

Boycotting House sittings following scuffles SJB convenes 'alternative parliament' on social media

By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE

The Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) yesterday (6) held a meeting which they called an "alternative parliament" after boycotting the parliamentary sitting, protesting the conduct of Government MPs in Parliament Chamber and Lobby last Friday (3) and Saturday (4).

The party boycotted yesterday's sitting saying they would not attend until Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena ensures their safety inside and outside the Chamber.

A scuffle erupted in Parliament Chamber on 3 November after SJB MP Manusha Nanayakkara requested more time to speak.

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PM visits protesting SJB MPs

By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa visited the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) MPs, who were staging a protest near the ornamental pond facing the ceremonial drive, in front of the entrance to the foyer of the Parliament and had a cordial discussion with them.



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LP gas supplies resume

Old stocks to be recalled

By THAMEENAH RAZEEM

The Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) has directed the two major LP gas distributors to supply new stocks of LP gas cylinders with coloured polythene seals depicting their logo in a different colour.

According to CAA internal sources, the distribution of Litro gas has commenced with a polythene seal carrying a red logo on white background, whereas the Laugfs Company has decided to release its fresh stocks with a polythene seal, its brand in blue on a yellow background.



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To help identify gas leaks Ethyl Mercaptan included - Prof. Walpolage

Chairman of the committee appointed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to probe recent incidents of gas explosions, Prof. Shantha Walpolage said steps have been taken to include sufficient amounts of Ethyl Mercaptan in gas cylinders, as the lack of a distinguished odour to identify a gas leak has been a primary cause in the inability to identify such occurrence.

He added that while 458 cases of gas...

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Sajith visits Priyantha Kumara's grieving family

By NABIYA VAFFOOR

Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa yesterday (6) expressed confidence in the Pakistani Government enforcing the law against perpetrators who...



Story Continued on **PAGE 2** ▶

In Sports

SLSRFA receives green light from Health Ministry

Sri Lanka Schools Rugby Football Association (SLSRFA) yesterday received the much-awaited Health Ministry approval to conduct their inter school Rugby seven-a-side tournaments scheduled to...



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Committee to Probe Ruckus in Parliament

By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE

A committee comprising senior MPs, from both the Government and the Opposition, will be formed to probe the unruly conduct that had taken place in the Chamber and Lobby last Friday (3) and Saturday (4), Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena announced yesterday (6).

The Speaker made this announcement after a series of clashes between the Government and Opposition occurred on those two days, following SJB MP Manusha Nanayakkara's request to give him more time to conclude his speech on 3 December. Nanayakkara, walking towards the Speaker's chair, caused a melee between Government and Opposition MPs. A tense situation arose again, in Parliament on 4 November when an exchange of words took place between



Opposition MP Manusha Nanayakkara and State Minister Kanchana Wijesekera in connection with the incident on the previous day.

The Committee that is expected to submit a comprehensive report on the

issue, would be appointed within this week, the Speaker said.

"The MPs should properly follow the Standing Orders and safeguard the honour of the House," he noted.

Speaking after the Speaker's announcement, Jathika Jana

Balawegaya (JJB) Leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake stressed that appointing committees would not solve the problem.

He said the issue was taken up for discussion during the Party Leaders' meeting held yesterday (6) morning, as well.

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Priyantha Kumara's remains arrive



The remains of Priyantha Kumara, who was lynched in Sialkot, Pakistan, arrived at the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) from Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore yesterday (6) evening (Pic by T.K.G. Kapila-Katunayake)

Power outages CEBSEA accuses CEBEU of sabotage

By THAMEENAH RAZEEM

The Ceylon Electricity Board Senior Engineers' Association (CEBSEA) accused the Ceylon Electricity Board Engineers' Union (CEBEU) of causing the islandwide blackout on 3 December, alleging that they did it deliberately to win their demands.

CEBSEA also warned that a plot to depose CEB General Manager M.R. Ranatunga is being hatched with the help of a senior official from the Ministry of Power.



Story Continued on **PAGE 2** ▶

Trying to save Lankan from lynch mob Malik Adnan to get top civilian award

Pakistan has announced a top civilian award for a man who risked his life while trying to save Priyantha Diyawadana, a Sri Lankan factory manager, from being lynched by an angry mob over blasphemy allegations.

Malik Adnan, a colleague of the slain Sri Lankan citizen, will be awarded Tamgha-i-Shujaat, or the 'Medal of Bravery' for "endangering his own life by physically trying to shield the victim," Prime Minister Imran Khan tweeted on Sunday.

Diyawadana was beaten to death and his body burned by a mob in Sialkot, a city in Pakistan's...

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Mini-hydro plant near Athwelthota Piliythuda falls Project not stopping despite years of lobbying - CEJ

By FAADHILA THASSIM

Legal actions will be taken if permission is granted to the small hydro-power plant, proposed by a private company, to be constructed near the Athwelthota Piliythuda falls, Senior Advisor to the Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ), Hemantha Withanage said.

He added although requests were made to the Department of Forest Conservation and the Central Environmental Authority (CEA) over the past ten...

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Boycott limits House sitting to three hours

By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE

The Parliamentary sitting yesterday (6) was limited to three hours contrary to the usual practice.

The sittings commenced at 9:30 a.m. and concluded at around 12:30 p.m. According to schedule, the Committee Stage Debate was to be held from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) MPs boycotted the sitting claiming they would not attend until the Speaker ensures their safety inside Parliament.

Committee Stage Debates on Expenditure Heads of Ministry of Urban Development and Housing,...

Story Continued on **PAGE 2** ▶

Third Bonds issuance case HC releases Karunanayake et al from 11 charges

By HANSI NANAYAKKARA

The three-Judge Bench of the Colombo High Court Trial-at-Bar yesterday ordered the release of eight defendants, including former Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake, from 11 of the 22 charges preferred against them in the Central Bank Bonds scam, which took place during the third auction in 2016.



Story Continued on **PAGE 2** ▶

In connection with extortion case

India's ED summons Jacqueline Fernandez

Enforcement Directorate in India has summoned Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez to appear before the investigators in Delhi tomorrow (8). The summons has been issued in connection with INR 200 crore extortion case

involving conman Suresh Chandrasekhar.

The agency summoned Fernandez, a day after stopping her at the Mumbai airport and preventing her from flying abroad, stating that she may be required to join the ongoing...



Story Continued on **PAGE 2** ▶

Pakistan obliging with probe, compensation – G.L.

By **FAADHILA THASSIM**

The allegations of blasphemy against 49-year-old Sri Lankan Factory Manager, Priyantha Kumara, who was lynched in Sialkot, Pakistan is a complete fabrication and there is

no proof on such allegations, Foreign Minister, Prof. G.L. Peiris said, adding that the Pakistan Prime Minister pledged to take the highest possible legal actions against the offenders.

He added that constant discussions

are taking place between the Pakistan and Sri Lankan Governments in regard to the compensation payable to Kumara's family, together with the investigations into the incident. Prof. Peiris expressing his

condolences to Kumara's family added that Pakistan's Prime Minister, Imran Khan and the Foreign Minister stated that the Cabinet of Ministers, the Government and the entire nation of Pakistan vehemently condemns such a heinous crime and

calls it a disgrace to humanity.

"While 120 involved in the incident have been arrested, Khan has pledged to take strict legal actions against the offenders and 13 have been identified for direct involvement in the incident," he added.

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Committee to...

"When there is an issue in the House, a committee will always be appointed. This is not enough. We have experienced in the past that these kinds of committees did nothing to solve the issue. They were only a waste of time. The Speaker is the person who is in the charge of the House. Therefore, he can take a direct decision on this, without appointing these types of committees. The Speaker should not pass the ball to others when he can always give a decision regarding this," Dissanayake said.

The Government members, including Leader of the House Dinesh Gunawardena and Chief Government Whip Johnston Fernando, said that the government MPs only tried to protect the Speaker.

"Nanayakkara was approaching the Speaker, demanding more time. It was a threat to the Speaker. We tried to protect the Speaker. That is our duty. The Speaker should rule the House. This incident happened in the evening. Prior to that, the sitting had to be stopped due to the

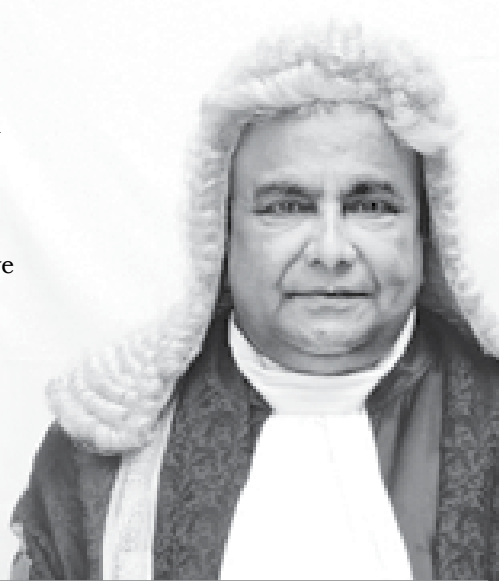
blackout. This is a dangerous situation," Gunawardena said.

SLPP MP Mohomad Muzammil: "The Opposition MPs behaved wild after the electricity was gone. The Speaker should look into that too. The Opposition is trying to mislead the international community and the media that Parliament is not functioning properly. These people have taken you for granted. We condemn their behaviour and request a fair investigation into this."

ITAK MP Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam said he associates with the JJB Leader's remarks on the matter. "The Points of Order have been completely abused by the MPs. Some MPs use Points of Order to disrupt other MPs' speeches. Another thing is abusive language. The Speaker should take actions against this conduct too."

Chief Government Whip Johnston Fernando said, "It is obvious that with regard to the Friday (3) incident, the SJB MPs are trying to cover up the wrong doing of their MP. Today they state that

there is no security for the Opposition MPs. Anura Kumara Dissanayake spoke in this House today. TNA MPs too do not complain of such insecurity. That proves the SJB is propagating a lie. Nanayakkara rushed to the Chair on Friday addressing the Speaker by a name of an animal. We stood up for the protection of the Speaker, who always upheld democracy in this House."



Ethyl Mercaptan...

... explosions have taken place from 1 January to 5 December. 244 have taken place as a result of gas leaks, while requesting the public to refrain from using unsafe methods to inspect gas leaks.

Prof. Walpolage observed the second reason that has been identified by the committee is the use of substandard regulators, valves, hoses, clips and stoves, adding that the public must use accessories that have been recommended by the Sri Lanka

Standards Institute, including gas stoves.

He further said scientific investigations have to be conducted to inspect whether a change in the composition of gas cylinders has resulted in such explosions.

He added that a special seal will be contained in every gas cylinder to portray a quality assurance conducted by the SLSI, CAA, Industrial Technology Institute and the Sri Lanka Accreditation Board.

PM visits ...

The SJB MPs staged a protest boycotting yesterday's (6) Parliamentary sitting, demanding the Speaker to ensure their safety inside Parliament.

They held placards with slogans such as 'Miriskudu Balakaya Rata Yalith Wanasai' (Chili Powder Gang Destroys the Country Again).

Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa, who spoke after the protest, criticised Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, alleging that the latter acts in a biased manner. He said that a gang of Government MPs tried to assault SJB MP Manusha Nanayakkara and that the Speaker should take actions against them.

The Premier, who visited the protesting MPs, recalled how he led such protests in the past. Rajapaksa said he advised the Opposition to gather support of more MPs when staging protests.

LP gas supplies...

They said, the new gas cylinders were filled with fresh LP gas and that the original colours of both the Laugfs and Litro gas cylinders have not been changed.

Following a meeting with State Minister Lasantha Alagiyawanna, Litro Gas Lanka Limited and Laugfs Gas PLC agreed to begin domestic LP gas supplies in accordance with CAA norms, according to sources.

When inquired regarding the old LP gas stocks that are available in the market, sources stated that the numbers in question are not substantial but the companies have agreed in principle to recall the said cylinders.

Stipulating three conditions, the CAA approved the release and distribution of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) to the market. They include, non-distribution of previously imported LPG stocks, adding Mercaptan (also known as methanethiol) to new stocks, facilitate consumers to detect possible gas leaks through its odorant, and sample testing one in every 100 gas cylinders during the manufacturing process, serialising and declaring them to the CAA.

India's ED summons...

...money laundering investigation.

It was believed that Fernandez was either travelling to Dubai or Muscat. She left the airport around 6 p.m. after being stopped.

The Sri Lankan-origin actor was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in multiple sessions in connection with the over INR 200 crore money laundering case being probed against Chandrashekhar and his actor wife Leena Maria Paul.

The ED filed a charge sheet, in this case, before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) Court on Saturday, naming Chandrashekhar, his wife and six others.

It had alleged in the charge sheet that Chandrashekhar had gifted the actor numerous costly gifts, including some Persian cats and a horse. He is accused of cheating some people, including some high-profile individuals such as former

Fortis Healthcare promoter Shivinder Mohan Singh's wife Aditi Singh.

Another Bollywood actor-dancer Nora Fatehi has also been grilled by the ED in this case

Investigation found that Chandrashekhar was lodged in Delhi's Rohini jail when he allegedly ran an extortion racket using phone spoofing technology.

The ED had arrested the couple and two co-accused, Pradeep Ramnani and Deepak Ramnani, in this case.

In August, the ED raided some of Chandrashekhar's premises and seized a sea-facing bungalow in Chennai, INR 82.5 lakh in cash and over a dozen luxury cars.

It had claimed in a statement that Chandrashekhar is a "known conman" and is being probed by the Delhi Police in a case of alleged criminal conspiracy, cheating and extortion to the tune of about INR 200 crore.

(India Today)

SJB convenes...

Nanayakkara walking towards the Speaker's chair caused a melee between Government and opposition MPs. A tense situation arose again in Parliament on 4 November following an exchange of words between Nanayakkara and State Minister Kanchana Wijesekera in connection with the incident on the previous day.

Following this, the SJB held a protest in front of the entrance of Parliament building yesterday morning. Afterwards they met at the SJB Head Office for 'alternative parliamentary sitting' and live streamed their speeches prepared for yesterday's Committee Stage Debate on social media.

Boycott limits...

... State Ministry of Urban Development and Waste Disposal and Community Sanitation, State Ministry of Rural Housing and Building Materials Industries, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Water Supply and Drainage, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Housing State Ministry of Coast Conservation and Low Land Development were held yesterday (6).

However, since the majority of Opposition MPs were not present in the Chamber for the debate, the House was adjourned at 12:30 p.m. after passing the Expenditure Heads.

Parliament will commence today (7) at 9:30 a.m.

Jeewantha Jayathileke represented the defendants.

The AG has indicted the eight accused with having flouted provisions in the Public Properties Act and Section 450 (6) of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The other defendants are primary dealer PTL Private Limited, ex-Governor of the CBSL Arjuna Mahendran, Arjun Joseph Aloysius, Kasun Palisena, Geoffrey Joseph Aloysius, Chitta Ranjan Hulugalla, Muthuraja Surendran, Ajan Gardiya Punchihewa and Indika Saman Kumara.

The case was deferred until 26 January next year on which date the AG's future course of action would be informed to the Court.

HC releases...

The case pertaining to criminal misappropriation of Bonds, valued at Rs 15 billion, during the Central Bank's Treasury Bonds auction, held between 29 and 31 March 2016 was taken up before a Bench comprising Judges Amal Ranaraja, Namal Balalle, and Aditya Patabendige.

Raising preliminary objections the lawyers representing the defendants had previously stated that the relevant charges could not be pursued against their clients and therefore requested the Court to release them from the charges.

Delivering the Court's decision

on the preliminary objections yesterday, Judge Patabendige stated that 11 of the charges against the defendants cannot be pursued and hence ordered to release them from those charges.

Appearing on behalf of Attorney General Sanjay Rajaratnam, ASG Priyantha Nawana urged the Court to provide a date to decide whether the charges filed against the accused would be amended or withdrawn or if alternate legal action would be pursued.

President's Counsels Faiz Mustapha, Shavindra Fernando, Gamin Marapana, Anuja Premaratne and Attorney-at-Law

Project not stopping....

... years not to grant permission to the project on the basis of environmental and social issues that will follow, a field inquiry has been set to take place on 9 December to grant approval without further considerations.

"This makes it evident that organisations vested with the responsibility to conserve the environment operate to satisfy polluters," he said adding that the decision to carry out a field inquiry

is only on a political basis and not based on environmental impacts.

Withanage noted that the ecosystem associated with the waterfall is a region of high biodiversity and is home to endemic fish species together with specialised aquatic plants while many reptiles and frogs live along the riverbank and the said project will result in the complete destruction of the ecosystem.

He added that the project is to

commence based on the preliminary environmental report obtained in 2014 and that it is illegal to request permission for a project based on the initial environmental report seven years after it had been prepared.

CEJ further raised concerns on the order made by the State Minister of Solar Power, Wind and Hydro Power Generation Projects Development, Duminda Dissanayake to expedite the work on 19 proposed hydro power plants that were halted due to several environmental concerns.

Malik Adnan to...

... northeastern Punjab Province, on Friday.

Videos circulating on social media showed Adnan physically shielding the Sri Lankan in an attempt to save him from the vigilante mob.

He, however, had to give in as the mob comprising hundreds of charged protesters overpowered him.

"On behalf of the Nation I want to salute moral courage and bravery of Malik Adnan who tried his utmost to shelter and save Priyantha Diyawadana from the vigilante mob in Sialkot including endangering his own life by physically trying to shield victim. We will award him Tamgha-i-Shujaat," Khan tweeted.

Prime Minister Khan has expressed satisfaction over the progress report on the Sialkot tragedy.

Addressing a meeting about the Sialkot tragedy on Monday, the Prime Minister said the incident had damaged the identity of Pakistan. "The Nation is ashamed of the incident. The people involved in the incident do not deserve any leniency. They should be awarded the exemplary punishments,"

he maintained.

He directed the prosecution to go to Court with full preparation. Legal experts and high-ranking officers attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan High Commissioner Mohan Vijay Vikrama has said the Sialkot tragedy is a murder and Pakistan took prompt action.

Speaking to the Media on Monday, he said he believed the victim's family would get justice. "The Sialkot tragedy will not affect the relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka," he added.

He also expressed his satisfaction over the steps taken by the Pakistani Government, appreciating the steps taken for arresting the accused.

PTI leader Arshad Dad said the Pakistani Nation is grieved at the Sialkot incident. "The Pakistani Government considers Sri Lanka very close to it," he said.

The PTI leader and the Sri Lankan High Commissioner stressed the promotion of friendly relations between both countries despite the incident.

(Pakistan Daily)

Public Wants Food, Not Big Development Projects - Harrison

By NABIYA VAFFOOR

The Opposition says the public do not want the Government to carry out large-scale development projects but to provide them sufficient food for three meals. Addressing a Media Briefing on 5 November, former MP P. Harrison said the public is severely

burdened due to the Government's short-sighted decisions. "The public is concerned about affording three meals and finding gas, milk powder and firewood for woodstoves to prepare meals. Sending children to school has become a concern because they are unable to provide them with meals in the morning. State sector

workers are unable to cook food at present and unable to go to work. The ones who have money cannot have goods to purchase," he added. Harrison claimed that this simply portrays the failure of the Administration and urged the Government to stop burdening the public.

Coast Guard save three

Sri Lanka Coast Guard (SLCG) life savers, attached to their Life Saving Post at the Bentota Beach, saved three locals from drowning in the seas off Bentota on Friday, SLCG said.

The rescued, three 22-year-old males, were from Matugama. SLCG, since the inception of its life saving units, has rescued a total of 1,609 lives, including 712 foreigners from drowning thus far.

(PA)



Three dead, five missing, in drowning incidents

Police reported three deaths, five missing, and two injured due to drowning and near drowning related accidents that took place in various parts of Sri Lanka on Sunday (5). Deaths due to drowning were reported from Mullaitivu and Peradeniya. Two of the five missing, from the aforesaid Mullaitivu accident, another two missing, a mother aged 20 and her two-year-old daughter from the Peradeniya accident and the other missing, from Garandiella, Kuruwita, who is feared drowned, a 32-year-old. The two injured were also from the aforementioned Peradeniya accident. The Mullaitivu accident took place

off the seas in the area. The deceased was identified as being 26 years old and the two missing, each as 27 years old. Meanwhile, the Peradeniya accident took place while bathing in the Mahaweli River flowing through the area, where the single death reported was that of a 20-year-old, while the two injured from this near drowning accident are receiving treatment at the Gampola Hospital. In related developments, the suspected drowned person at Garandiella whose body is yet to be found has been identified as that of a 38-year-old.

