is that we need a production economy, and Diana in her maverick fashion teaches us that lesson. The country has been made into a small-time import substitution experiment, but that has got us nowhere near the promised breakout moment.

There is a distinct inability to think big and believe big, which is why the refrain is that "the President has had oodles of bad luck". It's what I hear from the proverbial man and woman on the street. The President, they say, is plagued by ill-luck, and that's written in his star.

That may be why there is so much of looking up to Gnanakka, but that's

a different story. The story of ill-luck has a distinct genesis.

Covid-19 is not necessarily ill-luck. Vietnam's breakout moment was Covid-19, and the country had the best emerging economy of 2021, would you believe it? It was by far Asia's top-performing economy during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The genesis of the story that the President is plagued by ill-luck is that it's all in the mind, and whether our powers that be have Gnanakka in mind to do something about that or not, what's psychological is psychological. It's not to suggest that handling the economy in the global period of Covid-19-related slump was a walk in the park.

But ill-luck is a perception. Stories are legion of countries that performed better than normal during the pandemic, and Vietnam is just one of them.

Small beer is small beer – and simple piecemeal import substitution is not revolutionary, period. It may be true that there were previous governments that didn't think of any strategy to produce locally, in the large scale or small. To that extent, the ethanol and pepper experiments, etc. have worked. But that's not a transformation, especially in the time of a pandemic when the economy is hit before we are out of the gate, due to the tourism slump, etc.

At the very least, small economies that aspire to breakout should be nimble enough to take the hits. This is explained in the book *Open and Nimble: Finding Stable Growth in Small Economies* (Leaderman

and Lesniak). "Small economies tend to compensate for their export concentration by being nimble in the sense of being able to change their production and export structure relatively quickly over time." That's a direct quote.

We can't think big, if, particularly during times of crisis, "small beer" is the only solution that comes to mind (i.e. ethanol substitution.) When Mahinda Rajapaksa was President, it's known that he didn't like the initial tourist board slogan of that time – "Sri Lanka, Small Miracle".

It was changed to "Land Like No Other". But it's not merely the slogan that needs to be big. The slogan may even connote small or even tiny, but it's the ideas that need to be big.

Ethanol substitution cannot be crowded about when the economy as a whole was essentially cramped by needless lockdowns, etc.

The office of the presidency in the main could not handle the optics. It was thought that the mere "optics" of not closing down would be devastating.

Vietnam didn't think that way. There were never any nationwide lockdowns, but there were some of them in the so-called epicentres in that country. All the while "open and nimble" economic innovation took place, and Vietnam became the focus for industry that was displaced from China.

Just last week, President Rajapaksa congratulated the exporters for almost reaching pre-pandemic levels of export, as he said. But has that helped the forex situation or with regard to all other negative perceptions?

Hardly. Is that ill-luck, too? No, it's because the economy has been hamstrung by "small thinking" and snuck away in a corner. The President is eternally in complaint mode, saying we were beset by the Covid-19 ravages. It doesn't help complaining when he has brought half the ravages upon himself and the economy by being so obsessed with the "optics".

Import substitution has to be done with export in mind, in particular. Then again, even when there is minimal import substitution, it's the export sector that matters.

Open and nimble is not about import substitution. It is about opening up breakout export opportunities and thinking big. There is no place in that equation for complaining how badly we were hit by Covid-19.

Small beer is small beer – and simple piecemeal import substitution is not revolutionary, period. It may be true that there were previous governments that didn't think of any strategy to produce locally, in the large scale or small. To that extent, the ethanol and pepper experiments, etc. have worked. But that's not a transformation

Yes, we were badly hit by Covid-19 – who wasn't? Vietnam was, too. We also had negatives such as a relative lack of foreign reserves and a debt crisis unlike, say Thailand, which in 2021 is classed above China as an emerging market. Our disadvantages, however, were all the more reason we had to be rational about Covid-19 optics, and had to be 10 times more innovative than Thailand.

That didn't happen, and there were no breakout moments, but there were enough dismal moments and melancholy days.

In some ways, the "small beer speech", as it shall be anointed, about ethanol is emblematic. Gotabaya Rajapaksa bit off more than he could chew when he offered to transform the country as President. Yes, he nor anyone anticipated Covid-19, but if he was true leadership material, he would have had the presence of mind to move beyond ethanol and complaining eternally about Covid-19. Churchill didn't say "nobody expected this bloody war".

He said "we shall fight on the beaches", and when someone said Britain's neck would be wrung like that of a chicken, he said "some chicken, some neck".

Leadership takes a little more than a semi-confessional speech. In fact, it takes a lot more than that.

(The writer is a former Editor-in-Chief of three national English language publications and a practising Attorney-at-Law. He is an Editors' Guild award-winning columnist, and contributing writer and columnist for Nikkei Asian Review and South China Morning Post, while his editorials have been published in The Australian) The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of this publication.

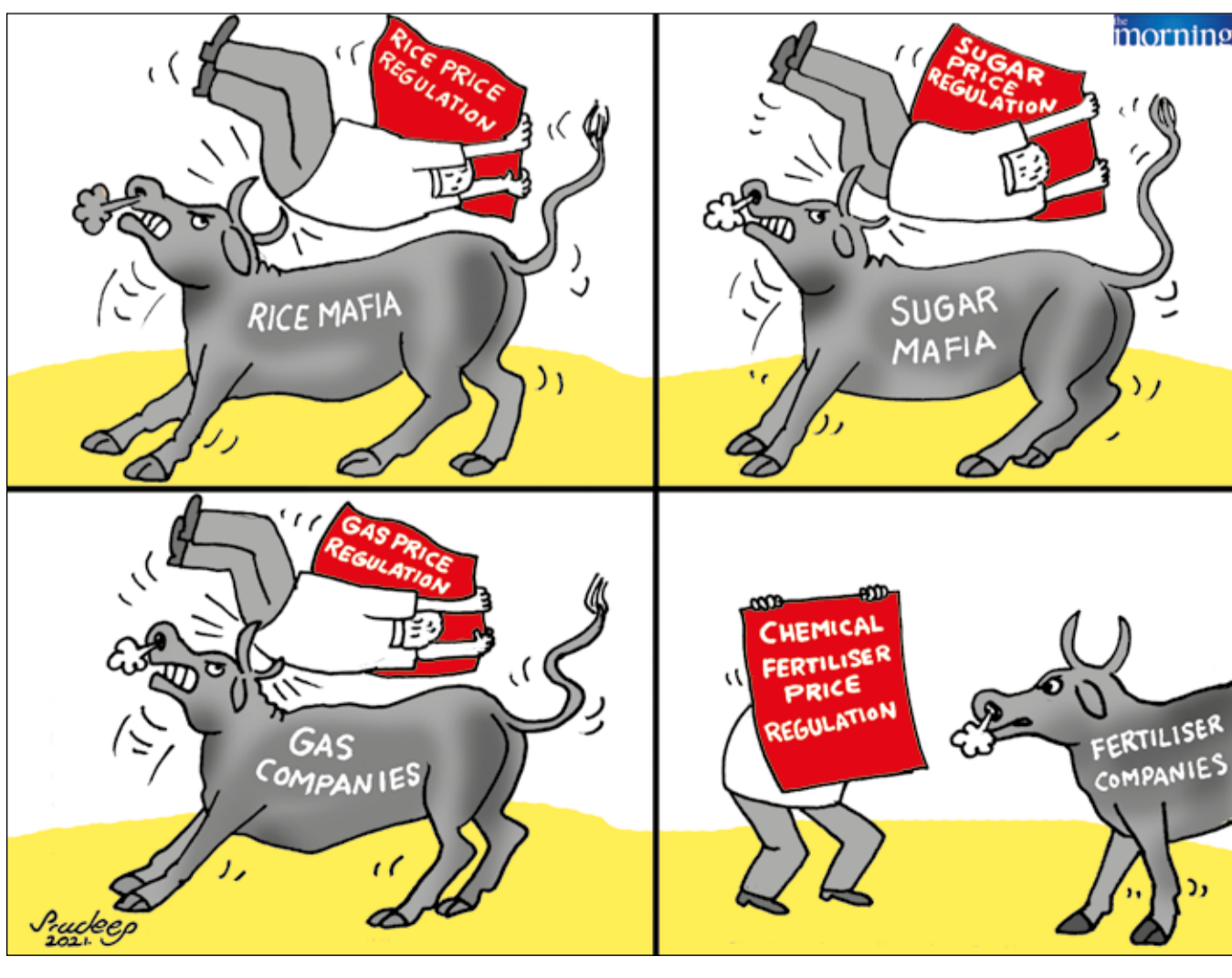




PHOTO SAMAN ABESIRIWARDANA

The mystery of 'kitchen bombs' and the science of consumer safety

BY SUMUDU CHAMARA

“During the past few weeks, we struggled in queues and exposed ourselves to Covid-19 just to get a cylinder of gas, and now, we have to live in fear because we don't know when that cylinder will cause an explosion.”

These were the words of a liquid petroleum (LPG) consumer, who expressed fear of LPG-related explosions and fires that are becoming worryingly more common in Sri Lanka than before. To add to the plight of the people affected by the skyrocketing cost of living and the Covid-19 pandemic, Sri Lanka now has an issue about the safety and safe use of LPG cylinders.

Explosions and debates

During the past few months, a string of explosions, said to have been caused by gas leaked from LP gas cylinders meant to be used for domestic purposes, were reported from several areas of the country, including Colombo 7, Weligama, Homagama, Ratnapura, Pannipitiya, and Nikaweratiya. Another two such incidents were reported from the Jaffna and Puttalam areas on 28 November, which were the latest of these incidents. However, most of these incidents were reported this month.

While a change in the composition of LPG was mainly blamed for these explosions, LPG providers, i.e. Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. (State) and Laugfs Gas PLC (private), have denied these allegations, saying that they have always maintained the composition of LPG in accordance with the locally and internationally recognised standards, which do not allow changes that may pose a threat to the consumers. They further claimed that the current composition had been determined taking into account Sri Lanka's weather, among other factors.

The Sri Lanka Standards (SLS) certificate issued for LPG cylinders is SLS 712.

However, the matter of composition emerged several months ago, when then Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) Executive Director Thushan Gunawardena raised concerns over the composition of LPG that is distributed for domestic consumption.

Speaking during a television programme, he claimed: “There is a SLS standard for LPG cylinders. However, the standard is only for the cylinder's quality, not for the LPG composition contained within it. The gas companies can fill them with anything and sell. So far, the composition of LPG was 20% propane and 80% butane. What actually happened through the introduction of the 18-litre LPG cylinder was making the propane and butane percentage 50% each. Propane is an industrial gas, and not a domestic gas. Other countries don't have the same 50% each composition.”

Meanwhile, Government Analyst's Department Senior Assistant Analyst Roshan Fernando explained to the media that even though inspections were carried out at the places where LPG-related explosions were reported, these inspections did not show that any LPG cylinders had exploded.

He added that what had happened, in fact, was that gas had leaked to the normal atmosphere, thereby mixing with other gases present in the atmosphere, which had then resulted in explosions. He added that this could happen especially through the presence of an electric short or spark, and that paying attention to the electric circuits of houses, therefore, is extremely important. In this regard, Fernando further noted that in certain places that were inspected, they could see electric wires and domestic wiring circuits that had not been installed properly. “Since such circuits could create electric shorts or sparks, the likelihood of such accidents (explosions) taking place due to old refrigerators is high,” he emphasised.

Quality of appliances

As the matter became a national-level topic, the discourse on LPG-related explosions expanded, and several parties expressed different opinions about the matter. They blamed the inferior quality of gas cylinders and also other appliances such as regulators, valves, and hoses, which are

used to obtain gas from the cylinder.

Professionals' National Front Secretary Kapila Renuka Perera, an engineer by profession, stressed that therefore, it is of extreme importance that people be vigilant about the quality of not only LPG, but also the quality and usage of appliances they use in domestic environments.

Litro Gas Lanka Chemical Reaction Engineer and Health Safety and Environment Director Jayantha Basnayake, speaking to the media last week, claimed that the LPG cylinders that are currently in use can handle six times the current, normal pressure, and that the cylinders are unlikely to explode due to a change in pressure.

Moreover, speaking to the media, Laugfs Holdings Chairman W.K.H. Wegapitiya also denied allegations that the composition of LPG has been changed, while claiming that gas cylinders have been manufactured in accordance with the international standards.

Meanwhile, State Minister of Co-operative Services, Marketing Development, and Consumer Protection Lasantha Alagiyawanna last week said that steps have been taken to look into the matter, including the widespread allegation pertaining to the change in the quality and composition of LPG. Even though the report of this probe was scheduled to be presented to Parliament yesterday (29), at the time of writing this article, the State Minister had not presented it, and he was unreachable to obtain more information about the status or results of the probe.

Detection and precautions

Despite the disputes about the cause/s of these explosions, one fact most of the people who commented on the matter shared was that gas cylinders themselves did not explode in the said cases, even though they are referred to as explosions of cylinders, and that what has actually happened in almost all cases reported so far was gas leakages, in turn leading to an explosion or a fire, mostly in the presence of other risk factors such as electric sparks and highly inflammable material in the immediate surroundings.

According to scientists, in addition to gas leaks, a number of reasons can cause LPG-related explosions or fires, and the most common reason where cylinders are involved is improperly installed regulators and hoses. To prevent that, regularly checking whether those parts have been installed

properly and are functioning as well as using high-quality appliances are recommended.

Regardless of the reason/s behind the explosions, it is crucial that those who use LPG take precautionary measures to prevent or at least minimise the damage caused by such incidents.

Detection of a gas leak is the first step to taking any measure to prevent explosions, and there are several simple ways it can be done in a domestic environment.

One of the easiest ways of carrying out such a test is applying soap foam around the opening of the LPG cylinder, covering the regulator, valve, and the end of the hose that is attached to the cylinder. If a formation of bubbles is observed, it can be considered as a sign of a gas leak, according to internationally accepted practices.

Even though detecting the smell of LPG while the cylinder is connected to the regulator and hose is also a common sign of a gas leak, it is not a 100% reliable method to find out whether there is a gas leak, as it depends on other factors such as the ability of a person to smell and the presence of other odours in the immediate surrounding area. In addition, hearing a hissing sound from near the opening of the LPG cylinder could also be a sign of a gas leak. Even though it is also not a 100% reliable method, it is known as a common sign of a gas leak.

Even though such observations cannot be considered 100% reliable methods and call for a more methodical inspection to determine whether there is actually a gas leak, there is a high likelihood of such an observation being a result of a gas leak, and such observations, especially when both a LPG smell and a hissing sound are observed at the same time, should not therefore be ignored.

In addition, a device known as the gas leak alarm or detector is available in the local market, including in several online stores, and they too can help conduct an inspection in a domestic environment without any specialised knowledge or experience, with this method being identified as a reliable device in international markets as well.

In the event signs of a gas leak are identified, people can take several immediate measures to prevent or minimise the likelihood of a fire or an explosion.

Among them are immediately stopping the use of LPG (if LPG

was being used when the leak was identified), i.e. switching off the gas cooker, and removing the cylinder from the cooker and putting the safety clip (attached to the regulator or valve) back on. In addition, if there are any inflammable materials in the immediate surrounding area, such materials should be removed immediately. Also, if there are any fires, putting out that fire should receive priority.

While removing the cylinder from the house could also be a precaution, house dwellers must do so only if they are certain that their safety would not be jeopardised in attempting to do so. It could be risky when the safety clip or the regulator does not stop the gas leak or when gas has been leaking for more than a few minutes, and in such circumstances, distancing themselves from the cylinder and contacting the authorities is recommended.

Whether it is possible to remove the cylinder or stop the leak, opening windows and doors of the part of the house where the LPG cylinder is kept, in order to increase ventilation, is highly recommended. However, people must be vigilant about whether there are any inflammable materials or fires near the doors or windows that are being opened, and get rid of such before opening them. Also, refraining from using any device that could create a spark such as a light switch within the room where the leak is detected is recommended.

In the event of an explosion or a fire caused by or has occurred when there is a gas leak, moving as far away as possible from the place of such incident and contacting the relevant authorities including the Fire Services Department are recommended.

As a long-term measure, keeping the LPG cylinder away from the gas cooker (using a longer hose) – preferably at a place that does not get exposed to high temperatures or direct sunlight for a prolonged period of time – or outside the house has been recommended by, and is being practised in, a number of other countries. However, being vigilant about any damages to the hose, especially those caused by rats biting the hose, and covering the hose are also necessary.

Taking precautions and being aware of warning signs key to preventing and reducing damage caused by gas leak-related fires or explosions

In fact, this measure is becoming popular in Sri Lanka. Social media posts during the past few weeks showed that certain LPG consumers have started to keep their LPG cylinders outside the house and kitchen while using a longer hose to obtain gas, as a measure to avoid a fire or an explosion inside the house. But it should be emphasised here that the cylinders should not be exposed to the elements. Also, some companies had advertised lockable metal frames and cages for those who are willing to adopt the said measure to keep their LPG cylinders outside the house and away from house dwellers, while also giving the opportunity to keep LPG cylinders safe from burglars. However, this measure can also pose a certain danger as keeping it outside the house (without covering it) can expose the LPG filled cylinder to higher temperatures, which can, in turn, increase pressure inside the cylinder and result in an accident.

