

**Petitions against Yugadanavi Deal  
 Three Ministers support  
 Petitions in Court**



**By KAMAL MAHENDRA WEERARATNE**  
 Ministers Wimal Weerawansa, Udaya Gammanpila and Vasudeva Nanayakkara yesterday (7) filed submissions in support of the petitions before the Supreme Court filed against the Yugadanavi power plant deal.

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**Details emerge of attempt to kill 'Podi Lassie'  
 Suspect's lawyer urges IGP, authorities to take preventive action**

**By KUMUDU UPUL SHANTHA**  
 Attorney-at-Law Kanishka Samaranyake said he is requesting the authorities including the Inspector General of Police to prevent the Police from killing his client, Janith Madhusanka alias 'Podi Lassie' who is in Police custody at present, by blaming it on a snake bite.

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**Gazette allows import of organic, inorganic fertiliser**

**By SULOCHANA RAMIAH MOHAN**  
 A Gazette Extraordinary has been issued permitting the import of organic and inorganic compounds and phosphorus derivatives of fertiliser as well as Glyphosate.  
 The Ministry of Finance issued the Gazette stating that the Import and Export Control Regulation No. 7 of 2021 published in the Gazette Extraordinary dated 31 July 2021 has been repealed from 30 November 2021.

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**Ranil queries Basil's India visit during Budget Debate**

**By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE**  
 UNP Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe yesterday (7), said the Government should reveal why the Finance Minister undertook a visit to India during Budget Debate.  
 "Did he go worshipping Bodhi Gaya or was it the Indian Government? This must be revealed to the people as it is of utmost importance than the Budget 2022," he added.



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**Alleged assault on Manusha Johnston thanks Ranil for providing solution**

**By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE**  
 Chief Government Whip Johnston Fernando yesterday (7), thanked UNP Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe for proposing a solution to the crisis in the House following the alleged assault on SJB MP Manusha Nanayakkara by Government MPs.

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**In Sports**  
**Jaffna Kings Back to Winning Ways**  
 Defending Champion Jaffna Kings (then Jaffna Stallions) registered their first win of the LPL 2021 when they beat Dambulla Giants by eight wickets in a one-sided encounter at R. Premadasa Stadium yesterday.

A16

**Sialkot Businesses Raise US\$ 100,000 for Priyantha**

**Family will continue to receive salary | Sri Lankan Cabinet approves Rs 2.5M compensation**

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, yesterday (7), said the business community in Sialkot has raised a sum of US\$ 100,000 for the family of the late Priyantha Kumara, who was lynched in Sialkot over blasphemy allegations, and his salary will continue to be paid to his family.  
 Khan, addressing the condolence reference for Kumara held at the PM's Office, said the Government will not spare anyone resorting to violence in the name of religion from now on.  
 He further spoke of those who are falsely accused of blasphemy and are jailed with no legal support, while stating that the whole of Pakistan has to stand united against terrorism.  
 The Premier, while appreciating the efforts of Malik Adnan, who attempted to rescue Kumara, said "we are proud of his bravery and courage, as he proved that moral strength is greater than physical strength," adding that the *Tamgha-i-Shujaat*, or the 'Medal of Bravery' award will be conferred on Adnan on 23 March 2022.  
 Meanwhile, based on the proposal presented by the Minister of Labour at the Cabinet meeting held on 6 December, the Cabinet approved Rs 2.5 million as compensation to the family of the late Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana, who was brutally murdered in Pakistan on 3 December 2021.  
 The Employees' Welfare Fund of the Bureau of Foreign Employment released the funds on humanitarian grounds.



**Better safe than sorry!**

Women are now wearing helmets when cooking due to explosions of gas stoves  
 (Pic by Laksiri Rukman)

**Diana embarrassed by SJB boycotting Parliament**  
**By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE**  
 MP Diana Gamage yesterday (7), said in Parliament that she is ashamed of the conduct of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB).  
 She made this remark while joining the discussion initiated...



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**To conserve biodiversity Sajith to formulate national environmental policy**  
**By NABIYA VAFFOOR**  
 Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa said he hopes to formulate a national environmental policy under a new programme to conserve biodiversity, environmental protection, and minimise adverse...



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**Pic mix-up in Collure's condolence banner**

**By WIJESINGHE WELIKANDA - KURUNEGALA**  
 The Wariyapola Pradeshiya Sabha (PS) had printed banners to mark the death of Wayamba Governor Raja Collure, with the image of Uva Governor, A.J.M. Muzammil, yesterday.  
 A decision had been taken by the Wariyapola PS Chairman, its Secretary and its membership to display a few banners...

Story Continued on **PAGE 2** ▶

**Govt awaiting PC Report to sue gas companies - Alagiyawanna**  
**By THAMEENAH RAZEK**  
 The Government vowed yesterday that legal action would be instituted against the two major LP gas distributors, if the Presidential Committee (PC), formed to investigate recent mishaps involving LP gas cylinders, finds that the composition of LP gas has been altered.

Story Continued on **PAGE 2** ▶

**Generalising Priyantha's lynching Weerasekara slams Pakistani Defence Minister**  
**By SULOCHANA RAMIAH MOHAN**  
 Minister of Public Security, Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara, while condemning the brutal killing of Priyantha Kumara in Sialkot, Pakistan, also expressed his discontent over the statement of Pakistani Defence Minister about the lynching, where he said the killing was committed by enraged kids.



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**Alleged assault on Manusha SJB lodges complaint with IPU and CPU**  
**By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE**  
 The SJB has lodged a formal complaint with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Commonwealth Parliament Union (CPU) over the alleged assault on SJB MP Manusha Nanayakkara last Friday (3), by Government MPs in Parliament.

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# President attends Ministerial Consultative Committee on Defence

The Ministerial Consultative Committee on Defence met under the patronage of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa at the Parliamentary Complex yesterday (7).

The President, who arrived at Parliament as the Chairman of the Committee, was received by Leader of the House Dinesh Gunawardena and Chief Government Whip Johnston Fernando.

The national security of the country, law and order, the current issues that have drawn the

attention of the security forces and a number of issues and proposals put forward by ministers including Chamal Rajapaksa, State Ministers and MPs were discussed at the meeting.

Secretary General of Parliament Dhammika Dasanayake, Secretary of the Defence Ministry General (retired) Kamal Gunaratne, Commanders of the three armed forces, the IGP and officials of institutions under the Ministry of Defence were also present at the meeting.

## Govt backers in Opposition Speaker will decide on seating them on ruling side – Dr. Pathirana

By THAMEENAH RAZEEM

Co-Cabinet spokesman Dr. Ramesh Pathirana said the Speaker should decide whether the seven Opposition MPs who voted in favour of the Government on the 20<sup>th</sup> Amendment and on the 2022 Budget should sit on the ruling party's side in

Parliament or not.

He was responding to a question during yesterday's (7) Cabinet media briefing.

"Only 112 MPs can sit on one side of the House, while 113 MPs can sit on the other. MPs who support the Government while also being in the opposition cannot sit on both sides. But we know

they will support, however, they can and we owe it to them to offer whatsoever they need when it is needed," he said.

In response to a question from the Media whether there are plans to give the seven MPs ministerial positions, Dr. Pathirana said the matter had not been discussed.

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## Suspect's lawyer...

He said since information has emerged about a Police plan to kill him, he urged the authorities to take preventive measures in this regard.

Samaranayake further said his client's period of detention is due to end on 15, 16 of this month and subsequent to finishing his detention term, details have emerged regarding a plan to hand him over either to the Criminal Investigation Department, the Colombo Crimes Division or to some police unit and that he would be taken to a jungle area saying that it is for investigations and then he will be killed.

He also said, previously criminals such as Kosgoda Tharaka, Makandure Madhush, Uru Juwa and Tinkering Lasantha were taken into the jungles by police and killed in an inhumane manner.

The lawyer said that facts have emerged that a plan was underway to take his client Janith Madhusanka alias 'Podi Lassie' into a jungle and kill him, while following a new strategy Police will claim that he was stung by a reptile and died as a result.

Attorney-at-Law, Samaranayake made these revelations when he participated in a discussion organised in Colombo yesterday (7) to raise awareness among the authorities including the IGP as well as the public over the plan to kill 'Podi Lassie'.

A group of people including Podi Lassie's mother who is in Police custody and the Secretary of the Organisation for the Protection of Rights of Prisoners, Sudesh Nandimal De Silva expressed their views in this regard.

## Three Ministers...

The written 59-page submissions produced before the Court by President's Counsel Uditha Egalahewa, representing the Ministers, specified that the relevant Cabinet Paper in relation to the Yugadana power plant deal was not presented to or discussed at the Cabinet and thereby the notion that Cabinet approval has been granted is a falsehood.

It was further stated that the American New Fortress Energy company in question

did not bid when tenders were called, thus, there was no possibility to hand over the deal to the company while the said company, that was only established in 2018, does not have sufficient expertise or knowledge to enter into such contract. Thereby handing over such deal to this company would result in a crisis.

The submissions also specified that it is historic for State Ministers to appear before Courts

against a Government decision.

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

## Gazette allows...

According to the new Gazette, organic inorganic compounds and organic phosphorous derivatives and glycine and its salts and derivatives (Glyosphate) can be imported.

Also radar apparatus, radio navigational aid apparatus and radio remote control apparatus could also be imported.

## SJB lodges...

Chief Opposition Whip Lakshman Kiriella, in two written complaints to the unions, said the IPU and CPU should intervene to ensure the safety of Opposition MPs in Parliament.

He claimed the Government's conduct is a grave threat to Parliamentary democracy in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the unions should intervene to prevent such incidents in the future, ensure the safety of the MPs, and protect Parliamentary democracy in Sri Lanka, he added.

The SJB on Monday (6) said they will boycott Parliamentary Sittings until the Speaker ensures the safety of them in Parliament following the alleged assault. The Speaker has decided to appoint a committee to probe the unruly behaviour in the House last Friday (3) and last Saturday (4).

## Govt awaiting...

State Minister of Consumer Protection, Lasantha Alagiyawanna also said State officers, institutions, and other officers in authority have failed to regulate the market for LP gas.

The public were the victims of the catastrophic incidents and once the committee's report is submitted to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the other State institutions will definitely function accordingly, he said.

He further said LP gas cylinders caused several deaths and that the Government should be held accountable.

He told a Cabinet Media briefing that the Government had on 16 September advertised in newspapers for public feedback on the standard of LP gas cylinders.

Alagiyawanna said when they take the case to Courts, it will not be in favour of LP gas companies. "Police are investigating the accidents that occurred due to gas cylinders. As of now, Police confirmed that the recent fatality said to be caused by a fire due to a faulty LP gas cylinder, was in fact due to the stove catching fire and spreading to the victim's garments resulting in the victim suffering from burns. However, she succumbed due to a heart attack," he said.

## Diana embarrassed...

...by Illangai Tamil Arusu Katchchi (ITAK) MP Charles Nirmalanathan complained that he was continuously overlooked in the list of Opposition MPs speaking in the House.

Chief Government Whip Johnston Fernando and Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) National List MP Dr. Suren Raghavan also spoke in favour of Nirmalanathan's request. "This is how the SJB treats the MPs who represent the North and East," Fernando said.

Gamage who intervened said, "I do

not know about others. But SJB is my party. I am its owner. So, I need time to speak in Parliament. Today I am ashamed of their conduct. They are behaving like children. They do not care about the mandate given by the people. They have no accountability at all. But since, it is my party I have a right to speak during this debate. I request the Speaker to consider this."

The Speaker said that the MPs will be given a chance to speak during the third reading of the Expenditure Heads.

## Ranil queries...

Raising a privilege question in Parliament, Wickremesinghe said the Government promised to present details on the foreign currency reserves to the House last week.

"However, the Government has failed to do so until now. Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa is on an official visit to India at the moment. They present the information we sought to India, without even informing us. Why can't the Finance Minister reveal this information to us?" he inquired.

The Central Bank Governor during an online forum said that Sri Lanka's foreign currency reserve is currently about USD 1.5 billion. Why do you

hesitate to reveal this to us? This is actually a violation of our privileges. The Finance Minister should be in the House during the Budget Debate. This is the first time a Budget Debate is being held without the presence of a Finance Minister, he stressed.

In response, State Minister Shehan Semasinghe said that a detailed answer for the questions raised by Wickremesinghe and other MPs regarding the economic situation in the country including foreign currency reserves is being prepared and would be presented to the House very soon.