(PA)

MCSA condemns murder of local in Pakistan

The Muslim Civil Society Alliance (MCSA) - All Ceylon Jamiyathul Ulama (ACJU), Muslim Council of Sri Lanka (MCSL), National Shooraa Council (NSC) and Young Men's Muslim Association (YMMA) while expressing their sympathies to relatives of the Sri Lankan expatriate worker, Priyantha Diyawadane, who was murdered in Pakistan,

condemned the massacre and urged the Pakistani Government to bring the culprits before the law. The MCSA in a statement said they were shocked when they heard of the tragic incident and added that they appreciated the swift action taken by Pakistan Prime Minister, Imran Khan in this regard. The statement added that

since Pakistan was a friendly nation, tragic incidents of this nature should not recur, as it would damage the goodwill between the two countries. The statement added that the victim was serving as the General Manager of a factory of the Industrial Engineering Company, Rajco Industries Sialkot in Punjab, Pakistan. This is an extremely shameful and barbaric crime

and cannot be justified at any cost, the statement added. The Pakistani Police was on a manhunt to arrest the culprits, while several have already been arrested. However the Pakistani Government's move and Pakistani Premier Khan must be appreciated, the statement added.

(N)

Education aids gender wage gap decline in SL - WB

By PANEETHA AMERESKERE

Sri Lanka's labour market greatly rewards Sri Lankan women who invest in education resulting in the gender wage gap decreasing in that country for that category, the World Bank (WB) said on 1 December. The WB, in a publication titled 'From Jobs to Careers: Apparel Exports and Career Paths for Women in Developing Countries' said having tertiary education or above is especially beneficial for Sri Lankan women, enabling them to earn more than 50 per cent more than those who do not have tertiary education. "Our results show that high skill occupations (HSOs) in high-skill service industries (education and human health services) tend to favour female employment where women account for more HSOs in these two industries than men," the WB said.

Financial services account for two per cent of all women employed in Sri Lanka, it added. Nonetheless, Sri Lankan women need to have more than a lower-secondary education to have better returns than males, the publication said. "In Sri Lanka, the returns to completing primary education are lower for females than males in most years, while returns to lower-secondary education show a decreasing trend," the report further warned. Nevertheless, a stronger footprint across manufacturing subsectors—

combined with sufficient average education levels and training—creates an opportunity to further expand women's opportunities in manufacturing-related services, such as in the wholesale, logistics, and distribution stages of the supply chain in Sri Lanka, the WB advised. It further said overall, the Services Sector accounts for 45 per cent of all Sri Lankan women in employment. Next was the Agriculture Sector which employed 30 per cent of all female labour in Sri Lanka, with the remainder being filled by the Manufacturing Sector. Meanwhile, in the Apparel Subsector in the manufacturing Sector, women account for 12 per cent of all working women in the country, it said. Apart from the Apparel Subsector, the food Product Manufacturing Subsector accounts for five per cent of all female employment in the island, the WB said. Seventy two per cent of all employees, employed in Sri Lanka's Apparel Sector are women, it said. The average age of female Sri Lankan apparel workers were between 31-45 years old, where their ages with time have increased, resulting in the wage gap decreasing. However, the apparel share of exports remains flat in Sri Lanka, the report further warned. The average marrying age for Sri Lanka is 23.4 years, it added.

Akkaraipattu cops bust jewellery thieving duo



By M.A.P. DEEN - AMPARA CORRESPONDENT

Two thieves responsible for 23 robberies including the theft of 25 sovereigns of gold, three motorcycles and a three-wheeler were arrested by Akkaraipattu Police following a tip-off. Heroin weighing 3,320 mg and clothes used in the robberies were also seized by Police. The arrest was made at Wangamam in the Irakkamam area by a Police team headed by OIC Crimes M.S.A. Majeed on the instructions of the OIC Akkaraipattu Police Station M.S.D. Wijethunge. The preliminary inquiry revealed that

the suspects had systematically robbed jewellery from women attending weddings and other ceremonies. Motorcycles of different models were used in these robberies and the suspects had sold the stolen jewellery to buy heroin. It also came to light at the inquiries that some of the robberies took place in Thirukkivil, Sammanthurai, Chavalakkadai, Central Camp Sammanthurai, Kalmunai and Eravur. The locals, happy over the Police's stern and timely action, expressed their thanks and gratitude to OIC Wijethunge and OIC Majeed.

Govt needs to fix issues in Trinco - Imran

By NAALIR JAMALDEEN

SJB Trincomalee District MP M. Imran yesterday (6) said in addition to the Kurinchakeni bridge construction issue, there are many issues in the area which need to be addressed by the Government immediately. "People from over fifty villages in Kinniya as well as from Muttur and surrounding areas benefit from the Base Hospital Kinniya. Time has come to upgrade it. I am planning to make a proposal to the Government, predominantly the Health Ministry in this regard," he said. He said nearly 600 persons are being treated in the Outpatient

Department daily and every month nearly 160 childbirths take place. Facilities at the hospital are not sufficient to treat all patients. The Government, which gives priority to regional development, should take the Kinniya Hospital issue as well as other transport facilities seriously, before the people fall victim to another tragedy like the Kurinchakeni ferry incident, Imran said. The District General Hospital, Trincomalee, Base Hospital, Kantale and the Divisional Hospital, Padavi Sripura have many shortcomings. The Government should resolve them to ensure uninterrupted health services to the public, Imran added.

Ja-Ela Bridge expansion work commences



The Ja-Ela Bridge, on the Colombo-Negombo main road, is being widened at a cost of Rs 214 million. The Road Development Authority will be in charge of the construction. The bridge will have a width of six meter on one side and 12 on both sides; expanding the existing structure to 26 meter, easing traffic congestion in Ja-Ela.

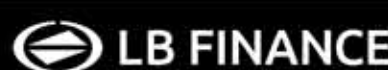
Minister of Highways Johnston Fernando inaugurated the project on 2 December in conjunction with the development of the Ja-Ela town in the Gampaha District. State Minister for Rural Roads and Other Infrastructure Nimal Lanza, MP Nalin Fernando and many other political and Government representatives attended the event.

PUBLIC AUCTION

Reference to the notice published to the public on, 11th, 22nd January 2021, 9th, 10th February 2021, 12th, 15th March 2021, 8th, 9th April 2021, 10th, 11th May 2021, 10th, 11th June 2021, 12th, 13th July 2021, 12th, 13th August 2021, 13th, 14th September 2021, 11th, 12th October 2021, 11th, 12th November in Mawbima, Thinsakaran and Ceylon Today. This is to inform the public that LB Finance PLC scheduled to conduct a public auction to sell gold articles which have been mortgaged to it, as borrowers thereof fail to settle such loans as agreed and which were scheduled to auction in January 2021, February 2021, March 2021, April 2021, May 2021, June 2021, July 2021, August 2021, September 2021, October 2021, November 2021 and which were scheduled to auction in December 2021. Pleased be informed that such gold articles will be auctioned on following dates at respective Branches from 10.00a.m.

BRANCH	DATE
Polonnaruwa, Wattala, Kandana, Ragama, Ja Ela, Elakanda, Gothatuwa New Town, Kolonnawa, Thotalaga, Dematagoda, Stave Island, Mahiyanganaya, Monaragala, Welimada, Medirigiriya, Embilipitiya, Tissamaharama, Dehittakandiya, Nuwarawela, Katunayake, Awariwatta, Chilai, Kochchikade - Negombo, Negombo, Negombo 02, Wemnapuwa, Marawila, Minuwangoda, Kurunegala City, Kurunegala, Kurunegala Premier, Kuliyaipitiya, Narammala, Aluthgama, Beruwela, Kalutara, Deikanda, Kirulapana, Nugegoda, Kotte, Battaramulla, Rajagiriya, Narahenpita	28 December 2021
Homagama, Maharagama 02, Maharagama, Kottawa, Athurugiriya, Dehiwala, Moratuwa, Moratuwa, Keselwatta - Panadura, Wadduwa, Dehiwala 02, Boralesgamuwa, Piliyandala, Dharga Town, Panadura, Rathmalana, Mount Lavinia, Aththidiya, Kotahena, Aluth Mawatha - Colombo 15, Mattakuliya, Modara, Grandpass Sulaiman - Colombo 14, Grandpass, Wellawatta, Premier Colombo 07, City Office, Head Office - Colombo 07, Corporate Office - Colombo 03, Kiribathgoda, Delgoda, Kadawatha, Kelaniya, Kaduwela, Kiribathgoda Makola, Ganemulla	29 December 2021
Matara, Matara City, Deniyaya, Akuressa, Neluwa, Elpitiya, Pitigala, Horana, Bandaragama, Pilmathalawa, Kandy, Kandy City, Katugastota, Nawalapitiya, Matale, Geliya, Malabe, Puttalam, Matugama, Baduraliya, Anamaduwuwa, Jampattah, Dam Street, Deans Road, Maradana, Borella, Balingoda, Avissawella, Eheliyagoda, Rathnapura, Hanwella, Kegalle, Thihariya, Warakapola, Nittambuwa, Gampaha, Divulapitiya,	30 December 2021
Karapitiya, Galle, Tangalle, Ambalangoda, Badulla City, Badulla, Bandarawela, Pussellawa, Gampola, Gampola City, Sangaraja Mawatha, Maligawatta, Sea Street, Kohuwala, Hatton, Maskeliya, Dambulla, Kekirawa, Anuradhapura 02, Anuradhapura, Medawachchiya, Thambuththegama, Chenkalady, Valachchenai, Mannar, Chavakachcheri, Kinniya, Trincomalee, Vavuniya, Kokkadicholai, Arayampathy, Batticaloa, Kalawanchikudy, Addalaichenai, Jaffna, Jaffna Premier, Jaffna City, Ampara, Pothuveli, Akkaraipattu, Klinochchi, Puthukudiyirippu, Mullaitivu, Thirunelvely, Manipay, Chunnakam, Atchuwely, Nelliady, Sainthamaruthu, Sammanturai, Kalmunai, Mallavi, Vaddukoddai	31 December 2021

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Saubhagya Production Village Programme in Palugaswewa Assistance Programme for Local Batik Industry

By EUNICE RUTH AND SAJITH GAYAN

The Batik industry in Sri Lanka is a small scale industry which employs individuals based on their talent and creativity. It has created a way to increase self employment opportunities within the country. Even though it makes a huge profit for the country's economy, while dealing with foreign customers, still the small producers are not identified properly by the Government and the relevant authorities. The local producers said they suffer a lot without having a proper way to get the needed raw materials and without a proper market to sell their final products.

In many developed and developing countries of the world, the local industrial development is at the front of development. Obtaining and distributing raw materials to the needed people were done properly in those countries and also the incorporation of the needed technology for the batik manufacturing industry was adopted perfectly, where it has led to a huge success. However in Sri Lanka, nothing has been done to encourage and support the local manufactures, said a group of entrepreneurs.

They said that they are not wealthy enough to do everything on their own and even they are unable to afford for the raw material purchase. The batik manufacturers have requested the authorities and the Government to take steps,



to bring the rural self-employed in the country to a good level by recognising their needs.

Meanwhile, by recognising the demand for the batik industry, the Saubhagya Production Village Programme has been implemented within Palugaswewa Divisional Secretariat area. Several villages in the divisional secretariat area were selected for this Programme and it was implemented by the Department of Samurdhi Development to provide guidance and support to the local manufacturers, to achieve the goal of promoting all local industries in the country.

The Minister of Department of Samurdhi Development, Shehan Semasinghe has initiated this Programme and stated that Rs 100 lakhs had been allocated for this production village Programme



Vasana Sanjeevani

which consist of about 51 families.

While commenting on this, a batik entrepreneur in the village, Dilrukshi Tharangani said that, they had many issues in their profession and they have gone through hard times by engaging in the batik manufacturing industry. We are self employed people and we had much shortage of facilities in



Dilrukshi Tharangani

running the industry. We are unable to get the needed raw materials and also we have no proper facilities to do dye baths. The sellers sell them at a higher rate where we can't afford to buy them. Even though we buy such expensive things, we are unable to sell our manufactured products at a higher rate to receive an income. Also, with the

current trends and fashions, people are not wanting to buy batik clothes and it has led us to go through some bad days where we can't sell any of our products.

She further said that, even though they were going through so many issues, no one had helped or paid any attention on the issues they were facing. However, with the current initiative, I believe the Saubhagya village Programme will help us to uplift our levels to a industrial level, she added.

Another entrepreneur of the village, Vasana Sanjeevani, said that about 20 of us received batik training in this village. However, due to the lack of facilities, only a few of those who received the training are now self employed in the batik industry and the remaining have travelled in other paths as they find difficulties in continuing this batik manufacturing. She also

added that, till today, they had no proper market to sell their products and they have turned their own homes into shops to sell the final products. We make batik at our home with minimum resources and we used ground wax for dye bath process.

She also pointed out that, they were running everything all alone without having any support from any responsible authorities or the Government. However, along with the new initiative, we hope that we will be able to survive with a good income and needed support for the manufacturing.

Meanwhile, when contacted an official from Ministry of Industries, Batik Handloom Fabric and Local Apparel Products, he noted that, currently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they are unable to inspect the place to find a solution. However, he said that the ministry will support and help the local entrepreneurs by fulfilling their requests. He asked the local entrepreneurs to make a complaint regarding their issues and shortages, to the Ministry by contacting via phone. The Ministry will look into the possible ways to support and uplift the business of the people who are suffering alone, he added. Also he advised the local entrepreneurs that, people who are facing difficulties in running their businesses because of COVID-19 or otherwise can contact the Ministry for help, support and guidance.

Railway Department blocks road repair



By EUNICE RUTH AND GAYAN

Even though the Medawachchiya Pradeshiya Sabha has initiated steps to repair the road of the village Maguruhiti-Kadawalagama, the officials of Railway Department, Anuradhapura have opposed the idea and stopped the commenced renovation work, said the residents.

The residents said that they are facing a lot of issues due to the dilapidated condition of the road. It is this one kilometre long path which is the only path available to enter the village. This path has not been renovated for more than three years and it is the main reason for the current condition of the road. However, after making several requests to the relevant authorities including Medawachchiya Pradeshiya Sabha, they have commenced the work to renovate the road. However, later due to the interference of the Railway Department, Anuradhapura the renovation work has stopped. The officials from the Department claimed that the road is located in the middle of a land which is owned by the Railway



H. M. Weeratunga

Department and the Department has given permission only to construct a one metre wide and 460 metres long road.

This road has been used by more than 25 resident families of the village and others. The large store of Medawachchiya, Paddy Marketing Board is located here and the farmers who use this road are suffering, even without having a proper way to transport their harvest.



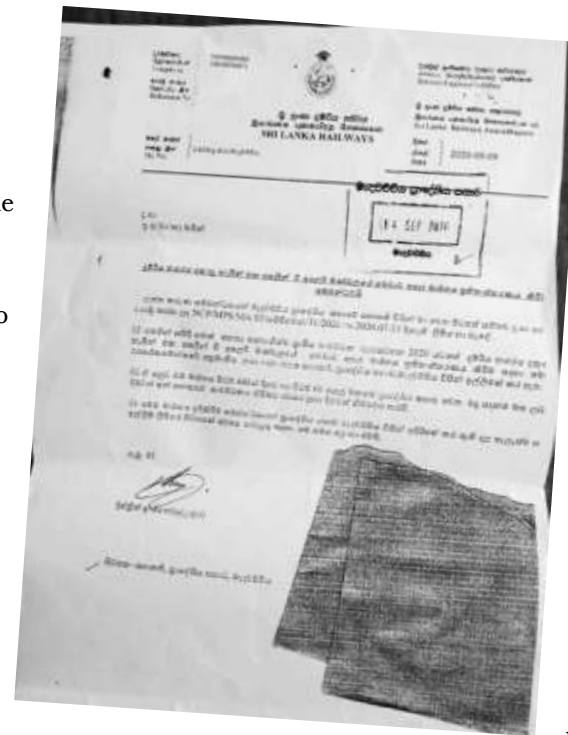
M. Ganeshan

A resident of the village, H. M. Weeratunga, said that this road was used by all the residents and surrounding village people. However, for the past few years no steps have been taken for the renovation of the road and later it was commenced with the help of Medawachchiya Pradeshiya Sabha. Unfortunately, even after commencing the renovation process after years due to the interference of Railway Department again it

has stopped, he said.

He also pointed out that the Railway Department officials claimed that it is not a public road. But through this road, electricity and water for the village was given and the Government has given permission to supply all these via this road. He also said that, however, at the beginning of this road construction also, the Railway Department had opposed the idea.

"The large paddy store of Medawachchiya, Paddy Marketing Board is located here and currently, due to the dilapidated condition of the road vehicles are unable to reach the store. During rainy season, the road is muddy and vehicle cannot pass. In those situations, the residents should push the vehicle to reach the store. We have used this road for more than 60 years and no one has informed us not to use. However, while we try to renovate the road, the officials of the Railway Department have opposed. We request the Government to help us by renovating the road and



solving the issue," said Weeratunga.

Another resident of the village M. Ganeshan said that, more than on the normal days, the residents are suffering in rainy seasons. The children who use this road meet with accidents and sometimes it has even led to major accidents. Most of the residents of the village are cancer patients, disabled war-

heroes, Government servants and farming families. Already they are facing many financial difficulties and also, due to this road condition they are even facing difficulties in transport.

Medawachchiya, Pradeshiya Sabha has allocated Rs 500,000 for the renovation of this road. However, due to the interference of the Railway Department, all the renovation works has been stopped and we urge the authorities to help us in renovating this road, by clearing all other issues, he said.

Meanwhile, an official of the Medawachchiya, Divisional Secretariat noted that the Government and the related authorities will look into the issue and they will solve the problem of the public by renovating the road. However, the decision in this regard cannot be taken, as the Railway Department is claiming that the road belongs to them. We will examine all the facts related to the road and we will take the decision in this regard soon, he added.

By SAJITH PREMADASA

Leading up to 2019, Sri Lanka was recognised as one of the most exciting travel destinations in the world by numerous prestigious publications, including the 'Lonely Planet', the New York Times and Condé Nast. Improvements to the transportation system, the development of infrastructure, world class hotels and facilities and Sri Lanka's natural beauty and hospitality were all factors. The Tourism Industry, a critical component of Sri Lanka's economy and a key foreign exchange generator, was left devastated by the 2019 Easter Attacks as well as by the ongoing Global Pandemic.

The resulting lockdowns have impacted every facet of life and every industry, especially Tourism: research shows that 36 per cent of low-skilled workers and a further 36 per cent of semi-skilled workers have been laid off; 28 per cent of the junior and middle management segments have also been retrenched. 70 per cent of tourism and hospitality specialists estimate that between 41 per cent and 60 per cent of the total industry workforce would be terminated. Tourist arrivals have dwindled; only 507,704 between January and December 2020 with zero arrivals recorded between April and end December due to the closure of the airport and suspension of flights since the 18th of March 2020. This represents a decline of 73.5 per cent over the previous corresponding period, when arrivals exceeded 1.9 Mn.

There are numerous service providers directly dependent on tourism; over 500 travel agents, 250 recreational outlets, 300 tourist shops, 5,000 guides and the airlines as well, with employment opportunities within these service sectors severely restricted.

Over 90 per cent of formal sector outlets and 75 per cent of informal sector outlets remain temporarily closed. Over 75 per cent of the informal sector outlets have closed down operations. Dependent industries have suffered due to sectoral linkages, leading to a multiplier effect, with millions of livelihoods left devastated.

Given the importance of Tourism to the economy, the GoSL must prioritise this industry.

In this regard, we consider certain budget proposals to be counterproductive to uplifting this vital sector. Pricing and margins will suffer due to the proposed 2.5 per cent Social Security Contribution in addition to the 1 per cent TDL on turnover. This impacts competitiveness of the Sri Lankan Tourism offering and these taxes are largely regressive in nature. The upcoming moratorium expiry deadlines will only lead to further cash flow constraints, plunging individuals and businesses into further debt. Disposable incomes will be virtually non-existent, fresh investments become unfeasible.

Based on the above critical issues we submit the following proposals

- A) To restructure the debts obtained by the tourism sector from Licensed Commercial Banks for a period of ten (10) years with a grace period of two (2) years.
- B) To waive-off the total interest

Tourism, Economy's Critical Component

portion of the term loans from April 2019 until 30th June 2022 during the moratorium period.

C) Implementation of the debt restructuring plan recommended by the Monetary Board of CBSL.

We further recommend abolishing the Local Government Levy up to 1 per cent of the Turnover and replace it with a trade licence fee similar to all other industries. In fact, this proposal was presented at the last budget by the Hon Finance Minister but has not been implemented to date.

Hotels are also subject to higher electricity tariffs. Tariffs applicable to hotels (i.e., H-1, H-2 & H-3) should be matched with Industrial tariffs (i.e., I-1, I-2 & I-3 which is currently a lower rate than "Hotel purposes").