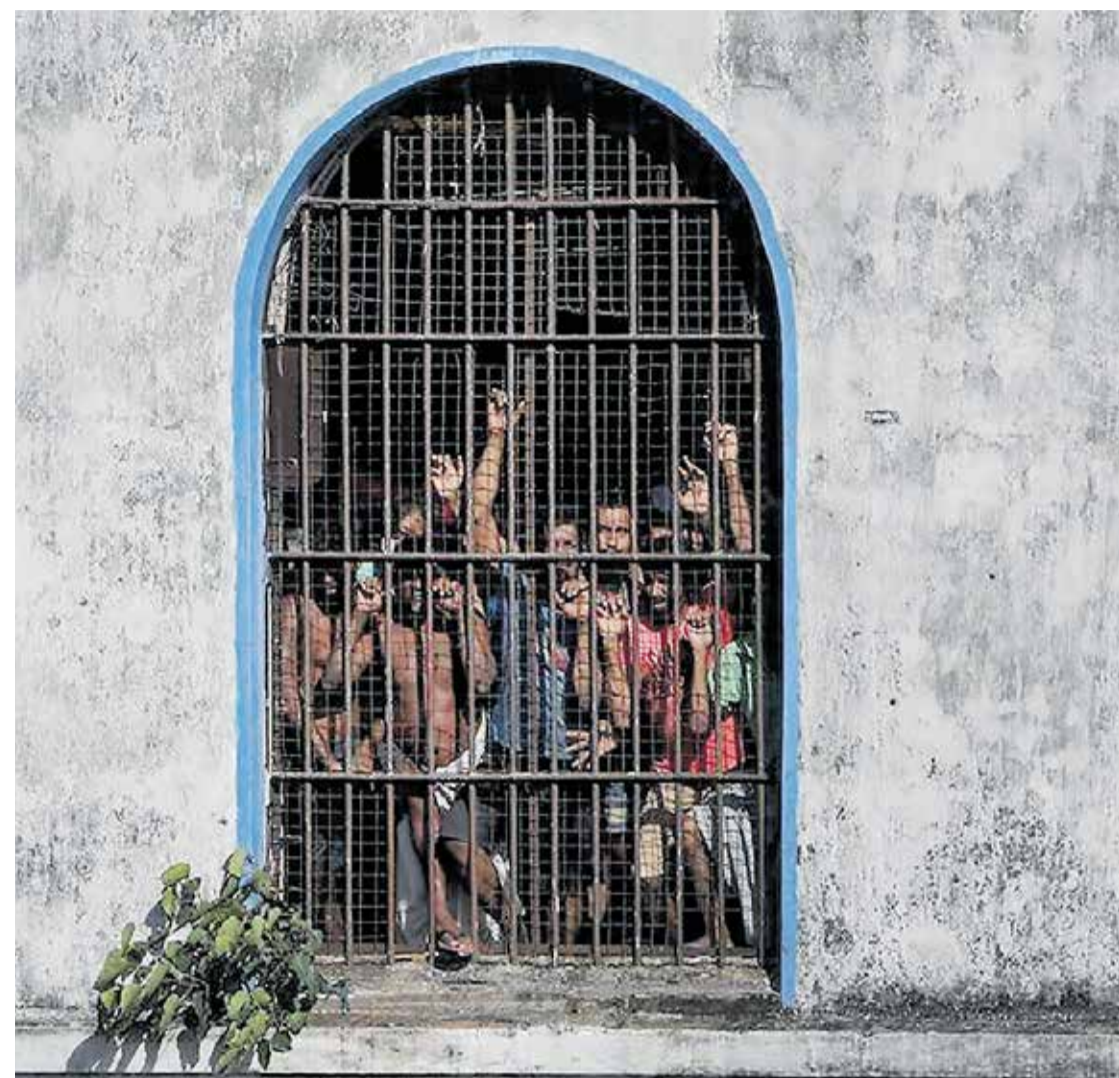
Another international best practice is replacing the regulator and the hose more frequently or as recommended by the manufacturer. However, attention should be paid to selecting high-quality regulators, those that can handle high pressure as well as the high temperature prevalent in Sri Lanka, and other appliances.

While the authorities are trying to find out the reasons for these explosions, identifying and finding solutions take time, and LPG consumers should, therefore, pay attention to adopting immediate, improvised measures to ensure that the cylinders of LPG they have been/are using are maintained properly and safely. Also, attitudinal changes are necessary to encourage the people to check their LPG supply more regularly and to make it a normal practice, and thereby not wait until a disaster happens.

Regular inspection and timely replacement of appliances necessary when using liquefied petroleum gas

Correction of convicts should not be limited to prison sentences: Local academics

● Note need for evidence-based development of criminal justice system



There are other correctional methods besides imprisonment, which can not only aid the rehabilitation of convicts, but also ease the burden on an overcrowded prison system

PHOTO © BLUE MOUNTAINS GAZETTE

BY RUWAN LAKNATH JAYAKODY

The future development and modification of the criminal justice system should be evidence-based and pay emphasis to types of post-conviction, non-imprisonment-based correction methods which include the suspension of the sentences of imprisonment, the supervision of island reconvicted criminals (IRCs), probation, and intermediate sanctions.

This observation was made in an editorial on “Correction methods available for convicts in Sri Lanka compared with American methods of correction”, which was authored by Prof. M. Vidanapathirana (attached to the Sri Jayewardenepura University’s Medical Sciences Faculty’s Forensic Medicine Department) and R.R. Ruwanpura (attached to the Karapitiya Teaching Hospital’s Judicial Medical Officer’s Office) and published in the *Medico-Legal Journal of Sri Lanka* 6 (2) in December 2018.

According to G. Newman’s “The punishment response”, punishment is pain or other unpleasant consequence to the offender who broke the rule, and results from an offense against a rule and is administered by others who represent the legal authority. For Vidanapathirana and Ruwanpura, the beneficial aspects of punishment include deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation or reform.

In the Sri Lankan criminal justice system, the laws are enforced by the Police, the suspects are prosecuted by the Attorney General, the punishments are imposed by the Judiciary, and the punishments are enforced by the correction agencies.

With regard to post-conviction correction methods, Vidanapathirana and Ruwanpura pointed out the need to ascertain how such methods have contributed to the rehabilitation of convicts as well as the reduction of crimes and recidivism.

Hence, Vidanapathirana and Ruwanpura conducted a descriptive cross-sectional study based on the latest secondary data on post-convictions in Sri Lanka in 2016, as published by the Statistics Division of the Department of Prisons in 2017, and other relevant secondary data published by the Police, the Probation and Child Care Services Department (DPPCS, which functions as a subject under the Child Development and Women’s Affairs Cabinet Ministerial or State Ministerial portfolio), the Judiciary, and the Community-Based Corrections Department (CBCD).

There are five methods of post-conviction corrections available, four of which are non-imprisonment-based correction methods: Suspension of the sentences of imprisonment, supervision of IRCs, probation, and intermediate sanctions.

Suspension of the sentences of imprisonment

As per Section 303 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP) Act No. 15 of 1979, the suspension of the sentence/s of imprisonment is granted only for first-time offenders, also known as first-timers or offenders who have no previous imprisonment, and imposed on offenders whose sentences do not exceed two years. The period of suspension should be more than five years and the fingerprints are taken. If any violation occurs, as per Section 303 of the CCP Act, the punishment will be reactivated.

Supervision of IRCs

The supervision of IRCs is done by the Police. IRCs are registered as IRCs by the Police following three or more significant offences being committed and convictions being received for such. Such offenders are graded into three groups, namely Grades A, B, and C. They are periodically supervised by the Police. If IRC Grade A, they are monitored by the Police on a weekly basis. If IRC Grade B, they are monitored by the Police every month. If IRC Grade C, they are monitored by the Police every three months. They can change their place of sleep permanently, only after obtaining permission from the Police, and they have to register with the Police under whose jurisdiction the new place of residence comes under. In the US, sex offenders are similarly registered and supervised.

Probation

There are two types of probation, “probation orders” and “probation hostels with certified schools”, the latter for minor offenders between the ages of 12 and 16 years, with such certified schools being located in Hikkaduwa, Makola, Jaffna, Keppetipola, Ranmuthugala, and Madatugama with 466 being granted and admitted to such certified schools in 2016, as per the Probation of Offenders Act No. 20 of 1958 and the DPPCS.

According to the DPPCS, a probation order means the rehabilitation of an offender without subjecting them to institutionalisation, a fine, or other punishments. In the case of minor offences, the punishment is suspended and probation orders are given for one to three years. Here, fingerprints are not taken. If, however, there is any violation, the court punishment will be reactivated.

The individual in question has to follow certain court-ordered rules such as meeting with their Probation Officer (PO) within 24 hours of the probation order and on one or more occasions per month; avoiding certain persons and places, and not being able to change the place of employment or

sleep without the approval of the PO; and having to obey the directions of the PO, such as refraining from using illegal drugs or excessive alcohol.

Minor offenders (12 to 16 years) are kept separately in probation and are sent to probation hostels with certified schools. Sri Lanka became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991 and ratified it in 1992, and in 1999, the DPPCS created a new post called the Child Rights Promotion Officer (CRPO) and such CRPOs are attached to the district and divisional secretariats.

Intermediate sanctions

Methods of intermediate sanctions involve “community-based correction orders” to do community work or an “order to pay fines, compensation, or restitution”. According to the CBCD, in 2016, such intermediate sanctions were granted to 14,086 convicts. Here, the whole idea behind it, Vidanapathirana and Ruwanpura explained, was to find something in between probation and prison where, while probation usually involves just telling the offender to go handle their problems, intermediate sanctions represent an attempt to tailor the punishment to the offender.

Sometimes the convicts are asked to pay the “fines” to the government, while, as per Section 17(4) of the CCP Act No. 15 of 1979, some convicts are asked to pay “compensation” to the victim, and “restitution”, as per Section 306(4) of the CCP Act No. 15 of 1979, involves the payment of money for restoring the stolen property.

However, in Sri Lanka, the majority of post-convicted prisoners, as per statistics of the Prisons Department in 2017, were “fine defaulters”. A community-based correction order, under the Community Based Corrections Act No. 46 of 1999, is granted when the term of imprisonment exceeds two years. For example, when such a convict is unable to pay a fine, compensation, or restitution, a community-based correction order is given, prior to which a “pre-sentence report” is sought from the Commissioner of Corrections, and then the consent of the offender is obtained and the conditions of the community-based correction order are provided in a prescribed form.

The convict has to perform unpaid community service at a named place – for example, cleaning a park, repairing a house, or picking up litter – as per Section 18 of the Community Based Corrections Act No. 46 of 1999. If a community-based correction order is offered, the offender has to report to the community correction centre of the particular judicial area. For a week, the offender has to do a minimum of unpaid work for 10 to 24 hours. The duration of the service should not be ordered for more than one year by magistrate’s courts and not more than three years by high courts, as per Section 5 of the Community Based Corrections Act No. 46 of 1999.

In the US, other methods of intermediate sanctions include “intensive supervised probation”, which allows for more monitoring and supervision; “boot camps”, which involve military-like training, “shock incarceration”, which is a split sentence to remand or send to prison for a short time (usually 30 days) and then release the inmate to the community under probation, where the inmate however does not know of such in advance; “halfway houses”, which are a middle point between prison and full release to the community; and “home confinement”, which is a cost-effective method that involves the use of house arrest, often combined with electronic ankle bracelets that track the offender’s movements (as noted in E.J. Latessa’s “Overview of correctional programmes in the USA”).

Imprisonment

Imprisonment-based corrections methods include closed prisons; remand prisons, which include open prison camps (sent to such based on the convict’s behaviour within the prison – located in Pallekele) and work camps (sent to such based on the convict’s behaviour within the

prison – located in Meethirigala, Homagama, Weeravala, Anuradhapura, Kadurugasara, and Hangilipola); death sentence (based on the offence committed); life imprisonment (based on the offence committed); training schools for youthful offenders (TSYO) between the ages of 16 and 22 years; rehabilitation (almost all prisoners are given some kind of rehabilitation, including by Rehabilitation Officers [ROs] who were formerly of the Prison Welfare Officer rank); and methods of release which involves three schemes – work release, home leave, and licence (parole). Moreover, “final discharge” is available on bail, after the payment of fines, on presidential pardon or after serving the sentence.

Imprisoned prisoners are categorised into three groups: First-time offenders, reconvicts with two convictions, and recidivists with more than two convictions.

As Vidanapathirana and Ruwanpura put it, the ultimate objective of imprisonment is to rehabilitate and reform the convicted offenders and to reintegrate them to society.

Remand prisons are meant for pre-conviction detentions, awaiting trial or bail. However, in Sri Lanka, additionally, post-convicted prisoners are also located in remand prisons for short terms. Vidanapathirana and Ruwanpura, therefore, noted that pre-convicted offenders should be kept separate from post-convicted offenders, according to their type of crime committed, such as violent, sexual assault, property, organised, and drug-related.

Yet, such separation is not strictly done in Sri Lankan remand prisons. In Sri Lanka, by 2016, there were 19 remand prisons and 11,582 (48%) of the post-convicted prisoners were in remand prisons as of 2017, according to the Statistical Division of the Prisons Department.

In closed prisons (such as Welikada and Mahara), there is a perimeter wall and the prisoners are held under maximum security conditions. Their inmates should also be kept separate according to their crime committed. Among the closed prisoners, there are four sub-categories of corrections, namely, prisoners who have been sentenced for less than five years, sent based on their behaviour within the prison, those sent to a large open prison camp, and those sent to medium-sized work camps.

With regard to the open prison camp (such as in Pallekele), prisoners with good conduct, who have served one-fourth of their sentence and with at least two years more to serve, are selected. As Vidanapathirana and Ruwanpura elaborated, the objective here is to rehabilitate and facilitate the re-integration into society with the main guiding principle being trust. Here, families are encouraged to meet the inmates often and such visits are not supervised by prison officers. Prisoners can build relationships with those in the free community and it is also encouraged by the Prisons Department for them to participate in community-based projects on an entirely voluntary basis.

Work camps are open institutions with no boundary walls. First-time offenders with a less than two-year sentence are transferred to these work camps. It is, Vidanapathirana and Ruwanpura noted, promoted due to the presence of a large number of first-time offenders with short prison terms, who should be kept away from hardcore offenders. These prisons have minimum security conditions and the objective, as stated in G. Kuruppu’s “Current issues in correctional treatment and effective countermeasures”, is rehabilitation.

Based on the severity of the offence committed, some serve life imprisonment and some serve the death sentence. Some prisoners who received the death sentence are under appeal, awaiting the final decision for the commutation of the execution by hanging.

There is also a training school for youthful offenders in Watereka for offenders between the ages of 16 and 22 years.

All post-convicted prisoners are provided with different levels of rehabilitation which include vocational training, farming, and religious

activities. Every convicted prisoner sentenced to rigorous imprisonment is required to work for eight hours a day and therefore, carpentry, tailoring, laundry, motor mechanism, printing, bread making and baking, weaving, knitting, masonry, soap making, mat making, brush making, polishing, and the manufacture of coir goods are taught, and they also engage in agriculture and animal husbandry. According to the Prisons Department, the value of the industrial and agricultural output in 2016 was Rs. 153,709,118, with bakery products giving 46% of the income. Prisoners have to attend education, recreation, and religious activities.

Under the work release scheme, prisoners are allowed to get themselves employed in the open community, unescorted, during the day, but have to return to a work release centre or a prison for the night.

In the home leave scheme, long-term prisoners are permitted to visit their homes unescorted, for a maximum period of seven days at a time, once in six months. The purpose of this, according to the Prisons Department, is to facilitate the re-integration into society and family, upon his/her return.

Under the licence scheme (parole), certain categories of prisoners are conditionally released from prison prematurely, under the supervision of prison rehabilitation officers. The prisoners who have been sentenced to four years or more and who have completed half of their sentence, prisoners who have served six years of their sentence and prisoners who have served five years of their sentence with one year in an open prison camp become eligible for parole. A social report with a plan of his/her rehabilitation in the community is prepared by the rehabilitation officers and submitted to the License Board.

As per the Community Based Corrections Act No. 46 of 1999, prisoners who violate their conditions of release have their license revoked. Parole, as emphasised on by Vidanapathirana and Ruwanpura, has three purposes: Firstly, to assist the parolee to adjust to the normal life and help re-integrate to the community where with the help of the rehabilitation officer, a parolee may obtain help with problems concerning employment, residence, finances, or other personal problems; secondly, it prevents the parolee from committing new crimes; and thirdly, it prevents the needless imprisonment of those who are not likely to commit further crimes.

According to the US Parole Commission’s Rules and Procedures Manual of the Justice Department, parole is granted upon the satisfaction of a few conditions, such as the inmate having substantially observed the rules of the institution, the release would not depreciate the seriousness of the offence or promote disrespect for the law, and the release would not jeopardise public welfare. In the US, the grant or denial of parole is at the discretion of the Parole Board, and if an inmate is thus released, they are placed under the supervision of a parole officer for a certain time, after being released.

Finally, when post-convicted prisoners are discharged, they are registered and notification will be done.

J.A. Bell noted that the efficiency of correctional methods as an alternative to imprisonment needs to be evaluated, adding that the random group design, matched group design, prediction analysis, and prediction research have been suggested as research models for this purpose.

Furthermore, Vidanapathirana and Ruwanpura pointed out that since the majority of the post-convicted prisoners in Sri Lanka are young, married, male adults (between the ages of 23 and 39 years), convicted for drug-related offences and have studied up to less than grade eight, and do not have the capacity to pay fines, compensation, or restitution, imposing large fines may further increase the number of prisoners and result in further burden being imposed upon the government.