Intervening in the conversation,

## Johnston thanks...

During yesterday's Parliamentary Sitting, Wickremesinghe said the Speaker should immediately name the MPs from the Government and the Opposition ranks for the committee to investigate the alleged incidents in Parliament last Friday (3) and Saturday (4).

If that is done fast, then the MPs

can discuss the matter and come up with solutions, he added.

Fernando: "We are thankful to the UNP Leader for proposing a solution to the crisis. We are also thankful that you attended Parliament today, soon after returning to the country. I was contacted by one SJB MP and was

Leader of the House Dinesh Gunawardena noted that the Finance Minister attends the debate from time to time.

"When there are special meetings and events, he has to attend them. I know about the conduct of past Finance Ministers. I also was a Finance Minister back then," he said.

Wickremesinghe said that no Finance Minister visited foreign countries during budget debates.

"Can you tell us why he want to India to attend a pilgrimage" he queried.

Semasinghe said, "The Finance Minister has done his duties

properly. He attended several Sittings. The problem is Wickremesinghe does not attend many Sittings."

**Wickremesinghe:** "The CBSL Governor said the Government would not kneel before other nations. Then why did the Finance Minister go to India?"

Semasinghe then said that Wickremesinghe is doing the duty of the Opposition single handed. "I thank him for that. The Opposition Leader and the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) never asks questions like this. The SJB fled Parliament because they cannot face the people now."

## Weerasekara slams...

Pakistani Defence Minister Pervez Khattak said kids do such things in passion, which doesn't mean things are bad, he said over the ghastly killing of Priyantha Kumara, a father of two.

"We also heard that the Defence Minister of Pakistan has generalised the incident to be a normal occurrence by angry youngsters. If that is to be true in Pakistan, I vehemently condemn that statement and action," he said.

Paying his last respects to the remains of Priyantha Kumara, the Minister further said the Pakistani Prime Minister felt ashamed and also condemned the killing and took all measures to arrest the culprits. "We

are watching the Court proceedings," he added.

Weerasekara urged Defence Minister Khattak to withdraw his statement and apologise to Sri Lanka.

He stressed that it was an unfortunate incident and Islam shouldn't be used for such atrocities. "Zahran Hashim, who was behind the Easter Sunday Attacks, also did the same to attack non-Muslims. But we ask those perpetrators where is it written? Who has said so? Such questions should be raised by Islamic leaders who condemn the attack," he said.

He pointed out that many Muslim religious leaders, politicians, and

organisations have condemned the gory incident, but that isn't sufficient.

"They should declare that such practices are wrong and it is not written anywhere in their religious doctrines and no Islamic preachers, Muslim politicians, and top officials have said so. They should also make it known that even if it is written in any religious books, it is wrong, and that is not the right interpretation," he added.

If Muslims don't make this declaration, such ghastly murders and lynching will continue to take place, he added. "If such murders in the name a religion are committed, they will not go to heaven, but to hell," he added.

## Pic mix-up in...

...opposite the PS and at a few strategic places within the town to express their condolence on the death of Raja Collure, who passed away yesterday.

But, to their dismay they found that they had mistaken Collure's picture for that of the current Uva Governor, Muzammil.

However, after the mix up of the photos was brought to the notice of the Wariyapola PS, the members had rectified the error.

Collure passed away while being treated for COVID-19. He was 83 years old.


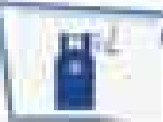


He was also the former Chairman of Sri Lanka's Communist Party.

Collure joined the Communist Party of Sri Lanka in 1959 and appointed as the party Secretary of the Colombo District Council in 1972. Then, while being a member of the Politburo, he worked as General Secretary and Chairman full-time.







# HOME SAFETY TIPS






## 01 When you purchase a Litro Gas cylinder

-  **1.1** Always purchase your cylinder from an authorised Litro dealer/distributor.
-  **1.2** Check the cylinder thoroughly for any leaks or the smell of gas.
-  **1.3** Check the cylinder for the correct/ stated gas weight.
-  **1.4** Check that the tamper - proof seal is intact.





## 02 When you store Litro Gas cylinders, place them

-  **2.1** In an upright (vertical) position.
-  **2.2** In a well-ventilated place.
-  **2.3** Away from sources of ignition or fire.
-  **2.4** In an unobstructed location, where it can be easily removed in case of an emergency.

## 03 Don'ts in proper Litro Gas cylinder use

-  **3.1** Remove the seal until you are ready to use the cylinder.
-  **3.2** Store the Litro Gas cylinder below ground level, near drains, or in the basement.
-  **3.3** Drop or roll cylinders while handling them.
-  **3.4** Store the cylinder inside pantry cupboards.
-  **3.5** Attempt to repair cylinder valve leaks using improper tools (wire nails, screwdrivers, etc.)


## 04 Equipment usage and inspection

-  **4.1** Always use Litro Gas approved regulators and hoses purchased from Litro Gas authorised dealers or distributors.
-  **4.2** Hose Connection between the regulator and cooker should be tightened using the clip.
-  **4.3** Check for wear and tear, cracks or leaks in the regulator and the hose.
-  **4.4** Change the regulator once every five years, and the hose once every two years.


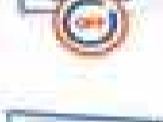

## 05 When you connect the regulator to a full gas cylinder

-  **5.1** Place the cylinder vertically on the ground level, with cooker positioned higher than the cylinder.
-  **5.2** Ensure the Gas cooker is in the OFF position. Ensure the regulator is in the OFF position.
-  **5.3** Ensure there are no ignition sources (naked flames or sparking electrical appliances) in the vicinity.
-  **5.4** Press the regulator onto the cylinder valve until you hear a 'click' & Do not attempt to switch the regulator to the ON position without fixing it correctly to the cylinder valve.
-  **5.5** Check and ensure that there is no smell/sound of gas leaking from the cylinder connection.
-  **5.6** Keep the doors and windows open while cooking.



## 06 The method of lighting a non-automatic gas cooker is as follows


- 6.1** Ensure that the rubber hose does not touch the surface of the cooker.
- 6.2** Light a match or a lighter.
-  **6.3** Place the flame of the match close to the burner.
- 6.4** Turn on the cooker knob/tap.
- 6.5** Do not light a match or a lighter while the tap/knob of the gas cooker is switched ON.

## 07 When the gas cylinder is not in use

-  **7.1** Close all taps/knobs of the gas cooker.
-  **7.2** Turn the regulator to the OFF position without removing it from the cylinder valve.
-  **7.3** Please contact your Litro Gas dealer/distributor or Litro Gas Customer Care for help, in case you happen to vacate the house for a long period.

## 08 If you can smell of gas or hear a hissing sound from the cylinder

- 8.1** Switch off the gas cooker. Extinguish all naked flames.
- 8.2** Turn off the Regulator and remove the regulator from the valve.
-  **8.3** Fix the attached safety cap onto the cylinder valve and take the Cylinder outside to a better ventilated place outside the building.
- 8.4** Open all doors and windows to disperse the gas leak.
- 8.5** Do not operate (ON/OFF) any electrical appliance or electric switch.
- 8.6** In order to verify if there is a leak, check the connections of the Regulator and hose to the cooker.
-  **8.7** If you suspect that the gas leak is from the Regulator, Hose or Cooker, please contact your Litro Gas Dealer or a trained Technician.
- 8.8** Please contact the Litro Gas Customer Care Centre on the telephone Number **1311** for any assistance or information in this regard.
- 8.9** Do not re-connect the gas cylinder until all necessary steps have been taken to prevent a gas leak again.

 **ATTENTION** විද්‍යුතය මෙහි දී වැළි ඉවැසීම සාධක වශයෙන් සැලකිය යුතු බව සලකා අනතුරු වැළැක්වීම සඳහා ප්‍රදේශයේ ඉහත/පහත ප්‍රදේශයේ පිහිටි වැළි ඉවැසීමේ ස්ථාන භාවිතය කරන්න.

When the Cylinder is empty, place the safety cap and return it to the Dealer

මෙම පිටුවේ වැළි ඉවැසීමේ ස්ථාන සඳහා විද්‍යුතය මෙහි දී වැළි ඉවැසීමේ ස්ථාන භාවිතය කරන්න.

For more information contact our Customer Care



**Fire and Rescue Service - 110 | Police - 119**



# To probe islandwide blackout PUCSL Appoints Committee

By THAMEENAH RAZEEM

The Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL) has formed a committee, chaired by PUCSL Deputy Chairman, Prof. Janaka Ekanayake, to investigate the islandwide power outage that occurred on 3 December.

PUCSL Chairman Janaka Ratnayake

said on Monday (6) that the committee will submit a report once the statements of individuals regarding the blackout have been recorded. He went on to say that as the power supply regulatory body in Sri Lanka, they are responsible for investigating what happened and whether the power outage was intentional. He said the commission has

the authority to summon anyone to the appointed committee and then record statements to prepare the report. When asked what deadline they had given the commission to submit the report, he said they had not given any deadline, but they hoped the report would be submitted soon because its operation had already begun.

## Urging justice for Priyantha Kumara Cardinal condoles with grieving family

The Archbishop of Colombo Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, issuing a condolence message on the brutal murder of Sri Lankan migrant worker Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana by a lynch mob in Pakistan on 3 December, says that while he conveys his deepest commiserations to the victim's family members he is hoping that the perpetrators behind the heinous act will be dealt with in keeping with the law.

The Cardinal has also most unreservedly and unequivocally condemned the merciless act by a lynch mob in Pakistan which cost Kumara his life and assured that he will be

praying for the eternal peace of the victim's soul. He has stated that the time has come for regional leaders to formulate a joint mechanism to thwart acts committed by extremist groups in the name of different faiths and religions.

Cardinal Ranjith stressed that if the situation is not effectively brought under control, it will continue to pest all countries in the South Asian region and urged the Pakistani political leadership to act on this brutal murder and mete out strongest possible punishment to those guilty of the crime to set a deterrent for the future.

## Power cuts to continue today

By THAMEENAH RAZEEM

Power outages are expected today (8) as well, between 6:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., according to Secretary of the Ministry of Energy, Wasantha Perera.

She said the Norochcholai Power Station Unit 2 is currently operating at full capacity, while the other two units are undergoing maintenance.

"Thus, the public may experience one-hour nightly power outages in various areas.

It is difficult to restore the units because it requires more energy. It is difficult to restart the units after they have been shut down, and it will take time to use

manpower in other areas of maintenance even after they have been restarted," she added.

The maintenance process, however, is currently underway.

Meanwhile, Sulakshana Jayawardena, Spokesman for the Ministry of Power, said because the areas where power cuts will be imposed have yet to be determined, the electricity supply will be interrupted as needed.

The Power Ministry recently announced that sporadic power outages may occur in parts of the island for one hour until the Norochcholai Power Plant is fully operational following the recent major power outage on 3 December.



## Ensure safety of Lankan expats – Herath

State Minister Kanaka Herath emphasised the importance of taking additional steps to ensure the safety of Sri Lankan migrant workers.

He said the Foreign Ministry, Foreign Employment Ministry, and other relevant institutions should collaborate to prevent any harm to Sri Lankans living abroad. The State Minister was speaking about the recent brutal assassination of a Sri Lankan in Pakistan.

He said so while attending a recent ceremony to kick off the construction of a new building for a training centre at the Kegalle Technical Exchange Centre under

the Advisory Services Department of the Sri Lanka Rubber Research Institute.

This project will cost Rs 3 million to complete. The new structure will be used to provide training and technical services to rubber smallholders, medium and large scale companies, and cultivators in the districts of Kegalle, Matale, Kandy, and Kurunegala.

The State Minister also said the Government will request from the Pakistani Government that each and every suspect involved in this crime be brought to justice to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

## SJB protest action continues for the second day

# Freedom of speech denied to Opposition – Sajith

By NABIYA VAFFOOR

Samagi Jana Balawewa (SJB) Parliamentarians continued to boycott Parliamentary sessions and staged a protest, against the acts of violence in Parliament by the ruling party MPs, in front of the Parliament complex for the second consecutive day.

Addressing the Media, yesterday (7) Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa said that the Speaker doesn't

have a backbone to stand against the injustice meted out to the Opposition.

"We are staging this protest to make the public aware that the Opposition has been denied its Freedom of Speech in the Parliament. Though we have bitterly complained and shown our disapproval and intolerance to such unrefined acts, the Speaker doesn't have the backbone to carry out a fair inquiry," he remarked.