The restructure of the Tourism industry's total debt portfolio of Rs. 350 billion as per recommendations of the Monetary Board of CBSL and the full implementation of concessions granted by the Cabinet of Ministers on the 10th of June 2020 are of vital urgency.

As a measure of immediate relief, the industry has requested authorities to intervene by mandating restructuring and rescheduling of loan facilities. The CBSL must provide clear guidelines to all Licensed Commercial Banks and Finance Companies regarding the enforcement of contracts and recovery of facilities.

Effective mediation is necessary, unlike the previously *ad hoc* approach. Facilities need to be extended to new, approved projects in the tourism pipeline.

The main objective was to ensure worker retention, even on reduced salary terms, yet these have not been met, with a continued spike in terminations across all sectors. Many previously employed in the tourist sector also lack formal social security and are thus vulnerable to bankruptcy and destitution

Revenue from Tourism was Sri Lanka's second highest net foreign exchange generator in 2018/19 with earnings of USD 4.3 billion. As per the last budget speech presented by the former Finance Minister and present Prime Minister, the valuation of the hotel industry has exceeded over USD 10 billion.

Apart from the above, the following Government institutions have benefited from the inflow of LKR 12.6 billion in 2018/19

It is estimated that the public sector will lose approx LKR 12 Bn in revenue from the Tourism sector in 2020 with similar losses expected by the end of 2021.

The loss of public sector revenue through tourism in 2020, based on

Month	2019	2020	2021	Month	2019	2020	2021
January	244,239	228,434	1,682	July	115,701	0	2,429
February	252,033	207,507	3,366	August	143,587	0	5,040
March	244,328	71,370	4,581	September	108,575	0	TBN
April	166,975	0	4,168	October	118,743	0	TBN
May	37,802	0	1,497	November	176,984	0	TBN
June	63,072	0	1,614	December	241,663	393	TBN

Public Sector Revenue	Year	2009/10	2018/19	Growth (%)
from Tourism in LKR Million	TDL	405.2	1,482.1	265.77%
	TDA Income	48.9	248.6	408.38%
	Embarkation Tax	766.3	2,824.9	268.64%
	Cultural Triangle	402.8	4,200.1	942.73%
	Botanical Gardens	72.3	673.4	831.40%
	Zoological Gardens	201.7	698.8	246.46%
	Wild Life Parks	103.9	2,138.4	1958.13%
	Museums	4.6	76.0	1552.17%
	BMICH	146.7	464.8	216.84%
	Total	2,152.4	12,807.1	495.01%

2019 earnings is estimated to be around Rs. 12, 000.0 million. Even 2021 will see similar losses. Overall, the economy has lost around US\$ 3.5 Bn during 2020 and this trend will continue in 2021. At a time when Sri Lanka has depleted foreign exchange reserves, protecting established and proven avenues for the generation of foreign exchange has to be a primary concern of the Government.

Please also note that 90 per cent of all tourism sector investments have been implemented by local entrepreneurs, of which 90 per cent belong to the small and medium category.

It is notable that the 2009/10 registered hotel room capacity of 14,461 increased some 71 per cent to 24,757 by 2018/19, a remarkable growth rate that has supported Sri Lanka's investment portfolio.

Based on industry recommendations to the Government, assurances have been given that steps to renegotiate and restructure the facilities extended through commercial banks will be favourably considered. However, in reality, this policy has not been equitably implemented and would not on its own be sufficient to support the industry at this crucial juncture. The following factors need urgent consideration to support the industry:

- Repayment of accumulated interest on current borrowings once the moratorium has been granted comes to an end by mid-2022
- Repayment of any outstanding capital on borrowings by end December, 2021

- Repayment of outstanding statutory payments
- Assistance to support a minimum of 6 months working capital
- Assistance towards maintenance and product upgrading to ensure conformity with required quality and standards in keeping with classification requirements
- Assistance for new, approved development projects that are on-hold as a result of increases in development costs, mainly due to depreciation of the Rupee and increase in construction cost – Bridging finance -
- Financial assistance to industry stakeholders to be provided through local commercial banks.
- Government on obtaining cabinet approval, to set up a separate unit to plan, structure, evaluate, control and monitor the entire exercise. It could fall under the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Implementation, Ministry of Tourism or at the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) falling directly under the Ministry of Tourism.
- The Government to provide required guarantees to the fund through local banks. Perhaps a mechanism of the individual entities pledging shares to the value of borrowings or similar to be considered.
- Though, the offshore funding made available will be in US\$, the lending to industry stakeholders to be in Sri Lanka Rupees. (This will also assist the Government to

- strengthen its depleted foreign reserves to some extent)
- After careful evaluation of applications against an established criterion, assistance in the form of soft loans to be offered. - Minimum 2-year grace period on repayment of capital and interest. Preferential interest rates below 4 per cent per annum. Payback period of 7 years. (In total, covering a period of 10 years)
- Special financial package purely meant for promotions for all local inbound tour operators as local inbound tour operator business volumes equal to 65 per cent of the total arrivals to Sri Lanka during the pre-pandemic period.

We are aware of the forthcoming tourism policy document which has been submitted for public observations. It needs to articulate an action plan for all sectors namely: Development, Promotion and Regulations with clear time lines to prevent these policy documents from gathering dust.

We do not believe that this is the appropriate time to enact a rushed Tourism Act, replacing the current Tourism Act No. 38 of 2005. The current Act certainly does require changes but this must include adequate private sector participation in decision-making.

It is also an instrument that determines how the Tourism Fund has to be managed and disbursed. We note with consternation that the proposed Tourism Act leaves governance aspects to representatives of state bodies with the private sector invited merely as 'observers'.

It is also transparent that this proposed Act has been orchestrated to suit the needs of certain individuals. This is not acceptable.

The Hon Minister of Finance indicated the other day that the Tourism Fund is likely to be revoked and collections will go directly into the Consolidated Fund. This was the system that we did away with 15 years ago and brought the current Act to enhance effective industry participation towards the development of tourism. We should not forget that the payoff was 2.3 million arrivals with tourism receipts hitting over USD 4 billion.

Sri Lanka is one destination out of over 250 competing destinations, hence, it is vital that our country is positioned in source markets. We need to reach out to our primary, secondary and emerging markets aggressively to prevent ourselves from falling behind to other destinations.

We are aware of the massive shortage of foreign exchange in the country and tourism is one effective and sustainable remedy.

Indeed, given the above, it is clear that the economic destiny of Sri Lanka as a whole is closely intertwined with the performance of our Tourism Sector. Thus, protection of this sector and related aspects, such as protection of the environment, wildlife as well as reduction in pollution are vital to our Sri Lankan National project.

(The writer is the Opposition Leader of the Sri Lankan Parliament and the Leader of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya)

Professor, Journalist receive AMIC Asia Communication Awards

A scholar/professor of Asian culture and communication from Sri Lanka and the U.S. and a journalist/civic engagement advocate in Bhutan received the 2020 and 2021 AMIC Asia Communication Awards on Saturday (4) at the culmination of the virtual 28th AMIC Annual Conference and 50th founding anniversary of the organisation, said Ramon Tuazon, AMIC Secretary General.

The awardees were Prof. Wimal Dissanayake and Dasho (Sir) Dorji Kinley.

Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) is the non-governmental organisation dedicated to Media development in Asia and the Pacific. Its members and affiliates have published the rich trove of research studies on journalism and communication in the region in the last 50 years.

Prof. Wimal Dissanayake (B.A. University of Ceylon, M.A. University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. Cambridge University) is a leading scholar of Asian cinema and Asian communication theory. He received the 2021 AMIC Asia Communication Award for Disruptive Inquiry.

A critic of the wholesale adoption of Western – produced communication theory, research and methods, Dissanayake devoted his career not only to creative writing but also to finding and articulating the Asian perspective and sensibility in communication studies – in collaboration with other Asian scholars.

Dissanayake is recognised for his great contribution in providing a conceptual link between Asian communication and culture. He accomplished this by studying classical Asian teachings, cultural traditions and



Prof. Wimal Dissanayake

belief systems, customs, oral and written texts – in order to understand their impact and influence on the communication culture of Asia – the patterns, ways and behaviour that go into both verbal and non-verbal expressions of Asian sensibility and social interaction.

Dissanayake said, "If communication is to become a more consequential field of endeavour, it is important that we establish contacts with indigenous roots, situated knowledge and local forms of knowledge. Therefore, the imperative need to focus on Asian theories, methods, and concepts of communication becomes more urgent and compelling."

He shares his reflections in his numerous books, including *Communication Theory The Asian Perspective* (Editor, 1988, 2021), *Continuity and Change in Communication Systems* (1984), *The Role of News Media in National and International Conflict* (1984).

He has also been awarded an honorary D.Litt. for his scholarly work. He has written a large number of books on cinema and cultural theory which have been published by Oxford, Cambridge, Duke, Minnesota, Indiana, Illinois University Presses and Routledge Publishers and Penguin.



Dasho (Sir) Dorji Kinley

His notable works include: *Ashes of Time* (2003), *Sholay, A Cultural Reading* (1992), *Self and Colonial Desire: Travel Writing of V.S. Naipal* (1993), *Raj Kapoor's Films: Harmony of Discourses* (1988). He is the Founding Editor of the East-West Film Journal and former Director of the Cultural Studies Programme jointly sponsored by the University of Hawai'i and the East-West Center.

Dissanayake is also one of the leading poets in Sri Lanka who has published eight volumes of poetry in his mother tongue Sinhalese, and has won numerous awards for his poetry. In 2012 he was given the highest lifetime award granted by the Government of Sri Lanka.

He is also the recipient of the Lifetime Award conferred by the Sri Lanka Foundation in Los Angeles. He also serves as an Editorial Advisor to a large number of prestigious international academic journals dealing with cinema, communication, and cultural theory, as well as the International Encyclopedia of Communication. He has been invited as the keynote speaker at conferences held in countries and territories such as Germany, Canada, United States, India, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

Dasho (Sir) Dorji Kinley received the 2020 AMIC Asia Communication Award for Transformative Leadership. He is the

first formally trained journalist in Bhutan, having been sent by the Fourth King to study in Australia, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication degree from Charles Sturt University. He also earned a Master of Journalism degree from Columbia University in the U.S., and then was awarded the prestigious John S. Knight Journalism Fellowship at Stanford University for his work in Media development in developing democracies.

Upon his return from formal studies, Dasho Kinley Dorji introduced modern Media into Bhutan, using them as platforms for wider citizen participation in the country's move into democracy, while bringing new thinking on the role of Media in society to the international academic community.

Kinley converted the government newsletter Kuensel into the country's first newspaper. This was a significant challenge in a small, oral culture, where reading was considered work, among the tasks civil service employees were paid to do.

Over the next two decades Kinley trained journalists to work alongside him, increased publication of Kuensel to twice-weekly editions in two languages (English and Dzongkha), and widened the distribution of the paper across the country. He wrote editorials, encouraging critical reflection about Bhutanese society. They became a must-read among the educated and the political class.

He wrote in one of his editorials: "All of us who professionally use the Media are the shapers of society. We can vulgarise that society. We can brutalise it. Or we can help lift it to a higher level."

Dasho Kinley's belief that Media should serve to elevate society reflected

Bhutan's renowned philosophy of Gross National Happiness. He developed Bhutan's Media space according to those principles.

"Media must help society to understand change and, in the process, define and promote the right values, including public values... we are responsible for culture, happiness, liberty, spirituality, even survival of society," he wrote in a paper for an international conference.

Dasho Kinley was a valuable voice in his country's development. Kuensel was a platform for national discourse on Bhutan's Constitution which was ratified in 2008. The Bhutanese Constitution enshrines freedom of the press, freedom of Media and citizens' rights to information.

In 2006, he was awarded the prestigious Red Scarf and given the title of Dasho by His Majesty the Fourth King.

In 2009, after 29 years at Kuensel, Dasho Kinley assumed the role of Secretary to the Ministry of Information and Communications, advising government on Media and communications policy. He also published Bhutan's first book of Creative Non-Fiction, *Within the Realm of Happiness*, reflecting on life in Bhutan.

Now retired, Dasho Kinley maintains many roles in the community, including editor-in-chief of Druk Journal, a journal of thoughts and ideas. Through regular publications, an interactive website, and open discussions after each edition, Dasho Kinley engages different sections of Bhutanese society in conversations, so that all citizens can exchange open and frank views on national policies and issues relevant to Bhutan.

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Make CPC Report Public

Yesterday, another allegedly LPG (cooking gas) victim, this time from Matale, died, taking the death toll from such accidents to two, together with three injuries and damages to several houses and property, including to restaurants and at least one hotel, having had been reported since 4 November.

In connection with these accidents, this newspaper in its editorial of Wednesday (1 December), to quote excerpts said, 'Opposition and SJB MP Nalin Bandara Jayamaha speaking in Parliament on Monday (29 November) said, tests carried out by the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) in relation to LPG accidents showed that they were due to the change in composition of the LPG.'

Jayamaha therefore requested the Government to make the contents of this CPC report public. Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila under whose purview the CPC comes, in reply, however said that such a report cannot be made public as the report had been compiled at the behest of the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA). Complementing these developments, Cabinet Spokesman Dullas Alahapperuma on 30 November said that there is a report on recent LP gas accidents out and that its contents, together with other reports such as that which is being compiled by Moratuwa University will be made public on 2 December.

But 2 December has come and gone and none of the two reports, including the Moratuwa University report, which Alahapperuma promised would be made public by then, has neither materialised, nor yet to be materialised by yesterday (6 December), i.e. even after the lapse of four days from Alahapperuma's promised date.

The allegation is that the reason behind those recently reported LPG related accidents is that the usual LPG composition had been changed from 20 per cent propane to 80 per cent butane (20:80), to 50:50 recently.

In related developments, Parliament, on its website, in an article also dated Wednesday and titled, 'A special meeting of the Ministerial Consultative Committee on Trade held to obtain views of several parties regarding the explosion of gas cylinders,' to quote excerpts said, 'A special meeting of the Ministerial Consultative Committee on Trade was held in Parliament on 1 December (Wednesday) to seek views and solutions of several parties regarding the sudden gas cylinder explosions which took place a few days ago.'

The Ministerial Consultative Committee met under the chairmanship of Trade Minister Dr. Bandula Gunawardana and State Minister Lasantha Alagiyawanna. Among those who were included in the Committee was Petroleum expert Nimal de Silva,' it said.

Meanwhile, a 'daily,' quoting the aforementioned Nimal de Silva, in an article published yesterday under the heading 'Like tying a time bomb to the leg of a housewife,' to give excerpts of de Silva's opinion, said, 'If the LPG (cooking gas) composition, i.e. butane to propane, is made 50:50, there is almost a 50 per cent increase in pressure at Sri Lankan temperatures. That means that the gas cylinder valve and the washer cannot hold this pressure.'

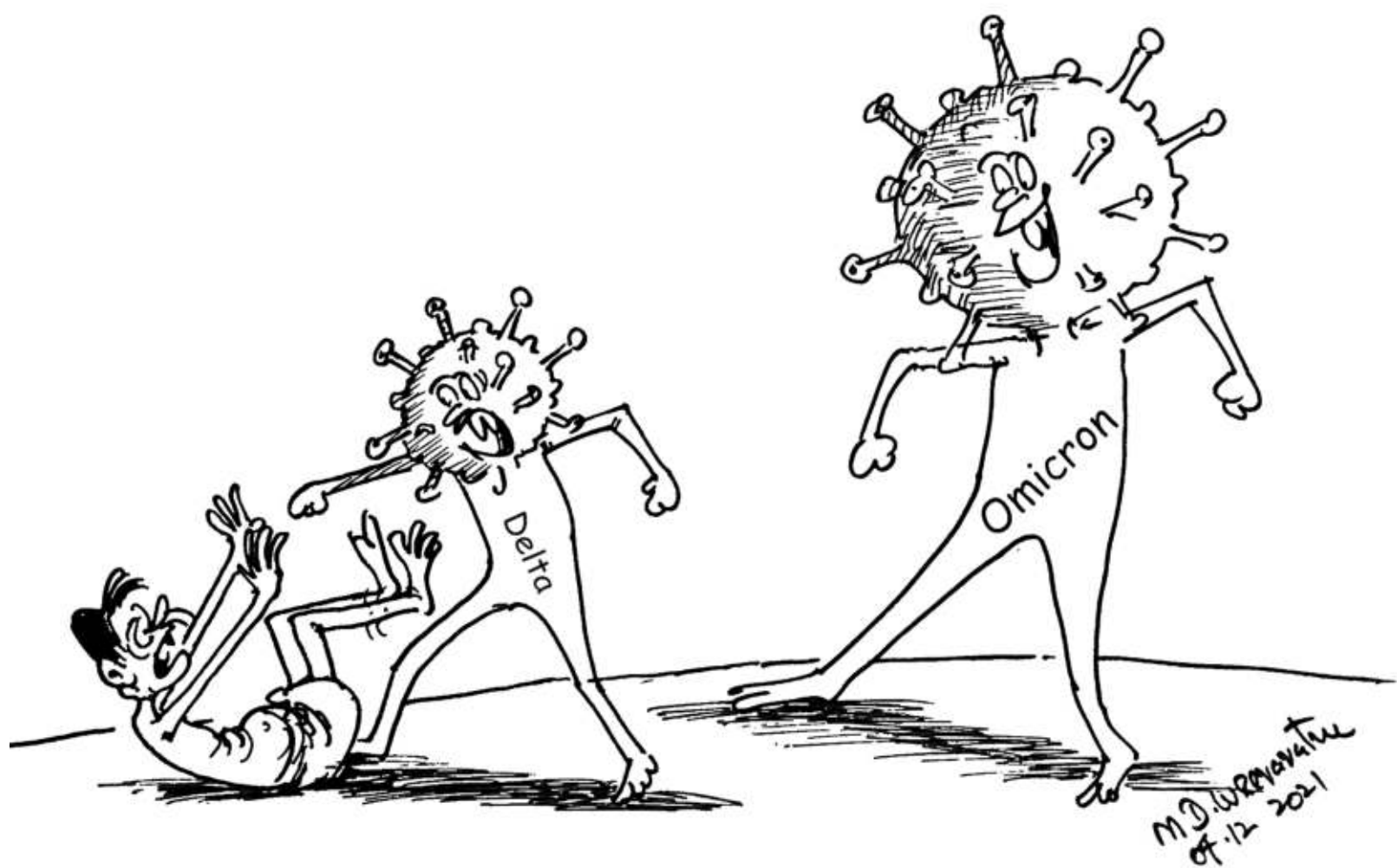
All other components in the market, such as the hose and the regulator are designed to withstand a composition of 30:70, propane to butane pressure.

When the Media inquired from de Silva, whether LPG companies have mentioned that they do not trust CPC's Sapugaskanda lab facilities, can the test results from Sapugaskanda be trusted, his answer was, "Yes, definitely. Why not? Sapugaskanda has been there for a long time."

Q: CPC is said to have sent their results to Moratuwa University which will compile a report. Have you seen the report? Was this discussed at the consultative committee meeting in Parliament last week?

A: No, that was not shown to me at the consultative committee meeting. It also was not at all productive or useful as it was just politicians who spoke the most. Experts, including me, only got a small chance to present our views. I do not think it was a useful exercise.

Therefore, for the good of the public and for their safety, including their houses and property, the Government should make the CPC report public at their earliest, as early as today, as that report is already out so that the public could take immediate remedial measures to protect themselves and their properties as the Government is pussyfooting to fulfil their mandate.



Joe Biden Era: A Good Sign for China-US Relations

By DR. RAJKUMAR SINGH

Earlier, since the coming of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States of America on 20 January 2017, the US-China overall relations, the economic and trade in particular, underwent a drastic change, and it also proved a fatal for the region and the globe. The then US Administration imposed a number of restrictions on US trade with China and other Western countries to hamper Chinese economic interests across the world, while, in response Beijing too, tried its level best to harm American diplomatic and strategic interests in the region and outside it. Uncertainties in their moves against each other affected several poor and developing nations of the world, pushing the trend in reverse direction in many sectors of production. In the context, a new hope of good relations between the two remained an overdue to be fulfilled in the regime of Joe Biden, his successor, who took the oath of office on 20 January 2021. Although, on the day of his assumption Biden hinted to continue the Chinese policy adopted earlier by Donald Trump, other officials of the State Department revealed that newly appointed President is planning to take a multilateral approach by enlisting support of Western allies to increase US leverage on Beijing. Now, the two countries began talking on various issues and in line US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and China's top foreign policy official, Yang Jiechi held high-level discussions on a number of issues of mutual interest between the two countries.