Plastic pellets inside a dead fish washed ashore on a beach near Wellawatte, Sri Lanka
PHOTO SAMAN ABESIRIWARDANA

“The pellets themselves are a mixture of chemicals – they are fossil fuels,” said Tom Gammage at the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), an international campaign group. “But they act as toxic sponges. A lot of toxic chemicals – which in the case of Sri Lanka are already in the water – are hydrophobic (repel water), so they gather on the surface of microplastics.

“Pollutants can be a million times more concentrated on the surface of pellets than in the water,” he said. “And we know from lab studies that when a fish eats a pellet, some of those pollutants come loose.”

Nurdles also act as “rafts” for harmful bacteria such as E. coli or even cholera, one study found, transporting them from sewage outfalls and agricultural runoff to bathing waters and shellfish beds. The phenomenon of “plastic rafting” is increasing.

Yet nurdles, unlike substances such as kerosene, diesel, and petrol, are not deemed hazardous under the International Maritime Organisation’s (IMO’s) dangerous goods code for safe handling and storage. This is despite the threat to the environment from plastic pellets being known for about three decades, as detailed in a 1993 report from the US Government’s Environmental Protection Agency on how the plastics industry could reduce spillages.

Now environmentalists are joining forces with the Sri Lankan Government in an attempt to turn the X-Press Pearl disaster into a catalyst for change.

When the IMO’s marine environment protection committee met in London this week, Sri Lanka’s call for nurdles to be classified as hazardous goods attracted public support, with more than 50,000 people signing a petition. “There is nothing to stop what happened in Sri Lanka happening again,” said Gammage.

Last year, there were at least two nurdle spills. In the North Sea, a broken container on the cargo ship MV Trans Carrier lost 10 tonnes of pellets, which washed up on the coasts of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. In South Africa, a spill in August 2020 came after an accident in 2018, which affected up to 1,250 miles (2,000 km) of coastline. Only 23% of the 49 tonnes that were spilled were recovered. In 2019, 342 containers of plastic pellets spilled into the North Sea.

Awareness is growing about the huge threat posed by the tiny pellets. Last year, two environmental protesters in the US were charged under a Louisiana state law with “terrorising” a plastics industry lobbyist when they left a box of nurdles outside his house as part of a

campaign to stop the Taiwan-based Formosa Plastics opening a factory in Louisiana.

The nurdles came from another Formosa plant in Texas, which had spilled vast amounts of the pellets into Lavaca Bay on the Gulf of Mexico (Formosa agreed to pay \$ 50 million to settle a lawsuit for allegedly violating the Clean Water Act). The charges against the activists, which carried a 15-year prison term, were later dropped.

Such incidents are preventable, campaigners said. “The sinking of the X-Press Pearl – and spill of chemical products and plastic pellets into the seas of Sri Lanka – caused untold damage to marine life and destroyed local livelihoods,” said Hemantha Withanage, Director of the Centre for Environmental Justice in Sri Lanka. Consumption of fish, the main protein source for 40% of Sri Lankans, has reduced drastically, he said. “It was a huge accident and unfortunately, there’s no guidance from the IMO.”

Classifying nurdles as hazardous – as is the case for explosives, flammable liquids and other environmentally harmful substances – would make them subject to strict conditions for shipping. “They must be stored below deck, in more robust packaging with clear labelling,” said Tanya Cox, Marine Plastic Specialist at the conservation charity Flora & Fauna International. “They would also be subject to disaster-response protocols that can, if implemented in the event of an emergency, prevent the worst environmental impacts.”

But the nurdle can have been kicked down the road, with the IMO secretariat referring the issue to its pollution, prevention, and response committee, which meets next year. Campaigners said it was disappointing that the Sri Lankan proposal was not properly discussed. The EIA’s Christina Dixon said: “The attitude of the committee members was extraordinary and showed a callous disregard for plastic pollution from ships as a threat to coastal communities, ecosystems, and food security. This is simply unacceptable.”

Meanwhile, the clean-up continues in Sri Lanka. Some of the 470 turtles, 46 dolphins, and eight whales washing ashore have had nurdles in their bodies, said Withanage. While there is no proof the nurdles were responsible, he said: “I’ve seen some of the dolphins and they had plastic particles inside. There are 20,000 families who have had to stop fishing.

“The fishermen say when they dip (themselves) into the water, the pellets get into their ears. It’s affected tourism, everything.”

(This article was first published by The Guardian on yesterday (29/2021, as part of its “Seascape” series)

Why the nurdles on SL’s beaches are the worst type of toxic waste

BY KAREN MCVEIGH

When the MV X-Press Pearl container ship caught fire and sank in the Indian Ocean in May, Sri Lanka was terrified that the vessel’s 350 tonnes of heavy fuel oil would spill into the ocean, causing an environmental disaster for the country’s pristine coral reefs and fishing industry.

Classified by the UN (United Nations) as Sri Lanka’s “worst maritime disaster”, the biggest impact was not caused by the heavy fuel oil. Nor was it the hazardous chemicals on board, which included nitric acid, caustic soda, and methanol. The most “significant” harm, according to the UN, came from the spillage of 87 containers full of lentil-sized plastic pellets: Nurdles.

Since the disaster, nurdles have been washing up in their billions along hundreds of miles of the country’s coastline, and are expected to make

landfall across Indian Ocean coastlines from Indonesia and Malaysia to Somalia. In some places, they are up to 2 metres deep. They have been found in the bodies of dead dolphins and the mouths of fish. About 1,680 tonnes of nurdles were released into the ocean. It is the largest plastic spill in history, according to the UN report.

Nurdles, the colloquial term for “pre-production plastic pellets”, are the little-known building block for all our plastic products. The tiny beads can be made of polyethylene, polypropylene, polystyrene, polyvinyl

chloride, and other plastics. Released into the environment from plastic plants or when shipped around the world as raw material to factories, they will sink or float, depending on the density of the pellets and if they are in freshwater or saltwater.

They are often mistaken for food by seabirds, fish, and other wildlife. In the environment, they fragment into nanoparticles whose hazards are more complex. They are the second-largest source of micropollutants in the ocean, by weight, after tyre dust. An astounding 230,000 tonnes of nurdles end up in oceans every year.

Like crude oil, nurdles are highly persistent pollutants and will continue to circulate in ocean currents and wash ashore for decades. They are also “toxic sponges”, which attract chemical toxins and other pollutants onto their surfaces.

Is India ready for a third wave?

BY CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA

Anyone travelling through India’s northern states would be forgiven for thinking that the pandemic is over. In the smaller towns, few people wear masks, fewer practise social distancing, and Covid-19 rarely comes up in conversations. The only visible reminders are the billboards thanking politicians for tackling the virus.

In the national capital, Delhi, most people are masked because of rules that demand it. But the city is once again in full swing, from crowded markets and busy restaurants to packed social calendars.

Low case counts (India has been recording around 10,000 new Covid-19 cases daily) and the ongoing vaccination drive (nearly 80% of the 940 million eligible adults have received at least one dose so far) seem to have dimmed the memory of a brutal second wave in April and May this year.

But the fact is the pandemic is not over. Cases are rising in Europe again, prompting the World Health Organisation (WHO) to say it is “very worried”.

The emergence of a new variant, initially named B.1.1.529 and now Omicron by the WHO, is another cause for concern – although more research is needed to determine how dangerous it is.

So the inevitable question to ask is: Will there be a third wave of Covid-19? And if so, is India prepared?

It’s likely India may not see a major rise in cases because studies suggest the majority of Indians have antibodies against the currently predominant Delta variant, and four-fifth of all adults have also been partially vaccinated.

But that isn’t enough cause for cheer.

The recent reports of a dengue virus outbreak – an endemic disease – in many Indian states is proof that the health system is still not equipped to detect and tackle emerging and re-emerging diseases.

And therein lies the problem. When the pandemic arrived in early 2020, the hope was that the stringent lockdown would afford an opportunity for the Government to strengthen an understaffed and underfunded public health system.

Top political leaders and senior health policy makers repeatedly said that was the objective of the first lockdown.

But a year on, a second Covid-19 wave devastated India as hospitals ran out of beds, medicines, and oxygen. Medical bills soared in a fragmented market



Some 80% of all eligible Indians have had one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine so far
PHOTO © GETTY IMAGES

with spotty insurance coverage, and people borrowed money or sold family assets to pay up.

Soon after, in July 2021, the Government did announce a second Covid-19 package to strengthen health infrastructure. But some argued that the amount set aside was too little, and there was no visible urgency to put it to action.

India’s national health policy, announced in 2017, had proposed raising government spending on health to 2.5% of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2025. But spending has only marginally increased since – it accounted for just 1.3% of GDP in the fiscal year ending 2022 – and is clearly not on track to reach the target.

The Government has often claimed that its Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana is one of the world’s largest public health insurance schemes. But several news reports suggest that the scheme barely helped those who desperately needed it.

The challenge ahead is even bigger and goes well beyond the pandemic.

While much of the health system was focused on tackling Covid-19, other essential services took a hit. It’s one of the reasons many Indian states have struggled to deal with the dengue outbreak.

The WHO said in October that the pandemic reversed “years of global progress in tackling tuberculosis” as people struggled to access treatment. India accounted for 41% of the total global drop in reporting the disease between 2019 and 2020, the WHO said.

People suffering from non-communicable diseases have also found it difficult to get the care they need. So, what should India do?

First, the Government should commission independent experts to conduct an impartial assessment of its pandemic response.

Second, India needs to recommit to strengthening its health systems. If the promises made on this front in the last five years by both federal and state governments can be fulfilled, the country would have a far stronger health system.

Third, all policymakers, medical experts, and technical experts should be trained in science communication to avoid panic and misinformation.

Fourth, India’s pandemic response has to be integrated into primary healthcare services.

Fifth, India needs to immediately fill vacancies at all levels in the health workforce and draw up a detailed plan for equitable distribution across urban and rural areas, giving priority to underserved regions.

Complacency and fatigue at different levels have led to a slowdown in the adoption of Covid-19-appropriate behaviour, vaccination uptake in adults, and even genome surveillance.

The emergence of Omicron should be used as an opportunity to reassess pandemic preparedness across the country – including enhanced and targeted Covid-19 testing, genomic sequencing, and accelerated vaccine coverage in adults.

But a note of caution – the emergence of a new variant should not lead to hurried decisions on vaccine dose intervals, boosters, or even the functioning of schools, which have only now begun to reopen after more than a year.

Those decisions should be determined only by a calm assessment of scientific evidence.

India may or may not face another major Covid-19 wave, but other outbreaks and epidemics will continue to be a reality after this pandemic – as they were before it.

If a country is prepared for preventing and controlling any disease outbreak, it’s also prepared for a pandemic. So, let’s prepare for responding to every outbreak.

The struggle to control the dengue outbreak in 15 Indian states is proof that India is not ready yet.

Action is needed now, and one can only hope that someone is listening.

(The writer is a physician epidemiologist and a public policy and health systems specialist based in Delhi. This article was first published by BBC yesterday (29/2021))



RED NOTICE DELIVERED

The Sri Lanka Postal and Telecommunication Services Union (SLPSTU) staged a protest in front of the Central Mail Exchange yesterday (29) demanding a salary increase of Rs. 10,000 for public servants and over several other issues

PHOTOS ESHAN DASANAYAKA

AT A GLANCE

LINE BREAKDOWN CAUSES POWER CUTS IN VARIOUS AREAS

BY RUWANI FONSEKA

Several areas around the island faced a power outage roughly after 8 p.m. yesterday (29), *The Morning* learns.

Speaking to *The Morning* yesterday, Minister of Power Gamini Lokuge said that the reason for the power outage was due to a breakdown in the supply line and transformer from Kotmale to Biyagama. "The supply will be restored as soon as possible. Already, the breakdown team has managed to supply electricity to a few areas, and within the next hour or two, all areas will have electricity again," he confirmed.

Areas such as Mount Lavinia, Dehiwala, Peliyagoda, Dematagoda, Orugodawatta, and Ja-ela were still experiencing the power outage as at 9 p.m. yesterday.

TWO SUSPECTS BOOKED OVER WEERAKETIYA MURDER

Two suspects wanted in connection with a recent murder in Weeraketiya have been arrested by the Police while they were in hiding. The two suspects were arrested by Weeraketiya Police at the Mahajjawa and Kumbalgodu-ara areas. They had been wanted in connection with an incident where an individual had been shot and hacked to death in the Weeraketiya police area on 20 November. Following the interrogation of one of the arrested suspects, a 29-year-old from Debokkawa East, police officers had recovered a foreign-made hand grenade hidden in the Debokkawa area, as well as a blood-stained shirt suspected to have been worn by the suspect when committing the murder.

In addition to this, the Police also recovered the motorcycle used by the suspects to carry out the crime. The other arrested suspect is a 33-year-old resident of Kawanthissapura, Embilipitiya. During interrogation, he had divulged the location of the firearm used to carry out the murder. Accordingly, a locally manufactured firearm and one bullet (12-bore) was found hidden in a teak estate at Debokkawa, the Police said.

Reopen national education colleges, urge teachers

Colleges presently used as quarantine and treatment centres

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWEEERA

Teachers' trade unions have urged the Government to take immediate action to reopen the national colleges of education islandwide, which have been closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

Addressing a media briefing yesterday (29), Ceylon Teachers' Service Union (CTSU) General Secretary Mahinda Jayasinghe said that 19 national colleges of education with more than 8,000 students have been closed at present. He also said that the closure of such was problematic at a time when even primary school students have been called back to school.

"Many National Colleges of Education have now been turned into quarantine centres and Covid-19 treatment centres. As a result, students' clothing and other belongings that were at hostels have become unusable. Therefore, in addition to preparing a programme to reopen these Colleges of Education immediately, the Government should also provide some allowances to the students," he added.

Jayasinghe further commented on the spread of Covid-19 among students and teachers in a considerable number of schools.

He said that although the Government was keen to reopen the schools, no arrangements had been made to maintain the schools that had been reopened. "Schools have not been given sanitary equipment. Teachers and principals have to undergo Covid-19 tests at their own expense whenever a Covid-19 infected person is reported from their classes," he added.

Education Minister Dinesh Gunawardena and Education Ministry Secretary Prof. Kapila Perera were not available for comment.

Unions allege expensive national essential syllabi programme scrapped

CTSU claims teachers instructed to cover all subjects, not only 'essentials'

BY BUDDHIKA SAMARAWEEERA

Teachers' trade unions have alleged that the Education Ministry has revoked a programme prepared by the National Institute of Education (NIE) at a huge cost to cover the essential parts of the existing syllabi of all grades missed by schoolchildren during the recent closure of schools in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Speaking to the media yesterday (29), Ceylon Teachers' Service Union (CTSU) General Secretary Mahinda Jayasinghe said that the NIE had formulated a programme to identify and cover the essential parts of the syllabi that were missed by school children during the school closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, a letter issued by Education Ministry Secretary Prof. Kapila Perera on 26 November had instructed all teachers and principals to cover all subjects as usual, instead of implementing the said programme

prepared by the NIE, he charged.

"Prof. Perera on 9 November instructed teachers and principals to cover the essential parts of the syllabi under the NIE's programme, but in a letter dated 26 November, he has again instructed that the syllabi should be fully covered as usual."

Jayasinghe further said that millions of rupees had been spent to prepare the relevant programme and that the Education Ministry Secretary had also been involved in preparing the programme. In this backdrop, he emphasised that



PHOTO KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM

if there were any shortcomings in the programme, Prof. Perera could have pointed them out at an early stage without spending such a large sum of money for no reason.

"Under this programme, essential parts of 64 subjects were identified

and 25 teachers participated in the work related to each subject. Each teacher was given an allowance of Rs. 4,000. Accordingly, more than Rs. 6 million has been spent on teachers alone. In addition, a lot of money has been spent on the

Provincial Directors of Education and other officials of the NIE who participated in this," he elaborated.

Prof. Perera was unavailable for comment on the matter.

The Morning, on 9 November, reported that the NIE had prepared a programme to cover the essential parts of the existing syllabi of all grades within 100 days after the reopening of schools for all grades, taking into account the impact caused to education by the Covid-19 pandemic situation, related school closures, and other disruptions.

Speaking to *The Morning*, Education Reforms, Open Universities, and Distance Learning Promotion State Ministry Secretary Dr. Upali Sedara at that time said that under this programme, essential parts of the existing syllabi would be covered, noting that such parts had already been identified by the NIE.

Dr. Jeewandara reveals current insights on Omicron variant

Dr. Chandima Jeewandara, the head of the Department of Immunology and Molecular Biology at Sri Jayewardenepura University, discussed the current knowledge about the Omicron Covid-19 variant, noting that despite several unknown factors, the existing precautions against Covid-19 continue to apply in avoiding transmission.

Dr. Jeewandara, posting on his Twitter account yesterday (29), detailed what has already been studied about the variant.

"Transmissibility: It is not yet clear whether Omicron is more transmissible (e.g. more easily spread from person to person) compared to other variants, including Delta," his Tweet mentioned.

As for the severity of the disease caused by the Omicron variant, Dr. Jeewandara stated that it is not yet clear whether infection with Omicron causes more severe disease compared

to infections with other variants, including Delta.

He further added that effectiveness of prior SARS-CoV-2 infection preliminary evidence suggests there may be an increased risk of reinfection with Omicron, clarifying that people who have previously had Covid-19 could become re-infected more easily with Omicron, as compared to other variants of concern.