Premadasa reiterated that



the Speaker is trying to conduct 'Committee Politics' in the Parliament, by

appointing Committees for everything to obscure unruly incidents of this nature.

By EUNICE RUTH

The Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) of Sri Lanka recently launched SPARX Lab for start-up entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka, and this lab is a physical space dedicated to nurturing early-stage start-ups in Sri Lanka.

This workspace will provide the required support to develop and nurture the start-ups, and also it will provide orientation, consultation, guidance, and mentoring for entrepreneurs who are planning to set up their own start-ups. In addition, these entrepreneurs will get the chance to develop networks with many people including the Government and all other entities in which the ICTA Startup Ecosystem Development unit closely works. Primarily, the SPARX Lab will act as a hub for budding entrepreneurs and early-stage start-ups that can come together and be groomed with the support of ICTA, the start-up ecosystem, and the Government. Also, the lab will be the central hub for all regional start-up hubs and University incubator networks formed due to the roll-out of the Entrepreneurial University framework. At last, it will allow all key ambassadors to get together and work on one national agenda along with ICTA.

Meanwhile, the Founder of Hatch Works, Jeevan Gnanam said the SPARX Lab

## SPARX Lab to act as springboard for entrepreneurs



will be open and available for any team or individual whose idea qualifies or has already qualified as one of the '10,000 Ideas' tech-innovation programme. The individuals who do not own a business registration or who have not completed one year since registering their business would also be eligible to get themselves registered with the Startup-SL platform. He further said this is the national online platform for start-ups in Sri Lanka, which allows its registrants to connect with the start-up ecosystem enablers and vice-versa. The partners of 'STEP,' the ICTA pre-incubator programme, will also have the access to the SPARX Lab. ICTA has remained particularly close to the start-up ecosystem and has played an important role in changing the lives of many entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka, he added. "The SPARX Lab

can be accessed from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekdays, with multiple facilities including video conferencing, free high-speed Wi-Fi powered by Dialog, and SLT Mobitel. Based on the requirements, they will also receive access to a pod to house their start-ups with two team members for two consecutive weeks or daily. One-on-one meetings could be facilitated, along with a dedicated space for start-ups seeking a business place for recruitment. Meanwhile, for more details, individuals can contact the ICTA via [startups@icta.lk](mailto:startups@icta.lk), he said.

Since 2010, ICTA has supported developing start-up ecosystems by creating awareness, instilling entrepreneurship culture, incubation, market access, and early-stage seed funding, consulting, and mentoring. In addition, initiatives such as '10,000 Ideas,' STEP Pre-

Incubator, Startup-SL, and Regional Startup Hubs will further support the development and growth of the start-up ecosystem in Sri Lanka. Chief Executive Officer of ICTA, Eng. Mahinda B. Herath said the ICTA has been incubating start-ups for a long time, and it comprises a mature and young team to support and nurture start-ups. The facilities that have been developed by ICTA here will be a massive addition to the start-up ecosystem.

Secretary of the Ministry of Technology, Jayantha De Silva, said within the prevailing cultural and economic setup in Sri Lanka, initiating start-ups is a huge challenge. Therefore, the Ministry of Technology, along with ICTA facilitates and nurtures these start-ups to create a technology-driven environment conducive for the growth of start-ups.

"The key pivotal point for us is the development of the next generation of techno-entrepreneurs and start-up enablers. The ICTA has an important role to play in enabling and empowering the Sri Lankan start-up ecosystem," said Director-General of Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL), Oshada Senanayake.

## Johnston calls SJB's safety concerns 'hypocrisy'

The Yahapalana Government tried to prosecute the then Opposition MPs for the fracas in Parliament Chamber after the 52-day Government, but withdrew their moves after finding that the CCTV records proved the partiality of former Speaker Karu Jayasuriya, Chief Government Whip and Highways Minister Johnston Fernando told Parliament on Monday (6).

Making a statement following an announcement by Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena that a committee comprising Government and Opposition MPs would be appointed to investigate the incidents of violence in Parliament on Friday (3) and Saturday (4), the Chief Government Whip said: "There had been a time when MPs came to the Chamber armed with knives to attack us. During an incident that went out of the control of the former Speaker Karu Jayasuriya, MPs resorted to fistcuffs. Some MPs threw chillipowder while some hurled chairs.

Following that incident the Yahapalana Government and its Speaker Karu Jayasuriya tried to prosecute the Opposition MPs. They lodged complaints with the Colombo Crimes Division and the Rajagiriya Police Station. They boasted that action will be taken against us under criminal law. Somehow the investigation stopped.

Later when CCTV footage was inspected it was found that the Speaker had summoned outsiders to the Chamber.

Among those outsiders was a secretary of Karu Jayasuriya, who later decided to stop the investigation seeing that he would be in trouble if the probe continued," the Chief Government Whip said.

"It is obvious that with regard to the Friday incident, the SJB MPs are trying to cover the wrongdoing of their MP. Today they state that there is no security for opposition MPs. JVP MP 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".

MP Manusha Nanayakkara rushed to the Chair on Friday addressing the Speaker by a name of an animal. We stood up to protect the Speaker, who always upheld democracy in this House. The Speaker allows all opposition MPs to raise points of order to interject the speeches of Government MPs.

There was no need to continue the session after five in the evening if those opposition MPs had not been allowed to waste time by raising points of order unnecessarily. Only the minister who is supposed to deliver the reply speech is entitled to ask for additional time not opposition MPs. MP Nanayakkara had no right to ask for additional time and thereafter trying to attack the Speaker. There are security personnel assigned to the Speaker but they cannot come to the Chamber that was why we rushed to protect the Speaker.

The opposition's so-called boycott is a ruse. Today the debate is on the Expenditure Heads of The Housing Ministry. That ministry was under Sajith Premadasa during the Yahapalana time. If the debate proceeded as planned all his corruptions would have come to the surface.

Therefore, the Opposition Leader made use of this issue to boycott the debate, so that his wrongdoings could be kept under the carpet.

## No Tamil-speaking official at Eastern Pre-School Edu Bureau

By NAALIR JAMALDEEN

Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Trincomalee District MP M. Imran yesterday (7) claimed that pre-school teachers and the employees attached to the Pre-School Education Bureau of Eastern Provincial Council, who are not fluent in Sinhala, are struggling to work with the officials who don't speak Tamil. Imran added that nearly 75 per cent of pre-schools in the Province function in the Tamil medium. "The Government should recruit Tamil-speaking officials to

this Bureau considering the issue of Tamil-speaking people in the Province who don't know any other language except Tamil."

He said that the SJB Batticaloa District organisers had brought the issue to his attention urging him lobby the Government for a sustainable solution.

During our United National Front (UNF) led Good Governance regime, we had given priority to Sinhala and Tamil languages while recruiting for the State Sector to serve all communities equally, MP Imran added.



## Fmr NBB Directress released from bribery case Prosecution free to re-file

By HANSI NANAYAKKARA

Colombo Chief Magistrate Buddhika Sri Ragala, yesterday released from a bribery and corruption case the former Directress of the National Blood Bank (NBB) Ranjani Bindusara and Dr. H. Champika Prabodani on the condition that the case could be re-filed against the duo. The Commission

to Investigate Allegations of Bribery Or Corruption (CIABOC) had charged Bindusara and Prabodani with causing a loss of revenue to the State through the purchase of expired blood plasma from 10 April to 9 July, 13 years ago. Magistrate Ragala, having perused the initial objections raised by the defence lawyers

against the charges released the duo from the case on the proviso that the prosecution can re-file the case.

The Bribery Commission filing the charges in the Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court on 31 March, six years ago, has further stated that the two suspects had violated provisions contained in Section 70 of the Bribery Act.

## Committee Stage Debate on Appropriation Bill

# Backbenchers Request for Floor Time

By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE

A written request was submitted to Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena by 35 MPs, both Government and the Opposition, yesterday (7), requesting to grant time for them to speak during the Committee Stage

Debate on Appropriation Bill 2022.

The letter signed by MPs of Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) and Illangai Tamil Arasu Katchchi (ITAK), was handed over to Speaker Abeywardena by SLPP MP Pramitha Bandara Tennakoon, SJB MP Diana Gamage and ITAK

MP Charles Nirmalanathan.

The letter said: "According to the traditions in Parliament, the opening speech of each day of Committee Stage Debate should be delivered by an Opposition MP. However, the SJB is continuing to boycott the sittings and as a result the Opposition MPs have lost the

opportunity to speak in the House."

Apart from that, the MPs noted that the backbenchers rarely receive the opportunity to participate in the Budget Debate. Therefore, they request the Speaker to intervene in the matter and allocate time for them to speak during the Committee Stage Debate".

## All Birth Certificates to have Identification Number

By THAMEENAH RAZEEM

The Cabinet granted approval vesting powers in the Registrar General to issue a National Identification Number to any child born in Sri Lanka.

The President, in his capacity as the Minister of Defence, released the relevant Cabinet Memorandum facilitating Sri Lankans to attend to their statutory needs easily and efficiently when obtaining services relating to birth and death by utilising a unique identification reference, in the future.

Co-Cabinet Spokesman Dr. Ramesh Pathirana stated during yesterday's Cabinet briefing that the Registrar General's Department is entrusted with the task of issuing Birth Certificates to any child born in Sri Lanka in accordance with the Births and Deaths Registration Act.

Whereas, according to the provisions of the Registration of Persons Act No 32 of 1968, the Department of Registration of Persons is entrusted with the authority to maintain the national individual registry as well as to register and issue National Identity Cards to Sri Lankan citizens who have completed or are about to complete 15 years.

Furthermore, under electronic transaction orders (Sri Lanka identity numbers) No. 1 of 2019, issued in accordance with the provisions of the Electronic Transactions Act No. 19 of 2006, the Department of Registration of Persons is entrusted with the authority to issue Sri Lankan Identity Numbers to all Sri Lankan citizens.

## Outgoing UK mission Defence Adviser makes farewell call on Defence Secy

Col. David Ashman, Resident Defence Adviser (DA) to the UK mission in Colombo who will complete his tenure in Sri Lanka, made a farewell call on Sri Lankan Defence Secretary, Gen. Kamal Gunaratne at the Defence Ministry, yesterday (7).

Col. Ashman and Col. Paul Clayton who will be taking over duties as the new Defence Adviser for Sri Lanka and the Maldives at the UK mission met the Defence Secretary at his office yesterday morning.

Gen. Gunaratne welcomed both officials and had cordial discussion with them. Col. Ashman expressed his gratitude to the Defence Secretary for the cooperation extended by the Defence Ministry during his tenure.

Gen. Gunaratne praised the services of the outgoing Defence Advisor and extended wishes for his future endeavours. The Defence Secretary assuring his fullest cooperation and support to strengthen defence ties between the two countries expressed his good wishes to Col. Clayton on his new posting.

He presented a memento to the outgoing Defence Adviser as a token of appreciation.

Military Liaison Officer Maj. Gen. Dinesh Nanayakkara was also present.

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## Issue Travel Advisory on Punjab

The torture and killing of Diyawadanaage Don Nandasiri Priyantha Kumara (48), a manager at a sportswear export company in Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan by religious extremists in broad daylight on Friday, follows the armed attack on a bus carrying the Sri Lankan cricket team at Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan 12 years ago in 2009, also by religious extremists once more in broad daylight, where however no cricketer was killed, though a few were injured.

These two incidents taking place in broad daylight in the Punjab Province in Pakistan by religious extremists within the space of 12 years after the first highlight the fact that at least the Punjab Province may be a dangerous place for Sri Lankans, though, the Pakistani authorities made several arrests over both of these attacks.

It's apt that the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) issues a travel advisory, warning Sri Lankans about the danger of visiting Punjab in the light of these two incidents. The Province of Punjab, Pakistan, should not be confused the State of Punjab, India, which share a common border.

The Punjab Province in Pakistan where Lahore is its Capital is 79,284 square miles (255,344 square kilometres), more than three times the size of Sri Lanka which is a mere 25,330 square miles (65,510 square km).

There are a number of Sri Lankans working and studying in Punjab. In fact two of the aforesaid victim Priyantha Kumara's brothers work in Faisalabad, another city in the Punjab.

GoSL should take immediate steps to evacuate Sri Lankans and their families living in Pakistan who want to return to their motherland, even those living outside of the Punjab, gratis, having the cost of their air tickets borne by the GoSL, in the light of Friday's incident.