Latest diplomatic developments

As expected, the two rounds of telephonic talks between Joe Biden and Xi Jinping held in the month of February and September, respectively, which led further to a detailed first virtual talks between them on 15 November 2021. The talks between the two top leaders of the globe lasted for more than three and half hours and covered a wide range of subjects from bilateral to regional and global in order to smoothen US-China relations. At the end of talks, a joint statement was also issued which included their complex bilateral trade relations, instances on Taiwan,



views on health security, climate change, global energy supplies, key regional challenges in North Korea, Afghanistan and Iran. In the face-to-face meeting through virtual method, Joe Biden, the American President, focused his investment preferences at home but added that he will also align with other US allies abroad to take on global challenges and expressed deep concern over Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, reiterating American commitment for its 'one China policy'. Apart from the joint statement China, in a separate statement described the meeting as 'candid, constructive, substantial, and effective for the people of the two countries and called for co-operation on economic development and enhanced co-operation in terms of energy, law enforcement, education, science and technology, cyber space and environmental protection. By the time, as a mark of good gesture, the two countries also decided to ease the restrictions on access for journalists from each other and the consensus was reached even before the virtual meeting between their leaders. In a previous decision the US had exercised tight control over Chinese State Media organisations, including the Xinhua News Agency and China Global Television Network and also slashed the number of Chinese nationals working in US offices of major Media houses. In retaliation, Chinese expelled 13 US journalists from major publications and new visa restrictions were imposed on some American media companies.

Background of economic relations

Much before coming to power since the 1980s Donald Trump, advocated eliminating tariffs to remove the deficit in US trade thereby promoting domestic manufacturing which at the time of his Presidential Election became a major plank. In contrast, Trump's views on the economy of the country did not tally with the opinion of the economists who do not believe that it's a significant problem but some of them were of the view that it would do more harm than good to the American economy, while a few of them suggested to adopt alternative means to address the trade deficit with China. On becoming President of the US Donald Trump began removing the trade deficit with China and especially from January 2018 onwards he started setting tariffs and other trade barriers with China with the aim of forcing it to make changes and correct what the US called 'unfair trade practices' and intellectual property theft. He also made it clear that this has led to the US-China trade deficit and the Chinese Government requires transfer of American Technology to China. Trump's trade measures were totally rejected by China and accused the Administration for engaging in nationalist protectionism and at the same time also took retaliatory action. As expected, this trade war affected the economies of both countries negatively. In the United States, it had led to higher costs for manufacturers, higher price for consumers and financial

hardships for farmers. On the other hand, the ongoing trade war contributed to a slowdown in the rate of economy and industrial output growth. It also compelled some American companies to shift their businesses in other Asian countries. The intense trade war between the two countries continued for almost two years but slowed down with the break out of COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020.

New initiatives in economic sphere

For the first time under Joe Biden, the ice melted between the two countries on 17-18 March 2021, when the high-level meeting concluded between the US Secretary Antony Blinken and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and their Chinese counterparts with China's top officials Yang Jiechi of the Foreign Ministry and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The opening session of their meeting witnessed hot discussions and accusations on each other's policy. In between the deliberations, the US side expressed the wish to discuss with the Chinese its 'deep concerns with actions by China specially related to Xinjiang, Hong-Kong, Taiwan, cyber-attacks on US as well as economic coercion towards American allies. In response China also accused US for misusing its military and financial might and the notion of national security to hamper trade flows and induce anti-China sentiments. At the end of the meeting, although no joint statement was issued, in their separate releases identified only limited areas of co-operation and coordination with respect to climate change and geopolitical issues. In a further step, the two countries, in a joint statement agreed to work jointly on climate change in April 2021, and they expressed their will to relax earlier restrictions imposed by Trump in the coming days but side by side was anxious to limit Chinese power and influence at regional and global level with the help of allies across the world.

Dr. Rajkumar Singh,
 Professor and Head
 Department of Political
 Science Dean Faculty of
 Social Sciences, Bhupendra
 Narayan Mandal University,
 Madhepura - 852113, Bihar,
 India
 Email-rajkumarsinghpg@gmail.com

Where the West Gets it Wrong!

By N. SATHIYA MOORTHY

If none else, the Tamil Media at least has devoted space to the Security Forces scuttling the community's post-war annual memorial on LTTE era observances for their martyrs. The LTTE named it 'Heroes' Day' for their fallen boys and girls at war. Since then, every Tamil who want to gather at the end-war venue of Mullivaikkal say they are mourning their civilian brethren whom they claim the Security Forces had massacred in the last days of the war in May 2009.

The previous year, the authorities were known to have obtained Court Orders barring Tamils from gathering at the Mullivaikkal site or thereabouts. This time, Tamil political leaders say, the Security Forces broke into the day's functions and did not spare journalists and photo-journalists. Some of them have claimed compensation for the journalists (at the very least).

The message this time is clear. Is it the Government's response to the Tamil leaders - or, at least a select few - travelling across the West, from the US, to Canada and the UK, arguing their case with host Governments and articulating their worn-out arguments before a captive audience? As it turns out, the audience in every location was captive. In Canada's Toronto, they misbehaved and heckled, bringing the programme for Tamil political leaders from native Sri Lanka to an abrupt end.

It has not stopped with an overseas trip for some. From among those left out, some reportedly called on German Ambassador Holger Seubert in Colombo. It remains to be seen if Germany and maybe a few other continental powers in Europe are going to sing the same tune as the US-UK combo, as in the past, or if they are going to say the same thing in a different lingo - or, what...

Be it as it may, it needs to be remembered that not all Tamils used to remember their dead in mass public programmes. For the Hindus among them, it has always been a private and family affair, where even fellow-Hindus are not expected or allowed to partake of the observances. The Hindus do not go to the cremation sites. Yes, Christians across the world do pay annual homage at the burial site, where a memorial has been erected. But again, it has always remained a private, family affair.

Then, there is the annual question that compares the denial of Government permission for the Tamils to remember their war-dead, while JVP founder Rohana Wijeweera and fellow militants are allowed to be remembered in public in Sinhala South, despite the two major insurgencies they waged against the Sri Lankan State. But there is also a difference.

No one in the South, including the moderate JVP politico-electoral left-over or its two breakaway groups have talked any time about the possible revival of militancy and insurgency. None of them has also called for



Not all Tamils remember their dead in mass public programmes. For Hindus it is a private and family affair

re-structuring the constitutional scheme, with some continuing to hint at separation and secession. That is not the case with the LTTE supporting Tamils.

From a Sri Lankan State point, Tamil political leaders have to acknowledge this difference. Leaders of the West backing the 'larger Tamil cause' (?) have to ask themselves if they would allow the revival of a similar lost cause from the previous century within their nation? The Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis are only two among them.

Zig-saw puzzle

Whether or not anyone accepts the Government's position on details or not, there can be no two real opinions that the ethnic issue is an internal affair of the nation. No one understands the issues and concerns of all domestic stake-holders with their domestic (non-electoral) constituencies than the socio-political leadership nearer home.

The rest of the world sympathises and empathises with the 'victims', yes, and sincerely so - or, so would it seem. But there are inherent limitations to the outsider's understanding of a deep-seated, multi-faceted domestic issue. The past, for vocal sections inside the country, purportedly dates back to two-thousand years, to the era of Dutugemunu and Elara, followed by South Indian King Rajaraja Chola's naval attack a thousand years later - and a thousand years from now. Post-World War western concerns, concepts and solutions derive from an academic study of issues and classroom coaching of their diplomats and peaceniks, who now dominate the global peace industry. There is a template model of their own understanding and design, wherein they seek to fit in domestic variables in ways that will suit their

Nor has the Biden administration explained why Asia's oldest and longest democracy has been kept out - a democracy never allowed itself to be challenged by coup attempts against Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, two JVP insurgencies, decades of LTTE terrorism, war and violence

format. In the end, the West does not resolve the Jigsaw puzzle, but only complicates it. The alternative, or flowing from their peace initiative, is brutal war.

Because they are poor peace-time operatives, compared to war and victories, including the Cold War, the West does not know how to handle China, for instance, nor a much-weakened Russia, or even an Iran of the new-generation Ayatollahs, not to leave out the way they handed over Afghanistan back to the Taliban, on a platter - without the latter having to fire a shot.

Unfortunately, this is also the western legacy after the Second World War. It was the Koreans and Vietnam then, Shah's Iran not long after, followed by Saddam Hussein's Iraq in the immediate neighbourhood. The

West should also look inwards to acknowledge its contributions to the continuing conflict between two South Asian nuclear powers in India and Pakistan.

Is this what the Tamils want over the medium and long term?

Larger issues

Unthinking sections of the Tamil society, polity and Diaspora celebrate every time the West expands the scope of their Sri Lanka resolution at the UNHRC. First, it was the ethnic issue proper, then after a short break came the war crimes. Now since the more recent resolutions, the UNHRC is looking into what it should term as every-day allegations of human rights violations in the country.

Owing to this perception and consequent conclusion, US President Joe Biden has left out Sri Lanka from his 110-nation democracy summit. He has no problems inviting Pakistan, which predecessor Bush had dubbed as the focal point of global terror. Biden has not explained what has changed between then and since.

Nor has the Biden administration explained why Asia's oldest and longest democracy has been kept out - a democracy never allowed itself to be challenged by coup attempts against Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, two JVP insurgencies, decades of LTTE terrorism, war and violence.

Several challenges

It is in this background that the more recent missive by two senior members of the American House of Representatives to the nation's Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, on Sri Lankan affairs merit attention. In their brief letter, chairman Gregory W Meeks and ranking member Michael T Mccaul of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, have referred to 'several challenges' that Sri Lanka faces - 'from an impending financial crisis to an unending ethnic conflict - that could affect the long-term stability' and the US foreign policy and national security interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

Claiming that the US has 'rightly championed justice and human rights in Sri Lanka', the two Representatives have urged the State Department to 'support' the Colombo 'Government's engagement with Opposition parties, including Tamils and Muslims' to find 'solutions to political questions that remain unanswered years after the end of the civil war'. There is no marks for guessing what such 'support', set out in diplomatic terms, could mean in different circumstances in bilateral engagements on the subject.

In conclusion, the letter does acknowledge that 'Sri Lankan people should lead the debate'. At the same time, it wants the US State Department to 'make it clear that the United States stands ready to support and facilitate this effort'. The letter adds: 'Ultimately, however, it is imperative that any outcome is determined by and meets the needs of all citizens in Sri Lanka,

including the Tamil and Muslim people'.

There can be no two opinion about the underlying spirit of the missive, which indicates a desire for ethnic reconciliation. But the unsaid agenda that it indicates is what successive post-war Governments in the nation have been side-stepping. That includes the predecessor Government of anti-Rajapaksa forces, which talked and talked for four-plus years, delivering precious nothing on substantive issues of a political solution - and also the American-led western desire for a 'war crimes probe' under the supervision of the so-called 'international community'.

The truth is that no Government in Colombo can remain politically stable and socially acceptable in the majority Sinhala-Buddhist community if they act upon some of the western indicators. It is here the West's classroom model of 'transitional justice' and the like enter the scene. The concepts are alien to South Asian Third World conditions.

The socio-cultural conditions hereabout are guided by the age-old belief that the 'King can do no wrong'. To date, successive democratically-elected Governments, even while being corrupt, nepotistic and even autocratic, have always ensured that the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity prevailed in every national and international discourses - and is also defended to the last man.

Also, the likes of the two US Representatives should turn back the pages of contemporary history to learn for themselves how the US-led western talks of war-crimes probe and the like actually derailed post-war negotiations between the Government and the TNA. The threatened US intervention at the UNHRC after China and Russia had scuttled western efforts to get it mentioned in the UNSC even as an off-the-record agenda item scuttled the Sri Lankan people's discussions.

That was also when the Sri Lankan State, independent of the party and leader in power, was convinced that no price is less for an UNSC veto-vote, a view that had begun taking shape, in the closing years and months of the war, after the EU took the nation to the UNHRC. That said, the US also needs to realise that the Muslim concerns and problems in the country does not have its roots nearer home.

Instead, after the LTTE attack on Muslims in the North and the East, back in 1990, there was relative harmony and political understanding between the two. That way, the post-war 'Muslim issue' in Sri Lanka owes near-exclusively to US military interventions in the Asian neighbourhood, in Afghanistan and Iraq - and almost entirely to the same.

The writer is Distinguished Fellow and Head-Chennai Initiative, Observer Research Foundation, the multi-disciplinary Indian public-policy think-tank, headquartered in New Delhi. email: sathiyam54@nsathiyamoorthy.com

Army Assists Gravid Mothers

By NISAL RUKSHAN

Becoming a mother is significant. Mothers undergo a variety of difficulties and pain from the day they get pregnant. Their biological systems change to make accommodation for a new life. Mothers do not have single moments rest until the baby is born. Even after giving birth, mothers have to keep up at night to care for the baby. That's how caring mothers are. This is a story about fulfilling the needs of pregnant mothers around the island by the protectors of the Nation as a National responsibility. During pregnancy feeding and caring play a vital role in nourishing the child. According to health specialists a nutritious diet during pregnancy is associated with good brain development and a healthy birth weight, and can decrease the risk of numerous birth defects. A balanced diet will also reduce the risks of anemia, as well as other unpleasant pregnancy symptoms such as fatigue and morning sickness.

A few factors affect the standard of feeding and caring of pregnant mothers. Poverty is a significant reason, especially in low-income families. To overcome these



circumstances the Sri Lanka Army joined their hands together with health Officials located around different Army establishments. As the largest military human resource in the island, the Sri Lanka Army was able to identify these concerns of pregnant mothers on the island. Under the guidance of the Chief of Defence Staff and Commander of the Army General Shavendra Silva, a collaborative effort of Major General Harendra Ranasinghe, Commander 1 Corps, Major General Jagath Kodithuwakku, Commander Security Forces Jaffna, Major General

Champaka Ranasinghe, Commander Security Forces Vanni, Major General Sanjaya Wanasinha, Commander Security Forces Mullaitivu, Major General Channa Weerasuriya, Commander Security Forces - East, Major General Samantha Silva, Commander Security Forces, Central, Major General Sujewa Senerath Yapa, Commander Security Forces West.

The General Officers commanding Divisions, Brigade Commanders and Commanding Officers are primary stakeholders as ground commanders of this national responsibility. The



troops in different parts of the island as a Nation did not consider race, religion or cast during this humanistic approach of providing essentials and coordinating the entire process including nutrition, basic needs for delivery and other health directions.

The programmes were inaugurated and properly coordinated with Government Officials of the respective regions, including Divisional Secretaries, MOHs, Mid Wives, PHIs etc.

For these charity programmes, large numbers of donors in local, overseas, different religious organisations, etc.,

contributed stocks of essentials for the children of tomorrow.

Like the distribution programmes, the Sri Lanka Army provided administrative assistance to the Government machinery. Specially to conduct vital programmes for pregnant mothers, including nutrition awareness programmes, counselling programmes, medical camps, and many.

Especially these programmes are now on at Northern and Eastern Provinces in the country for the specially identified poverty-stricken communities.

After the culmination of humanitarian operations Sri Lanka Army took most of the national responsibilities to their shoulders without being to the barracks with pay and allowances.

It was a diversified effort that included nation-building, disaster relief operations, responding to pandemics, innovations, sports etc.

"We are the sons of this Nation. So, we undertake the responsibility to look after all island mothers with the coordination and guidance of all level health sector officials "that is the sound of Protectors of the Nation.

By **SAMAN PRIYANKARA NAMMUNIGE**

The medical profession is one of the noblest professions. A doctor is an embodiment of compassion and care for the sick and feeble, healing the minds and bodies of scores of people, during their lifetime. From the onset of the highly infectious coronavirus pandemic, the medical professionals have been at the forefront, battling the pandemic, often putting their lives and the lives of their loved ones at risk.

Trapped inside personal protective equipment throughout the day, doctors perform the near-impossible task of taking care of each of the symptomatic COVID cases warded in hospitals around the country, often disregarding physical discomfort, and staying away from family members for extended periods of time, to prevent the risk of infection spreading.

Nearly two years since the virus outbreak was first detected in the country, the situation has now been controlled to a certain extent, aided by the robust vaccination drive and social practices such as wearing masks in public places, constant sanitising of hands, and maintaining social distancing.

Although the number of cases reported on a daily basis has reduced, the pandemic's toll on the local economy has been immense. Medical care facilities in hospitals have been stretched thin, with equipment wearing out faster than in the pre-pandemic era. It is in such a context that a group of medical professionals have gone above and beyond their call of duty, and decided to raise funds to provide much-needed medical care facilities to selected hospitals in the country.

The North Colombo Medical College Alumni Association (NCMCAA), realising the dire shortages in the State medical care facilities, gathered their members who are scattered over many parts of the world, to lend a helping hand.

NCMCAA committee member, Consultant Dr. Ashok John Puvimanasinghe, Global Fund, Geneva, said, "Most members of our Association are serving in different countries. A few others are based in Sri Lanka. All of us have been donating medical equipment to hospitals that were in need of such facilities from the beginning of the pandemic. But, it was all done on an individual basis."

"Then we realised that we could make a bigger impact if all of us could get together. Therefore, we set up a WhatsApp group and met on Zoom to discuss how best we could do this. We decided to address the issue of shortage of certain medical equipment in hospitals. As COVID-19 is a relatively new disease, many hospitals lack equipment to treat patients who contract this virus."

"The team of 27 medical doctors decided to initially focus on COVID care centres, specifically set up to treat coronavirus infected patients. First, we distributed oximeters and then oxygen concentrators. We got 500 oximeters with the funds collected from our members. They were given to the COVID care centres on the condition that in case the centre is closed down, the equipment should be handed to the nearest hospital."

"We brought down the oximeters from the UK. Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, C.A. Chandraprema as well Sri Lankan High



Another Social Service Project by North Colombo Medical College Alumni A Helping Hand in Times of Need



Dr. Ashok John Puvimanasinghe



Dr. Mahendra Munasinghe



Dr. Kosala Karunaratne



Director of the IDH Hospital Dr. Hasitha Attanayake



Dr. Priyantha Weeraratne

Commissioner in the UK, gave an immense helping hand to bring these equipment to Sri Lanka. NCMCAA had spent a sum of Rs 1.5 million towards this endeavour. Apart from this, 10 oxygen concentrators, worth Rs 400,000 to 500,000 each, were donated to several rural hospitals that lack basic facilities. Before making donations, we made sure the equipment would reach the places that have a dire need for them. We also wanted to make sure that oximeters would reach hospitals in all 24 districts."

High Dependency Unit at IDH

NCMCAA next focused on an urgent request made to them by the Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians to help construct a High Dependency Unit for children at the National Institute of Infectious Diseases (IDH). "Following a lengthy discussion with our members, we decided to set up a fund to raise money to achieve this task. We were thrilled to raise more than the required amount of Rs 7 million within a short period of time." "We were able to overcome

certain issues that cropped up during the construction with the help of the Sri Lanka Army, who were involved in a separate construction work at the same premises. We are grateful to Sergeant Lanka Perera for his helping hand. He was in charge of the technical aspect of the construction. Dr. Priyantha Weeraratne took the trouble to visit the site from time to time, to ensure smooth-running of the operation."

Dr. Puvimanasinghe assured that the High Dependency Unit is being built to the highest standards. "We are renovating an old building and setting up state-of-the-art equipment to make sure that the unit can be operated to high standards. We have also made provisions to provide iPads and reading books for the children who are warded at this unit." The team has also focused their attention on providing special training to the nursing and other staff members serving in this unit.

"We first identify the need, before giving our service. That way, we can render our service in the most effective manner. Also, we will not look away once this unit is handed over to the

hospital. We will always be there to address any subsequent issues that might arise," Dr. Puvimanasinghe stressed.

Joining the discussion next was Dr. Mahendra Munasinghe, Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgeon at the National Hospital of Sri Lanka. Dr. Munasinghe was instrumental in the construction of a surgical unit at the Kandy General Hospital. He also rendered an immense service when the cardiac surgical unit at the Lady Ridgeway Hospital for Children was being built.

"I volunteered to oversee the obtaining of technical equipment for this unit. We made sure that each equipment is the best and state-of-the-art. We obtained them from companies that provide best equipment and service. We can guarantee that this unit will function for a long time, as all the equipment are brand new. We also expect to upgrade this High Dependency Unit into an Intensive Care Unit in the near future. For the moment, we will have five beds."

Senior Consultant Paediatrician, Dr. Kosala Karunaratne, Vice President of the Sri Lanka College of

Paediatricians, said "During the height of the pandemic, a large number of children were infected with COVID-19. Some of them suffered severe symptoms, mostly due to underlying illnesses. We had to encounter a lot of complications when treating these children. Some children were transferred to the Lady Ridgeway Hospital for Children from the IDH, as IDH did not have either an ICU or a High Dependency Unit."