Regarding the Covid-19 vaccines available, Dr. Jeewandara posted that vaccines remain critical to reducing severe disease and death, including against the dominant circulating virus Delta and that the current vaccines remain effective against severe disease and death.

As for the effectiveness of the current testing facilities, Dr. Jeewandara states that the widely used PCR tests continue to detect infection, including infection with Omicron, as seen with other variants as well.

"Studies are ongoing to assess any impact on other types of tests, including rapid antigen detection tests," his Tweet stated.

The effectiveness of current treatment for Covid-19 is Corticosteroids and IL6 Receptor Blockers, which Dr. Jeewandara stated, will still be effective for managing patients with severe disease, further mentioning that other treatments will be assessed to see if they are still as effective given the changes to parts of the virus seen in the Omicron variant.

Dr. Jeewandara adds that action taken by the Allergy Immunology and Cell Biology Unit in Sri Lanka will continue by enhancing surveillance and sequencing of cases.

His tweet concludes by stating that the only way to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus, whatever the variant might be, would be to adhere to preventive measures that are currently in place.

SLFP not intending to leave Govt. coalition, assures Dayasiri



Despite speculation to the contrary, SLFP General Secretary Dayasiri Jayasekara has assured that the SLFP intends to remain with the governing alliance

In the face of speculation that the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) might retract its support of the coalition-formed Government, thus costing it the two-thirds majority it enjoys in Parliament, State Minister of Batik, Handloom, and Local Apparel Products and SLFP General Secretary Dayasiri Jayasekara assured that the SLFP would remain a part of the governing alliance.

Speaking to the media yesterday (29), he stated: "People can say various things, but as a party we have not made such a decision. We will continue to work with the Government. This is the Government we formed, and this is the President we elected. We might not be able to agree with all the decisions made by the Government, but as a coalition party within the Government, we have spoken to the President, the Prime Minister, and Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) leaders."

He further added that as a party, the SLFP will support the cause of the coalition, which is to take the country and the Government forward, while facing any challenges that come along the way.

His statement came after former President and SLFP Leader Maithripala Sirisena, speaking in Parliament last Thursday (25), subtly warned the Government that the SLFP was vital to its success, owing to the fact that its two-

thirds majority in Parliament stemmed from the SLFP's support, while reiterating that the SLFP's departure from the governing alliance could cause the collapse of the Government.

"The present Government is an alliance," he had said. "It is a government made up of the SLPP and 11 other allied parties. It is very clear that the two-thirds majority of the Government lies in the hands of the 14 MPs representing the SLFP. Therefore, one needs to think intelligently and in depth about this two-thirds majority. What happens when there are conflicts within governments has been proven for 50 to 60 years."

He went on to recall that previous governments that came to power since 1947 led by leaders such as the Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, late President J.R. Jayewardene, and former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga had collapsed due to the withdrawal of support from other political parties that had supported them at the beginning.

Sirisena had made these remarks responding to the recent statement made by Minister of Agriculture Mahindananda Aluthgamage, comparing the allocations made to Sirisena and incumbent President Gotabaya Rajapaksa through the budgets.

Derana wins several awards at 2021 State Television Awards

The Talk With Chathura programme hosted by Chathura Alwis and produced by *Ada Derana* has won the award for Most Outstanding Talk Show Programme, at the State Awards Ceremony of Television Art 2020 held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) in Colombo yesterday (29).

Story of Champions, also produced by *Ada Derana*, won the award for Most Outstanding Sports Programme

at the event.

Meanwhile *Ada Derana*'s television trailer for the 2019 Presidential Election has also picked up an award for "Most Outstanding TV Trailer".

TV Derana's Dream Star Grand Finale - Season 8 picked up the award for "Most Outstanding Multi-camera Production".

Ada Derana news presenter Wasanthi Nanayakkara has also won the award for "Most Outstanding News Anchor".

Organised by the Department of Cultural Affairs on the direction of the Ministry of Buddha Sasana, Cultural and Religious Affairs, the State Television Awards Ceremony is held to give due accolade to tele artists and their programmes with a view to promote the Sri Lankan television industry.

Awards are presented to the programmes telecast in the year 2020 and for the contribution therein, under several categories.

UAE and SL discuss enhancing bilateral trade and economic ties

During a meeting with Foreign Minister Prof. G.L. Peiris, the UAE Chargé d'affaires to Sri Lanka Ibrahim Ali Ibrahim Al Gergawi expressed the UAE government's willingness to enhance bilateral trade and economic relations with the Government of Sri Lanka.

Extending greetings from UAE's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed bin Al Nahyan, he also recalled the recent bilateral meeting held between Foreign Minister Peiris with UAE's Minister of Industry and Advanced



Chargé d'affaires of the United Arab Emirates to Sri Lanka Ibrahim Ali Ibrahim Al Gergawi and Foreign Minister Prof. G.L. Peiris

Technology Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, at the sidelines of the 76 Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), New York.

Responding to the remarks made by the

Chargé d'affaires, Prof. Peiris expressed that the Government of Sri Lanka and the UAE has witnessed extremely cordial relations, and during his tenure he is looking forward to further strengthening Sri Lanka's

relations with the UAE.

Prof. Peiris also noted with appreciation, the support extended by the UAE to Sri Lanka in the regional and multilateral fora.

He emphasised the importance of co-operation among the member countries of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), where Sri Lanka took over as the Vice-Chair during the 21st Council of Ministers Meeting held at Dhaka, Bangladesh, and commended the role played by the UAE as former Vice-Chair for the progress of the association.

Contd. from page 1

Scotland...

The announcement has come after concerns of a leading human rights lawyer and United Nations (UN) Rapporteur and the testimony of torture victims who had allegedly been raped, beaten, and asphyxiated by the Sri

Lankan Police and security forces. They accused Police Scotland of being naive in continuing to train Sri Lankan officers despite damning UN reports into human rights abuses in the country. Campaigners claimed that the national force was giving credibility to an administration linked to violence, torture, and disappearances.

However, when contacted by *The Morning*, Police Media Spokesman Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Nihal Thaldewa claimed that the reports that the training given by the Scottish Police to the Sri Lankan police officers has been stopped are untrue.

"Certain reports that the Scottish Police has halted training programmes to Sri Lanka Police Department officers are erroneous. We have not been notified of such by the Scottish authorities," he added.

SSP Thaldewa said that even though such a halt has not taken place due to concerns over the human rights record, the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a halt of not only the Scottish training, but many other training programmes.

He added that due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation, Sri Lankan police officers have not left for Scotland since 2020.

He further said that discussions between the Scottish and Sri Lankan authorities are

presently underway to resume the Scottish training, which had been suspended due to the pandemic. "The training could not be continued in 2020 due to the prevailing pandemic situation, but there was a discussion on 17 November 2021 with our Police and British High Commission (HC) officials about resuming training from 2022," he explained.

Attempts to contact Public Security Ministry Secretary Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Jagath Alwis to inquire about the matter proved futile.

ASPI	S&P SL20	Market
11,202.09	3,836.42	Market Closed
4.41	13.81	Share Volume
↑ 0.04%	↑ 0.36%	343,288,266
		Turnover
		8,970,844,452.05

Cabraal refuses to float rupee despite dwindling remittances

- Says directive keeping USD rate below Rs. 203 won't be revoked
- Will maintain current rate throughout 1Q 2022
- Unregistered channels selling rate hover around Rs. 235-240
- Remittances drop for five consecutive months in Oct.
- Central Bank to take action against USD 'black market'

BY SHENAL FERNANDO
The Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) is unlikely to revoke the directive sent by them to licensed commercial banks (LCBs) by former CBSL Governor Prof. W.D. Lakshman days before his resignation, advising the banks to keep the selling rate of the US dollar (USD) below Rs. 203, *The Morning Business* learns.

Current CBSL Governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal confirmed this to us and also during a recent webinar in which he expressed his plans to maintain the Sri Lankan rupee at its current rate throughout the first quarter (1Q) of next year.

"We won't have a depreciation of the rupee in the 1Q 2022, we are confident that the rupee would maintain its value, and it will probably have an opportunity of appreciating a little more in value," he said at a webinar held by the International Chamber of Commerce.

Despite assurances by the CBSL that it will crack down on informal money exchangers as the widening disparity between the exchange rate set by the CBSL and the value set by the black market has prompted foreign workers to remit money via informal channels. As of yesterday (29) the Canadian dollar was sold at Rs. 195 (CBSL rate - Rs. 161) and the US dollar was sold at Rs. 237 (CBSL rate - Rs. 203) in the "black market".

Sri Lanka has been plagued by a foreign

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CBSL Governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal

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Expolanka becomes second Rs. 500 billion market capitalisation company

- Market cap Rs. 515 billion as of yesterday

BY SHENAL FERNANDO
 Expolanka Holdings PLC became the second company listed in the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) to achieve a market capitalisation of Rs. 500 billion yesterday (29) when it closed the day at Rs. 263.5 which represents market capitalisation of Rs. 515.1 million and an 8700% gain compared to its share price in January 2020.

Expolanka was the second most traded company in the exchange yesterday with over 4,715 trades made at a volume of 7 million shares, behind only Ex-pack Corrugated Cartons Ltd. and closed the day at Rs. 263.5, up 6.6% (Rs. 16.25) from the previous day's close of Rs. 247.25.

During 2Q FY2022 Expolanka recorded a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs. 12 billion, which represents 166%



Expolanka Holdings Group MD/CEO Hanif Yusoof

Yusoof said: "The continuous success achieved by the company is a reflection of our ability to execute well-defined strategic initiatives effectively whilst remaining agile and nimble amidst this dynamic external environment."

He noted that the company was now a truly global organisation, with a geographic footprint covering 32 countries and a majority of business generated from leading international clients outside of Sri Lanka.

This bull run experienced by Expolanka which has made it the most valuable entity listed in the CSE can be traced to the transformation of this local logistic company into a US-centric multinational company with over 75% of its revenue being derived from its subsidiaries operating in the US trade lane.

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Ranil asks forex figures; Govt. doesn't provide

Former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe yesterday (29) in Parliament called on the Government to disclose the exact figures of the foreign exchange reserve assets and currency reserves of the country as of last Friday (26) in order to clarify the energy situation of the country going forward.

However, the Government did not disclose the figures to Wickremesinghe. "According to what I'm hearing, the foreign exchange reserves have fallen to \$ 1.5 billion of which \$ 300

million is in gold. Therefore we have only \$ 1.2 billion on hand," claimed Wickremesinghe.

Wickremesinghe further stated that the documentation which was due to be presented by the Government to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been sent, but not yet presented in Parliament.

He also stated that if in fact the same has been presented, he would like to see the documentation.

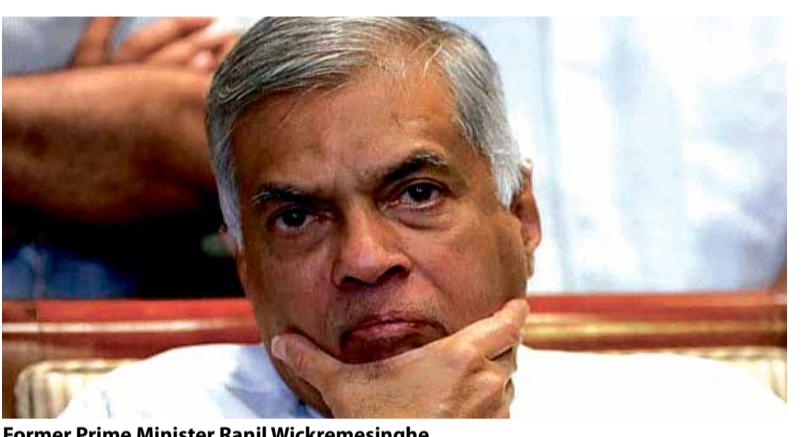
"The reason as to why I am asking for this documentation is because I want to

see what has been done in regard to the foreign exchange issue we are currently facing. In the Budget for 2022, it spoke about purchasing oil and coal. But, if we do not have forex, how are we to pay the other countries? In this state, Sri Lanka will have power cuts in the near future, as we do not have oil or coal," said Wickremesinghe.

He further provided that any decision on energy must be taken based on the foreign exchange position of the country and that we may have power cuts in the event of lack of adequate foreign exchange.

Despite protests by Minister of Education and Leader of the House of Parliament Dinesh Gunawardena that such an event would not arise and that the Government is in control, Wickremesinghe pointed out that Parliament is currently making appropriations for 2022 and that there exists a risk of power cuts which must be collectively addressed by Parliament due to the potential adverse repercussions on the environment.

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Former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe

Business confidence dips amid uncertainty: LMD-Nielson

The results of the latest LMD-Nielson Business Confidence Index (BCI) survey - which was conducted before Budget 2022 was presented in Parliament - point to a deterioration in sentiment among Sri Lanka's business community.

The BCI registered a slight fall of two basis points to 109 in November, following three consecutive months of increases.

However, this marks an improvement compared to where the index stood a year ago (91) and places it three points above the 12 month

average.

NielsonIQ's Director - Consumer Insights Therica Miyanadeniya offered insight into the latest survey's results: "The Covid-19 situation has abated, and the country has finally opened up with provincial travel restrictions lifted and schools also opening. But the havoc caused by the virus is being felt acutely in every segment of society."

Commenting on the future of the BCI, Miyanadeniya stated: "The road to recovery looks steep with much sacrifice and effort

needed, from businesses and the people. With the budget proposals not offering any concessions for either segment, it is likely that both the BCI and CCI (Consumer Confidence Index) will either stay the same or decline once more."

In the November edition of LMD, it was stated that the business community's perception of Budget 2022 would be crucial to the trajectory of the index along with the lockdown restrictions being eased.

Amid concerns being raised about the Government's approach

(LMD-Nielson)

TRCSL engages with SpaceX

- Explores introduction of Starlink internet in Sri Lanka

BY AAZAM AMEEN
 The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL) has held preliminary engagement sessions with SpaceX in exploring the introduction of Starlink internet services in Sri Lanka.

A Tweet by the TRCSL detailed that the first round of discussions focused on regulatory aspects and prerequisites of initiating the service in the near future for Sri Lanka.

Using advanced satellites in a low orbit, Starlink enables video calls, online

gaming, streaming, and other high data rate activities that historically have not been possible with satellite internet. Users can expect to see download speeds between 100 Mbps and 200 Mbps and latency as low as 20 ms in most locations.

Founded by Elon Musk, SpaceX designs, manufactures, and launches the world's most advanced rockets and spacecraft. The company was founded in 2002 by Elon Musk to revolutionise space transportation, with the ultimate goal of making life multiplanetary.

Sandun Hapugoda appointed Mastercard Country Manager

Sandun Hapugoda has been appointed as Mastercard's new Country Manager for Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Hapugoda succeeds Rajesh Mani who has transitioned to another role within Mastercard.

"Sri Lanka and the Maldives have witnessed a rapid uptake in digital payments in recent years, and Mastercard has played a significant role in supporting governments, communities, and

businesses as they develop their digital payments landscape. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to Mastercard's efforts to support the socio-economic growth of Sri Lanka and the Maldives," said Mastercard Country Manager - Sri Lanka and the Maldives Sandun Hapugoda.

Hapugoda joined Mastercard in 2017 to lead the company's

digital and value added services business in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Since then he has been instrumental in deepening the company's partnerships with banking and non-banking financial institutions, fintechs, and merchants by enhancing and streamlining their digital payment journeys. Hapugoda was also actively involved in the launch of the first EMV mPOS solution, SoftPOS and Mastercard's cyber and intelligence solutions in the region.

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Asia markets stabilise amid Omicron uncertainty

Asian-Pacific stock markets showed signs of stabilising as investors prepared for weeks of uncertainty over whether the Omicron variant could derail the global economic recovery.

Trading was erratic earlier yesterday (29) but there were signs of recovery as S&P 500 Futures added 0.8% and Nasdaq Futures added 0.9%.

Both indices suffered their sharpest fall in months last Friday (26), with travel and

airline stocks hit particularly hard.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan eased 0.1% but was off early lows.

Japan's Nikkei average was down 0.02% at 28,746.49 by the midday break, after dropping 1.4% earlier in the session. Australia's ASX 200 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index pared early morning losses later in the day.

Two-year Treasury yields

edged up to 0.55%, after falling 14 basis points last Friday in the most significant drop since March last year. Fed Fund Futures had pushed the first rate rise out by a month or so.

Oil prices also bounced \$ 3 a barrel to recoup some last Friday's shellacking, while the safe-haven yen took a breather after its run higher.

Singapore Capital Economics Economist Marcel Thieliand told *Al Jazeera* the implications of the variant for the regional economy were not clear-cut.

"A more transmissible variant could prompt even more disruptions and restrictions to domestic activity, particularly in China given its zero-Covid strategy," Thieliand said. "At the same time though, Asian exporters would benefit if the rest of the world imposes renewed restrictions on services spending and goods spending therefore remains strong."

(Al Jazeera)

Moderate recovery, challenges remain for APAC tech in 2022

Fitch Ratings expects a modest improvement in average cash flow from operations for the Asia-Pacific (APAC) technology sector in 2022, as economic uncertainties and continuing Covid-19 influences temper cash flow growth. "We believe recovery from the challenges of 2020 and 2021 will be slow. However, in general, our rated APAC technology companies are well positioned in their markets," said Fitch APAC Telecoms, Media, and Technology Team Head Steve Durose.

Fitch's sector outlook is "Neutral". Of its four sub-sectors, the agency indicates a neutral outlook on Chinese internet majors, hardware technology, and semiconductor back-end services (OSAT), and an improving outlook on Indian IT services.