The national carrier SriLankan and at least one foreign carrier operates weekly flights from Colombo to various parts of Pakistan like Sialkot, Lahore, the commercial capital Karachi in the Sind Province, Pakistan's Capital City Islamabad and Peshawar (Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province). These flights should be used to transport back Sri Lankans and their families who want to return home.

Such a travel advisory should be lifted only after the Pakistani Government not only assures the safety and security of all Sri Lankans living in Pakistan, but also after it passes certain laws which ensure such safety.

According to the BBC, offences relating to religion were first codified by India's British rulers in 1860 and were expanded in 1927. Pakistan inherited these laws when it came into existence after the partition of India in 1947.

Between 1980 and 1986 a number of clauses were added to the laws by the Military Government of General Zia-ul-Haq. He wanted to 'Islamicise' them and also legally to separate the Ahmadi community, declared non-Muslim in 1973, from the main body of Pakistan's overwhelmingly Muslim population.

The law enacted by the British made it a crime to disturb a religious assembly, trespass on burial grounds, insult religious beliefs or intentionally destroy or defile a place or an object of worship. The maximum punishment under these laws ranged from one-year to 10 years in jail, with or without a fine.

During the 1980s, the blasphemy laws were created and expanded in several installments. In 1980, making derogatory remarks against Islamic personages was made an offence, carrying a maximum punishment of three years in jail.

In 1982, another clause prescribed life imprisonment for 'wilful' desecration of the Koran. In 1986, a separate clause was inserted to punish blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad and the penalty recommended was 'death, or imprisonment for life,' in that order.

Often the laws are used to settle personal scores and have little or nothing to do with religion. Correspondents say the mere accusation of blasphemy is enough to make someone a target for hardliners, as is defending those accused of blasphemy or calling for the laws to be reformed.

Many Pakistanis believe the law, as codified by General Zia-ul-Haq is straight out of the Koran and therefore, is not manmade.

Amending the blasphemy laws has been on the agenda of many popular secular parties. None has made much progress - principally because of the sensitivities over the issue, but also because no major party wants to antagonise the religious parties.

In 2010, a member of the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Sherry Rehman, introduced a Private Members Bill to amend the blasphemy law. Her Bill sought to change procedures of religious offences so, that they would be reported to a higher Police official and the cases heard directly by the higher courts.

The Bill was passed on to a Parliamentary Committee for vetting. It was withdrawn in February 2011 under pressure from religious forces as well as some Opposition political groups.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan vowed to defend the country's strict blasphemy laws in the run-up to his General Election win last year.

The *status quo* is still in place. Qibla Ayaz, who heads Pakistan's top advisory body on religious affairs, the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), told BBC in February 2019 that no Government was ready to make changes to the blasphemy law due to fears of a backlash.

Nonetheless, until such a time Pakistan amends its blasphemy laws; let such a proposed travel advisory stay, while at the same time advising all Sri Lankans about the seriousness of Pakistan's blasphemy laws.

## Rulers created gas issue

- Anura Kumara



# Development Begins at Home

By JUSTIN YIFU LIN & YAN WANG

The eighth triennial Forum of China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was recently held in Dakar, Senegal. At past forums, China has announced large development-financing packages. But this year, Chinese President Xi Jinping opened the FOCAC by pledging another billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines and more private-sector equity investment to Africa. This is just one sign of how profoundly the development landscape has changed in the pandemic's wake.

The COVID-19 crisis has forced policymakers and development professionals worldwide to regroup and rethink their approaches. The continued emergence of new variants, together with the increasingly obvious consequences of climate change, has reminded us of how little control over nature humans really have. And travel restrictions and trade disruptions have highlighted the risks that lie in global interdependence.

This brings us to the first critical lesson of the pandemic: Development starts at home. Rather than depending on cross-border flows, countries must recognise and build their own wealth - that is, the assets and endowments that lie within their borders.

In the past, wealth has not gotten nearly enough attention from economists and policymakers. For starters, as voices from the Global South have increasingly lamented, evaluations of debt sustainability - such as the joint International Monetary Fund-World Bank Debt Sustainability Analysis Framework - have tended to focus narrowly on liabilities, without taking adequate account of the asset side of the public sector balance sheet. On the positive side of the ledger, flows, such as GDP, have attracted far more attention than the stocks of assets and net worth.

This reflects the predominance of short-term thinking. Whereas GDP indicates how much monetary income or output a country produces in a year, wealth also covers the value of the underlying national assets, including the human, natural, and produced capital that form the foundations of a country's comparative advantages. As such, wealth accounting provides essential insights into a country's prospects for maintaining and increasing its income over the long term.

Yet, there is currently a shortage of information on the value of public-sector assets and net worth. The World Bank's Changing Wealth of Nations 2021 report goes some way toward filling this knowledge gap, making it an invaluable resource for policymakers today.

### Development aid and cooperation

Supply chain disruptions have clearly inflicted severe pain on the world. But a second lesson of the pandemic is that many low and lower-middle-income countries continue to suffer more fundamental deficiencies, such as a lack of health-care personnel and resources, from



hospital beds to ventilators. For some, it is the inability to deliver clean water, electricity, and sanitation that is choking the economy.

After 70 years of development aid and cooperation, how is it possible that many countries remain stuck in low or lower-middle-income traps without sufficient capacity to meet their citizens' basic needs? Both market and Government failures - rooted not least in the long-standing neoliberal orthodoxy - can be blamed.

A core problem is that all that aid did not adequately address infrastructure bottlenecks. This partly explains why African countries have often welcomed Chinese investment.

As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi noted in his 2020 FOCAC speech, China financed, constructed, and completed thousands of hard and soft infrastructure projects in Africa in the first two decades of this century. This includes over 6,000 kilometres (3,728 miles) of railways in Africa, and roads covering roughly the same distance. China has also constructed nearly 20 ports, over 80 large-scale power plants, more than 130 medical facilities, 45 stadiums, and 170 schools.

This has gone a long way toward supporting Africa's structural transformation. According to our study, some 75-78% of China-financed projects completed in 54 African countries between 2000 and 2014 addressed one of five key bottlenecks. In other words, seven out of ten completed projects met the basic needs of the continent's people. Moreover, in as many as 18 African countries, the manufacturing sector has been trending upward since 2011.

But there is still much room for improvement. Targeting problems afflicted 22% of completed hard-infrastructure projects and 26% of soft-infrastructure projects, meaning that they were not genuinely demand-driven. This can lead to 'white elephants.' Moreover, research by the Boston University Global Development Policy Centre has revealed concerns about the social and environmental effects of these projects. Country-specific studies are needed.

The good news is that China has committed to stop financing coal-fired power plants and to invest more in

renewables. According to updated Chinese aid data, over 60% of Chinese investment projects are in green sectors. The bad news is that China's two large policy banks have reduced their overseas lending sharply since 2017, and there is still ample room to improve targeting.

FOCAC is a good place to start addressing these issues - and, more broadly, to revamp cooperation between China and Africa to reflect the lessons of the pandemic. This means, first and foremost, committing to ensure that aid or development cooperation is demand-driven, addressing each country's specific needs.

A market-based approach - which combines trade, aid, and investment - could be integral to success, as it would help to ensure that incentives are aligned among equal partners. Crucially, all China-financed projects must meet environmental, social, and governance standards. Soft-infrastructure projects that bolster health care, education, and governance should be top priorities.

More broadly, China must boost standardisation and transparency in its foreign-aid and cooperation projects. Ultimately, this requires the enactment of a comprehensive foreign-aid law, focused on ensuring transparency and accountability.

It is also critical to engage more actors, including the private sector and multilateral development banks, with a view toward blended financing. Given the long-term nature of the needed investments, all participants need to embrace the concept of 'patient capital.'

The post-pandemic agenda is clear: countries must build on their endowments and tackle infrastructure bottlenecks. With the right approach to policy and financing, countries can mobilise the resources needed to clear a path toward sustainable development.

**Justin Yifu Lin, a former Chief Economist at the World Bank, is Dean of the Institute of New Structural Economics and Dean of the Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development.**

**Yan Wang, a former Senior Economist at the World Bank, is a senior researcher at the Boston University Global Development Policy Centre.**  
 (Courtesy-[www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org))



# The Pond, Butterflies and the Rainbow

By Dr. Tilak S. Fernando

Recently the surgeon Dr. Athula Withanage translated into Sinhala for the first time, 'Evgeni Onegin' a Russian romantic novel written in verse and a masterpiece of the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. Simultaneously, he translated it into English, making it the 46th English translation. This achievement by Dr. Athula Withanage can be hailed as a historical event as it was declared impossible to achieve by many authors in the past including the great translator, Oruwala Bandu. This was because of cultural differences and the era (1880) when it was written, as well as the different meaning Alexander Pushkin gave his own poetic words. Dr. Withanage escaped the shackles of rhyming by producing the masterpiece in Sinhala using the unique form of 'Nisandas Kavi'. The books were presented to the First Secretary of the Russian Embassy in Sri Lanka and the Director of the Russian Centre, Anastasia Khokhlova at the Russian Centre Book Festival on 27 October 2021. This commendable literary mission was hailed as a historical event. The State Russian Language Institute in Moscow was named after Alexander Pushkin.

Dr. Withanage is currently working as a Senior Surgeon at the Malabe Neville Fernando Hospital. He worked in Wales (UK) for over thirty-one years, attached to the UK's National Health Service. On his retirement, he visited Sri Lanka on a holiday and met with the late Dr Neville Fernando, who invited him to deliver a lecture at the Neville Fernando Auditorium. Later, Dr Neville Fernando invited Dr Withanage to help his team to write the curriculum for the surgical faculty and for some guidance in perfecting the state of the art new theatre complex. With his knowledge and experience in the UK, Dr Withanage was able to do so. (At the construction stages of the Hospital). Although he accepted a temporary position because of his commitments in the UK for teaching at the RCS (Surgical Membership in England) and WIMATI The leading Centre for the Welsh Endoscopy Training and Laparoscopic Colorectal Training Scheme) of Cardiff University. Later, he decided to stay in Sri Lanka because of the plight of the SAITM students faced at that time. The Sri Lanka Government took over the Management of the Hospital, at the request of the late Dr. Neville Fernando, to help the poor and the needy. At that time the Hospital was operated as a private teaching hospital. Anyone visiting the Neville



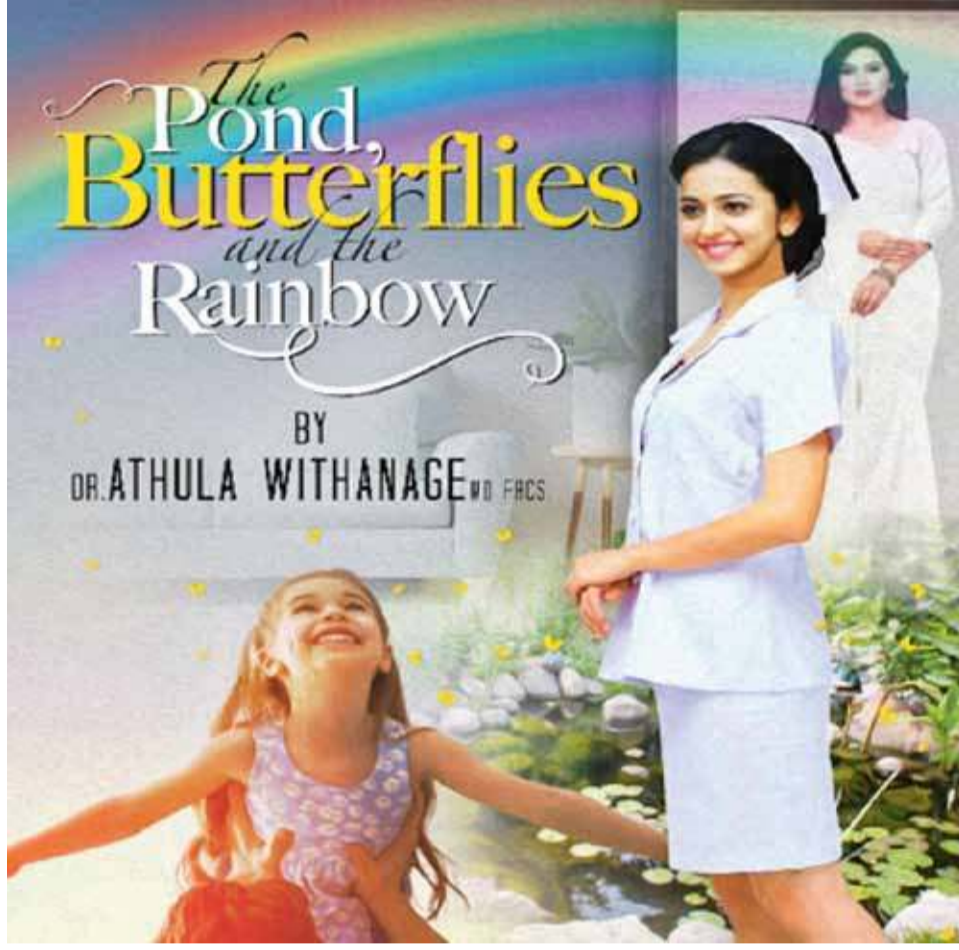
Fernando hospital can see how methodically wards are assigned and the overall layout of the hospital.