"There was a great risk of bringing COVID infected children to the Lady Ridgeway Hospital, where children suffering from numerous types of diseases are being treated. A number of COVID infected children were brought to Lady Ridgeway from hospitals all over the country due to lack of facilities to treat them."

"We identified this issue and built a unit at the Hambantota Hospital. Then we identified IDH as the next hospital to build a unit. Unfortunately, we were not able to collect sufficient funds for this purpose. It takes time to get funds approved from the Government."

"It is at this point that NCMCAA stepped forward to

build this unit. Then we set up a committee, along with the Director of the IDH, to make this project a success. This is a timely need for the IDH Hospital. Even after we fully control the COVID pandemic, this High Dependency Unit will help us take care of children infected with dengue."

Till now, the IDH only catered to adults suffering from infectious diseases. Soon, they will start taking care of children who contract infectious diseases.

IDH Director, Dr. Hasitha Attanayake, said the new High Dependency Unit at the IDH will open on Wednesday 8 December. "IDH is the best hospital to treat infectious diseases, even if we surpass our capacity. Most patients who are brought here are often battling for their life. We saved a number of COVID patients who had breathing difficulties and those who were at pneumonia stage."

"But we had one issue: The lack of a High Dependency Unit to treat children. We had to transfer critically ill children to the Lady Ridgeway Hospital. We had no other choice. It was not the most prudent step to send children suffering from a highly infectious disease such as COVID to Lady Ridgeway, where children suffering from many different illnesses are sent from around the country."

"But now we can treat the COVID infected children at IDH itself. For this, I must express my heartfelt gratitude to the NCMCAA."

It is noteworthy that NCMCAA has resolved not to step aside once this High Dependency Unit for children is opened tomorrow, but has assured that they would constantly monitor to make sure that it is regularly maintained to ensure that the highest quality of service is given to the children of this country.

Run Silent Run Deep – A taut WW II submarine tale



A better submarine film has not been made. The taut World War II adventure story, filmed in gorgeous black and white, features friction between Old School movie star Clark Gable as the commander of a submarine, with the new Hollywood star Burt Lancaster as the executive officer, both playing strong-headed, competent and honourable Navy Officers who want to command the submarine.

Robert Wise wisely elicits all he can get from the boat's claustrophobic conditions to build tension among the crew over the power dispute

between the two officers and the dangerous mission of bringing down a prized Japanese destroyer on Japanese waters in the climactic sea battle.

In the opening sequence, in 1942, veteran hard-nosed American submarine Commander Richardson (Clark Gable), in the Bungo Straits near the coast of Japan, is sunk by the Japanese destroyer Akikaze.

Richardson is one of the few survivors, but feels humiliated he's assigned as a desk jockey during the next year at Pearl Harbor.

The obsessed commander is

focused entirely on getting revenge on the destroyer and after he learns the Akikaze sunk four boats, talks the Navy board into giving him command of the Nerka submarine.

The command had been promised to the ambitious younger Lieutenant Bledsoe (Burt Lancaster), who is upset with the decision that he's assigned as the executive officer and asks for a transfer. That's denied by Richardson.

The submarine is assigned to patrol Area 7, which contains the Bungo Straits, but with orders not to enter

the straits.

Meanwhile, the crew is upset that their new commander has them drilling all the time and passing up attacking a submarine, believing Richardson is a coward.

It soon becomes clear that Richardson is planning to have another fight with the Akikaze, as he practices by taking out an enemy destroyer and then enters the Bungo Straits by redefining his orders as is the captain's privilege if he determines circumstances change that he must take advantage of.

In an ensuing sea fight,

Richardson gets severely wounded, and before Bledsoe could take over in a mutiny, because Navy orders were disobeyed, Richardson is declared physically unfit for duty, and Bledsoe assumes the command and goes after the destroyer. He's helped by Richardson's experience.

The only way not to like this authentic looking action film, with excellent sea fights, is if you don't care for the submarine genre.

Upon its release it didn't do that well commercially, but over the years it has gained a reputation as a first-class war tale with star power.

Myanmar Court Sentences Aung San Suu Kyi to Four Years Jail

Ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been sentenced to four years in prison, the first in a series of verdicts that could jail her for life.

She was found guilty on charges of inciting dissent and breaking COVID rules under a natural disasters law.

Suu Kyi faces 11 charges in total, which have been widely condemned as unjust. She has denied all charges.

She has been under house arrest since a military coup in February which toppled her elected civilian government.

It is not clear when or if Ms Suu Kyi will be placed in prison.

Co-defendant Win Myint, the Former President and Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party ally, was also jailed on Monday (6), for four years under the same charges.

Rights group Amnesty called the charges 'bogus', saying it was the 'latest example of the military's determination to eliminate all opposition and suffocate freedoms in Myanmar.'

The 76-year-old has been slapped with an array of charges, including multiple counts of corruption and violating the official secrets act. In one case, Suu Kyi was



Suu Kyi faces 11 charges in total, all of which she has denied (BBC)

convicted of violating COVID restrictions for waving at a group of supporters during last year's election campaign while wearing a mask and face shield.

In the other she was found guilty of inciting unrest for a statement calling for public opposition to the coup, put out by her party after she had already been taken into custody.

Suu Kyi's lawyers, who had been the sole source of information on the legal proceedings, have also been served with gag orders forbidding them from releasing information.

Little has been seen or heard of her apart from her brief Court appearances.

A spokesman for the newly formed National Unity Government, a group made up of pro-democracy figures and opponents of the coup, had earlier told the BBC Suu Kyi was struggling.

"She is not OK... military generals are preparing for 104 years of sentences for her in prison. They want her to die in prison," Dr Sasa said.

The military had seized power alleging voter fraud in general elections held last year in which the NLD won by a landslide.

However, independent election observers have said the elections were largely free and fair.

The coup triggered widespread demonstrations

and Myanmar's military has cracked down on pro-democracy protesters, activists and journalists.

Suu Kyi is one of more than 10,600 people to have been arrested by the junta since February and at least 1,303 others killed in the demonstrations, according to the monitoring group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

Aung San Suu Kyi spent nearly 15 years in detention at the hands of the military between 1989 and 2010, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work to bring democracy to Myanmar.

Her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) won a landslide victory in 2015, but she was prevented from becoming President herself by rules excluding those with foreign national children from holding that office. She was widely regarded as the de facto ruler of the country.

However, her reputation abroad was severely damaged by the way she handled the Rohingya crisis, which started in 2017.

In 2019, Suu Kyi appeared at the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ) to defend her country against accusations of genocide.

(BBC)

Johannesburg, South Africa Hospitals readied as Omicron variant drives new COVID-19 wave



Healthcare workers assist patients being treated at a makeshift hospital run by charity organisation The Gift of the Givers, during the COVID-19 outbreak in Johannesburg, South Africa, 10 July 2021 (Reuters)

South Africa is preparing its hospitals for more admissions, as the Omicron coronavirus variant pushes the country into a fourth wave of COVID-19 cases, President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Monday (6).

Omicron was first detected in southern Africa last month and has triggered global alarm as governments fear another surge in infections.

South Africa's daily infections surged last week to more than 16,000 on Friday (3), from roughly 2,300 on Monday.

Ramaphosa said in a weekly newsletter that Omicron appeared to be dominating new cases in most of the country's nine provinces and urged more people to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

"South Africa now has sufficient supplies of vaccines, ... vaccination is essential for our economic recovery because as more people are vaccinated more areas of economic activity will be opened up," he said.

The Government would soon convene the National Coronavirus Command Council to review the state of the pandemic and decide whether further measures are needed to keep people safe, Ramaphosa said.

Scientists in South Africa and other countries are racing to establish whether Omicron is more contagious, causes more severe disease and is more resistant to existing vaccines.

But some anecdotal accounts from doctors and experts in South Africa are reassuring, suggesting that many infections it causes are mild.

"We are keeping a close eye on the rates of infection and hospitalisation," Ramaphosa said.

(Reuters)

Banjul, Gambia

Adama Barrow declared presidential election winner



Barrow's supporters started celebrating before the final results were announced (BBC)

The Gambia's President Adama Barrow has easily won re-election, authorities there said, in the first vote for decades held without long-term leader Yahya Jammeh.

President Barrow received around 53 per cent of Saturday's (4) vote, with nearest rival Ousainou Darboe on 28 per cent.

Darboe and other candidates earlier said they could not accept the results of the poll.

The vote is being seen as a test for democracy in the country.

In the last election, Barrow defeated Yahya Jammeh, who was forced into exile after refusing to accept the result.

Jammeh's 22-year rule was marked by allegations of abuse, with witnesses recently telling a truth commission about State-backed execution squads and Aids patients being forced to take bogus cures.

Despite his exile in Equatorial Guinea, Jammeh remains an influential figure, addressing supporters remotely during campaigning and urging them not to vote for Barrow, even though a faction of his party had agreed a controversial deal to work with the current president.

Barrow is a successful property developer who once worked as a security guard in London. He sprung a major surprise in defeating Jammeh during the last vote in 2017.

As news emerged of Barrow's win, his supporters started celebrating in the streets, while supporters of his closest rival, Darboe, gathered at his house.

Addressing supporters during a victory speech in the capital Banjul, Barrow called for unity between the country's political factions.

"I call on all Gambians, irrespective of your political divide, to put aside our political and other differences and come together as one people to work towards the development of our country," he said.

Darboe and two other candidates - Mama Kandeh and Essa Mbye Faal - issued a joint statement before the final result was declared, questioning the figures.

They said they were concerned at delays and that their party agents had raised a number of issues.

Illiteracy is high in The Gambia so, a unique voting system involving marbles is used.

On arrival at a polling station, and after their ID has been verified, a voter will be directed to a series of drums painted in the party colours of the different candidates. Voters then slot their marbles into the drum of their choice.

The Gambia is one of Africa's smallest countries and the 2.4 million nation is among the poorest in the world. Its economy depends heavily on tourism but it has been hit by Coronavirus.

(BBC)

Caracas, Venezuela

Colombian FARC rebel Commander 'El Paisa' killed

A dissident former leader of Colombia's FARC rebels has been killed in an ambush in Venezuela, local media reported on Sunday (5). Hernán Dario Velásquez, nicknamed El Paisa, was reportedly shot dead in Venezuela's Apure State.

His death has not been officially confirmed and the Colombian army said it had no knowledge of the killing.

Local Media have speculated that mercenaries may have killed Velásquez, seeking rewards for his capture.

Colombian authorities told El Tiempo newspaper that they would not confirm his death until officials had seen his body. A spokesperson for Colombian President Iván Duque told Reuters news agency that his office was seeking more information.

The FARC rebels were a Marxist group that waged a bitter war against the Colombian Government for over 50 years, before eventually calling a ceasefire in 2016.

A Commander of one of the FARC's most feared units, Velásquez became notorious for the severity of his attacks. He was behind a car bombing in the Colombian capital, Bogotá, that killed 36 people and wounded nearly 200 more in 2003.

His reputation was such that when he joined peace process talks in Havana in 2016, many saw it as a sign that the guerrillas were truly committed to laying down their arms.

But in 2018 he broke with the truce and reappeared a year later alongside former FARC leaders Iván Márquez and Jesús



Velásquez (third from left) with dissident leaders of Segunda Marquetalia announcing the group's formation in 2019 (BBC)

Santrich to announce the formation of a new rebel group called Segunda Marquetalia, and declared that he was taking up arms once more. If his death is confirmed it will be the second major loss for the group this year. Santrich, once a key figure in the peace process, was killed in a shootout in Venezuela in May by what the dissident group claimed were Colombian army Commandoes.

Some 13,000 FARC guerrillas have laid down their arms since the 2016 ceasefire and the group has since transitioned into a minor

political party, holding 10 seats in the Colombia's congress.

Nonetheless, violence continues in some regions of Colombia where an estimated 5,000 dissidents continue to fight against government forces.

The Colombian Government has repeatedly accused Venezuelan leaders of harbouring FARC dissidents and has claimed that an attack on a helicopter carrying President Duque in June was planned from the neighbouring State.

(BBC)

Kabul, Afghanistan

Taliban warned against targeting former Security Forces

The U.S. and a host of allied countries have called on the Taliban to end the targeted killings of former members of Afghan Security Forces.

In a joint statement, the 22 nations demanded that the Islamist regime respect its pledge not to harm former government or Security Personnel. "We are deeply concerned by reports of summary killings and enforced disappearances", the statement says.

It follows a damning report on killings and abductions by the Islamist regime.

Released by the Human Rights Watch earlier this week, the report documented more than 100 executions and abductions of former Afghan Government officials since the Taliban took control of the

country almost four months ago. It also documented the murder of 47 members of the Afghan Security Forces who surrendered to, or were captured by, the Taliban between 15 August and 31 October.

This is despite the regime's assurance that previous government workers would not be harmed.

The short joint statement was issued by the U.S. and signed by the UK, European Union and a further 19 countries. It outlined their deep concerns over the report's findings and called on all cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances to be fully investigated.

"We will continue to measure the Taliban by their actions," the statement concluded.

The Taliban once again denied



the allegations, some of which are backed up by the BBC's own reporting, but did say they would be willing to allow an independent investigation into the allegations to happen.

"There is no evidence showing anything like this happened," the Taliban said in a statement to the BBC.

"We are willing to allow an independent investigation into these allegations and we will fully co-operate with it," it said, adding that the group's hope is that the international community will not base decisions regarding Afghanistan on the allegations.

There have been many instances of the Taliban's actions

contradicting what they have pledged, and previous humanitarian reports have also revealed targeted killings.

In August a report published by Amnesty International found that 300 Taliban fighters travelled to an area near Dahani Gul village on 30 August, where former government soldiers were staying with their families.

The report says the fighters executed nine of the soldiers after they had already surrendered, two more died in the crossfire and a further two civilians were also killed during the fighting that ensued, including a 17-year-old girl.

(BBC)

Email: ceylonft@ceylonnewspapers.lk

Monday Markets

Bourse makes Pyrrhic Gains

By PANEETHA AMERESKERE

The bourse made pyrrhic gains yesterday, where the bourse has suffered its second largest net foreign outflow (NFO) for a year to date in its 125-year history due to sustained uncertainty, with the so-called, common or garden benchmark ASPI increasing by 0.42 per cent to 11,034.41 points and the so-called sensitive S&P SL 20 Index by 1.61 per cent to 3,947.00 points on a Rs 6.74 billion turnover and on a 252.97 million share volume.

The bourse witnessed a marginal net foreign inflow (NFI) of Rs 23.31 million yesterday, though in the calendar year to date it has suffered an NFO of Rs 50.11 billion, its second largest ever, with its highest being Rs 51.04 billion established last year due to similar uncertainty.

Dead 148 days

The interbank foreign exchange (FX) market was 'dead' for the 148th consecutive market day to yesterday, with no outright transactions of worth taking place, coupled with all trades in the FX market, including bank-client trades too, since midnight 6 September, mandated to be executed under a controlled exchange rate (ER) regime of between Rs 202-203 to the dollar, aiding in the spawning of a black market.

In the black market, the dollar was being traded at Rs 250 a unit; sources told this reporter on Sunday (5 December), a year on year (YoY) depreciation of Rs 63.80 (34.26 per cent) and in the calendar year to yesterday, by Rs 61.50 (32.63 per cent).

Another first was that a person abroad who wants to gift a vehicle to a relative in Sri Lanka is precluded from so doing, even after being willing to pay the necessary import taxes to Customs in dollars, a situation that didn't arise even when Sri Lanka last practised a closed economy prior to this, 44 years ago, from 1970-77.

Due to milder controls a year ago where the market operated a dual exchange rate regime, the administered albeit benchmark 'spot' and the 'one month's forwards,' respectively, with their respective values being Rs 185.00/35 and Rs 186.00/20 to the dollar in two way quotes, then.

Liquidity Down \$139M

Money market liquidity during yesterday's trading decreased for the third consecutive market day, this time, too, sharply, by Rs 28,150.2 million (US\$ 139.41 million), *vis-à-vis*, at the discounted, albeit, so-called benchmark 'spot' price of Rs 201.93 to the US dollar as at Thursday due to the possible settlement/s by part foreign reserves sales for the triple purposes to aid the market to import so-called essential items and also to meet net foreign outflows from the bourse and/or Government of Sri Lanka's (GoSL's) foreign debt servicing commitments and/or Central Bank of Sri Lanka's (CBSL's) swaps with the market and/or with GoSL.

GoSL's non-demand pull inflationary face value money printing (FVMP) debt increased for the third consecutive market day, this time also steeply by Rs 14,297.20 million to Rs 1,817,696.78 million (Rs 1.8177 trillion) yesterday due to a lack of revenue, on the whole, an increase of 0.79 per cent. GoSL's FVMP debt has been over Rs one trillion for a record consecutive 93 market days to yesterday.

GoSL's at least theoretical MP borrowing costs fell for the seventh consecutive market day to yesterday, this time, too, sharply, by 2.33 per cent (Rs 1,053.88 million) to Rs 44,098 million, driven by persistent uncertainty, resulting in market preference to invest in riskless, low returns Treasury (T) Bills and T Bonds, rather than lend to the lucrative private sector, the engine of growth.

Money market was short for the 61st consecutive market day to yesterday, thereby causing persistent rate pressure, with market shortfall steeply increasing by 4.44 per cent (Rs 13,853 million) to Rs 326,055 million.

CBSL's open market operations (OMO) data don't capture transactions between Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) and other central banks, Asian Clearing Union and the IMF. Transactions between GoSL and CBSL are foreign reserves neutral. CBSL is not transparent in its OMO data.

'Spot' trades are settled after two market days from the date of trading, CBSL, the steward of GoSL debt and of its foreign reserves deals in 'spot.'

Big Brother ready to help Handing Over Trinco Oil Tanks to India Crucial

By ISHARA GAMAGE

The Government should soon announce its irreversible commitment to hand over the Upper Tank Farm in Trincomalee to India, to seek the generous support of the Indian Government, with a view to managing the current Forex crisis. Diplomatic sources told *Ceylon FT* yesterday.

In 2003, Sri Lanka agreed to lease 99 Oil Tanks in Trincomalee to the Indian Oil Company (IOC) for 35 years at the rate of US\$ 100,000 per annum. Fifteen of the tanks are currently being occupied by IOC while the rest are being upgraded.

However, due to Trade Union protests, the renovation work has been hampered. The Trade Unions have taken up the position that the majority of the tanks should be owned by the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC).

During the visit of the Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa to India last week, he sought assistance on a number of pressing issues impacting Sri Lanka including the severe drawback on foreign exchange. Given the first visit by the newly appointed Finance Minister, was made, even before the conclusion of the Budget Debate, indicates its sheer importance and the gravity of the financial stress that underpins Sri Lanka.

The Indian authorities have stated that as a neighbouring

nation maintaining close ties, it is concerned at all times, about events unfolding Sri Lanka. Accordingly, they have pledged their commitment to support Sri Lanka, irrespective of the amount in terms of dollars.

With recourse from the IMF now perhaps delayed beyond reasonable time, Sri Lanka seems to be more reliant on bilateral resources to manage ongoing financial constraints. Repayments on maturing ISBs are due in early and mid-2022 while fuels stocks are running low with immediate need for imports. Given such mounting financial pressure and little by way forecast dollar inflows, Sri Lanka has turned to India for a US\$ 500 million concessional loan to cover petroleum imports, a US\$ 1 billion swap facility from the Reserve Bank of India or similar credit line to fund the food and security package and another US\$ 400 million under the SAARC swap facility to cover forthcoming ISB related maturities.

Agreement was also reached to organise potential Trade and Investment related meetings between the two countries. A statement by the High Commission of Sri Lanka in New Delhi said both sides discussed, 'four pillars for short and medium-term cooperation'. One pillar involves providing a food and security package on an urgent basis that would envisage an extension of a line of credit to cover the import of food,

medicines and other essential items to Sri Lanka. To provide an energy security package that would include a line of credit to cover import of fuel from India, and an 'early modernisation of Trincomalee Tank Farm' were among the list other Agreements, stated the High Commission.

The 'four pillars for short and medium-term cooperation' is outlined below:

i) Food and health security package on an urgent basis that would envisage an extension of a line of credit to cover the import of food, medicines and other essential items from India to Sri Lanka.

ii) Energy security package that would include a line of credit to cover import of fuel from India, and an early modernisation of Trincomalee Tank Farm.

iii) Offer of a Currency Swap to help Sri Lanka address the current balance of payment issues.

iv) Facilitating Indian investments in different sectors in Sri Lanka that would contribute to growth and expand employment. This will build on recent trends in that respect.