The rating agency also expects higher

operating and free cash flow growth for the Chinese majors – albeit lower than previous expectations – but uncertainties over China's economic growth and potential for greater regulatory intervention to prevent an "Improving" outlook.

Cash-flow growth for its rated OSAT

business will be healthy, given the companies' position in the tight semiconductor market. However, higher capex and dividends will stymie FCF growth. In addition, it expects margins to narrow when the semiconductor supply/demand imbalance recedes, Fitch added.

Sophos strengthens distribution network in SL and the Maldives

Sophos announced the appointment of South Asian Technologies (Pvt.) Ltd. (SAT), as its new distributor in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

SAT is a leading distributor of highly-rated ICT products and a leading global value-added supplier of network infrastructure, web security, data centres, and digital imaging solutions. SAT has a partner network of over 150 companies.

This partnership will allow Sophos to maximise SAT's partner network and client base and allows SAT to diversify its security portfolio with Sophos' next-generation cybersecurity solutions and services. This will strengthen Sophos' channel network and increase its mark within Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

SAT Group Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Sanjaya Padmaperuma said: "As cyberattacks become more advanced, cybersecurity is likewise a deeper concern for all our clients across the region. Sophos and its next-generation cybersecurity solutions, such as Intercept X and Sophos Firewall enable us to provide layered security to better protect our associates and clients in Sri Lanka and



SAT Group Director/CEO Sanjaya Padmaperuma



Sophos MD Sales (India and SAARC) Sunil Sharma

the Maldives. With the expeditious development of digital transformation in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, local organisations are constantly in need of a proactive cybersecurity approach that can interoperate as a system to defend against modern cyberattacks. Sophos, with its innovative approach to security technology and threat hunting services, provides this kind of intelligent system."

"Sophos' Active Adversary

Playbook 2021 details attacker behaviours and their tools, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) that lead to attacks such as ransomware. More than 80% of the attacks Sophos investigated in 2020 and early 2021 involved ransomware. To enhance security, local organisations require a dynamic and consistent cybersecurity plan. With SAT as our new distributor in the region, organisations across Sri Lanka and the Maldives will now

have access to defence-in-depth through Sophos' advanced security solutions and services," said Sophos Managing Director (MD) Sales (India and SAARC) Sunil Sharma.

Sophos is a worldwide leader in next-generation cybersecurity, protecting more than 500,000 organisations and millions of consumers in more than 150 countries from today's most advanced cyberthreats. Powered by threat intelligence, AI, and machine learning from SophosLabs and SophosAI, Sophos delivers a broad portfolio of advanced products and services to secure users, networks, and endpoints against ransomware, malware, exploits, phishing, and a wide range of other cyberattacks. Sophos provides a single integrated cloud-based management console, Sophos Central – the centerpiece of an adaptive cybersecurity ecosystem that features a centralised data lake that leverages a set of open APIs available to customers, partners, developers, and other cybersecurity vendors. Sophos sells its products and services through reseller partners and managed service providers (MSPs) worldwide.

Contd. from page 9

Cabraal...

However, the effectiveness of such measures in addressing the root cause of the foreign liquidity issue is debatable because Sri Lanka possesses a soft-pegged exchange rate regime and excess liquidity rather than a trade deficit, which is the primary cause for forex shortages in such regimes.

This situation was exacerbated by the monetary policies of the Government which involved continuous printing of money on Treasury bill purchases, leading to significant forex outflows which in turn has resulted in significant pressure on the peg.

Amidst these challenging conditions in the local foreign exchange market, the CBSL engaged in a moral suasion strategy requesting commercial banks to artificially maintain the selling rate of the US dollar at a conservative range between Rs 200-203.

However, by August 2021 it was widely reported that while the CBSL was quoting a selling price of Rs. 203 for the dollar most local banks were quoting an exchange rate at around Rs. 210-220 and the kerb (black market) rate was around Rs. 240-250.

Consequently, a directive was issued by the former CBSL Governor Prof. W.D. Lakshman, demanding all heads of LCBs to coincide in respect of maintaining the exchange rate within the agreed range of Rs. 200-203, in order to urgently address the stark difference in the selling rate between the CBSL website and LCBs' websites.

Thereafter, while LCBs appear to be maintaining the CBSL denoted exchange rate, the black market has continued to offer high rates, which is more attractive to foreign workers when remitting money and thus, they have started utilising such informal channels over the CBSL regulated formal channels.

This is reflected by the fact that worker remittances have continued decreasing during 2021 despite the increasing trend of worker remittances observed in the rest of South Asia.

According to reports, remittance inflows have fallen to \$ 317.4 million in October down 99% year-on-year (YoY) and cumulative remittance inflows for 2021 have fallen 14% YoY to \$ 4.9 billion. October is said to be the fifth consecutive month remittances recorded a drop. In June, remittances dropped to \$ 478 million while in July, August, and September, it dropped to \$ 453 million, \$ 447 million, and \$ 353 million, respectively.

In contrast, recent data released by the World Bank on 17 November has projected remittance inflows to South Asia to grow by 8% in 2021, supported by high oil prices driving incomes in the Middle East, a key source market for remittances to the region. Remittances to Pakistan were projected to grow by 26%, and remittances to India were projected to grow by 4%.

Expolanka...

Increased consumer demand in the US following the March stimulus and the high yield rates enjoyed by Expolanka due to high global air and sea freight rates have proved to be the main catalysts behind Expolanka's rise.

According to the Baltic Exchange Air Freight Index, over the past 12 months airfreight rates have increased by over 64%. Whereas, sea freight rates have increased by over 400% according to the Freightos Baltic Global Container Freight Index. The reasons for such increase included soaring consumer demand, capacity shortage and saturated ports leading to higher container turnaround rates. However, fears of the resurgence of Covid-19 has led to a fall in global freight rates which may lead to a decrease in profitability quarter-on-quarter (QoQ).

Ranil asks...

He further pointed to the recent speech made by the President where he claimed that unpopular decisions will have to be made as evidence that power cuts may be considered by the Government in the future due to the lack of adequate foreign exchange to fund the necessary energy requirements.

Responding to the claims made by Wickremesinghe on the possibility of future power cuts, Minister of Energy Udaya Gammanpila admitted that the assertions made by the former Prime Minister were reasonable. However, he pointed out that at the time the Sapugaskanda Oil Refinery was closed, there existed over 79,000 MT of furnace oil in the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) tanks due to the fact that high rains have resulted in an increase in hydro energy generation by around 50-55% and consequently there is no demand for furnace oil from the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB).

"In the event the current heavy rains subside we possess sufficient stocks of furnace oil to facilitate electricity generation by furnace oil power stations for at least 40 days. Furthermore, the Sapugaskanda Refinery was closed only temporarily for 50 days and we intend to recommence operations before the expiration of such period. Therefore, there is no risk of power cuts due to fuel shortages," added Gammanpila.

He further claimed the country's export revenue is around \$ 1.0 billion but the import expenditure is around \$ 1.3 billion. As a result, in managing the country's imports the Government has been forced to give priority to certain goods. First priority is given to medicine and medical equipment following which second priority is given to fuel imports. Until now, despite the foreign exchange crisis, at no point has the Government refused to open a letter of credit (LC) for fuel imports.

Sandun Hapugoda...

Outside of Mastercard, Hapugoda is a member of the committee appointed by the Ministry of Technology to advise cabinet members on digital banking, blockchain-related industries, and cryptocurrency policy formulation. He is also a steering committee member for the National Science Foundation (NSF) for technology research.

Hapugoda will report to Mastercard Chief Operating Officer for South Asia Vikas Varma. Speaking about the appointment, Varma said: "Sandun brings nearly two decades of experience and expertise across multiple areas of the banking and payments industry to his new position. Having already worked closely with many of our customers and partners in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Sandun will be instrumental in strengthening our existing partnerships and forging new ones as we continue to build and nurture a vibrant digital ecosystem across Sri Lanka and the Maldives."

Prior to joining Mastercard, Hapugoda was Head of Payments and Cash Management for Hatton National Bank where he also led the digital banking team. Before that, he held managerial roles across diverse areas including information security and risk, IT management and card operations at Amana Bank, ICICI Bank (Sri Lanka), and Sampath Bank.

A former head prefect of D.S. Senanayake College, Colombo 7, Hapugoda held senior roles in the school's Old Boy's Association, is an active member of Round Table Sri Lanka, and is passionate about nurturing young leaders and supporting small businesses.



Daraz Managing Director Rakhil Fernando (fourth from left) handing over the award to HNB Head of Cards – Gauthami Niranjan. Also pictured are (from left): Daraz Partnerships Nimesh Dasanayake, Daraz Senior Manager – Prepayments Sandamina Rajapaksha, Daraz Head of Partnerships Dulika Jayamanne, HNB Cards Business Development Executive Ashokan Harishanna, HNB Assistant Manager – Cards Business Development and Portfolio Management Imanka Keshini Hikkaduwa, and HNB Cards Business Development Executive Roshan Chaminda Perera

HNB wins Daraz award for 'Card Base with Highest Overall Growth'

Hatton National Bank PLC (HNB) has been recognised by Daraz for exceptional contribution to its growth, in an independent endorsement of Sri Lanka's leading private bank's commitment to expand e-commerce and digital payments throughout the country.

The award, for the "Card Base with Highest Overall Growth", was presented to HNB at the "Daraz Payment Partner Performance Awards 2021". HNB, which ranks

among Daraz's best banking partners, recorded the highest growth on total payment volume, buyer engagement, and total transactions month-on-month, for both credit and debit cards for the year 2020-2021.

"This award is an important validation of how the local economy – both businesses and consumers – are benefiting from HNB's cohesive programme to drive greater adoption of e-commerce

and digital payments," HNB Head of Cards Gauthami Niranjan said. "These efforts are particularly significant at present, given how digital and contactless payments can assist in reducing the spread of the pandemic and support the bank's and the country's vision to transform Sri Lanka to a cashless economy."

Currently, HNB cardholders enjoy multiple offers on Daraz, a wholly-owned subsidiary of global

e-commerce giant, the Alibaba Group. These include zero-interest instalment plans up to 48 months with attractive discounts for HNB credit and debit cards and 10% off site-wide on Daraz for all HNB credit cards on purchases made during Saturdays. In addition, HNB tied up with Daraz for its 11:11 and Black Friday sales, which provided HNB cardholders access to a range of offers and massive discounts.

Seylan Bank among top 10 in 'Women Friendly Workplaces Awards' 2021

Seylan Bank was recently honoured at Sri Lanka's first-ever "Women Friendly Workplace Awards" 2021 (WFWP), pioneered jointly by the *Satyn* magazine and Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) Sri Lanka. Seylan Bank was named one of the "Top 10 Places to Work for Women" at the award ceremony that took place on 2 November at the Cinnamon Grand. The bank was assessed based on how supportive and empowering they were to women at work.

The WFWP awards are widely recognised as strengthening women's roles in the workplace in Sri Lanka and reinforcing Sri Lanka's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) 5, which targets gender equality and opportunity. The pandemic did have an impact on Seylan Bank's operations, but this has not discouraged the organisation from investing in workplace policies and programmes that encourage

women's progress at all levels and in all business sectors. The bank promotes and supports women in achieving their professional goals. It has encouraged women's empowerment because it realises that the variety and talent of its staff provides value to consumers and shareholders. The organisation believes in encouraging them to join higher-level teams, ensuring that women are adequately represented in future leadership roles.



Seylan Bank PLC Human Resource Deputy General Manager Jayantha Amarasinghe and Corporate Credit Assistant General Manager Sharon Fonseka receiving the Women Friendly Workplaces Award

Richard Pieris Finance to drive rapid expansion

Richard Pieris Finance Ltd. recently revealed its plans to drive its rapid network expansion in line with its digital journey. The company's digital journey was propelled following its inclusion as a member of the exclusive CEFT club, where only 26 banks and 14 finance companies have been authorised.



Richard Pieris Finance CEO Lohika Fonseka

The company's plans have been strategically aligned with its main objective of amplifying customer convenience, and its current offerings include fixed deposits and savings, leasing, Islamic finance, and business loans, to name a few. Moreover, Richard Pieris Finance will be implementing gold loan facilities through a new pawning service, which will be followed by a wider array of customer-centric products and services throughout the company's digital journey, according to Richard Pieris Finance CEO Lohika Fonseka.

Airtel's network expansion to amplify islandwide 4G coverage

Airtel Lanka, a subsidiary of Bharti Airtel Ltd., recently revealed its plans to strategically expand its new 4G network across the island. As such, over 400 new 4G sites are being commissioned across the country, which is in addition to the 2,000-plus 4G sites Airtel added during the launch of its 4G.

The new 4G sites are mapped out to ensure enhanced capacity in highly populated areas and coverage penetration into rural regions. Airtel's 4G network is built on a triple-layer network, which gives it a solid combination of coverage and capacity to deliver a superior experience with drastically improved indoor coverage with stronger signal penetration.

As Airtel is also equipped with a refreshed prepaid and postpaid model with the recent launch of the "Freedom" packs, the launch of Airtel 4G is the telco's single largest investment in Sri Lanka since its entry into the island in 2009. The purpose-built 4G network promises users a superior user experience, including 99% buffer-free streaming and noticeably quicker loading times.

From online learning to work-from-home to virtual socialising, every user from children to adults will be able to benefit from not having to face any more call drops, interruptions, or coverage issues.

Two wins for Teejay Lanka at Presidential Export Awards



Teejay Lanka CEO Pubudu De Silva (left) and General Manager - European Brands, Corporate Communication, and CSR Samadhi Weerakoon receiving the Presidential Export Awards for 2020-21 and 2019-20, respectively, from Minister of Trade Dr. Bandula Gunawardana

Teejay Lanka PLC won two awards as the "Best Textile Exporter in Sri Lanka" at the combined 2019-20 and 2020-21 Presidential Export Awards ceremony hosted by the Export Development Board of Sri Lanka (EDB).

These are the second and third consecutive times Teejay Lanka was recognised as the "Best Exporter" in the Knitted Fabric category. The company won this title for the first time at the debut Presidential Export Awards in 2019. The combined

awards ceremony marked the 24th edition of this awards programme and was necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which prevented the conduct of last year's ceremony.

The "Best Textile Exporter" awards were presented to Teejay in recognition of its outstanding contribution to the export sector and the economic development of Sri Lanka. Teejay Lanka, which has been on a steady growth trajectory over the years, reported a total revenue of \$ 112.9 million for 2020-21 and \$ 109.2 million

for 2019-20. Of this, 11% (about Rs 2.4 billion at current exchange rates) was generated by exports to customers in Bangladesh, Italy, India, and Haiti in 2020-21, while in 2019-20, exports of approximately Rs. 5 billion represented 23% of revenue.

The 24th Presidential Export Awards ceremony for the financial years of 2019-20 and 2020-21 was held on 26 November at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), under the patronage of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

HNB-CCC Residences partnership to offer ZiF investment facility

Hatton National Bank PLC (HNB) partnered with Colombo City Centre (CCC) Residences to offer prospective residents of the luxury apartment complex the unique zero interest and fees (ZiF) investment facility for the remaining 15 apartments available for occupancy.

The partnership offers customers the exciting opportunity for a down payment as low as 20% up to 50% with immediate occupancy while enjoying the financial relief of a two-year interest-free period on their mortgage payment.

HNB Deputy General Manager - Retail and SME Banking Sanjay Wijemanne, HNB Head of Personal Financial Services

Kanchana Karunagama, and CCC CEO Praveen Methil were present at the ceremony held to sign the agreement.

HNB will offer prospective homeowners flexible repayment options such as the Step-up facility which ensures a repayment option in line with the customer's evolving income. Customers can also obtain a maximum repayment period of 25 years for the loan facility for an attractive interest payment.

Notably, HNB will offer customers a five-year grace period for the capital payment of their mortgage, in addition to a revamped loan approval process supported by its backend systems.

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LOLC Advanced Technologies launches RT-LAMP test kit for Covid-19 detection

LOLC Advanced Technologies (Pvt.) Ltd. is the research arm of the LOLC group has recently introduced the RT-LAMP test kit for Covid-19 detection for the first time in Sri Lanka. LOLC Advanced Technologies provides advanced technological consultation support to companies under the LOLC umbrella in the fields of precision agriculture, process improvements for cinnamon agronomy and value addition, new product development in plant nutrition, and agrochemistry. The company was set up to explore sustainable business opportunities in the market with augmentation of science and technology. It is a wholly-owned subsidiary of LOLC Holdings PLC.

Ceylon Nano Diagnostics (Pvt.) Ltd. is a joint venture (JV) company established to produce RT-LAMP kits and other research and development initiatives related to the molecular diagnostics field. LOLC Advanced Technologies is the management entity for CNDL on behalf of Browns Pharma Ltd.'s shareholding of 50% while SLINTEC bears the balance 50% shareholding.



LOLC Advance Technologies RT-LAMP test kit for Covid-19 Detection produced for the first time in Sri Lanka

To capitalise on the marketing, distribution, technical, and application services in the market, CNDL entered into an agreement with Avon Pharms Chem (Pvt.) Ltd., a long-standing leader in the molecular diagnostics market in Sri Lanka.

Covid-19, which began in Hubei Province, China in December 2019 transformed into an unprecedented worldwide crisis at great speed. The pandemic caused snap lockdowns, social distancing, and an alarming number of loss of human lives across the world - all this, resulting in grave humanitarian and economic loss, globally.