## Latent Talents

Dr. Athula Withanage did his medical degree in Russia on a Sri Lankan Government Scholarship. He had to first learn Russian before he commenced his medical studies. After graduating from Russia, he achieved FRCS recognition from England, Scotland, and Ireland. He holds the record as the only Sri Lankan to take part in a stage play in Ireland ('Citi'), where he wrote down the dialogue in Sinhala as he could not speak a word of Irish. Dr. Athula Withanage is a versatile character committed to the Sinhala Culture like his brother, the late Bandula Withanage, an actor, writer, author, and drama producer.

Dr. Athula Withanage is exceedingly talented. After spending many hours in the hospital theatre attached to the NHS UK, he started writing books for relaxation and to keep his mind away from the stresses of surgical life. After one of the operations of a senior citizen, which 'everyone thought he would certainly fail,' the patient miraculously survived somehow. After a full recovery, the patient came to see Dr. Athula Withanage with a gift of a massive wall clock. After presenting the gift to the doctor, the old gentleman said: "Thank you, doctor, you gave me life and time on this earth, and I am symbolically giving you the time!"

Dr. Athula Withanage has published many books in Sinhala and English. His first medical novel "Living Capsule" was published by the Regency Press in London and New York. "Living Capsule" dealt with a clinical problem any surgeon had to battle. In Sri Lanka, he published an educational book for



doctors in every field of medicine called "Wound Care and Management," which sold out among the medical fraternity like hotcakes, at the book festival at BMICH year 2020!

## Latest Novel

The plot of his latest novel 'The Pond, Butterflies, and the Rainbow' wraps around a doctor who oversees the COVID-19 ward during the pandemic. The author goes into graphic details about the intricacy of surgery on COVID-19 patients and the universal precautions one must take. He reflects the deadliest nature of the virus and the agony the staff go through, and how it affects their own lives. He must have acquired knowledge on COVID-19 after being apportioned to the ward, as a surgical consultant, in the Neville Fernando Hospital unit, the country's second-largest unit at the height of the third cluster.

The book presents a rich and heart-warming portrait of an exceptional single parent doctor-father and his love for his seven-year-old daughter. In his vision, the father relates his Peradeniya University experiences and comes across an orphaned girl in the university library, who had been unsuccessful in her examination twice? Out of sympathy, he offers her help, but seemingly it leads to a romantic encounter. Out of the blue,

the girl becomes pregnant while both are under-graduates. The boy's father becomes irritated on hearing his youngest son's romantic pranks, and finally, the son gets ostracised from the family, but tragedy strikes later on the happy-go romantic capsule. The young infant becomes his primary responsibility and later he becomes overprotective of his daughter.

While working in the COVID-19 ward at the hospital, a scuffle breaks out with a patient there, who was fully infected and who tries to enter a geriatric ward. In trying to save the elderly and vulnerable in the ward, the doctor, too, gets contaminated by the wound caused by the assailant during the scuffle and quarantined. Fortunately, he spends fourteen days in the same hospital. During his quarantine period, a young nurse comes to look after his young daughter voluntarily. The daughter and the nurse become good pals to the extent she calls the nurse 'mum' at the end. Seemingly, the doctor being a bachelor for four years becomes involved romantically with the young nurse. He once explains to his daughter, when she urged him not to go to work, that he had taken an oath (Hippocratic Oath) when he qualified as a doctor, and he must maintain that promise. Therefore, he was committed to after the sick and

was unable to abandon patients for any reason.

Meanwhile, at the hospital, in a suicidal attempt a patient jumps out of the third floor of the hospital. The doctor without thinking and due to instant reflex action takes the risk and goes down on a drainpipe to save her. Unfortunately, the pipe collapses, and the doctor falls in a dramatic rescue attempt, while so many watch, and some curse him for taking unnecessary risks. Many bystanders urge him not to take a risk.

## Medical Experience

Being a medical man with experience, the author writes graphic accounts in his unique style of the dangers of the COVID-19, and how some of the general public's behaviour. He points out how the Media and newspapers blame doctors and health workers for not recognising the risk everyone takes in dealing with COVID-19 affected patients. He also criticises the Media for insulting and blaming the doctors at the slightest mistake when a doctor or health workers commit mistakes and how the Media attack and criticise. In his personal experience he says Media, or the public never appreciate the dedicated service done by the health authorities or the departmental staff while they save many patients daily.

The author displays his literal genius by his rich and heart-warming portrait of a medical man and a loving father. He makes the reader at various stages, laugh, cry with the sentiment, and sympathise with emotion-filled with warmth. Finally, the author opens his heart to the reader how the doctor becomes triumphant.

Dr. Athula Withanage is an excellent surgeon who spends more time with patients in listening to patients, a habit he learned in England. He never cares for money and most of the operations he undertakes are free of charge from poor and the helpless. When he concentrates on writing novels, he understands how to bring heroic visions to life. 'The Pond, Butterflies, and Rainbow' is a beautiful inspiring romantic story. The author has brought the beautiful heart-warming narration to a climax with subtle elegance.

**The writer is confident that Dr. Athula Withanage's latest English novel "The Pond, Butterflies, and Rainbow," based on the Sinhala story "Ran Dola" will become one of the most up to date novels for book lovers in this era of the COVID-19 pandemic, and create a new form of COVID-19 literature.**

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By Michael Gregson

The debate over cannabis has been reignited in Sri Lanka, with MP Diana Gamage telling Parliament that cannabis is a God-given gift to the island. She is in good company. Colombia is liberalising laws on the cultivation and export of medical marijuana and hopes to become the world's leading exporter. Pro Colombia, a Government agency for promoting business, is forecasting that by 2030 the market could be worth more than \$1.7 billion.

Much of the Latin American country's territory offers the perfect conditions for growing cannabis: 12 hours of sunlight most days of the year, minimal seasonal variation and high altitude, reducing the need for pesticides. Sounds rather like Sri Lanka.

The global business is currently dominated by Canada, the world's main exporter of medical cannabis. Other exporters include Uruguay, the Netherlands, Israel, Denmark, Portugal and Australia.

But Colombia's favourable climate and relatively low wages mean the plant can be cultivated for a fraction of the cost competitors face. Producing one gramme of dried cannabis flower in Colombia costs pennies while in Canada it can cost more than a dollar.

As a result, around \$500 million of foreign investment, mainly from established cannabis growers in Canada,

# The God-Given Gift

has flooded into Colombia in recent years. Some companies have been buying up land to establish plantations.

There appears to be little possibility that the permitted growing of cannabis will have a significant impact on Colombia's far more profitable business of illegal cocaine production, or lure workers away from the drug cartels.

Apart from their starkly different business models, the two industries are also based in separate areas of the country. While most cocaine is produced in remote regions on the Pacific coast and near the border with Venezuela, legal cannabis production has tended to be near the major cities of Bogotá and Medellín.

South Africa's Constitutional Court decriminalised forms of personal consumption of cannabis in South Africa in 2018 and the Government has proposed a draft National Cannabis Master Plan this year. The market is valued around \$1.8-billion according to the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, with a possibility of about 10,000 to 25,000 jobs being created.

"There are countless opportunities for budding cannabis entrepreneurs and for people looking to find work in the cannabis industry," says the director of South Africa's



Medical marijuana can help treat Alzheimer's disease, Cancer, HIV/AIDS, MS, anorexia, Epilepsy and Glaucoma

Cannabis Expo, Silas Howarth.

Howarth says the boom is not only in local business but in international investors and funders looking to support both small and commercial scale operations or recruit for jobs in the industry.

"Global cannabis companies have also woken up to the reality that Southern Africa has the potential to supply the world with quality cannabis and cannabis products at competitive prices, and are pouring millions of dollars into cannabis projects in South Africa," he says.

It's not only Governments that see big potential in legal cannabis. Big business is interested too.

The UK's largest tobacco firm

says it sees cannabis as part of its future. Earlier this year, British American Tobacco took a stake in Canadian medical cannabis maker Organigram. It also signed a deal to research a new range of adult cannabis products, initially focused on cannabidiol (CBD).

Despite a global pandemic, disrupted supply chains, ballooning inflation and an ongoing fight to legalise marijuana on a federal level, the cannabis industry in America is flourishing.

Sales hit \$20 billion in 2020, are on pace to top \$26 billion this year. They are projected to leapfrog to \$45.9 billion in 2025, according to data from Marijuana Business Daily.

Growing US sales shouldn't

come as a surprise. The majority of Americans live in a state where some form of cannabis is legalised. More than two-thirds of US states have legalised medical cannabis, of those, 18 have legalised cannabis for recreational use.

Sri Lanka's relationship with cannabis is complicated. Throughout much of its history, native medical practitioners have used cannabis to treat various illnesses. In 341 A.D., King Buddadasa wrote the medical pharmacopoeia Sarartha Sangrahaya describing the medicinal properties of cannabis. But the plant was criminalised under British colonial rule in 1935 (The Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs Ordinance of 1935). After gaining independence, Sri Lanka started permitting registered Ayurvedic doctors to use cannabis for medicinal purposes in 1967. However, the practitioners were not allowed to keep more than two plants.

Today, Sri Lanka still considers cannabis a 'dangerous drug,' and its recreational use can result in fines and years of incarceration. Despite this, cannabis is the most-used illicit drug on the island, with an estimated 600,000 users according to a UN study.

"The opposition to cannabis in the modern society still has

its roots in the Colonial mindset that has not changed," said Wasantha Sena Welige, a leading cannabis scholar and influencer. "Those who don't know its rich history and the medicinal value it holds in treating depression, anxiety and other psychological as well as physical ailments will continue to oppose the move for its legalisation."

In 2018, the Sri Lankan Government announced a proposal to establish a cannabis plantation with the aim of exporting it in drug form to the US for medicinal use. The plan was to have registered Ayurvedic practitioners cultivate a 400-hectare plantation, but it never materialised.

In 2020, Trade Minister Bandula Gunawardena proposed that locally cultivated cannabis be used to boost Sri Lanka's export industry. However, after a series of protests from the religious community, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa turned down the plan.

Diana Gamage's call to make cannabis a commercial crop for export also faces fierce opposition. Executive Director of the Alcohol and Drug Information Centre (ADIC), Pubudu Sumanasekera said anyone who claimed that cannabis or hemp could be used for commercial purposes, should come up with facts and figures to prove their point. Maybe he should read this article.





By DEVIKA BRENDON

The doctors in the public health system throughout Sri Lanka deserve to be recognised and commended. Not only for their dedication in study, their hard won qualifications and the conditions of stress and emergency in which they often work, but - particularly during this pandemic - for their heroic commitment to the community, which is highlighted by the global crisis which has been unfolding for the past 18 months.

The public hospitals are staffed by dedicated, skilled but overworked, stressed and under supported medical personnel. Public donations have successfully been raised by community groups both international and local to provide much needed facilities and equipment. During the ongoing COVID pandemic, this generosity has also been ongoing, in parallel.

However, the pandemic has shown us that the regional hospitals do not receive the level of recognition, support and financial assistance that the hospitals in Colombo do. Doctors throughout the country have shared the following pictures on social Media, to highlight the extraordinary practical lengths to which medical staff have been prepared to go, to assist the citizens of Sri Lanka, to get vaccinated and receive the protective care they need.

We see doctors and nurses in full PPE, travelling on trucks, climbing rocky terrain with their equipment and gear in backpacks, crossing rivers and streams on ferries, or on foot crossing on stepping stones, even crossing improvised bridges made of tree trunks in forest land, and wading through metre high water during floods.

# Above and Beyond

The physical and emotional resilience required to act in this dedicated way when their skill is needed is highlighted every day by the work of these medical staff. Their team spirit and enthusiasm are evident in the pictures.