It was agreed that modalities to realise these objectives would be finalised early, within a mutually agreed time frame. Minister Rajapaksa and Ministers Sitharaman and Jaishankar agreed to open direct lines of communication and be in regular contact with one another in order to coordinate these initiatives.

Diplomatic sources in

Colombo say while Sitharaman was in favour of the Sri Lankan request, some concerns had been expressed by other senior Indian delegates. Such concerns have been stemming from recent issues surrounding the Colombo Port as well as Indian interests in supplying LNG. The same diplomatic sources indicated that if the matter on the proposed transfer of the Trincomalee Oil Tanks could be favourably resolved, India is likely to activate the financial facilities requested by Sri Lanka in January 2022, when approximately US\$1.4 billion consisting of ISB repayments plus other trade obligations fall due for settlement by the Sri Lankan government.

In this connection, it should be noted that the Sri Lanka Energy Ministry has announced to finalise a Business Plan between the CPC and the Lanka Indian Oil Company (LIOC) for the Trincomalee Oil Tanks. Towards this objective, the Ministry has requested the Survey General Department to carry out a survey of the 677, acre land on which the 99 Oil Tanks are housed.

Following a request from Secretary to the Ministry of Energy, K.D.R. Olga, the survey is now in progress. Meanwhile, a senior CPC official said, talks with IOC were ongoing with the objective of reducing the losses of the corporation, increasing its storage capacity and venturing on a joint business plan with IOC.

Sri Lanka Economic Summit 2021

IMF-led debt restructuring process is less painful – CBSL Ex-Governor

By ISHARA GAMAGE



The Sri Lankan Government should take steps to resolve its prevailing balance of payments crisis in a manner that has a minimal impact (less painful way) on the economic and social affairs of the Country, former Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) Dr. Indrajit Coomaraswamy said yesterday (6).

He said the CBSL should look at the next best option if its recent six-month roadmap is not practical.

He also pointed out that it would be more effective to focus on a debt restructuring process led by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Addressing an economic forum he said that Sri Lanka has external stresses, which are usually driven by budget deficits and monetary

forbearance.

He said the Central Bank's role as the agent which raised debt for the Government should not be subordinated to its core objectives.

Dr. Coomaraswamy said the CBSL needed more independence to achieve its core objectives. At the moment, economic and price stability are its primary or core objectives.

According to him, there are opportunities for Sri Lanka to use its location and living standards to attract foreign investment and grow exports.

He also emphasised that economic reforms were essential to move the country forward.

He said that public enterprises in Sri Lanka, including energy pricing, were areas to be addressed.

CBSL Governor rules out outside assistance for debt sustainability

Outside assistance is not needed to resolve Sri Lanka's public debt crisis, CBSL Governor Nivard Cabraal said.

He said the solution to the crisis could be found through the systematic management of existing debt and effective debt profiling.

He said when a private business faces a heavy debt burden, it seeks to extend maturity, reduce interest rates, reduce foreign debt, increase domestic debt and negotiate with lenders.

Cabraal said Sri Lanka was doing the same to

reduce the risk of debt.

"We are now moving in that direction for debt sustainability," Cabraal said. "We are changing our credit profile."

He said Sri Lanka was moving away from borrowing and into a situation of non-debt inflows and moving towards a government debt path by reducing exposure to commercial loans.

Attempts were also made to improve transmission through a 'carrot and stick' approach.

"It is now partly full of unofficial remittances," he said.

Economic Development

Sri Lanka at a crucial juncture – CCC

We are at a crucial point in our economic development trajectory and the steps taken now by the Government and Private sector will determine how we emerge from our current challenges and signal the direction for the nation's economy and the prosperity of its people, the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC) Vice Chairman, Duminda Hulangamuwa said yesterday.

Addressing the inaugural session of two-day economic summit which was organised by CCC, he said, that as the Private sector, we have learnt to survive in the face of unprecedented challenges, demonstrating resilience and continued perseverance.

"It is now up for us to shift gears as we emerge out of the pandemic and start preparing our businesses for the next decade of growth," he stated.

He thanked the Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa for



Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa was the Chief Guest at the inauguration of the Summit. Governor of the Central Bank Ajith Nivard Cabraal delivered the Keynote Address. Vice Chairman of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC) Duminda Hulangamuwa delivered the Welcome Address on behalf of Chairman of the CCC Vish Govindasamy

giving the Ceylon Chamber an opportunity to have an open dialogue with him, while they 'agree-to-disagree' at times, it is healthy to have these 'difficult' discussions, as they all love Sri Lanka very much and that's what the Chamber puts ahead of all our businesses.

"When Sri Lanka shines, we will automatically shine. We kindly ask you to give us an opportunity to discuss your decisions with regard to the future of our economy and view our discussions objectively. All the meetings we have held with you so far has been fruitful to

the membership at large," he said.

Over the last two decades, the Sri Lanka Economic Summit has been the premier annual forum for economic policy discussion and an opportunity for the private sector to enhance their knowledge on key development projects and policy directions.

The theme for the 21st Sri Lanka Economic Summit is aptly titled,

"Springboard for Revival: Opportunity to Reset"

While understanding that the economy is facing numerous challenges at present, CCC strives to find solutions through a 'public-private' dialogue.

"It is said that one must not let a crisis go to waste and we feel this is an important opportunity for the Sri Lankan economy to bring in the reforms needed to ensure sustainable economic growth and development," he concluded.

The Banker Magazine U.K.

Bank of Ceylon named 'Bank of the Year 2021 - Sri Lanka'

Bank of Ceylon, the premier financial services organisation in Sri Lanka, was awarded the coveted title of 'Bank of the Year 2021 - Sri Lanka' by The Banker Magazine UK at an event held in London, recently. The prestigious award is recognition of the Bank's contribution to uplifting the lives of all Sri Lankans, while fulfilling its duty as the premier State Bank.

This award adds yet another title to the multi-award winning bank that has been listed in the Top 1,000 Banks in the World ranking, consecutively since 2012, with a country ranking of No. 1 by 'The Banker Magazine', UK, as well as being listed as the No. 1 Banking Brand in Sri Lanka by Brand Finance Lanka with a brand value of over Rs 53 billion for 2021 - the highest ever brand value recorded by a banking institution.

Commenting on being able to achieve this feat despite the economic

realities of the pandemic, General Manager of Bank of Ceylon, K. E. D. Sumanasiri says: "For over eight decades, Bank of Ceylon has worked tirelessly to develop both the nation's economy and the lives of our people. And, we are justifiably proud to have been named 'The Best Bank of the year' by The 'Banker Magazine' UK. We thank the entire staff of the bank and our loyal customers who have contributed to our being honoured with this prestigious award."

Bank of Ceylon has been a true resilient leader in the banking industry in Sri Lanka as the front runner in COVID-19 relief efforts, economic revival programmes, and moratoriums, in line with the Central Bank policies, as the single largest lender to COVID-affected businesses under the Saubagya Renaissance facility with Rs. 39.1 billion disbursed. Of special note are the number of financial assistance and special loan



Chairman of Bank of Ceylon, Kanchana Ratwatte

K. E. D. Sumanasiri General Manager Bank of Ceylon

schemes targeting the Micro and SME sector, to ensure sustainability of businesses.

In its broader role as the premier bank in the country, Bank of Ceylon also established a dedicated unit for exporters, under the banner-Export Circle. The new unit functions to assist exporters comprehensively to build networks and financial capacity to compete in the

international market.

Despite a challenging year, Bank of Ceylon achieved yet another milestone in its asset base surpassing three trillion rupees level in the first quarter of 2021 and a growth of 20% during the nine months ended 30 September 2021, backed by a 23% rise in the loan book for the same period.

In addition, the bank's loans and advances stand at over Rs 2.5 trillion, with a deposit base of over Rs 2.7 trillion, making Bank of Ceylon the largest and strongest banking and finance institution in the country. The Bank posted post-tax profits of Rs 27,565 million as at end September this year, compared to Rs 11,676 million in 2020, which is an increase of Rs 15,889 million or 136%.

"Bank of Ceylon has always been a bank of the people. When the world faced the COVID pandemic, Bank of Ceylon was at hand to offer financial relief to large, medium and small-scale

businesses and entrepreneurs across the island. As a bank, we are committed to ensure that the nation and our people are able to rebuild their lives and rise up again," added the Chairman of Bank of Ceylon, Kanchana Ratwatte.

The Bank has been rated at AA-(lka) by the Fitch Rating of Lanka, which was reaffirmed in the month of July this year too.

With an eye firmly on digital, the Bank continues to deliver excellence in customer service, through over 2,000 touch points, that include a network of 646 branches, and 1,379 ATMs, CRMs and CDMs bringing the convenience of banking services to every region in the country.

Through this inclusive approach the bank has ensured that all Sri Lankans play an active part in the banking system empowering citizens from all walks of life to contribute to and benefit from the banking system.

'Fly Lankan' to operate flights to Maldives

The new start-up airline, Sri Lanka's third scheduled international operator 'Fly Lankan' will be commencing operations with flights to the Maldives by the end of the month, Fly Lanka's CEO Dr. Arosha Fernando revealed. She was speaking during a special meeting held at the High Commission of the Republic of Maldives in Colombo, in the presence of the Ambassador of the Maldives to Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Seychelles, South Africa and Australia Omar Razak.

"As per our Business Model, we are in discussions with OSM Holdings Group, Global Park and Galactic Holdings to partner with us in our Maldivian operation," the CEO Dr. Fernando added.

Further, Dr. Fernando highlighted that the airline will be commencing operations with flights to a total of six



(From left) : Imran Cader, MD of Galactic Holdings, Onella Kraunanayake, Director of OSM Holdings Group & Global Park, Dr. Arosha Fernando, CEO of Fly Lankan, Ambassador of Maldives to Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Seychelles, South Africa and Australia, Omar Razak, Chairman of Fly Lankan, S. Nathan and Udaya Thuduwatte, Senior Consultant of Fly Lankan

international destinations after the Maldives, including India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia and the UAE. The airline will be commencing operations in two phases. Under the first phase, the

operation is expected to begin in January to the aforementioned six destinations. Operations under the second phase will commence in March, with additional destinations.



(From Left): Dr. Prasad Samarasinghe, Managing Director, LankaBell Ltd/Chairman FITIS, Shamilan Somasundaram, Founder, Niftron, Eng. Mahinda B. Herath, Chief Executive Officer ICTA, Jeevan Gnanam, Founder, Hatch Works, Jayantha de Silva, Secretary, Ministry of Technology, Oshada Senanayake, Chairman, ICTA/ Director General, TRCSL, Anura de Alwis, Chief Digital Economy Officer, ICTA, Nevindaree Premaratne, Senior Manager, ICTA, Lakmini Wijesundara, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, IronOne Technologies & BoardPAC

Launch of SPARX Lab by ICTA: Where Sri Lankan future entrepreneurship will be fostered

The Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) is the apex ICT institution of the Government mandated to drive digital transformation with a vision to make Sri Lanka a digitally inclusive nation. In line with the Digital Economy Strategy, ICTA develops, supports, and helps nurture the startup ecosystem of Sri Lanka.

ICTA, recently, announced the launch of SPARX Lab with an opening ceremony held recently with the participation of Jayantha de Silva, Secretary to the Ministry of Technology, Oshada Senanayake, Chairman, ICTA/Director General, TRCSL, Eng. Mahinda B. Herath, Chief Executive Officer, ICTA, Anura de Alwis, Chief Digital Economy Officer ICTA, and representatives from the startup ecosystem including Jeevan Gnanam, Founder, Hatch Works graced the occasion.

SPARX Lab is a physical space dedicated to nurturing early-stage startups in Sri Lanka. In line with ICTA mandate to develop, support, and help nurture the startups, this dedicated workspace will foster budding entrepreneurs and provide orientation, consultation, guidance, and mentoring for entrepreneurs planning to establish their own startup. In addition, these entrepreneurs will get the chance to develop networks with like-minded people, academia, government, and all other entities within which the ICTA Startup Ecosystem Development unit closely works.

Since 2010, ICTA has supported developing startup ecosystems by creating awareness, instilling entrepreneurship culture, incubation, market access, early-stage seed funding, consulting, and mentoring. In addition, initiatives such as '10,000 Ideas', STEP Pre-Incubator, StartupSL, and Regional Startup Hubs will further support the development and growth of the startup ecosystem in Sri Lanka.

Commenting on this initiative, Jayantha de Silva, Secretary of the Ministry of Technology, stated, "Within the prevailing cultural and economic setup in Sri Lanka, initiating startups is a huge challenge. Therefore, the Ministry of Technology, along with ICTA facilitates and nurtures these startups to create a technology-driven environment conducive for the growth of startups".

Chairman of ICTA Sri Lanka and DG TRCSL, Oshada Senanayake, addressing the opening ceremony, stated, "I think it's indeed a significant moment for ICTA. The key pivotal point for us is the development of the next generation of technologypreneurs and startup enablers. Therefore, ICTA has

an important role to play in enabling and empowering the Sri Lankan startup ecosystem."

Primarily, SPARX Lab will act as a hub for budding entrepreneurs and early-stage startups that can come together and be groomed with the support of ICTA, the startup ecosystem, and the Government. In addition, SPARX Lab will be the central hub for all regional startup hubs and University incubator networks formed due to the roll-out of the Entrepreneurial University framework. Finally, it allows key ambassadors to get together and work on one national agenda along with ICTA.

"ICTA has been incubating startups for a long time, and it comprises a mature, though young, team to support and nurture startups. The facilities that have been developed by ICTA here will be a massive addition to the startup ecosystem," said Eng. Mahinda B. Herath, CEO of ICTA Sri Lanka.

SPARX Lab will be open for any team or individual whose idea qualifies or has already qualified as one of the '10,000 Ideas' Tech-innovation Programme initiated by ICTA, to empower the next generation of tech innovators. In addition, the registrants in the StartupSL platform who do not own a business registration or who have not completed one year since registering their business would also be eligible. StartupSL is the national online platform for startups in Sri Lanka, which allows its registrants to connect with the startup ecosystem enablers and vice-versa. Cohorts of 'STEP', the ICTA pre-incubator programme will also have access to the SPARX Lab.

ICTA has remained particularly close to the startup ecosystem and have played an important role in changing the lives of many entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka," stated Jeevan Gnanam, Founder of Hatch Works, who was recently awarded 'The Best Co-working Space' in the world at the Global Startup Awards 2021.

The occupants at SPARX Lab will receive numerous supports from the entire startup ecosystem. SPARX Lab can be accessed from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm on weekdays, with multiple facilities including video conferencing, free high-speed Wi-Fi powered by Dialog and SLTMobitel. Based on the requirements, they will also receive access to a pod to house their startups with two team members for two consecutive weeks or daily. One-on-one meetings could be facilitated, along with a dedicated space for startups seeking a business place for recruitment. For more details contact us via startups@icta.lk.



SriLankan resumes flights to Gan island- Maldives

SriLankan Airlines, the National Carrier of Sri Lanka and a member of the oneworld alliance, resumed operations to picturesque Gan Island in Addu Atoll of Maldives from yesterday, 4 December 2021. SriLankan will operate weekly, with flight UL119 departing at 10:40 a.m. every Saturday from Colombo to Gan, which would return from Gan at 13:05 p.m. on the same day.

Gan offers a distinct, off the beaten path experience to visitors. The island not only has pristine white sand beaches, which the Maldives is famous for, but lush greenery and opportunities to experience the local culture and its people. Travellers can enjoy day excursions to Addu Nature Park to see Maldivian wildlife or smaller, neighbouring islands in addition to fishing trips; dolphin cruises; diving; snorkelling; surfing; canoeing; jet skiing; and paddle boarding. Tourists seeking a more luxurious getaway can easily transfer to nearby Gaafu atoll that has ten branded luxury properties.

In December 2016, SriLankan became the first and only international carrier to operate direct flights to Gan allowing travellers to fly direct to the island and save on time and money

otherwise spent if travelling via Male. Male and Gan have been two of the most preferred holiday destinations in SriLankan's network for luxury holiday travellers from Europe, the Middle East and the Far East. The Airline was compelled to cease operations to Gan temporarily in March 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic but will reclaim its title as the only international carrier to fly direct to Gan with the resumption of flights this December.

SriLankan Airlines Chairman, Ashok Pathirage said, "We look forward to restarting operations to Gan, and being the only international airline once again to fly direct to this underserved travel destination. We are anticipating a relatively greater demand for flights to Maldives in the coming months with the relaxation of travel restrictions, and Gan is ideal for those seeking something atypical to the standard Male experience," he added.

Travellers from London; Frankfurt; Paris; Doha; Dubai; and Dammam, who choose to book with SriLankan to travel to Gan, will benefit from a direct and hassle-free journey owing to convenient connections via Colombo.

"Compared with the same period last year, SriLankan Airlines has been gradually expanding operations by introducing new destinations, increasing flight frequencies to existing destinations and restarting flights to destinations such as Gan. Maldives has always been a premier leisure travel destination, and SriLankan will be the only international carrier to operate scheduled flights to two points in the Maldives. We were also the only international carrier to continue operations to Male without any disruptions even during the pandemic," said SriLankan Airlines Head of World Wide Sales and Distribution Dimuthu Tennakoon.

SriLankan Airlines became the first carrier in the South Asian region to receive the 'Diamond' rating from the Airline Passengers Experience Association (APEX) and SimpliFlying, a standard received for the extra safety measures and comprehensive hygiene precautions adhered to since the onset of the global pandemic. SriLankan Airlines is an award-winning airline with a firm reputation as a global leader in service, comfort, safety, reliability, and punctuality.

China towards the second goal

Strengthening the Military Through Talent Cultivation

By MAHIKA MING

The Armed Forces of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) held the Central Military Commission's Conference on talent-related work in Beijing recently. President Xi Jinping was the Chief Guest at the event. He is also the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the PRC. The President's comments as the leader of a super power and the world's largest army can be considered as a guiding light to those who believe in ushering lasting peace within safe, strong and prosperous communities with long term goals. Throughout history armed forces of China have never fought battles outside mainland China either to colonise nations or to interfere in the internal matters of another nation. Instead the Chinese Navy under the command of the legendary Admiral Zhen He helped countries such as Indonesia and Sri Lanka to stabilise their respective societies, establish strong public administration and trading systems along the ancient Maritime Silk Road. During the Ming dynasty Admiral Zhen supported the Sri Lankan state to establish the final longest serving administration nearly a century prior to colonisation by the Portuguese. President Xi was clear on the short, mid and long term goals of China in culture, education, talent, sports and health as explained in the blueprint for economic and social development during the next five years and till 2035 in the long-range. Armed forces of any country are made of humans who are trained to reach goals for the protection of the country or state. Talent development of the armed

forces therefore, is vital. The following views of the Chinese leader should be eye openers for those who believe in efficient, civilised development oriented armed forces.

Trees with roots

President Xi identified human talent as the first resource and innovation as the first driving force. The top managers who managed the Sri Lankan armed forces which ended the thirty year bloody conflict have actually displayed these qualities. Although many point fingers in many directions, Sri Lankan managers had the capacity to identify human talent and appoint best suitable persons to the respective positions which gave space for innovation creating a driving force to lay the foundation for a stable nation. The Chinese leader identified the competition for comprehensive national strength as the competition for talent and stressed that excellent institutional mechanism should be provided for attracting and retaining talent to get the best for the country. Although there are different views on large defense budgets of which larger portions go as salaries and wages, few would understand that high quality defense leadership is vital to maintain civil liberties in the 21st century amidst complicated conflict provocative elements. The Chinese leader displayed his advanced human qualities when he insisted on respecting knowledge and talent from the bottom of the hearts of the managers as he foresaw the vitality of creating relaxed environments to provide board platforms for the armed forces personnel to perform. This is a quality which Sri Lankan armed



forces and the public witnessed during the last stages of the three decade conflict. It will be encouraging if young armed forces personnel pick these lines and the Sri Lankan case study to bring in more efficiency to the systems in place. Developing talented teams focusing on different specialist fields and continuous training to make seasoned leading figures to manage the ever challenging State affairs was also seen as important by the Chinese leader. It is very important for a strategically located small State such as Sri Lanka given the opportunities that will come with the expansion of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the threats and competition that will come from other

powers and all those who are competing for the benefits of the BRI in the Indian Ocean rim. President Xi identified the optimisation of the education systems, academic disciplines and talent development systems such as vocational training to compete with future developments. In that aspect Sri Lanka has taken few progressive steps such as expanding the Defence University academic spectrum and also with the establishment of the National Defence College (NDC) at the 'Mumtaz- Mahal' mansion which was formally the official residence of the Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka. President Xi recognised the need for a talented top team to back independent innovations which if not, he

compared to water without a source or a tree without roots. He recognised allocating more funding and resources for scientists who will in turn decide on more effective technological routes for development. Being one of the most powerful men on earth, President Xi wanted more programmes implemented to cultivate and identify scientists with in-depth knowledge, broad vision, foresight, interdisciplinary understanding and strong organisational and leadership skills. **Lessons for Sri Lanka** The Chinese leader's advice to his own armed forces are extremely good lessons for the average Sri Lankans if they wish to develop as individuals

and as a nation. When approximately 22 million individuals act short sighted, the cumulative result is devastating for future generations. The population should study the contributions of respected US Army official Colonel Henry Steel Olcott who had the vision to establish the education network to identify and train new talent. His foundation created the talent which produced the best efficient military talent team seen in Sri Lanka after few centuries. Sri Lankan citizens should also study the services of US President David Eisenhower who had the vision to develop scientific development by establishing NASA which manage all advanced space technology operations. It was during his term the USA inter-state highway network was successfully implemented and completed taking it to new heights in socio-economic development in early 1960s. Sri Lankans came out of a conflict due to the hard work of talented teams. Twelve years later they seemed to be trying to get back to another. Additional post conflict management lessons can be learned by studying the work of the Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Britain. Being a former military officer he introduced welfare systems to military families, introduced carbon taxes to reduce the impact on environment and also introduced the minimum wage system which later was accepted by managers of many nations including Sri Lanka. Sri Lankans should learn more about how other countries develop using the armed forces and the humans in them as the best resource.