MAS secures 'Exporter of the Year' award for 2020/21



MAS Intimates CEO Rajiv Dharmendra receiving the 'Exporter of the Year' award for 2020/21 from President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, along with MAS Holdings CEO Suren Fernando

MAS Intimates, the largest division of MAS Holdings, received three top accolades at the Sri Lanka Presidential Export Awards, including the highly coveted "Exporter of the Year" award for 2020/2021.

MAS Intimates was also honoured as Sri Lanka's overall "Best Exporter in Product Diversification", while the company's focus on ethical and sustainable manufacturing was recognised as the overall "Contributor to Sustainable Development in Exports".

It was an additional triple

win for MAS Active and MAS KREEDA, who were honoured for their manufacturing of world class sports and performance wear for leading international brands. Their awards included the overall "Market Diversified Exporter of the Year", "Best Performing Exporter in Emerging Markets", and the sectoral award for "Best Exporter - Apparel Large" category for 2020/2021.

These six awards, including the Exporter of the Year, made MAS the most awarded conglomerate for 2020/2021.

Siyapatha Finance launches improved corporate website



The website was launched by Siyapatha Finance Managing Director Ananda Seneviratne in the presence of the senior management

Siyapatha Finance PLC, a fully owned subsidiary of Sampath Bank PLC, launched the newly improved corporate website in view of being ahead and providing the customers ease of access to required information digitally.

This mobile-responsive digital platform is compatible with all modern browsers, ensuring convenient access to necessary information through an effortless user-friendly experience. A view of the complete product portfolio offered by Siyapatha Finance is simply accessible by the customer through the improved navigational options, and in addition, the reintroduced website offers several more features that will aid convenient access for the user.

Further focusing on customer requirements, several of these beneficial features include quick access to inquiry submission, vehicle sales information, calculators, branch contact details, and other customer beneficial information. Moreover, the intelligent solution offered via the "Live Chat" option ensures that customers are guided through the website effortlessly.

Headed by a well reputed and senior group of empowering professionals, Siyapatha Finance PLC is known to maintain and ensure trust to its customers, providing flexible and creative solutions and generating greater values for stakeholders while ensuring corporate governance.

Maliban accredited as a Great Place to Work®

Maliban Biscuits was recently bestowed the "Great Place to Work" certification, resulting from the organisation's commitment towards the wellbeing of its employees. Inspired by goodness, this recognition evidently showcases Maliban's continued efforts to improve employee satisfaction and enhance its work culture, spanning across decades of operations.

Standing as a testament to the company's continuous strive to treat all internal stakeholders as a priority, Maliban successfully met the global assessment standards required to be Great Place to Work Certified™, for the period



Officials representing the Maliban Group receiving the Great Place to Work® certification

of April 2021 to March 2022. This significant accomplishment highlights the company's ability to recruit and retain top

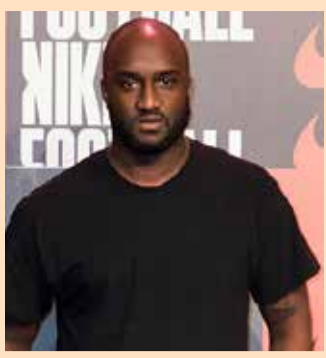
talents, resulting from numerous initiatives implemented by the management.

A crucial aspect of the

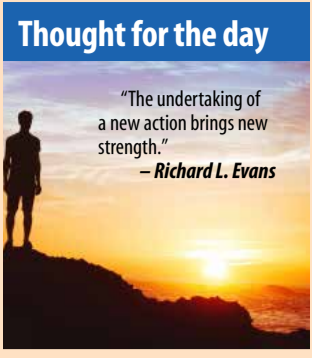
Great Place to Work® Certified™ programme includes the assessment of employee experience across

five dimensions; credibility, respect, fairness, pride, and camaraderie. Results generated from an extensive survey undergone by Maliban's employees indicate that the company has struck an ideal balance, showcasing the value felt by the staff in the company's efforts to ensure their personal and financial wellbeing.

Achieving the Great Place to Work® certification is the first part of Maliban's long-term social value creation journey and underlines the impact it creates as a socially responsible corporate, driven by its triple-bottom line focused sustainability strategy.



Virgil Abloh dies of cancer at 41
 Virgil Abloh, the founder of luxury streetwear brand Off-White and artistic director of men's wear at Louis Vuitton, has died from cancer at the age of 41. One of the most influential designers of his generation, Abloh had been privately battling the disease for several years. LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton said in a statement on Sunday (28). The designer died in hospital in Houston on Sunday, according to sources familiar with the matter.



Thought for the day
 "The undertaking of a new action brings new strength."
 - Richard L. Evans

the morning brunch

Rethinking Museums



MMCA Chief Curator Sharmini Pereira



Geoffrey Bawa Trust Curator Shayari de Silva



BY VENESSA ANTHONY

The Embassy of France in Sri Lanka and the Maldives is proud to present "Rethinking Museums", a series of webinars on a range of questions encountered by museums in France and Sri Lanka, scheduled to take place from 1 to 8 December 2021.

The conversations will take place on Zoom Webinars, while being broadcasted live on the Brunch (@brunchlk) Facebook page. You will also be able to find the replay of the conversations on the Embassy of France YouTube channel.

Creating museums

The first session will focus on how to define the mission and values of a museum and build its business plan, while touching on which common problems are encountered by newborn museums today. This workshop aims at sharing good practices of cultural engineering.

The panellists for the event will be Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka (MMCA) Chief Curator Sharmini Pereira, Agence France-Muséums Director General Hervé Barbaret, Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris Heritage Curator and Director of Collections Aurélie Samuel, and GIZ Sri Lanka Strengthening

Reconciliation Process in Sri Lanka (SRP) Director Christoph Feyen.

In conversation with Sharmini Pereira, she informed us that she would be talking about the MMCA. "It's the first museum in Sri Lanka dedicated to modern and contemporary art and it is an initiative that will be relaunched and relocated on 7 February at Crescat Colombo. It will be an amazing relocation as we're going to be in a public space."

Touching on the vision of the museum, she commented that it is to create a museum of modern and contemporary art for the public, students, and returning tourists, adding: "It is a building that we see as being accessible to people through the programmes that we offer as well as the trilingual work we do. Our vision is also really informed by trying to overcome what is a mindset here; that modern and contemporary art is something that is not seen as important, whereas the art and culture from the past is seen as important."

She highlighted that their vision is to help create awareness and an understanding that modern and contemporary art is as important to conserve, learn about, and create meaningful curatorial exhibitions.

She also added that she will speak about some challenges in setting up such a museum and named a few to be training staff and building capacity. She explained that in Sri

A series of webinars on questions encountered by museums in France and SL

Lanka, we don't have the people who are needed and required to work in a museum as specialists. Another challenge she will be focusing on is the museum's undertaking to do its work trilingual, essentially delivering their social media content and all activities in all three languages (Sinhala, Tamil, and English), which is something that no other institution – public or private – does at the moment.

Shifting the museum narrative

Rethinking Museums will elaborate on how to dissociate a museum's narrative from its past and the methodology to deconstruct an art history centred on archaeology. The question of if museums stick to

a chronological exhibition of their collections, will also be explored.

International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) Research Fellow, independent consultant, and author of *Museums, Memory, and Identity Politics in Sri Lanka* Hasini Haputhanthri; Department of National Museums Deputy Director and University of Kelaniya Visiting Lecturer in Museology Senerath Wickramasinghe; and political scientist, historian, and decolonial feminist Françoise Vergès will speak at the event.

Building an inclusive museum

Set to be held on 3 December, this session will explore how museums interact with society and how civil society and activists fit within museum practices. The panellists are University of St. Andrews Associate Lecturer and Museum of Religious Freedom Curator Vindhya Buttpitiya; Institute of Social Development Tea Plantation Workers' Museum Director Periyasamy Muthulingam; Palais de la Porte Dorée Director General, historian, Sciences Po (Paris) Prof. Pap Ndiaye; and Musée du Louvre Chief Curator and Director of Mediation and Cultural Programmes Dominique de Font-Réaulx, who will discuss the possibilities of building museum policies that are inclusive of other

communities and audiences as well as how outreach programmes play a role.

Considering museum sustainability

This session, to be conducted on 7 December, will focus on whether conservation is compatible with sustainability and the possibility of museums becoming environmental activists.

The speakers at the event will be Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle Curator and Project Manager Kinga Grege; The Shift Project Project Manager and AWARE: Archives of Women Artists, Research, and Exhibitions International Development Officer Anaïs Roesch; Geoffrey Bawa Trust Curator Shayari de Silva; environmental architect and conservationist Sunela Jayawardene; and Academy Of Design (AOD) Strategic Advisor – (BA) Programme Chani Perera.

We spoke to Shayari de Silva, an architect whose practice focuses on curatorial and editorial projects, to better understand what she will be speaking about during the discussion. She explained that at the Geoffrey Bawa Trust, they ensure to take an approach where sustainability needs to be at the forefront as they further develop their already recognised museum programmes.

| Contd. on page 13

The beauty of art and how it can shine a light on digital wellbeing

The Children in Lockdown Arts Festival 2021

BY NAVEED ROZAIS

This past weekend (26-28 November) saw the culmination of a beautiful thing – the Stages Theatre Group's Children in Lockdown Arts Festival – an eight-month-long creative endeavour, finally taking place for the public.

Put simply, the Children in Lockdown Arts Festival 2021 is a primarily virtual event, which gathers together artists, children, and adults to reflect on the treatment and experiences of children in Sri Lanka during the Covid-19 pandemic. The festival comprised three days of public screenings, live interactive digital sessions, and a closing plenary for select artists (in keeping with pandemic restrictions).

Curated by the Stages Theatre Group and supported by Kindemthilfe (KNH), the Children in Lockdown Arts Festival 2021 has brought children right into the centre of the curation of the artworks and conversations of this festival. The Stages Theatre Group is an ensemble theatre company that focuses on producing socially and politically conscious original theatre. Founded by veteran theatre practitioner and director Ruwanthi de Chickera, in addition to theatre productions, the Stages Theatre Group also works to strengthen the surrounding sub-culture of the arts in Sri Lanka and build stronger links between theatre and wider society, both local and global.

Taking place across three days, 26 to 28 November, the artworks showcased at the festival included theatre performances,



'Trapped' a mixed-media installation piece by Encelleta Solomon



#ReconnectUs a series of PSA videos by the Digital Wellbeing Initiative



'QuaranTEEN' the one-man show by Leeth Singhage



'Chatroom 2021' a mixed-media live performance directed by Tasmin Anthonisz

art installations, puppet shows, short-film screenings, and artist talks.

The festival took place in six sessions spread out over the three festival days with each session curated to respond to a specific theme to do with children and the pandemic. Each session included a showcase of work by artists commissioned by the festival and was followed by panel discussions on the theme of the session.

Day One of the festival, Friday, 26 November, covered the themes of "Health and Mental Wellbeing During the Pandemic" and "Abuse During the Pandemic".

Day Two of the festival, Saturday, 27 November, covered the themes of "Vulnerable Children in the Pandemic", and "Schooling in the Pandemic". Day Two also

featured a virtual magic show for kids.

Day Three of the festival, which took place on Sunday, 28 November, covered the themes of "Families in the Pandemic", "Digital Wellbeing in the Pandemic", and concluded with *Chatroom 2021*, a play directed by Tasmin Anthonisz about six teenagers who meet online looking for entertainment, a purpose to live, and a way to always be remembered during the global lockdown.

The Morning Brunch checked out the closing session of the festival "Digital Wellbeing in the Pandemic", which featured the unveiling of three artworks; *Trapped* by Encelleta Solomon; #ReconnectUs by the Digital Wellbeing Initiative (DWI); *QuaranTEEN* by Leeth Singhage; and a panel discussion on digital

wellbeing in the pandemic.

The festival took place primarily virtually, despite the initial intentions of the Stages Theatre Group. The festival's Artist Curators Ruwanthi de Chickera and Malith Hegoda took on the challenge of translating all the different forms of art that had been produced into a hybrid between live performance art and film, and pre recording, so that each performance could create the maximum impact in a virtual setting.

'Trapped' by Encelleta Solomon

The opening artwork showcase of "Digital Wellbeing in the Pandemic" was *Trapped* by Encelleta Solomon, a mixed-media installation piece by 19-year-old Encelleta Solomon under the mentorship

of visual artist Shaanea Mendis. *Trapped* reflected on the fragility of human connection and solidarity within the challenges of the pandemic, about how what people took for granted became a privilege, and what people took for normal became luxury.

Speaking on the influences that she used when conceptualising *Trapped*, Solomon said that the pandemic turned everything upside down, and even though there were things she initially had positive feelings about (like the postponement of her Advanced Levels [A/Ls] for example), after a while the pandemic and the lockdown became a trap, not just for her, but for everyone, and it was this feeling of being trapped that she explored within *Trapped*.

Trapped features paintings of different hands symbolising Sri Lankans and children in lockdown, bound yet connected through pieces of crimson string and handmade chains that capture both the dark side of the pandemic, form loss of livelihoods, productivity, and depression to the positive aspects of society like charity and lending a helping hand that developed during the pandemic.

The final result was a multi-faceted piece of work that managed to capture the duality that everyone, from children in school to adults of all ages, who had to deal with both the initial shock of the pandemic and the slow pace we're taking towards recovery at present with the threat of another wave hanging over us.

| Contd. on page 13

{ ARTS/PEOPLE }



'I AM A MUSICALLY DRIVEN ARTIST'

J!NNA on his musical career and more

BY VENESSA ANTHONY

J!nna, a local musician, was inspired to pursue his passion for music from an early age. He has been featured on Beatport for the track *Brace Yourself* (Digital Empire Records) and was also supported by the EDM Festival "Parookaville" for the track *Rhythmo* (Electronic Future Records).

His career was supported and made possible by Revealed Recordings, owned by the well-known artist Hardwell for the track *Ceylonely* (Digital Empire Records).

The Morning Brunch had a chat with him on his career and more.

➔ **What inspired you to get into music?**

Well, I have been a fan of music

since I was very small and my whole family was into music despite the genre or language. Just like other kids in my school I had a very interesting hobby which nobody my age would ever think of, which was collecting songs and sorting them out in different genres.

I had a good collection of songs where I used to play them when friends came over or during small parties and everyone liked them. This paved the way for me to become a DJ later even though I started learning music production before starting to DJ professionally.

➔ **What was the biggest challenge you faced in your career?**

As I am an electronic dance music producer, the major problem I faced was the lack of professional colleges or academies that teach electronic music production for beginners. I'm a self-taught producer; I learnt everything through YouTube tutorials, web articles, and by experimenting on my own, which was a bit of a challenge I faced. Moreover, when considering the social status or recognition given for electronic music producers/DJs in Sri Lanka, I'm very disappointed because people here really underestimate them.

➔ **Which song of yours is closest to your heart and why?**

The song which is really close to my heart is *Rhythmo* which was my very first song to be released on a record label called Electronic Future Records based in Sweden which polished me as it made me learn all the procedures behind song distribution and I learnt a lot through that song.

➔ **What is the procedure behind your song making?**

I'm a musically driven artist. I care a lot about my melodies and chord progressions. Therefore, I usually come up with a small melody in my head or any vocal idea and I build my track around it with my own unique sounds. There's no exact procedure to my song making. Sometimes I start my projects straight away from the drop and then continue to complete the intros and breaks but sometimes it goes the other way around. It all depends on the first idea in my head.

➔ **How important do you think it is to write original music?**

I think writing original music is a crucial part for an artist as it is the thing that symbolises the specific artist's style and their sounds. Writing original music can help artists' growth since they can take it as their own property and that will help people remember them through their originals. Covers and remixes can be considered a good chance to experiment different sounds but at the end of the day I think a successful artist should always have their own originals.

➔ **What is the message you want to send out with your music?**

There's nothing specific but I make music to make people happy. I usually make happy/uplifting songs which will help people get through their day. In fact, if I can bring up a single smile through my music, I think I'm successful.

➔ **What is your opinion of the music industry in Sri Lanka?**

To be honest, I'm really pleased with the evolution of the music industry occurring right now in the country. People are exposed to different types of music and their taste for music is widening compared to years back, which helps various



types of underrated artists show up. Furthermore, Sri Lankan artists are getting worldwide exposure, which they deserve, by being signed by international record labels, performing in international shows/concerts, etc. I think every artist deserves recognition and support as I know how much effort they put up to bring out something unique.



➔ **In terms of Covid-19, how do you think this third wave will affect the music industry and do you have any suggestions or plans on how to keep it alive?**

Well, the pandemic era and the lockdown have unfavourably affected the music industry a lot. Most of the artists couldn't perform in live shows and all the planned events have been postponed without any due date. But on the good side, I think this is the perfect time for artists to develop their skills as they have plenty of time to experiment and learn new things. Virtual events have been introduced to the music industry, but in my opinion, I don't think it's a success. For me, I have been producing a lot of music and trying new things to get exposure so that I can use newly learnt skills in my future projects.

➔ **What is 2021 looking like for you? Any future plans?**

I'd say 2021 was really successful for me as I was able to achieve some accomplishments such as releasing a Sinhala electronic dance music song called *Madhahase* alongside with the vocalist Jizzy, which was released on Senter Records, owned by DJ Mass (a big shout out to him). Moreover, I released another track called *Ceylonely*, which has traditional Sinhala vocals with a powerful drop which was released via Digital Empire Records based in Peru and gained a lot of popularity on Beatport and Spotify, and also the track *Turn it up Loud* with my best buddy KYZE via Digital Empire Records. When talking about future plans, I have a couple of releases in the coming months with artists such as BLAXE, The Tedy, Chehara, and Mophyne. My effort is to bring out Sinhala pop vibes along with a twist of dance music, which I think is becoming trending nowadays.