Living in the more urbanised areas of the country, city dwellers are often unaware of how remote and inaccessible rural housing can be. People who are elderly, less agile or chronically ill need medical care that is delivered to them at home.

The humanity of this commitment is a welcome feature of the bleak pandemic landscape. As the country now moves forward, out of the worst part of the pandemic, as a result of the outstanding dedication of medical professionals, army personnel and the citizens of the country to the vaccination process, we should continue to recognise and respect the exemplary performance of our regional doctors and nurses, most of whom have families and young children at home, and who have risked their own family lives and personal safety to support us at this time.

As we near the beginning of the third year of the pandemic, it's a good idea to take a look at what we have learned.

Throughout the world, the human race has experienced a lot of loss: the unimaginable and unrecoverable loss of loved ones, the disruption of job security, the anxiety of financial instability, and the undermining of our personal peace of mind. We have all in our own ways been forced to confront our personal vulnerabilities.

The onset of the Delta variant, before a large proportion of any society had the chance to be fully vaccinated, was devastating.

Professor Priyamvada Gopal recently asked on her Facebook platform: 'Why is it so hard to meditate on the possible immediacy of one's own passing? Every morning now brings an update about someone's sudden death, and yet it's so hard to conceptualise one's own. That bizarre sense that untimely death happens to other people is very difficult to overcome.'

My family have lost members during the past two years, although not to Covid. Of course, I have been trying to process the huge impact of this. I have

been remembering Ursula Le Guin, one of my favourite writers, who portrayed death as a country just past the dry stone wall, which divides the living and those who have passed. And this life is a testing ground. And at some point, all bets will be off, and all debts cancelled.

And in a way, the collective inevitability of death could prompt us to prepare for it. Medical technology and its advances had made us believe we were almost indomitable. But we are now shown that it's best to clarify and simplify our lives. Death makes us prioritize what matters most to us.

I suggest that, with each loss, we lose a barrier against the fear of our own death. That separating wall becomes permeable, and the reality of yourself crossing it becomes clearer and not remote. Death will never again be something I am personally detached from.

But life is for the living. That's not just a truism. There's a liminal transitional space and then - a gradual adjustment. I have learned that it's something that can be prepared for, even if the loss takes you by surprise

at first. I agree with the people who comfort the bereaved by pointing out that it's inevitable. So facing that fact, which is true for all of us, isn't life itself more to be valued? While we are still capable of responding to it?

Death puts a full stop on our lives. Or a pause, depending on what you believe.

But our universal human superpower is the capacity to adapt, and use the resources available to us to survive even the most adverse of situational circumstances. There has not been a better opportunity, I believe, in our lifetimes, to develop these transformational perspectives, than the opportunity this crisis has presented to us.

The COVID-19 virus and its variants will be confronting us into next year, and very possibly into 2023 as well. The support we extend now to our medical professionals and those in our communities who are vulnerable, whether through financial hardship, age, health issues or economic displacement, will need to be sustained regularly throughout this period, to be effective.

We will need to go deeper into our personal resources, both materially and psychologically, to adapt to this ongoing and developing situation. It helps greatly to recognise that such crises can stimulate our growth and improve our strengths and capabilities, both on a personal and a societal level.

Like the doctors and medical personnel who go above and beyond in their professional dedication, all of us in our own lives can extend ourselves to navigate this harrowing time - and become stronger and more resilient and skilled than we had previously thought possible.

(Pix by Dr. Ashwini De Abrew)

By DR. KUMUDU JAYAWARDHANA

## UWU Graduation

# Another generation is set to fly high!

The General Convocation of the Uva Wellassa University will be held on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2021 at the University premises in Badulla where 544 graduands will be awarded degrees.

The Uva Wellassa University (UWU) brings the evidence that depth of impact matters in lieu of the length of history. Being a very young national university established in 2005, and located in Badulla, its foremost focus is to offer degree programmes tailored to upsurge the depth of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies of the students in handling the steady trend of ever-evolving socio-economic complexities in the local and global economy.

Currently, UWU has evolved itself to be well-established with four academic Faculties - Faculty of Management, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Animal Science & Export Agriculture, and Faculty of Technological Studies which is the newest addition to UWU family. Envisioning the university mission, these academic establishments currently offer 15 Undergraduate Degree Programmes, Research Higher Degree Programmes, Master Degree Programmes, Professional Courses, and Short Courses.

UWU is about to mark another historical milestone with its 11th General Convocation which is set out to be on 9th and 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2021 at the University premises, Badulla.

### Conceptual Innovation in HE

UWU has been nothing short of a new defining feat of the modern higher education (HE) landscape from its very inception under the leadership of the first Vice Chancellor, Dr. Chandra Embuldeniya. Spearheading towards the right direction, the university has been a roaring success story under the leadership of current Vice Chancellor, Professor Jayantha Lal Ratnasekera with his style of leading by example.

What factors make UWU educational model unique? Why is it counted as a conceptual innovation model in higher education?

Grasping the lacuna on the notable separation between the university education and real market needs, our

courses are designed to be market-driven which in return creates well-rounded graduates with the right knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional ethics who can ably handle the complexities in the real-world scenario. Thus, the core of our educational model is to reach real-world needs without compromising academic excellence. Following pillars in our education model undeniably brings UWU the competitive edge in the higher education landscape.

### Living the University Vision

Our degree programmes offered by all the respective faculties are driven by one vision, adding value to national resource base. Thus, our vision isn't just another cliché, rather the guiding light. It is solidly embedded and linked with the core of our all the degree programmes which have led the particular Faculties to offer degree programmes on specific areas that could add immense value for the extant national resource base. The proceeding section provides further evidence on the facet of offering market-centric degree programmes.

### Entrepreneurship at the Core

Creating entrepreneurial graduates is at the core of all of our degree programmes.

Thus, all the degree programmes are designed to theoretically educate our students on the discipline by embedding courses such as entrepreneurship, New Product Development, New Venture Creation, IPR, and Commercialisation while we



Uva Wellassa University

maintain a culture favourable for new experimentations among students. The results so far have been remarkable.

### Silo-free Education

UWU is a living icon in the country which proves how far the "silo-free" education could function. Promoting insularity within graduates, silo mentality forces universities to be highly mindful of their study territories which is a bane when it comes to creating a generation of graduates who can competently handle real-world issues.

Well-spotting this scenario, UWU has tweaked its culture for cultivating effective cross collaborations and intermingling between diverse academic faculties and departments which has unquestionably blasted and breached the academic silos. Subsequently, rather than crafting university curriculums on selected and narrow fiefdoms, cross-faculty learning is strongly embedded in all of our undergraduate and postgraduate curricular. This has been a core practice of meeting the ends - Creating well-rounded leaders in the respective fields.

### Focus on Essential Skills

Enhancing the essential skills of undergraduates isn't again another cliché at UWU. Rather than being an add-on cliché, this constituent is strongly entrenched in the core of our degree programmes. Irrespective of the study discipline, all undergraduates of UWU have to get mandatory course units from our specific two study pillars - Essential Skills and broad general education. While the essential skills pillar focuses on developing undergraduates analytical skills, quantitative reasoning skills, mathematical skills, communication skills, and English language skills, the broad general education pillar focuses on creating responsible citizens with its specific course units such as ethics, law basics, history, and geography.

### Conducive Environment

University engenders a conducive environment for our graduates to prosper as young academics and professionals. This is accomplished via several fronts. Enhancing a positive research culture, creating blended models with industries where students can get hands-on experience with the

practical issues, facilitating numerous student clubs allowing students to have a quality life are some of those initiatives.

### The Group about to be Crowned

To summarise, the General Convocation of UWU will be held on 08<sup>th</sup> and 09<sup>th</sup> December, 2021 on University premises, Badulla where 544 graduands (both bachelor and postgraduate) will be awarded degrees. Followings are the bachelor degrees that will be awarded at the 11th Convocation by the respective academic establishments at UWU.

### Conclusion

The swelling graduating rate and the employability rate further posit that UWU is an efficacious game-changer in the higher education landscape. From its humble start with only five undergraduate degree programmes in 2005, it has grown into an establishment offering 15 undergraduate degree programmes in diverse disciplines, several postgraduate programmes, professional courses, and short courses. UWU has developed a bold pledge to participate in adding value to the national resource base which insists the university to change the directions and evolve.

So, it's time to celebrate the triumph of empowering another skilled generation who can proficiently row over real-world problems and challenges. UWU family wishes them all the best in their future endeavors!

(Dr. Kumudu Jayawardhana is a Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Management, Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka)



# Rohingya Sue Facebook for \$150B Over Myanmar Hate Speech



Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims fled Myanmar after a campaign of violence against them (BBC)

Dozens of Rohingya refugees in the UK and U.S. have sued Facebook, accusing the social media giant of allowing hate speech against them to spread. They are demanding more than USD 150 billion in compensation, claiming Facebook's platforms promoted violence against the persecuted minority. An estimated 10,000 Rohingya Muslims were killed during a military crackdown in Buddhist-majority Myanmar in 2017. Facebook, now called Meta, did not immediately respond to the allegations. The company is accused of allowing

"the dissemination of hateful and dangerous misinformation to continue for years". In the UK, a British law firm representing some of the refugees has written a letter to Facebook, seen by the BBC, alleging: Facebook's algorithms "amplified hate speech against the Rohingya people", the firm "failed to invest" in moderators and fact checkers who knew about the political situation in Myanmar, the company failed to take down posts or delete accounts that incited violence against Rohingya and failed to "take appropriate and timely action", despite warnings from charities and the media.

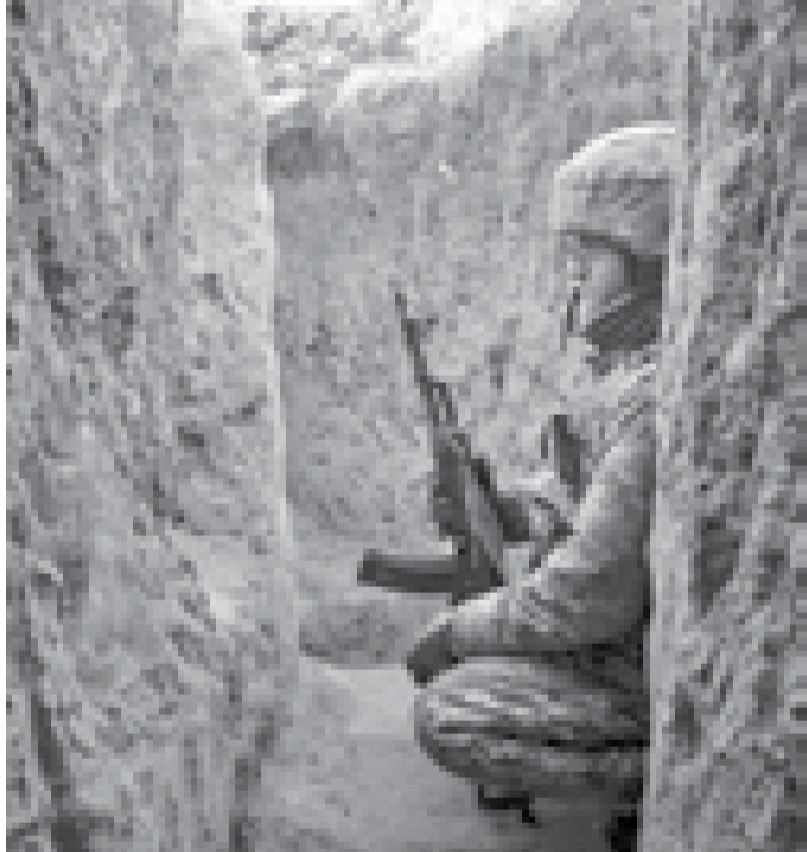
In the U.S., lawyers filed a legal complaint against Facebook in San Francisco, accusing it of being "willing to trade the lives of the Rohingya people for better market penetration in a small country in Southeast Asia." They cite Facebook posts that appeared in an investigation by the Reuters news agency, including one in 2013 stating: "We must fight them the way Hitler did the Jews." Another post said: "Pour fuel and set fire so that they can meet Allah faster." Facebook has more than 20 million users in Myanmar. For many, the social media site is their main or only way of getting and sharing news.

Facebook admitted in 2018 that it had not done enough to prevent the incitement of violence and hate speech against the Rohingya. This followed an independent report, commissioned by Facebook, that said the platform had created an "enabling environment" for the proliferation of human rights abuse. The Rohingya are seen as illegal migrants in Myanmar and have been discriminated against by the government and public for decades. In 2017, the Myanmar military launched a violent crackdown in Rakhine State after Rohingya militants carried out deadly attacks on Police posts.