Fitch Ratings 2022 Outlook: Asia-Pacific emerging market banks

APAC banks' earnings improving at varying pace

Earnings and profitability for most APAC Banking systems are set to improve in 2022, albeit to varying degrees, as economic recoveries take hold. Fitch Ratings believes the prospects for new business generation will be similar to or better than end 2019 levels for most regional Banking systems by end 2022. However, prospects remain subject to developments around COVID-19 and response measures adopted by the authorities. Fitch's 2022 sector outlooks are mostly neutral, which suggests a broadly steady financial performance by the Banks. In some instances it reflects better-than-expected rebounds in 2021 and moderating improvements in 2022. On the other hand, prospects are more clearly improving in some markets, particularly in parts of emerging Asia where the economy should expand further and Bank capital buffers are high (e.g. Indonesia, Thailand). That said, asset quality could still weaken as and when relief measures unwind, but we do not see that as affecting financial performance significantly. Developed-market Banking systems in APAC will look to consolidate the recovery in key financial metrics, continuing the search for new revenue sources while navigating a less accommodative fiscal and monetary landscape. Fitch expects some gradual unwinding of stimulus measures, particularly in markets where the recovery has been stronger than peers or where the authorities seek to address economic imbalances, including rising property prices and household leverage. Their outlook balances our expectation of the continued recovery of business conditions against modest headwinds, including slower nominal growth and a slowdown in China. Issuer Default Ratings should remain relatively stable. There is scope across the portfolio for changes, although related mainly to developments around sovereign/parent ratings and/or support assessments.

Sri Lanka Banking Sector -Fitch's Sector Outlook: Neutral

Fitch expects Sri Lankan Banks' operating conditions in 2022 to be broadly similar to 2021, despite Banks being likely to outperform its expectations for 2021. Fitch believes prospects for a more meaningful recovery in 2022 will remain muted due to ongoing challenges from the operating environment. These challenges stem from the lingering pressure from the sovereign's fragile external and public finances, as reflected in Sri Lanka's 'CCC' IDR; the resultant volatile macroeconomic conditions; and also the impact of the ongoing pandemic.

Fitch believe these factors limit upside to the credit profiles of Sri Lankan Banks and constrain the improvement in sector performance, particularly in terms of asset quality, while access to foreign currency funding is likely to remain challenging. There is also significant risk to the sector outlook if sovereign stress were to increase further.

What to Watch

Sovereign Stress a Key Risk

Risks to Sri Lankan Banks' profiles hinge largely on the trajectory of the sovereign credit profile due to the Banks' significant exposure to the sovereign and domestically focused operations. Elevated sovereign stress – although not our base case – could lead to significant deterioration in the Banks' financial profiles (see Fitch's report Sri Lanka Banks' Exposure to Sovereign Risk).

Asset-Quality Pressures to Persist

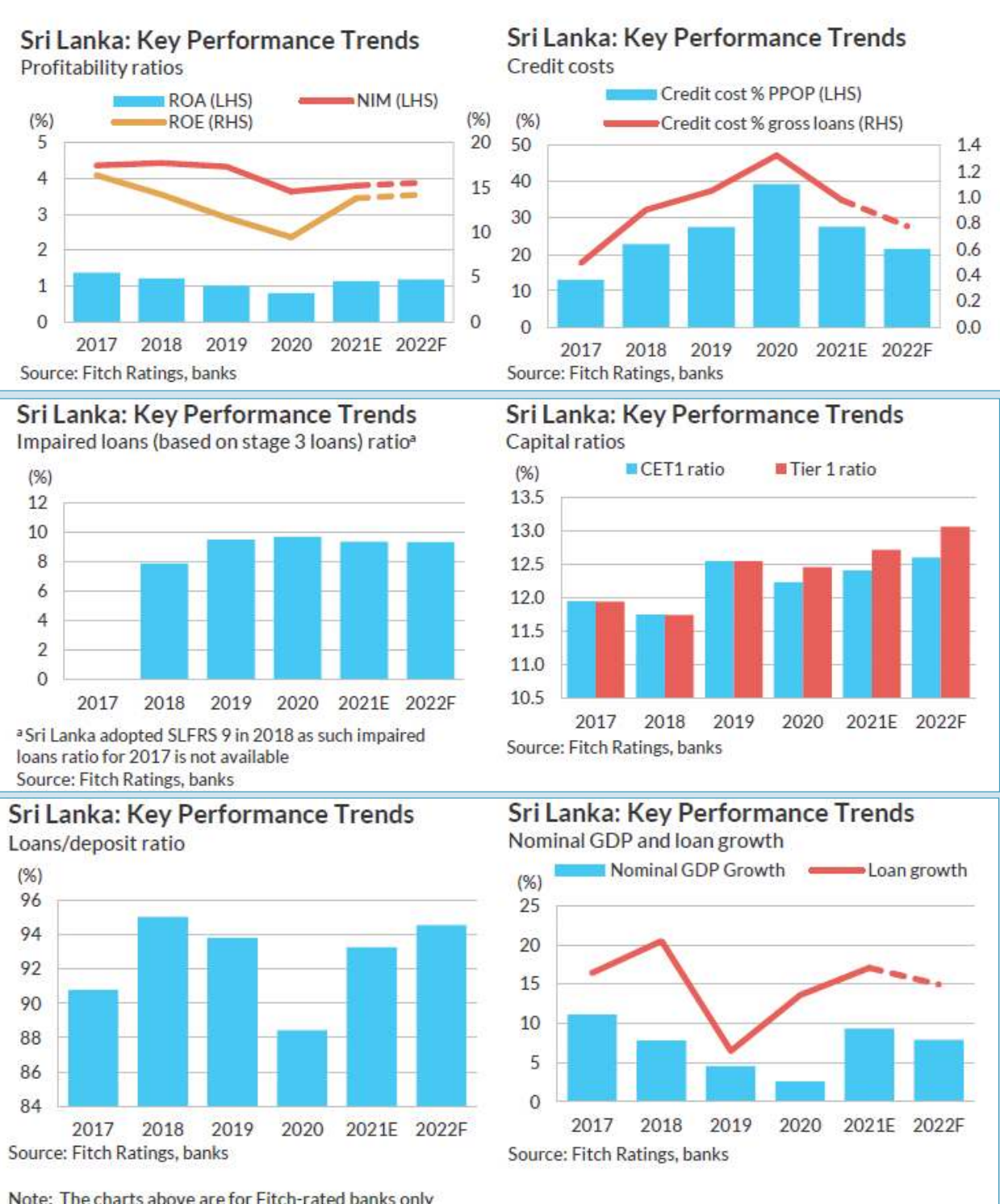
Fitch expects pressure on impaired loans to continue into 2022 as relief measures are likely to be phased out, while macroeconomic volatility could stifle borrower-repayment capacity. Therefore, credit costs are likely to remain elevated (just over 20 per cent of pre-impairment operating profit), albeit lower than in 2021. Any increase in impaired loans could be masked by loan growth which is still sound, driven mostly by state demand for credit, with a potential further pick-up as demand recovers for private credit.

Challenges in Access to Foreign-Currency Funding

The sovereign's credit profile is likely to continue to limit local Banks' access to foreign-currency funding, the share of which has been declining. Commercial Banks' short-term external liabilities relative to official reserves have also been rising, reflecting potential foreign-currency funding and liquidity risk, should sovereign stress increase further.

Potential Tax Hike Could Dampen Profitability

Fitch expects Sri Lankan Banks' profitability to improve only marginally in 2022. This is despite the higher revenue generation supported through marginally better NIM and robust loan expansion. However, a likely increase in effective taxes in 2022 will dampen the improvement.



LOOK

www.ceylontoday.lk

Making the World a Better Place

By **KHALIDHA NAUSHAD**
CEYLON TODAY FEATURES

"Social work is a very challenging job to pursue. But all of the stress and pain of working in this field is worth it when you consider rewards like a smile from a child or seeing a homeless person get back on their feet," says the Co-founder and Directress of Care Station, a charitable organisation working towards community development and social welfare. Razni Razick is a social activist and an advocate of marginalised and vulnerable families with over 17 years of experience working with children in a variety of settings. It's true that being selfless in a selfish world takes a lot of courage but Razni believes when you do good, it will come back to you in multifold. "I cannot even begin to tell you all how many times I have been at, or close to, my lowest, gave someone as much kindness as I could muster, only to have it returned to me, at full force, exactly when I needed it most. It's not the things we have, the money we make, the photos we take or the popularity we gain that defines us. It's the unforgettable marks we make on others hearts that we will be remembered for. It is leaving people a little bit better off than they were, that matters," she says. Razni Razick was honoured by the Junior Chamber International in 2017 for her outstanding service, receiving the coveted Ten Outstanding Young Persons (TOYP) of Sri Lanka award in appreciation of her contributions to children, world peace, and human rights. She was also awarded the prestigious 'Desha Abhimani' title, which was presented at the Colombo Peace Conference 2018 by the Ceylon Justice of Peace Association and International Human Rights Peace Commission.

Ceylon Today was able to reach out to this wonderful lady who is yet another example of how much just one person can achieve by caring enough.

Setting off...

Born in Kandy, Razni has lived in Colombo since her marriage. Her native home is in Gampola where she schooled and got employed. Growing up, she says she was fond of and wanted to follow a career that focuses on children. "My passion for children led me to choose child psychology for my higher studies and that paved the way to pursue a career as an early childhood educator and a child guidance counsellor." Her ultimate goal was to study the influences that combine and interact to help make kids who they are and to use that information to improve areas focused on benefitting children. "The thought of being able to connect and help a child grow both academically and socially, appealed to me." Since childhood,



Razni Razick

Razni wanted to make a difference in the world but never actively set out to be a social worker. But the defining moment for her was however, when she went into volunteering at a centre for street kids many years ago not really knowing what she was about to experience. "My journey as a social activist kicked off after a random visit to meet a friend who worked at a Centre for Street Children." "After about a week I realised that this was what I was meant to do all along hearing their painful stories made me realise the sad plight they were in." It was what prompted her to resign from the job and change the course to devoting her entire time and effort to make the lives of street children and orphans just a bit brighter. She is currently fully engaged in her organisation's activities, "as it requires my full time commitment". She is someone who always wore her heart on her sleeve, she says. She was drawn to charitable work because of the generosity of her parents. "I wanted to help protect people's rights and dignity, particularly those who were most vulnerable in our society. I also wanted to be available to people in need, to provide emotional support to those who are struggling and be a voice for the silent voices among

us." Her charming smile shows us her great personality with a strong will. Razni continues to appreciate her husband who has been her biggest support. "My husband, Hisham Haniffa, constantly pushed me and helped me overcome the challenges this profession throws at me and also my teammates at CareStation."

Care Station

In May 2016, Razni happened to partner with a friend who she came to know in their volunteering efforts during the floods in 2016. "Our intention at the time was never to start a full-on organisation, but to merely serve the community and reach out to more deserving/deprived people and help them out." The organisation was officially launched in September 2017. "Over the years, it has grown to what it is today and we now focus on empowering, enriching and enlightening individuals and diverse communities through our projects all around the island," she says. The organisation's mission is to alleviate poverty through long term sustainable solutions. Razni says her ultimate dream is to cultivate awareness of social justice issues by continuing to equip and empower the vulnerable and underrepresented populations of the society.

She says the organisation's goal was to reach out to those who are struggling with a biased educational system, to provide encouragement to women, to work with people who face barriers to independence, and advocate for those who have been marginalised by mainstream culture. "We strive towards alleviating poverty through advancing development and empower individuals, families, and communities at every social level through education, livelihood support, educational scholarships, orphan sponsorships, disaster relief, food for the needy, water wells community engagement, financial assistance, focusing on needs of vulnerable individuals, refugees and communities facing complex challenges in diverse environments and improving livelihood by promoting equality and diversity." Over the years, she says, the organisation has grown to what it is today and now they focus on empowering, enriching and enlightening individuals and diverse communities through our projects. Care Station was successfully able to work on hundreds of projects, with 300 registered volunteers across the country, covering 22 districts on millions worth projects, thousands of children and families whose lives are now more hope filled, whose futures are more stable because of Care Station. She says the team has earned the right to be heard by influential decision makers at the government level

and be recognised as operational partners for UNHCR. "As we reflect upon where we started, as a grassroots organisation and to where we are now, we are truly humbled."

"Building credibility and trust," she says, were the biggest challenges in setting up this organisation. "To showcase the cause and to motivate people to volunteer was the next big challenge. The biggest challenge to date is being answerable to many audiences." Razni goes on to share how a nonprofit organisation needs to be mindful of tailoring their actions and communications. "A relatively minor misstep and you lose trust and reputation."

Charity projects and future works

Her first welfare project was the construction of concrete stairs for over 13 families living in a hilly region in Kandy. The 187 steps climb to their place of living is now more structured, and risk free. Razni continues to read a feedback she received, "Every time and every day that we climb up and down the stairs we will always remember all the moments that you've been around. All the effort, hard work and happiness that you have shared and have shown us." They said with tears of gratitude in their eyes.

Through the organisation, Razni and the team have helped people obtain water and electricity connection and help build their houses and provide school packs every year and sponsor monthly for their children's education.

Currently, they have fundraisers running to support the flood victims in Mannar and Puttalam districts. "We have a couple of housing projects being constructed and we have an ongoing dry rations distribution for COVID affected families all the other services we provide are carried out simultaneously by the respective teams," she says about her future works.

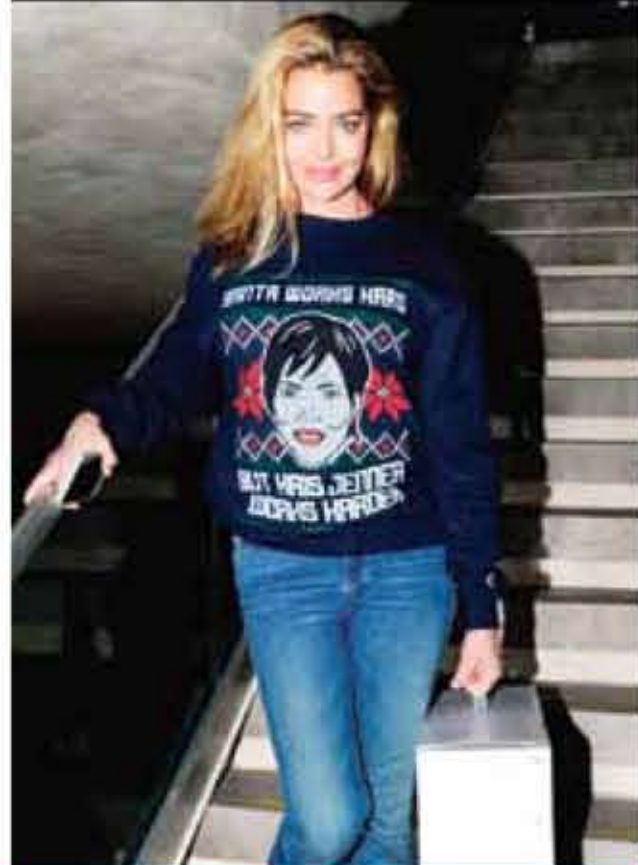
Conveying a message...

"Whatever your motivation, whatever your driving force, it is important to find that motivation that drives you every day, that motivation that makes you chase after and look up to something and finally achieve it. If you pursue it, and make good use of it, education and dedication can flip things upside down. This does not mean that we all become social activists. This does not mean that we give up on aspirations to have a good job or join a large corporation or be an entrepreneur. What it means is that, we recognise and acknowledge our privileged position and we accept a responsibility to give back to society".



Feeling Fresh

Chrissy Teigen rocks a blunt bob and bright pink top while running errands



So Stylish

Denise Richards wears the ultimate Kardashian-Jenner holiday sweater while shopping



Sing It Out

Christina Aguilera belts on stage at the AIDS Healthcare Foundation's annual World AIDS Day Concert



'Tis the Season

Kathy Hilton gets festive while wrapping gifts in LA

Colombo Club Celebrates 150 Years of Journey

Sri Lanka's oldest private member club re-threads 150 years of journey mileposts

There are a few institutions that can claim to have had Governors of our Country such as Rt. Hon. Sir William Henry Gregory, Sir James Robert Longden and Hon. Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordonas original members. The Colombo Club, in its 150-year journey, has been attracting prominent persons of the day, such as J. A. Bell, President of Planters' Association, T. Berwick, District Judge of Colombo, Sir Richard Cayley, Municipal Councillor, later Chief Justice of Ceylon, from its British roots, later attracting corporate luminaries such as Mallory Wijesinghe, who had the distinction of being the club's first Sri Lankan chair. He was followed by others who have helmed many of the nation's leading business houses and professional firms.

The roll call of Chairmen of the Colombo Club reads like a veritable who's who of Sri Lanka. R. Singleton-Salmon, Mallory Wijesinghe, Ranjan Canekaratne, Trevor Moy, Basil Jesudason, Deshabandu Reggie Candappa, Deshamanya Deva Rodrigo, Tissa K. Bandaranayake, Hemaka Amarasuriya, Richard (Dickie) Juriansz, Sega Nagendra, Manik Pereira, Nigel Austin to the current Kumar Jayasuriya, all captains of their industries, contributed immensely of their time and effort in maintaining the aura and prestige of the club.

First as a gentlemen's club and now an exclusive, private member institution, Colombo Club remains a luxurious and discrete oasis in the heart of Colombo.

To mark its 150th anniversary, a coffee table edition that re-threads the club's journey mileposts, reflecting how it fitted into the larger fabric of British Ceylon, as the Country transited from a crown colony to a democratic republic, will be inaugurated.

The book captures the essence of a



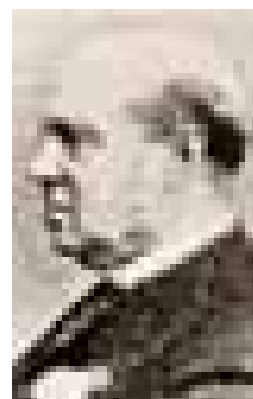
The Heritage Building, original premises of the Colombo Club

bygone era and brings to life the culture and current offering of the club, vividly capturing the fact that the Club is not just a relic of Sri Lanka's colonial past but also a strong reminder of our heritage and a reassurance of the future.

It takes us on a blissful journey on how the club started in colonial times and traces the economic situation of the era, to what it is today. The story of the Colombo Club's journey over 150 years records the ups and downs, its place in colonial times and the emergence of a club for all seasons – one which is the exclusive domain of the nation's crème de la



Presiding Chairman of the Colombo Club, Kumar Jayasuriya



Founding President of the Colombo Club, Sir Hercules Robinson

crème in social, professional and business circles.

"Today, the club's esteemed membership comprises the upper echelons of Sri Lanka's corporate and state sectors, the club is their second home – an exclusive venue to relax, conduct meetings, and wine and dine in amiable company. It follows that the club can proudly proclaim that many business deals, which have transformed the nation's business landscape, have taken shape in a private meeting room within its premises," said Chairman of Colombo Club, Kumar Jayasuriya.

With exclusive excerpts from life

To mark its 150th anniversary, a coffee table edition that re-threads the club's journey mileposts, reflecting how it fitted into the larger fabric of British Ceylon, as the Country transited from a crown colony to a democratic republic, will be inaugurated

members – Deshamanya Sohli Captain and Deshamanya Deva Rodrigo from joining the club as youngsters to seeing it grow to the establishment it is today, the coffee table book is an illustrious and insightful outlook on the indefatigable spirit that sustains the club.