Contd. from page 12

The beauty...

#ReconnectUs

The second showcase of "Digital Wellbeing in the Pandemic" was something more digital, a series of public service announcement (PSA) videos by the DWI, with a group of child-artists that focused on the need for digital awareness and wellbeing amongst teenagers and families.

In a talk on the public service announcement (PSA) videos and the concept of #ReconnectUs, DWI Co-Founder Maleen Jayasinghe that though the need and trend for digital has been a long time coming, educational systems and family units are still trailing behind when it comes to being proactive with the problems of technology, and this is what spurred him and a group of his friends to help children and adults both to develop stronger digital wellbeing.

Through their maiden project #ReconnectUs, the DWI worked with a group of child-artists to develop a series of PSA videos where kids can create an honest dialogue with each other on the dangers of the internet (as opposed to being lectured by adults who are often not as up-to-date on digital safety and wellbeing as they would like to think).

The PSA videos touched on four key issues around digital wellbeing: Addiction to devices and social media; privacy and how what we share online (and with who) can make us vulnerable and open us up to harm; cyberbullying and the impact careless actions online can have on people in real life; and misinformation and the importance of sharing information responsibly.

Over the course of #ReconnectUs,

the DWI team as well as other professionals mentored the child-artists with workshops, knowledge sessions, and feedback sessions to help the artists develop the most impactful PSA videos despite the challenges of the pandemic. In the end, the artists all shot their components of the PSA videos on their mobile phones before creatively editing them to make them powerful one-minute stories that can show people how to be more responsible and safe online.

Part of DWI and the group of artists' intention was to show that the internet and technology are not inherently bad things, but are also tools that can be, and are, used for good. The videos themselves were compelling without being overwhelming. While the cyberbullying PSA could have had a little more depth into it in terms of just how cyberbullying can demoralise a person, given that each video was shot on mobile phones and had to be kept under one minute, it was nevertheless a wonderful attempt. The other videos of #ReconnectUs were spot on with capturing the issues outlined in a relatable and effective way.

'QuaranTeen' by Leeth Singhage

The longest, but also arguably the most compelling, artwork featured in "Digital Wellbeing in the Pandemic" was the one (and a half) man show put on by 19-year-old Leeth Singhage.

The setting of *QuaranTeen* was one that was familiar to all of us, especially the younger among us – a simple bedroom. Over the course of 48 mins, Leeth took us through all the stages of the pandemic through a teenager's eyes – from the first few weeks of "this too shall pass", to the realisation that while it would pass the nature of its passing

would be slow and arduous. At its core, *QuaranTeen* chronicled a teenager stuck in lockdown with the bleakness of socially distanced university applications, online life, poor judgement, and how teenagers navigated the pandemic.

Leeth compiled *QuaranTeen* based on interviews conducted with teenagers on how they experienced lockdown, and honestly, this play ran the gamut. It started with reminiscences of the good old days, and how for this generation at least, everyone will be able to agree on just when "the good old days" were.

It also dealt with rather relatable things like how everyone was supposed to have made the pandemic a "learning opportunity". For teenagers, this became most apparent in university questions like "how has the pandemic made you grow?".

It also chronicled the rather ill-advised online dating escapades many of us have embarked on in lockdown, from randomly texting people we hadn't seen in months only to be coolly rebuffed or contacting strangers in hopes of making a connection. There were some stellar cheesy pick-up lines that were shared in this section of the play.

QuaranTeen also captured another interesting phenomenon that everyone, adult or teenager, could relate to – the development of online personas. From self-certified fitness expert to self-professed Instagram music star, whether we made these online personas by ourselves or simply enjoyed the efforts of others' personas, this was absolutely something we could all relate to.

QuaranTeen also captured how Leeth developed his one-man show, from its working title to its drafts to figure out how it would flow, and even to the moment he found out it would no longer be a live

performance (the news was not well-received).

Leeth's one-man show was very engaging from start to finish and was a rather well-developed cross-section of all the things young people have been up to during lockdowns and the pandemic.

Digital wellbeing in the pandemic as an issue

The session closed with a panel discussion on the digital wellbeing in the pandemic as an issue and looked at how teenagers can navigate and take control of the virtual world in a manner that benefits them.

The panel consisted of HashtagGeneration Co-Founder Mahishaa Balraj, one of the artists from #ReconnectUs Shaakya Nathavitharana, ICTA Legal Officer Thanusshi Dissanayake, and roboticist and academic Chrisjit Xavier, and was moderated by Sanjith Dias of the DWI. The panel discussed the importance of digital literacy, critical thinking, and being discerning when consuming and sharing information; the impacts of cyberbullying; the legality of cybercrime and the recourse available when dealing with cybercrime; and the very harsh reality of being addicted to our screens and how to break free from this addiction.

The overall festival was concluded by a mixed-media live performance reimagining of Enda Walsh's *Chatroom* in a pandemic situation, offering insight into the psychological effects of online harassment on teenagers, at a time when one's world is completely virtual.

The Children in Lockdown in Arts Festival can be viewed in much of its entirety on the Stages Theatre Group's YouTube channel.

Rethinking...

As de Silva joined the Geoffrey Bawa Trust in 2018, where she now manages the Geoffrey Bawa Collections, including the programmes around exhibition, publication, and conservation, she is just the person to speak to on the topic of sustainability in terms of modern and contemporary art. In conversation with us about the topic of sustainability going hand in hand with museums, she commented: "The word 'sustainability' is really loaded, but from a professional stance, it includes environmental, economic, and social considerations."

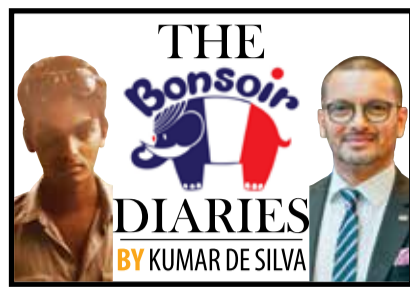
De Silva also added that she is currently working on the forthcoming exhibition "It is Essential to be There: Drawing from the Geoffrey Bawa Archive" and the accompanying publication of the same title.

Contested histories in archaeological museums

The final session, which will be held on 8 December, will discuss the role that identity politics play in archaeological museums while questioning if there is an illusion of neutral museology and whether these museums play a role in the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods. The panellists are International Council of Museums (ICOM) Heritage Protection Department Head Sophie Delapierre, University of Kelaniya Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology Director, Theertha Artists' Collective Co-Founder, senior artist, and archaeologist Jagath Weerasinghe; senior architect and conservator Ashley de Vos; and National Institute of Preventive Archaeological Research (INRAP) Operations and Research Officer and Archaeologist Catherine Barra will explore how archaeological museums are built on different practices compared to art museums and how to present conflicted past and presents.

{ COLUMNS/EVENTS }

TIME WARP WITH DELORAINE BROHIER AT THE OLD DUTCH HOSPITAL



In its early years, *Bonsoir* began by focusing entirely on France – on French people, French events, and all things French. However, with the European Union (EU) coming into effective play, our boundaries expanded and gave us greater flexibility to open out into Europe.

The Old Dutch Hospital in Fort had often intrigued and fascinated me. I remember visiting it often during my undergraduate days with like-minded fellow undergrads studying architecture and getting lost in reverie there. Much has been written and many have waxed eloquent about the metamorphosis of the Old Dutch Hospital.

Just like the Old Racecourse Promenade, it is today one of the (restored) crown jewels of the city of Colombo. But there was a time when this urban heirloom was a badly neglected and a sorry sight – where vagrants, beggars, drug peddlers, pimps, and assorted prostitutes ruled at night as the sun went down.

I decided that I would take *Bonsoir* to the Old Dutch Hospital. How, I wondered, was I to angle this programme? I was no expert on *des affaires hollandaises*. I then remembered that I vaguely know the legendary Deloraine Brohier, having once met her at the Dutch Burgher Union (DBU) in Colombo.

The stories she related to me that day fired my imagination and have stuck in my mind ever since... how the DBU's front gardens extended way beyond today's Thunmulla Junction and extended right into Bauddhaloka



Deloraine Brohier

Mawatha; how the "ancestor" of today's Bauddhaloka Mawatha was a mere gravel road on which horse-drawn carriages rolled; how, according to her mother Pansy Werkmeister Brohier, children were scared to go down this road since the Mental Asylum was housed in an old colonial building, "somewhere past Radio Ceylon"; how the Burghers celebrated St. Nicholas Day (named after Nicholas, the Fourth Century Bishop of Myra) on 6 December; and how "St. Nicholas came riding a white horse to the DBU".

I finally located her and invited her to be our guest on this "*Bonsoir* Dutch Hospital Special". What better

choice than the famous daughter of the famous R.L. Brohier. I'm happy she graciously agreed.

The French Embassy got us the necessary police permission to shoot in this high security zone and there we were among the weeds, the rubble, the stray dogs, and the relative ruins of the Dutch Hospital with Sri Lanka's *grande dame* of Dutch-descent in tow.

Although she looks delicate and frail, Deloraine is a sport with a mind of her own. With her absolute, total, and willing consent we played with a time warp and transformed poor Deloraine into her own "ghost". She loved it, to say the least, and still admits that she revelled in it. With a haunting soundtrack in the background, we had her appear in and out of those old doorways... waft across half-closed and creaking windows hanging off their hinges... drift ethereally along the verandahs... with a vacant, faraway look in her eyes, while her brilliant (voice off) narrative brought the magnificent edifice back to life.

The "ghost" of Deloraine took us decades back to her childhood when she visited this building with her celebrated father. She even took

us further beyond, back in time, and told us how the hospital staff threw buckets of water on the stone floors to cool the place while the punkahs facilitated air circulation. She played her role to perfection: An authentic *phantôme hollandaise* from the past, caught up in a time warp in 20th Century Colombo!

The aesthete in me loved every moment of it. We literally had the entire Dutch Hospital all to ourselves – AND with a very knowledgeable "ghost" as a bonus.

It was April. The sun was harsh and the air sticky. The cacophony of the Fort traffic wasn't helpful. Nor were the noisy vendors down Hospital Street. Yes, there were many takes, but Deloraine braved it all. I admired her spirit. We even had chilled bottled water in the diplomatic boot, which she didn't avail herself of. Not a drop.

We crawled all over the place to our heart's content and finally climbed the wooden stairs into the little upper room to get the high-angle shots. From there we even got a good view of the Janadhpathi Mandiraya. Then incumbent President Madame

Kumaratunga was apparently not in town, and so we thought a few quick shots of the old Queen's House were okay.

Less than four minutes later, we had a visitation by men in civvies. They said they knew *Bonsoir*, but very politely wanted to know if we had permission. Yes we had. We were cleared. It was only then that I realised that the PSD had been watching us all the time!

CHAPTER
47

NOTE:

On 26 April 2002, Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Kingdom of the Netherlands bestowed on Deloraine Beryl Brohier a royal honour, when she made her a *Knight of the Royal Order of Orange Nassau*.

A quarter century earlier, on 26 September 1978, Queen Beatrix's mother, Her Majesty Queen Juliana of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, had similarly bestowed on Deloraine's distinguished father, Richard Leslie Brohier, a royal honour in the higher grade of the Order – *Officer of the Royal Order of Orange Nassau*.

This is a rare honour bestowed on two persons of the same family.

"The Bonsoir Diaries" by Kumar de Silva is a cocktail of chapters bursting at their seams with pithy asides, a trail of faux pas, and tit-bits from behind the scenes, marinated with anecdotes and drizzled with nostalgia, revealing everything you never saw on your favourite television show... from the '80s through the '90s into 2000.



The Old Colombo Dutch Hospital



Dutch Hospital Shopping Precinct

The female workforce and violence against women

In Sri Lanka, one in five (20.4%) ever-partnered women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, while 4% of women have experienced sexual violence by a non-partner, according to Women's Wellbeing Survey (WWS), the first-ever dedicated survey on the prevalence of violence against women and girls, conducted in all 25 districts of the island in 2019.

Two experts in the field shared their thoughts on the female workforce and violence against women both in Sri Lanka and the globe.

Following are excerpts of the interviews.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) Country Office Senior Programme Officer Balasingham Skanthakumar

➔ How does violence against women affect the female workforce?

Violence against women is a worldwide issue. It affects the health and safety of workers, productivity in the workplace and enterprise, and women's participation in the world of work. Violence against women is a threat to the physical and mental wellbeing of women; it has a direct impact on the performance of work roles and tasks, with knock-on effects on the productivity of the individual and the enterprise. It excludes women from the labour force.

➔ How can companies and organisations help women who face economic abuse at the hands of their intimate partners?

The world of work, including employers' and workers' organisations, can make a positive contribution to supporting victims of abuse, including domestic

violence. Some measures that can be taken by employers include providing leave to people experiencing abuse (e.g. to receive medical help, counselling, attend court hearings, move their children and themselves to safe environments, etc.) and extending temporary protection against dismissal.

A supportive environment can be fostered in the workplace by including domestic violence in safety and health risk assessments. The provision of flexible work arrangements is a practical measure that supports the victim in balancing work with personal security.

➔ How and by what means does the ILO address this issue on a global scale?

In 2019, the ILO, with the support of its tripartite membership (government, employers, and workers), adopted the first global standard to eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence (GBV) and harassment. ILO Convention No. 190 provides an international framework and guidance on prevention, protection, and measures for the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work for governments, employers' organisations, and workers' organisations.

Brandix Lanka Group Consultant Psychologist Peshali Fernando

➔ Speaking from your experience at Brandix, how does violence against women affect women working in the workplace?

GBV is a global issue that is unfortunately very prevalent today. Mostly experienced by women, it leads to immense mental



ILO Country Office Senior Programme Officer Balasingham Skanthakumar

strain and trauma. Victims of GBV may also become increasingly socially isolated and experience deteriorating relationships, leading to issues in the context of a factory environment where collective work is required. Additionally, it must be noted that these issues do impact productivity at the workplace, as a result of the severe emotional harm caused by the experience.

➔ How can companies and organisations help women who face abuse at the hands of their intimate partners?

Most women who have experienced abuse are unaware of who they can turn to for help. Even though organisations have some level of awareness, there is room for improvement, considering that it impacts work productivity and relationships.

At Brandix, we implemented a professional counselling and mental wellbeing function across all our locations around four years ago. We have a counsellor at each plant and two dedicated to multiple-shift plants, and all counsellors adhere to strict confidentiality and ethical principles. We actively drive programmes to foster the feeling of safety and respect, and equip our associates with ways to heal from their GBV experience, thereby enabling them to fulfil their potential.

Additionally, with the



Brandix Lanka Group Consultant Psychologist Peshali Fernando

support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), we are in the process of building awareness of the "Abuse and Harassment-free Policy" at Brandix. The policy extends Brandix's Code of Conduct and details how everyone must be treated with dignity, equality, respect, and ethics, and the importance of personal and organisational accountability in ensuring a safe and inclusive workplace for all.

➔ What are some of the challenges you face in rolling out these initiatives?

It is difficult for many people to seek help due to negative sentiments in society about mental health. There may even be instances when people who have been socialised to believe that violence against women cannot be challenged and is therefore acceptable. Our counselling programme has focused on reducing the stigma for people seeking support and provides employees a platform to learn ways to cope with adversities, develop self-awareness and gain insight, get support from community resources, and improve self-esteem. Our experience in this area continues to reinforce that all individuals are strong, capable, and aspire to a better quality of life, and we strive to empower them during this journey through counselling support.

AIESEC launches Amplifier '21

Amplifier '21 is Sri Lanka's first-ever islandwide leadership development programme conducted by AIESEC, an international youth-run organisation which aims to assist young people in developing leadership potential. This three-month programme commenced on 19 September and intends to develop leadership and public speaking skills of 250-plus post-Advanced Level (A/L) students who were recruited as delegates for Amplifier '21 from all 25 districts of Sri Lanka, while several general events are open for 650-plus young people.

In addition to the skills development programmes conducted at Amplifier '21, a youth forum on leadership also took place on 27 and 28 November. The forum was open to any youth of Sri Lanka, including undergraduate and post-A/L students. With these programmes, AIESEC Sri Lanka aims to create brand-new experiences for all youths of Sri Lanka.

Amplifier '21 launched with the participation of AIESEC Sri Lanka Country President Bhanuka Hathurusinghe and AIESEC Bangladesh Country President Arfan Nazar. A motivational session on confidence building and positive thinking was then led by Nirvana Club Co-Director and Sri Lankan Motivational Community Founder Hasitha Hewawasam.

This was followed by a series of leadership



Post A/L students recruited as delegates for Amplifier '21



The Amplifier '21 Organising Committee

skills development sessions every Sunday for two months on several topics including AIESEC leadership values, personality development and personal grooming, and fundamentals of public speaking. The session were conducted with the participation of past and active members from the AIESEC Sri Lanka Member Committee and other prominent personalities of the country, such as personality development and corporate etiquette trainer, former Embassy of France in Sri Lanka Audio and Visual Officer, and Kumar de Silva Training Lead Trainer Kumar de Silva as well as certified skills development coach, communication evangelist, and Pufferfish

Founder Shuaib Ali. Furthermore, contestants from "Voice Sri Lanka" also performed at every event to provide an entertaining break for the enthusiastic delegates of Amplifier '21.