Thousands of people died and more than 700,000 Rohingya fled to neighbouring Bangladesh. There are also widespread allegations of human rights abuses, including arbitrary killing, rape and burning of land. In 2018, the UN accused Facebook of being "slow and ineffective" in its response to the spread of hatred online. Under U.S. law, Facebook is largely protected from liability over content posted by its users. But the new lawsuit argues the law of Myanmar - which has no such protections - should prevail in the case. The BBC has asked Meta for comment. (BBC)

# Western leaders urge Russia to lower Ukraine tensions

Western powers have called on Russia to lower tensions with Ukraine and backed Kyiv against any threats from Moscow. U.S. President Joe Biden spoke with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and the leaders of France, Germany and Italy, agreeing to use "all the tools at their disposal" to prevent aggression. Biden is to speak to Russia's President Vladimir Putin by video call later on Tuesday (7). Russia has boosted its troops near Ukraine's border, prompting fears. But, Moscow says it has no plan to attack Ukraine and has accused Western nations of provocation. In a conference call on Monday (6) night, the Western Leaders discussed their "shared concern about the Russian military build-up", according to the White House. The five leaders had "reaffirmed their staunch support for Ukraine's territorial integrity", Downing Street said. The White House said they had formed a joint strategy "to impose significant and severe harm on the Russian economy" should Russia launch an invasion. According to U.S. media reports, possible measures include restrictions on Russia's banks or its access to global financial payment systems. But officials say Washington is not planning a U.S. military response. U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said how Washington responds would depend on Moscow's actions. He said: "If Russia chooses to fail to de-escalate, if Russia chooses to move forward with



A Ukrainian Government serviceman on the front line in Donetsk (BBC)

any plans it may have developed to continue its military aggression or to aggress militarily upon Ukraine, to violate Ukraine's sovereignty, its independence, its territorial integrity, we and our allies would be prepared to act, we would be prepared to act resolutely." Tens of thousands of Russian troops are believed to be massed near Ukraine's borders. A large part of the recent Russian military build-up is in Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. Troops are also gathering near Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, the name for parts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions

under the control of separatists. Ukrainian officials have said Moscow could be planning a military offensive at the end of January. But the Kremlin has blamed "aggressive and hostile rhetoric" from Western countries for stoking tensions. Putin's press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, said the Russian President would "listen with great attention" to Biden's proposals on Ukraine. "There is only one way to defuse tensions - to understand how to ensure against the possible intentions of Kyiv to solve the Donbas problem through force," he added. (BBC)

## Jakarta, Indonesia

# Toll rises after Mount Semeru buries villages



Some villages have been buried in ash after the eruption (BBC)

At least 34 people were killed in a volcanic eruption in Indonesia on Sunday (5), the country's national disaster agency says. Mount Semeru engulfed villages in volcanic ash and hot mud on the island of Java, forcing thousands to flee. Seventeen people are still missing. Emergency teams and rescue dogs are looking for survivors and bodies in the debris. The operation has been complicated by dangerous conditions and bad weather in the area. The volcano remains active, with smaller eruptions

continuing since the weekend. Indonesian President Joko Widodo visited the area on Tuesday (7) and said some 2,000 families could be moved because of the ongoing threat. "We hope that after everything has subsided, that everything can start: fixing infrastructure or even relocating those

from the places we predict are too dangerous to return to," he said. Mt Semeru rises 3,676m (12,000ft) above sea level and is among Indonesia's almost 130 active volcanoes. The last time it erupted was in December 2020 and thousands of residents were forced to take shelter. Indonesia sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire, an area where continental plates meet, causing frequent volcanic and seismic activity. (BBC)

## Melbourne, Australia

# Conman caught after six-month manhunt

Australian serial conman Peter Foster has been arrested, six months after he failed to appear in a Sydney Court over an alleged Bitcoin fraud. Foster, 59, is accused of defrauding a Hong Kong man of AUD 1.7 million (USD 1.2 million) in cryptocurrency. Last year, he was arrested in Queensland and extradited to New South Wales, where he allegedly went on the run after being given

bail. He was arrested in the state of Victoria on Tuesday (7). Foster is accused of posing as a man called William "Bill" Dawson as part of an online scam. Police have alleged he received money from the Hong Kong man in several tranches between April 2019 and January 2020, in amounts ranging from about AUD 125,000 to USD 890,000. He faces multiple charges of dishonestly obtaining financial

advantage by deception, and publishing false or misleading material to obtain an advantage. At the time he went missing, he was on strict bail conditions that required him to surrender his passport, wear an electronic ankle bracelet, and not use the internet or a mobile phone. He was also barred from leaving his Sydney home unless it was a medical emergency or he was seeing Police or his lawyers.

Foster was declared a fugitive after failing to appear in court on 20 May. The Australian Federal Police arrested him on Tuesday near the town of Gisborne, about an hour north-west of Melbourne. Foster has previously been involved in high-profile previous scams, most notably involving former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and his wife Cherie Blair, in 2002. (BBC)



Australian conman Peter Foster, pictured in 2006 (BBC)





# Bailout Plan For forex /Debt Crisis IMF-led Strategy is the Best Available Option -Economists

We should draft the Bailout Plan and not the IMF - Dr. Nishan De Mel

By RAJESH SEETHARAM

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) led Debt Restructuring Programme is the best available option for Sri Lanka. Verite Research Executive Director Dr. Nishan De Mel said on Monday (6). Speaking at the Sri Lanka Economic Summit 2021, he said that Sri Lankan economists should draft the bailout plan and obtain the approval from IMF, instead of depending on IMF to do the same.

The Government which came to power in late 2019, slashed VAT and abolished various taxes. This led to drain one-third of the Government's Tax Revenue in 2020. Consequently Rating Agencies downgraded Sri Lanka, and the country couldn't access international markets. Sri Lanka has to make a series of maturing ISB payments till 2027, in addition to various bilateral and multi lateral payments.

"Today, if you ask the Private sector, whether they would like to return to pre-2019 tax rates in return for various restrictions like imports, capital controls, USD shortages facing currently, they would definitely prefer the pre-2019 tax rates for better times," stated Dr. De Mel.

As a result of the economic crisis, Assets are being sold at discounted prices, out of desperation for USD, like the Yugadnavi Power Plant deal, where the normal tender procedure was not followed,



Dr. Nishan De Mel

remarked Dr. De Mel.

He added that a debt restructuring programme doesn't mean that ISB holders aren't going to get anything, given the huge discounted prices currently trading in, and that a deal with a reasonable haircut could be achieved with ISB holders with IMF assistance, in negotiations.

IPS Executive Director Dr. Dushni Weerakoon, said that options are running out, and suggested to obtain IMF assistance without a Debt restructuring programme.

"If Sri Lanka has to go for Debt restructuring, IPS director recommended that an Investment Committee has to be formulated with China, Paris club, ISB holders and other bi-and-multi-lateral Agreements.

"We have to check Clauses on Bond Agreements whether it



Dr. Dushni Weerakoon

compels small investors holding ISBs to come for negotiations. In the absence of such a Clause they can go to the Tribunal.

"We may have to treat bilateral, multilaterals, ISB holders equally, which makes things complicated, and also may not solve the issues for the following year either.

IMF programme will be about bringing down public debt, where the IMF will have control over interest rates, exchange rate and fiscal policies," stated Dr. Weerakoon.

When questioned regarding how Sri Lanka can go to IMF without a debt restructuring programme, the IPS Director replied, "In the current situation, the best thing Sri Lanka could have done is to have presented a credible Budget in November with a viable three year Plan, which would have regained investor confidence and

paved the way to re-enter international markets, regretfully, this wasn't done.

"Now, if the Government's current aim of increasing bilateral facilities and swaps do not materialise as envisaged, then the next option would be IMF assistance without a Debt restructuring programme. Maybe, we can tag on debt restructuring," he said.

Dr. Nishan De Mel agreed that a Debt restructuring programme can be 'tedious and painful' but still it can be done, and that some countries have succeeded in the past.

"When business encounters turbulence, it seeks a Bank loan, which needs to be substantiated by a Business Plan to have the loan sanctioned. The Credit officer of the Bank cannot be expected to prepare the Business Plan. Similarly, when opt for the IMF programme and Debt restructuring, Sri Lankan economists should be preparing the Plan in a convincing manner to the IMF. The biggest mistake of many poor Nations is that they leave it to the IMF to draft the Plan.

'IMF has the power to negotiate with different parties. Two years ago, Argentina benefited from a Debt restructuring programme with IMF assistance. Even the Wall Street wasn't happy as it had to take a deep haircut, even more than what Argentina expected', stated the Verite Research Director.

## Tuesday Markets

### Bourse Continues to Make Pyrrhic Gains

By PANEETHA AMERSEKERE

The bourse continued to make pyrrhic gains for the second consecutive market day to yesterday, in a scenario 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 0.49 per cent to 11,088.17 points and the so called sensitive S&P SL 20 Index by 0.44 per cent to 3,964.42 points on a Rs 6.02 billion turnover and on a 873.15 million share volume.

The bourse suffered an NFO of Rs 38.54 million yesterday and in the calendar year to date to Rs 50.15 billion, its second largest ever, with its highest t being Rs 51.04 billion established last year due to similar uncertainty.

#### Dead 149 days

The interbank foreign exchange (FX) market was 'dead' for the 149<sup>th</sup> consecutive market day to yesterday (Tuesday), 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 US 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 63.50 (34.05 per cent) and in the calendar year to yesterday (Tuesday), 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.

A year ago, the benchmark 'spot' was trading at Rs 186.20/50 to the dollar in two way quotes and as at last year end, due to milder controls, "the 'spot' and up to one week's forwards," was trading at a superimposed fashion of Rs 187.50/188.50 to the dollar in two way quotes.

#### Liquidity up Rs 9.30B

Money market liquidity during yesterday's trading increased by Rs 9,303.2 million (US\$ 46.41 million), *vis-à-vis*, at the discounted 'spot' price of Rs 200.45 to the dollar as at Friday, due to the possible settlement/s Government of Sri Lanka's (GoSL's) dollar transactions with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) and/or CBSL's swaps with the market.

#### FVMP Debt: Rs 1.82 Trillion

GoSL's face value money printing (FVMP) debt decreased by Rs 1,693.20 million to Rs 1,816,003.58 million (Rs 1.8160 trillion), thereby marginally defraying demand-pull inflationary pressure as well. GoSL's FVMP debt has been over Rs one trillion for a record consecutive 94 market days to yesterday due to a lack of revenue.

#### MPBCs down 8<sup>th</sup> Day

GoSL's at least theoretical MP borrowing costs fell for the eighth consecutive market day to yesterday, this time, too, sharply, by 0/91 per cent (Rs 399.52 million) to Rs 43,698.48 million, *vis-à-vis* the rate of the fall in GoSL's FVMP debt in percentage terms, 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.

#### Short 62<sup>nd</sup> Day

Money market was short for the 62<sup>nd</sup> consecutive market day to yesterday, thereby causing persistent rate pressure, though market shortfall fell by 2.33 per cent (Rs 7,610 million) to Rs 318,455 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.'

## HNB Assurance PLC Group records impressive results for 3Q21

HNB Assurance PLC (HNBA) and its fully owned subsidiary HNB General Insurance Limited (HNBGI) posted a Profit After Tax (PAT) of LKR 465 million (Excluding surplus transfers from the Life Fund which will be determined at the end of the year following the valuation of the Life Fund) for the nine months ended September 2021. The Group recorded a Gross Written Premium (GWP) of LKR 9 billion for the period.

Chairperson of HNBA and HNBGI, Rose Cooray stated, "The business has delivered notable results during the period, demonstrating an impressive growth. Despite the on-going challenges in the market and travel restrictions which were in place, the Group delivered impressive results. Life Business recorded a growth of 30% and the General Insurance Business recorded a growth of 9%. During the period, the Group further enabled and enhanced its technology initiatives to improve resilience to face the on-going challenges as well as to provide a meaningful and distinctive experience to customers as well as other stake holders. During the period, the Life Insurance Business recorded a GWP of LKR 5 billion and the General Insurance Business recorded a GWP of LKR 4 billion. The Net Income of the Group surpassed LKR 9.8 billion". Cooray



Prasanth Fernando – CEO of HNBA & HNBGI



Lasitha Wimalaratne – COO of HNBA



Sithumina Jayasundara – COO of HNBGI

further added, "As businesses across the country are battling the aftermath challenges of the pandemic, and with the economy gradually recovering, HNBA and HNBGI will continue to adopt more agile business strategies to deliver superlative value to all our stakeholders, while advancing our mission to build a sustainable future".