Originally set up as The Assembly Rooms Company in 1869 with Governor Sir Hercules Robinson as its President, the original building, now part of the Taj Samudra hotel is a heritage site. The Colombo Club itself was inaugurated in 1871 and is one of Asia's oldest social clubs with a membership of 500 of both men and women.

First Superyacht to Berth at Port City Colombo Marina

The Port City Colombo Marina welcomed the MY Kalizma - The Classic Superyacht, once owned by Hollywood screen idols Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. The first Superyacht to sail into the Port City Colombo Marina, established Colombo as a calling port in the Indian Ocean with facilities for berthing luxury Superyachts.

Chairman of Sail Lanka Yachting Group which manages the Port City Colombo Marina, Pierre Pringiers said, "The 145' Kalizma - built in 1906 by GL Watson in Scotland - arrived from the Maldives on 28 November, marking a milestone in the development of Colombo as a Superyacht destination. To see this historic Superyacht berthed at the marina is the fulfilment of a dream for me, and is a fitting tribute to our staff who have efficiently handled the logistics and administrative details. I also want to express my sincere thanks to the officials of the Port City Colombo and the Customs, Immigration, and all the agencies involved. I'm hoping that the arrival of Kalizma will augur well for the success of visiting Superyachts and the opening up of Sri Lanka for cruising and

yacht charters - one of the new pillars of the tourism industry."

MY Kalizma has served in both world wars as part of the British Royal Navy. It was in 1967 that two of Hollywood's most famous actors, Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor chartered the yacht for a cruise on the Mediterranean. They fell in love with the yacht and Burton bought it and gifted it to Taylor. They named the yacht 'Kalizma,' after their three daughters, Kate, Liza and Maria.

Managing Director of West Coast Marine Yacht Services in India, Aashim Mongia, who manage the yacht said, "MY Kalizma has been cruising the Indian Ocean region through the last season. The opening of the Port City Colombo Marina is a boon for Superyachts that visit the region, and hopefully we will see more Superyachts coming into the Indian Ocean Region for nautical tourism. We are thankful to the Sri Lankan authorities, the Sail Lanka Yachting Group and the management of Port City Colombo, for their assistance in making MY Kalizma's visit a success. With this first visit we are hoping to bring more yachts

to Sri Lanka to explore the untapped potential that the island nation has to offer."

The Port City Colombo Marina is expected to be one of the region's most modern and largest international yacht marinas. When it is fully operational, it is expected to have the facility to anchor 200 yachts and become one of the largest such venues in the region. It is also expected to have a mini yacht repair facility, duty-free terminal, customs, and facilities for several other maritime related businesses.

Sail Lanka Yachting Group, founded in 2014 by Pierre Pringiers, operates a fleet of 10 luxury catamarans around the island (www.sail-lanka-charter.com) and has been designing manufacturing boats and developing marine infrastructure and boats for export since 2008. Sail Lanka Yachting Group is also now managing the Port City Colombo Marina operations.

The vision of SLYG is to develop Sri Lanka as one of the main hubs for boat and yacht building, ownership, and chartering in South and South-East Asia and make Sri Lanka a key world-class destination for Experiential Tourism and Marine Tourism.



Making Special Needs Education Easier

Asha Wanigasekara's latest book on special needs education launched



Asha Wanigasekara's latest book titled, *Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities and Disorders* was launched recently at Nelung Arts Centre, Hyde Park Corner, Colombo. The event was attended by Educational Psychologist Dr. Daya Rohana Athukorala, Principal of Wycherley International School, Malith Kumarasinghe and other educational experts who discussed the



Asha Wanigasekara



Daya Rohana Athukorala



Malith Kumarasinghe

timely need of such a book for the educational sector and how the book has expounded deep and complex theoretical and practical elements of special needs education in a simplistic and easy-to-understand manner.

Wanigasekara holds a degree in psychology and has 17 years of experience in the special needs education and counselling. Describing the content of her book

Wanigasekara said that every child in their own way is unique and possesses an innate ability to learn. However, the definition of educational success the contemporary society abides by has marginalised kinds with special needs and made education rather hard for them. In her book, Wanigasekara has shed some light on the importance of improving learning environment for special needs kids and thereby achieve successful education process for kids with learning disabilities and disorders.

(Pix by Manjula Dayawansa)



SL National B Chess C'ship 2021 (Open & Women)

Susal and Chanindi win the Gold Medals



Susal de Silva



Chanindi Mewna Attanayake

Susal de Silva of Nalanda College added yet another Gold medal to his trophy cabinet when he won the Sri Lanka National Chess Championship 2021 convincingly scoring 7 ½ points out of 9 games while remaining unbeaten. Susal was the front runner from round 1 to 9, winning 6 and being held to 3 draws. He won against Surath Wijerathne, SDBK Senevirathna, Sanudula Dahamdi, Buddhika Amarasinghe, Osheen De Silva and Nabil Nazar, and drew against Denuwan Theekshana, Chehan Weerasinghe and Isara Banindu Dahanayake.

Chanindi Mewna Attanayake of Devi Balika Vidyalaya reached a milestone of her Chess career when she beat the front runner Desandi Dihansa Gamage to clinch the Gold medal with a score of 7 points. She won against Anujana Sendanayaka, Sathini Liyanage, Minethma Wickramasinghe, Oshini Gunawardena, Dasuni Hansika Mendis and Dehansa, lost to Janandani Abeysinghe, and drew against Chethani Chamathka and THD Tharushi Niklesha.

Theeksana Denuwan of Ananda College maintained a fair result from the

beginning to win the Silver Medal, while Nabil Nazar of Gateway College, Colombo gave the best performance of his young career to clinch the Bronze.

Desandi Dihansa Gamage of Sirimavo Bandaranayake Vidyalaya had a remarkable event. She led the event till the penultimate round, but had to be satisfied with the Silver Medal due to the last round loss, while Tharushi Niklesha, who had the same number of points as Desandi, won the Bronze medal due to the poor tie breaker.

The event was organized by the Chess Federation of Sri Lanka according to the Swiss System in 9 rounds to select players for the Sri Lanka National Chess Championships 2021. This was an important event as it was held over the board after a long wait as a result of the Pandemic. The event was internationally rated and was held with the usual time control - 90 minutes + 30 seconds per move played.

Reigning National Chess Champion Ranindu Dilshan Liyanage, and Top Ranked Harshana Thilakarathne qualified directly to play in the National Championships 2021 Finals

(IR)

India win by 372 runs to win Test series 1-0

India's spinners wasted little time in removing New Zealand's remaining batters on Monday to thrash the tourists by a record 372 runs in the second Test at the Wankhede Stadium and secure the series 1-0.

It was the biggest margin of victory by runs for India in a home match, eclipsing their 337-run win against South Africa in a Delhi Test in 2015.

Spin-bowling all-rounder Jayant Yadav did most of the damage on the fourth morning, picking up 4-49 to cut through New Zealand's middle and lower order.

Ravichandran Ashwin

took the final wicket to finish with 4-34 as New Zealand were all out for 167 in their second innings, chasing 540 for victory.

It took India just 43 minutes in the first session to wrap up the win after New Zealand had resumed on 140-5.

The first Test in Kanpur ended in a draw.

Scores:
India: 325 (Agarwal 150, Axar 52, Ajaz 10-119) and 276 for 7 dec (Agarwal 62, Ajaz 4-106)
New Zealand: 62 (Ashwin 4-8, Siraj 3-19) and 167 (Mitchell 60, Nicholls 44, Ashwin 4-34, Jayant 4-49)

(Reuters)

Manchester United and Spurs continue revivals with wins

Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur continued their recoveries from poor starts to the season with victories in the Premier League on Sunday.

United, with German manager Ralf Rangnick in charge for the first time, beat Crystal Palace 1-0 at Old Trafford thanks to a late goal from Brazilian midfielder Fred.

The Reds have not lost in the three league games since Norwegian Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was dismissed following the 4-1 defeat at Watford.

(Reuters)



Crystal Palace's Conor Gallagher in action with Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo

Cuban coaches to work for free until AG trials

Relief for several National athletes

Didn't want to leave athletes midway

By ANJANA KALUARACHCHI

Despite several backlashes, Cuban coaches Luis Miranda and Sergio Manuel, proved they are not here just for the money as they offered to work for free until the Asian Games trials in April, despite the Sports Ministry refusing to fund them.

Earlier Ceylon Today revealed about the shameful coup where a group of incompetent local coaches and ex athletes with questionable past, together with Ministry officials with conflict of interests, got together and made several attempts to send these coaches away out of pure jealousy, despite several National athletes and the Athletics Association requesting their services.

The Sports Ministry's decision to terminate their services in December with just four months to go for the Asian Games trials in April, put several top national athletes in a dilemma with nowhere to go for training, where the Ministry did not take input from the Athletics Association or dozens of national athletes who trained under them.

Athletes fought hard to retain their coaches and made several requests through the Athletics



Luis Miranda

Association, and even wrote to the Sports Ministry with all performance evaluation about how they improved since the arrival of the foreign coaches, especially Luis Miranda, who took jumping events to another level.

Nevertheless, the Sports Ministry did not change their decision. However, these

As a coach we are always working hard to instill leadership and good ethics into all that we look after. We make sure we understand and support athletes who want do their best without judgment, gratuity or satisfaction



Sergio Manuel Rodriguez

Coaches didn't want to leave the athletes midway, since they had already undertaken the responsibility of getting them ready for the Asian Games, and have now offered to work for free until the trials in April.

"As coaches, we are always working hard to instill leadership and good ethics into all that we look after. We

make sure we understand and support athletes who want to do their best without judgment, gratuity or satisfaction", said Luis Miranda.

"Cuban Coaches work for love and not just for money, and we educate athletes to be good people," said Sergio Manuel of his athletes, after the matter was resolved.



MCA felicitate Mahela and Sanga

Mahela Jayawardena and Kumar Sangakkara were felicitated by the MCA at a glittering ceremony amongst a distinguished gathering, including past MCA Presidents, held on Thursday (2nd) at the MCA Legends New Wing.

Jayawardena was honored for being inducted to the prestigious ICC Hall of Fame and Kumar Sangakkara for being the first non-British to be selected as the President of the Marylebone Cricket Club. (MCC).

Mahela unveiled his own portrait, the latest to adorn the MCA legends wall along with other MCA greats, late Bandula Warnapura, Duleep Mendis, Roy Dias, Arjuna Ranatunga, Kumar Sangakkara, Muttiah Muralidaran, Chaminda Vaz and Lasith Malinga.

MCA President Nalin Wickramasinghe, in his speech, solicited a

helping hand from Kumar Sangakkara to use his MCC connection to modernize the facilities at the existing MCA Cricket Academy, inaugurated in 2002.

MCA was formed by the British Expatriate Heads or Senior Executives on 23 February 1911, as Mercantile Cricket Competition (MCC)

Ceylon Tea, the British planters and the MCA are closely linked together; this link became more magnified after Kumar Sangakkara delivered the MCC 'Spirit of Cricket' - Colin Cowdry Lecture at Lords in 2011, where he got a standing ovation, and when he was selected as the President of MCC in 2019.

Both were presented with two attractive mementos by MCA President, Nalin Wickramasinghe, Snr. VP, Mahesh de Alwis, VP, Sirosha Gunatillake and General Secretary, Tarindra Kaluperuma.

100th RCGC Club Championship Yannik stamps his class

By SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Defending champion Yannik Kumara was in sparkling form in the Men's 100th RCGC Club Championship when he beat much fancied, Rusi Captain for the second consecutive time in the Club event 7 Up. Yannik was unstoppable and showed his supreme class and what can be expected of him in the future.

Meanwhile, in the Ladies event defending champion Kayla Perera was beaten by her cousin, Kaya Daluwatte who was in top form. Kaya Daluwatte won the event 6/4.

The event was sponsored by Tag Heuer with Chief Executive of Colombo Jewelry Stores, Akram Cassim giving away the main awards. RCGC Captain, Jehaan Ismail and his committee put up a very well-organized event in the Centenary year which will be talked about for many more years.

Men's

Winner Yannik Kumara
Runner-up Rusi Captain

Ladies

Winner Kaya Daluwatte
Runner-up Kayla Perera

Ladies Bronze

Winner V. Fowler Watt
Runner-up Ruani Desinghe

Silver Division

Winner Zeng Ming
Runner-up Hoo Lee

Bronze Division

Winner Yue Ming
Runner-up Dulanka Weraduwaage

Master's Division

Winner Sarath Piyaratne
Runner-up Milinda Ratnayake

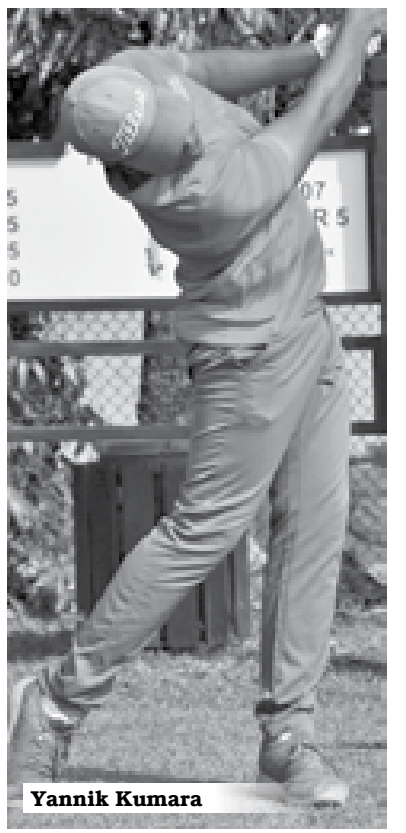
Senior Division

Winner Sarath Wickremaratne
Runner-up Mohamed Fazeel

Photo credit Jim Shadrach



Kaya Daluwatte



Yannik Kumara



Phil Salt in action

Lanka Premier League Salt Fireworks Hand Dambulla Giants Convincing Win

By **MUSTAQ SYDEEN**

Phil Salt's cameo guided Dambulla Giants to a convincing 20 runs win over Kandy Warriors in the second match of the Lanka Premier League at the RPS, Colombo yesterday.

Winning the toss and electing to bat, Dambulla Giants were off to a flying start with Niroshan Dickwella and Phil Salt laying the perfect platform by adding a 97 runs partnership for the first wicket.

The duo was seen playing aggressively from the get go, maintaining a run rate of over 10 per over. Dickwella making a return to competitive cricket after facing a bio breach suspension during the England tour in June, announced his arrival in style, creaming a four off the very first ball he faced in his 23 ball 37. Phil Salt, on the other hand, was in a different mood, where he played an outstanding innings of 67 runs off 27 balls which included four boundaries and five sixes.

Salt continued his merry way while Dickwella batted with caution, as the pair pushed the Dambulla Giants past

the 90-run mark in just 7 overs.

Kandy Warriors were desperately looking for a wicket, and met with success when Lahiru Kumara got the breakthrough in the 8th over when Dickwella mishit one and gave a straightforward catch to the midwicket fielder.

With wickets in hand Phil Salt continued to take charge, smacking the Kandy bowlers all over the park until Al-Amin Hossain picked up the all-important wicket in the 10th over.

After both openers were back in the pavilion, Dambulla Giants were seen struggling a bit in the middle overs, but cameos by skipper Dasun Shanka's (24) and Ramesh Mendis (22) helped them post a healthy 190-7 in their allotted 20 overs.

Lahiru Kumara was the pick of the bowlers with three wickets, while Al-Amin Hossain picked up two.

Chasing a target of 191 runs, Kandy Warriors were never comfortable in the middle and were restricted to 170-8. Rowmen Powell was the only batsmen to go past the 30-run mark. The

Jamaican power hitter smashed the ball all over the park for a well-deserved 42 runs.

Dambulla Giants continued to chip away and take wickets, but Powell on the other hand made merry with Ishan Jayarathne (18) for company. The pair cashed in on all the scoring opportunities and targeted the Dambulla Giants bowling to give a glimpse of hope of a comeback, but it was too little too late as Nuwan Pradeep came back into the attack and claimed the wicket of Powell, and rest of the batters failed to capitalize on the momentum as Dambulla Giants registered a comfortable victory.

Ramesh Mendis was the pick of the bowlers. He went through the Kandy middle order to claim the wickets of Charith Asalanka, Angelo Perera and Kamindu Mendis.

Brief scores:
Dambulla Giants: 190-7 (20) (Phil Salt 64, Niroshan Dickwella 37, Lahiru Kumara 3-34, Al-Amin Hossain 2-36)
Kandy Warriors: 170-8 (20) (Rowman Powell 42, Anjelo Perera 24, Ramesh Mendis 3-21, Nuwan Pradeep 3-31)

Inter Schools Rugby 7s

SLSRFA receives green light from Health Ministry

By **ASANKA GAMMANPILA**

Sri Lanka Schools Rugby Football Association (SLSRFA) yesterday received the much-awaited Health Ministry approval to conduct their inter school Rugby seven-a-side tournaments scheduled to be held this month.

The tournaments will be conducted under Health Ministry guidelines in five Provinces - Western, Central, North Western, Sabaragamuwa and Southern Province - and will be sponsored by Dialog.

Out of 24 schools in the Western Province, 21 schools have confirmed their participation. However, new dates of the tournaments are yet to be announced, but earlier it was scheduled for 11 and 12 December.

SLSRFA is planning to call a meeting with all schools' representatives soon before announcing the new dates for each province to conduct the tournament.

Although approval has been granted to conduct the tournament, spectators will not be permitted to enter the grounds.

All players must do the Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) 1-2 days before the tournament and while at practices. The team should then move into a Bio-Safe-Environment. The team should have separate transportation facilities and meal arrangements till the end of the tournament.

Newly appointed Rugby Advisory Committee commenced the initial ground work to obtain Health Ministry approval through the Sports Ministry in order to bring back schools' rugby, which was halted since March 2020 due to the pandemic.

worked off at Sugathadasa Stadium yesterday.

Hiruni back with second fastest time

US based Sri Lankan marathoner Hiruni Wijeyaratne finished 10th in the California marathon yesterday.

Her time of 2 hours 34 minutes and 22 seconds is the second fastest time by a Sri Lankan woman. This was her first marathon since the 6 December 2020 Valencia Marathon. She suffered an ankle injury thereafter but has now recovered and eyeing to better her time.

With a heavy year ahead, which includes Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and World Championship, Hiruni will be one of Sri Lanka's prime athletes. She was the only marathon finisher from Asia at the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Her main focus now is the next marathon in April 2022 in Dusseldorf Germany, the same venue where she set the National record of 2:34.10 seconds.



SLWF receives Rs. 46.7 million Grant

The Sri Lanka Wushu Federation (SLWF) and the Ministry of Sports signed a Special Sports Development Pact yesterday. The signing of the Pact was overseen by Sports Minister Namal Rajapaksa.

As part of this Pact the SLWF will be able to provide enhanced specialized training to Wushu players, provide latest equipment to improve the standard of the game, as well as seek the input of foreign trainers with next year's Asian Games in mind.

Furthermore, with the signing of the Pact the Enhanced Taskforce of the Wushu Federation is to be provided with a sum of over Rs. 46.7 million.

As part of the signed Pact the SL Wushu squad will also be able to obtain the services of an Iranian and a Chinese trainer respectively.

It was also revealed at the event held to mark the signing of the Pact that 10 players who will be selected after the Junior Wushu



Manel Dharmakeerthi, President Wushu (right) exchanging the agreement with Director Sports Development Amal Edirisuriya in the presence of Sports Minister Namal Rajapaksa

Championship to be held in March next year, will be sent for specialized training in China as part of the Pact.

The Pact was signed on behalf of

the SLWF by its President Manel Dharmakeerthi and on behalf of the Sports Development Department by its Director Amal Edirisuriya.

Pic by Dumindu Wanigasekara

Hamilton wins crazy, twice-halted Saudi GP

Lewis Hamilton won a crazy, twice-halted Saudi Arabian Grand Prix on Sunday to send the Formula One world championship into a winner-takes-all final showdown with the Mercedes driver and Red Bull's Max Verstappen level on points.

On a chaotic night in Jeddah, the race took almost as many twists and turns as the rollercoaster season with crashes, safety cars, red flags, claims of dirty driving, penalties, collisions and angry exchanges with Race Director Michael Masi.

Seven-times world champion Hamilton took the bonus point for fastest lap to level with Verstappen on 369.5 points after 20 races.

(Reuters)



Super League Renown-Blue Star play out a goalless draw

Renown SC and Blue Star SC encounter ended in a

stalemate in another fixture of the Super League tourney

worked off at Sugathadasa Stadium yesterday.