In addition to that, a unique session was held with Unilever Sri Lanka Senior Human Resource Business Partner – Corporate Functions and Lead Keshavi Puswewala on the importance of leadership, where the delegates of Amplifier '21 had the opportunity to interview her. An interview with Hemas Holdings PLC Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Kasturi Chellaraja Wilson took place on 12 November in collaboration with the V Force youth movement of Sirasa TV.

Jaffna Central records landmark achievement in school cricket

Enters All-island Division-III finals with a dominating performance against Hanwella Rajasinghe Central College

BY RAVI VARMA IN JAFFNA

After making it to the quarter-finals and the semi-finals, Jaffna Central College failed to enter the finals a few times in recent years. Yet they broke that streak this time by entering the finals this year.

Jaffna Central College did so with the dominant performance against Hanwella Rajasinghe Central College to win this year's All-island Inter-school Division-III semi-final by seven wickets.

The knockout stage of the Inter-school Under-19 Division-III Tier "A" tournament is now being played off by the Sri Lanka Schools' Cricket Association (SLSCA), in amalgamation with Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC).

The quarter-finals

Last weekend, both the semi-finals of the tournament were played at the Colombo Nalanda College grounds. Jaffna Central had earlier registered a victory by 10 wickets in their quarter-final fixture against Enderamulla St. Joseph's College.

Jaffna Central College vs. Hanwella Rajasinghe Central College

All-island Inter-school Division-III cricket semi-final at Nalanda College Grounds in Colombo last Saturday (27)

Brief scores:

Rajasinghe Central College, Hanwella: 104 all out in 47.2 overs (Isuru Udesch 35, Praveen Maneesha

29; R. Newton 3/16, T. Gowtham 2/14, B. Inthujan 2/25)

Jaffna Central College: 105/3 in 20.3 overs (S. Sarangan 50, J. Vithushan 18; Praveen Maneesha 3/31)

Result:

Jaffna Central College won by seven wickets and qualified to the finals

In last weekend's semi-final held in Colombo, they took on Hanwella Rajasinghe Central who had won their quarter-final against St. Mary's College, Matugama by six runs.

Jaffna dominated from word go

After winning the toss, Captain of Jaffna Central, B. Inthujan, invited Hanwella boys to bat first. From the start itself, fast-bowlers of the Jaffna Central troubled the batsmen from Hanwella.

Young left-arm fast-bowler R. Newton was the chief player as he picked up three wickets for 16 runs.

In the end, the Skipper himself kept on building the pressure against the Hanwella batters.

Rajasinghe made 104

By the end of the 21st over, Hanwella had lost six wickets for 27 runs. Praveen Manisha and Isuru Udesch, who made 28 in 106 balls and 35 in 86 balls respectively whilst sharing 48 runs between themselves, helped Rajasinghe Central post a respectable total of 104 all out in 47.2 overs.

Newton captured three wickets while other two fast bowlers, Inthujan and T. Gowtham, got two wickets apiece.

Jaffna openers excelled

Jaffna Central continued their dominance with the bat as well. Their two openers, S. Sarangan and J. Vithushan, posted a solid 70-run partnership for the first wicket and got the team close to victory.

Last year's Lanka Premier League (LPL) star from the Jaffna Stallions franchise team, Vijayakanth Vijaykanth, along with Ajay, confirmed their team's place in the finals.

Wicket-keeper batsman Sarangan was the pick among the lot as he scored a quick-fire fifty in 36 balls, including three sixes and two fours.

Grand finale this weekend

For Hanwella, Praveen Manisha again became the top performer as he captured all three wickets to fall in the Jaffna Central's reply.

Jaffna Central College will now be taking on Vidyaloka College, Galle in the coming weekend in the grand finale.

Vidyaloka registered a four-wicket victory against Methodist High School, Moratuwa in their semi-final of the tournament.



Jaffna Central College Under-19 cricket team that made a landmark performance by entering the final of the All-island Inter-school Division-III Tournament last week in Colombo



ASALANKA IS NO. 157

Charith Asalanka received his maiden Test cap from Sri Lanka Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne just 15 minutes before the scheduled toss time at the second cricket Test against the West Indies at Galle yesterday (29). He became the 157th Test cricketer of

Sri Lanka since the country played its inaugural Test in February 1982. Asalanka, who hails from Galle itself, having played school cricket for prestigious Richmond College in Galle, will be the 10th to earn Test debut since February 2019.

Sri Lanka Test debuts from February 2019

148 Chamika Karunaratne	152 Minod Bhanuka	156 Praveen Jayawickrama
149 Lasith Embuldeniya	Asitha Fernando	
150 Oshada Fernando	154 Ramesh Mendis	
151 Wanindu Hasaranga	155 Pathum Nissanka	
		157 CHARITH ASALANKA

BRADMAN MAKES TEST DEBUT



Don Bradman made his first stroke in Test cricket at Brisbane in 1928

ON THIS DAY



1872 The first-ever international soccer game was played between Scotland and England

1928 Debut of Australian legend Sir Don Bradman, 20, who made an inauspicious 18 and one in his first Test appearance, against England in Brisbane. England won the match by 675 runs!

1956 At 21 years, 10 months, three weeks, and five days, Floyd Patterson became the youngest world heavyweight boxing champion, knocking out Archie Moore in the fifth round in Chicago, The US



At 21 years, Floyd Patterson became the youngest world heavyweight boxing champion in 1956

1956 Sweden's Gert Fredriksson won the second straight K-1 category 10,000 m canoeing gold medal at Melbourne Olympics which was the last time the event was held in Summer Olympics

1960 Birth of ultimate English football legend Gary Lineker

1999 A six-wicket win for Sri Lanka against Zimbabwe in the second Test as Nuwan Zoysa took a hat-trick with his first three deliveries in the second over of the match



England striker Gary Lineker is tripped by Cameroon's goalkeeper Thomas N'Kono during the 1990 FIFA World Cup quarter-final. Yet Lineker brought England a 3-2 victory in extra time

2014 A massive innings win by New Zealand helped them square their series at 1-1 against Pakistan in Sharjah, as news of Australia's Phillip Hughes' death - after the batter was struck by a cricket ball on the back of his head - came through early on day two. That led to play being abandoned and the match being extended by a day. Though it was an emotional victory for New Zealand who recorded only their third away win against Pakistan and the first since 1996, there were no celebrations out of respect for Hughes. New Zealand also did not bowl any bouncers in the match

FOREIGN SPORTS IN BRIEF

Removal of riding from modern pentathlon approved

The International Modern Pentathlon Union (UIPM) has approved a motion to remove riding from modern pentathlon last Saturday (27) at the UIPM Congress, despite an ongoing Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) case against the Board's use of force majeure to make the decision. A vote was held on ratifying the removal of riding - which could be replaced by an unnamed sport - during the Congress, with the motion passing 66-15. The next step would see the UIPM submit a competition format to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles with a new discipline decided by members at the 2022 Congress.

NBA: Curry inspires Golden State Warriors to victory

Stephen Curry inspired the Golden State Warriors to a seventh straight victory as he scored 33 points in a 105-90 win over the Los Angeles Clippers yesterday (29). Curry scored seven three-pointers to take his tally to 105 in 19 games. In doing so, he broke his own record for the fastest player to reach 100 three pointers in a season. The Warriors, who have the best record in the National Basketball Association (NBA) in the US with 18 wins and two losses, will next play the Phoenix Suns, who have won their past 16 games.

Inglis ready for Ashes challenge

Wicket-keeper Josh Inglis believes he'll be ready to represent the green and gold



Josh Inglis is likely to replace Tim Paine as the Australian wicket-keeper in their home Ashes cricket Test series against England starting on 8 December

should he be tapped on the shoulder for the first Ashes Test on 8 December. Currently with the Australian squad in Queensland in preparation for the series, Inglis is in a tussle with Alex Carey for the spot left vacant by Tim Paine, taking an indefinite break from cricket.

'Unvaccinated' Djokovic unlikely to play at Aus Open

Novak Djokovic is unlikely to play at the Australian Open unless rules over Covid-19 vaccinations are relaxed, said his father Srdjan Djokovic yesterday

(29). Unvaccinated players will not be allowed to compete at the 2022 event and defending champion Djokovic, 34, has declined to disclose his status. "Under these blackmails and conditions, he probably won't (play)," Djokovic Sr. had told Serb TV. World No. 1 Djokovic has won the Aus Open a record nine times and is level on 20 Grand Slam wins with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

Spain knocked out of Davis Cup final

Defending champions Spain were knocked out of

the Davis Cup tennis finals yesterday (29) after Russia - playing under the name Russian Tennis Federation (RTF) - clinched a dramatic late-night win in Madrid. Needing victory to reach the quarter-finals, Spanish pair Feliciano Lopez and Marcel Granollers lost 4-6, 6-2, 6-4 to Andrey Rublev and Aslan Karatsev. Success in the deciding doubles meant the Russians - favourites to win the 18-team event - topped Group "A". The Davis Cup 2021 final is to be concluded on 5 December.



Andrey Rublev (left) and Aslan Karatsev of Russia beat Feliciano Lopez and Marcel Granollers of Spain in the Davis Cup finals in Madrid yesterday (29)

the morning sports

Shardul Thakur is engaged now!

Indian pacer Shardul Thakur got engaged with long-time girlfriend in Mumbai yesterday (29). Indian and Chennai Super Kings fast-bowler who was part of India's T20 World Cup squad is currently rested by the management to manage his workload before the series against South Africa in December.



Pakistan close to victory in Chattogram

Pakistan went to stumps on day four on 109/0, needing a mere 93 more runs to go 1-0 up in the two-match Test series against Bangladesh at Chattogram yesterday (29). Pakistan dominated the second-half of the Test. They were 40-odd runs short of Bangladesh's first-innings' total but a solid bowling performance in the second innings, backed up with an equally



impressive batting, put them in the driver's seat. **Brief scores:** Bangladesh 330 and 157; Pakistan 286 and 109/0 (Abid Ali 56 n.o., Abdullah Shafique 53 n.o.)

Little prodigy from Kalutara Vidyalaya struck another fifty yesterday (29)



Nissanka shines on rain-marred first day in Galle

Sri Lanka vs. West Indies 2nd Test, day-one report



Head Coach Mickey Arthur gets ready, amid drizzle, probably for his final assignment for Sri Lanka

The skipper too soon started to take the attack to the spinners. He smashed Roston Chase for two fours in an over but was out caught and bowled off the final ball of the over for 42, breaking the 106-run partnership for the first wicket.

Shortly afterwards, the umpires called stumps after bad light forced play to halt, allowing less than 35 overs of action on the first day.

SRI LANKA 1ST INNINGS	
Pathum Nissanka not out	61
Dimuth Karunaratne (Capt.) c & b Chase	42
Oshada Fernando not out	2
Extras (nb 1, lb 7) 8	
Total (for 1 wicket in 34.4 overs)	113
Did not bat: Angelo Mathews, Dhananjaya de Silva, Dinesh Chandimal (wk), Ramesh Mendis, Suranga Lakmal, Lasith Embuldeniya, Praveen Jayawickrama, Charith Asalanka (debut)	
Fall of wickets: 1-106 (Karunaratne, 30.6 ov)	
Bowling: Kemar Roach 6-2-12-0, Jason Holder 8-2-23-0, Kyle Mayers 2-0-13-0, Veerasammy Permaul 5-0-18-0 (1nb), Roston Chase 7-4-0-33-1, Jomel Warrican 6-3-7-0	
West Indies: Kraigg Brathwaite (Capt.), Nkrumah Bonner, Jermaine Blackwood, Roston Chase, Kyle Mayers, Shai Hope, Jason Holder, Joshua Da Silva (wk), Jomel Warrican, Veerasammy Permaul, and Kemar Roach	
Toss: Sri Lanka who elected to bat first	
Series: Sri Lanka lead two-match series 1-0	
Test match no.: 2,437	
Umpires: Kumar Dharmasena and Ruchira Palliyaguruge	

To LISTEN to our lead story, scan this QR code on your device

Compiled by Ranjika Perera
Pathum Nissanka's third Test fifty was the only talking point of a rain-curtailed day of the second cricket Test between Sri Lanka and West Indies at the Galle International Stadium yesterday (29).
 After a wait of five long hours, the fans in Galle were treated to some cricket. With

the majority of the day washed out due to rain, the sun finally came out to allow some cricketing action.
 Dimuth Karunaratne won the toss and opted to bat first. Charith Asalanka was handed his maiden Test cap, replacing pacer Dushmantha Chameera. For the West Indies, Rakheem Cornwall and Shannon Gabriel made way for Veerasammy Permaul and Kemar Roach.
 Nissanka showed intent from the start, hitting a beautiful straight drive past Jason Holder in

just the second over and followed it up with another boundary off Roach in the next over.
 The pacers made good use of the new ball and the conditions early on, creating a few half-chances in the process but the openers remained largely untroubled for the most part.
 While Karunaratne was cautious in his approach, Nissanka was dismissive of any loose delivery, regularly finding the ropes. He welcomed Permaul into the attack with a six off his second over and soon got to his fifty.

Gritty Kiwis earn nail-biting draw at Green Park

● *India vs. New Zealand first Test in Kanpur*

New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra and Ajaz Patel came up with a determined performance to hold off the Indian pacers in the final hour of the Test to earn a commendable draw at Green Park, Kanpur yesterday (29).
 India started the day knowing they had to get wickets and get them early in order to force the issue on the final day.
 But New Zealand were in no mood to give them an inch in the morning session in Kanpur. Tom Latham and especially Will Somerville batted expertly, showing great patience and application on the crease, reported ICC in its match report yesterday.
 They were largely able to frustrate the Indian pacers and the spinners, who were hardly able to carve out an opening. The visitors headed to lunch unscathed with a draw looking the likeliest of the three results possible.
 Henry Nicholls couldn't last long after tea as Axar Patel got his first scalp of the innings, getting him lbw plumb in front of the stumps. He only contributed one run to the scorecard.

Brief scores

India: 345 and 234/7 declared
New Zealand: 296 and (target 284) 165/9 in 98 overs (Tom Latham 52, William Somerville 36, Kane Williamson 24, Rachin Ravindra 18 n.o.; Ravindra Jadeja 4/40, Ravichandran Ashwin 3/35)
Result: Match drawn
Next Test: Friday (3 December) in Mumbai

Williamson and Blundell then embarked on a blockathon but the skipper was undone by Jadeja who dismissed him with an lbw call on 24. India now had genuine belief that they could get the job done.
 Rachin Ravindra joining Blundell on the crease frustrated India for a few overs before the latter was dismissed in an unlucky manner being bowled by Ashwin for two.
 They eventually ran out of time as the pair batted out 52 deliveries to clinch a well-deserved draw for the

Kiwis. It was high drama at the end as the light metre was out after every over but the grit of the two batters was something to be highly commended.
 The two sides will now face off in Mumbai for the second and the final Test of the series on 3 December with the score evenly poised.
 For all intents and purposes, Jamieson and Ravindra looked comfortable enough at the crease and seemed to be headed towards clinching a draw for the visitors.
 But India had one final ace up their sleeve with the second new ball available and Ravindra Jadeja made full use of it. He got the lbw dismissals of Jamieson and Southee. The delivery to Southee was especially noteworthy, as it was pitched on middle and leg and straightened enough to trap him plumb.
 All of a sudden it became a nail-biting affair as India needed one wicket for a victory but had a battle on their hands with the light quickly dwindling. Standing in their way were Rachin Ravindra and Ajaz Patel.



New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra (centre) and Ajaz Patel (right) came up with a determined performance to hold off the Indian spinners in the final hour of the Test in Kanpur yesterday (29)

106TH COLOMBO CHAMPIONSHIP TENNIS 2021

Neyara books berth in women's singles final with Anjalika

Here are yesterday's main results of the ongoing 106th Colombo Championship Tennis, one of the highest-rated (Grade-1) annual competitions in Sri Lanka, being held at the Sri Lanka Tennis Association (SLTA) clay courts, Green Path, Colombo.

- Women's Open Singles**
- Quarter-finals:*
- Savini Jayasuriya (seed 1) beat Vishmi Serasinghe 4-1, 5-3
 - Neyara Weerawansa (3) beat Tania Doloswala (8) 4-0, 5-4 (2)
 - Anjalika Kurera beat Hasali Gajaba (7) 4/1, 4/2
 - Tuvini de Alwis beat Dewmini Warnasuriya (6) 4/0, 4-1
- Semi-finals:*
- Anjalika Kurera beat Tuvini de Alwis 6/1, 6/1
 - Neyara Weerawansa beat Savini Jayasuriya [match continued from overnight 6-1, 5-5] 6-1, 5-7, 10-7

Women's Singles Final:
 Today, 30 November:
 Weerawansa vs. Kurera not before 3 p.m.



Neyara Weerawansa preparing to serve PHOTOS ISHAN WANNIARACHCHI



Archana Lokuge plays a back-hand drive

- Men's Open Singles**
- Quarter-finals:*
- Thechan Wijemanne (1) beat Kiran Vairavanathan (7) 4-2, 3-5, 11-9
 - Archana Lokuge beat Zaidh Zihar (12) 2-4, 4-0, 10-5
 - Chathurya Nilaweera (10) beat Meshal Sinnen 4-2, 4-1
- Semi-finals:*
- Vibuda Wijebandara (5) beat Jagath Gamage 4-0, 4-1
 - Wijemanne beat Lokuge 6/2, 6/2
 - Nilaweera beat Wijebandara 6/1, 6/2
- Final:*
- Nilaweera vs. Wijemanne (scheduled for yesterday but not played due to bad weather)