CEO of HNBA and HNBGI, Prasanth Fernando said, "The Group continued its growth momentum despite the on-going impact of COVID-19, recording a 20% GWP growth during the period, whilst our on-going cost mitigation efforts and other effective business strategies in place helped bolster the Group's bottom line. Fulfilling

its commitment to its shareholders, the Group settled Insurance Benefits and Claims over LKR 2.9 billion during the period". Fernando further added, "Investment Income of the Group surpassed LKR 1.8 billion and Total Assets of the Group surpassed LKR 34.8 billion. Reaffirming the Group's financial strength, the Life and General Insurance Funds reached values of LKR 19.8 billion and LKR 3.5 billion respectively. Both companies continued to be rated at A+ (Ika) for 'National Insurance Financial Strength Rating' by Fitch Ratings Lanka. The Management is well focused on the way-forward and remains confident on what's ahead and is committed to deliver value to all stakeholders".



## Highest food prices recorded in November

Colombo based public policy think tank Advocata Institute's Bath Curry Indicator (BCI) which tracks the monthly changes in the price of a basket of commonly consumed food items recorded the highest retail prices since 2019.

\*Gap due to insufficient availability of data.

Since 2019, prices have increased by 44%. This means that an average family, who spent Rs 960 weekly on the BCI basket of food items in November 2019 now has to pay Rs 1,390 for the same basket of goods just two years later.

Retail prices year on year have shown an increase of 35%. However, the food items that have increased the most in the past month alone are Tomatoes (206%), Beans (33%) and Green Chilli (23%).

The BCI tracks the weekly retail prices in the Colombo market of the most commonly consumed food ingredients that might be used in a typical Bath curry meal. The prices are collected from the 'Weekly Indicators' that the Central Bank publishes.

The BCI Indicator can be accessed at [www.bci.advocata.org](http://www.bci.advocata.org).

## BOI enterprises' export revenues record 2019 values

Accounting for 65 per cent of all national exports and 85 per cent of all national industrial exports, the Board of Investment (BOI) announced that total export earnings recorded as at date for the year, from enterprises under its purview, have surpassed export revenues with the corresponding year-to-date value achieved in 2019. The year 2019 is regarded as the last recorded year of pre-COVID growth and is considered a base year to measure absolute performance and growth for subsequent years.

Of the 23 export sectors listed under the BOI, 15 of them have grown vs. 2019, and most notably,

seven industries such as Rubber, Textiles and Fabrics, Electronics, Food Processing, Industrial Chemical, Petroleum, Coal and Plastic, Transport Equipment and Waste have all recorded double-digit growth against the same period. Apparel, which is the largest contributor to export earnings among the total portfolio, while just under seven per cent shy from achieving the corresponding 2019 value, has grown in double digits against 2020.

To support this achievement, BOI remained committed to all enterprises under its purview, especially with the pandemic continuing to soar through the better part of this year, by the

successful vaccination of the entire working population both within and outside its 14 Export Processing Zones and even facilitating the provision of curfew passes during lockdown periods, for all operations to continue unhindered. On top of this, the BOI also represented enterprises on issues that related to policy and regulation, to address concerns and challenges faced by enterprises.

As of November 2021, the BOI has signed USD 2 billion worth of investment approvals. During the first half of 2021 alone, USD 760 million has been invested in Sri Lanka, of which USD 400 million is FDI, in contrast to pre-pandemic

2019, where 113 new projects were approved and added to the pipeline, to the value of USD 1.1 billion, of which, the foreign component value was USD 400 million. In 2020, despite the pandemic and slow-down in investment decisions, 128 projects were approved with a value of USD 2.2 billion, of which, the foreign investment component was USD 1.6 billion. In 2021, 117 new projects were approved to the value of USD 2 billion, of which USD 980 million is the foreign investment component. Through this, the overall investment pipeline has exceeded 2019 values, despite the pandemic continuing through 2020 and 2021.



Plastic Pandemic

# The Ecological Fallout of COVID and Policy Options for Sri Lanka

By Ruwan Samaraweera (IPS)

The lockdowns introduced in 2020 to curb the spread of COVID-19 saw the narrative “nature is healing” gain prominence. However, the notion that nature, in the absence of people, was healing fizzled out fairly quickly with the emergence of fresh environmental challenges, most notably, the resurgence of single-use plastics. In fact, in the months following the lockdowns, reliance on plastics grew exponentially, with the scale of the negative environmental impacts far outweighing initial gains such as reduced air and noise pollution. This blog examines the ecological fallout of the pandemic and suggests policy options for Sri Lanka to avert the looming environmental disaster.

**The plastic pandemic**

Plastics have several applications and offer undeniable benefits to consumers and producers due to specific, inherent properties. They are hygienic, lightweight, flexible and anti-corrosive. As such, plastics are among the most extensively-produced material globally with 359 million tonnes of plastics produced in 2018 alone. However, plastics have become a severe environmental concern due to haphazard disposal. Plastics include consumables like plastic bags, straws, cups, bottles etc., which are thrown away after being used just once, referred to as single-use plastics. Worldwide consumption of plastic bags ranges from 1 to 5 trillion annually, and almost 160,000 plastic bags are consumed per second globally.

Without even being a large consumer of plastics globally, Sri Lanka generates more than 5 million kg of plastic waste per day, where the per capita daily contribution is nearly 0.5 kg. Sri Lanka is already struggling to cope with the amount of plastic waste generated each year. Unless concrete measures are taken to alter the current manufacturing methods and consumption patterns of plastics, the situation could result in irreversible damage to the environment. The global threat of the COVID-19 pandemic makes the problem (ex: Styrofoam, aluminium cans, polystyrene etc.) even more challenging.

**An ugly resurgence**

The demand for plastic by medical and packaging sectors is increasing sharply compared to pre-pandemic conditions

(Figure 1). For instance, an estimated 89 million medical masks, 76 million gloves and 1.6 million goggles are required monthly in the battle against the pandemic, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). As a result, researchers expect a 53.4 per cent market growth for disposable facemasks over 2020-2027. The disposable facemasks are produced using polymers such as polypropylene (PP), polyurethane, polyacrylonitrile, polystyrene, polycarbonate, polyethylene (LDPE), or polyester, which are potential sources of microplastics.

Estimates illustrate that the demand for disposable syringes and plastic containers that store vaccines will be increased with nationwide vaccination efforts against COVID-19. As a result, the global market will experience a seven per cent compound annual growth rate and reach a value of USD 14.4 billion by 2030. Moreover, the demand for other personal protective equipment like face shields made from PP, LDPE gowns, vinyl gloves made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC) will increase sharply along with the plastic packaging material. Thus, the production and consumption of PP, LDPE and PVC material will exhibit an increasing trend.

Lockdowns and resulting online shopping and home delivery can escalate the demand for plastic, which is reflected by the accumulation of plastic wastes, especially from food packaging. In Thailand, plastic waste rose by 15 per cent during the pandemic, primarily due to food packaging waste, resulting from



tripled food delivery demand. During the pandemic, many governments worldwide banned the use of reusable cups and food utensils due to safety reasons since reusable commodities could be contagious. Scholars also predict a drastic increase in medical waste that includes single-use plastic and other environmentally problematic material. For instance, in Hubei province, China, medical waste generation increased sharply, and by 9 March 2020, the country collected 468.9 tonnes of medical waste related to the pandemic. A more significant proportion of that waste is comprised of single-use plastics. Wuhan’s medical waste exceeded the maximum incineration capacity of 46 tonnes/day due to a

dramatic rise in waste accumulation up to 240 tonnes/day. Hence, despite their detrimental impacts, managing the pandemic is linked with single-use plastics and other environmentally-harmful material.

**The Way Forward**

Addressing environmental, economic, health, and socio-cultural issues related to single-use plastics and other damaging material requires identifying the most problematic single-use plastic and other material, evaluating the scale of the problem, identifying significant sources of pollution and potential impacts of mismanagement on the environment, human and animal health, and the economy. Various methods can reduce the harmful effects of single-use plastics and other environmentally problematic materials. However, the availability of alternatives is crucial to cut down the use effectively.

**Voluntary reduction strategies**

One of the key instruments for single-use plastic is voluntary reduction strategies. Those are based on consumption patterns, consumer and producer choices upon an increased understanding.

**Awareness creation**

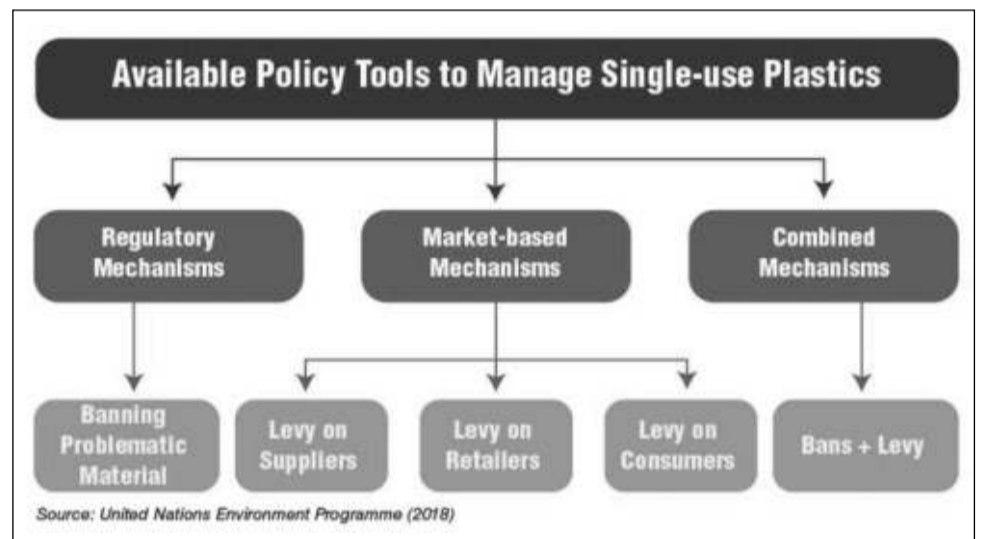
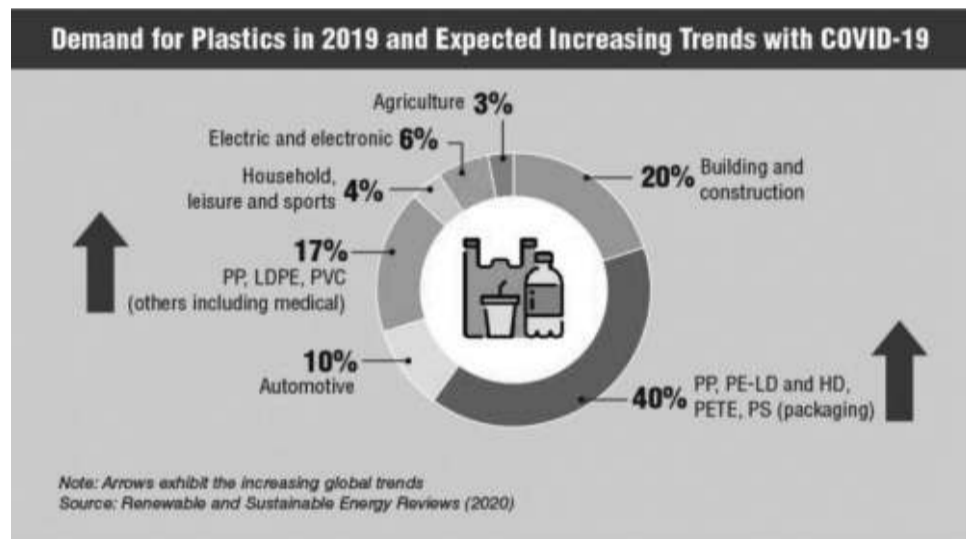
Voluntary adjustments are facilitated by awareness creation among stakeholder groups which are a gradual and transformational process that changes consumer and producer behaviour.

**Policy instruments**

Policy instruments can be classified as regulatory and economic (market-based and a combination of regulatory and financial) instruments.

The principal legislation governing plastic pollution in Sri Lanka is the National Environmental Act No. 47 of 1980, where Section 32 comprises the manufacture, sale and use of plastic and polythene. As previously mentioned, several amendments were made to the Act to address the challenges in managing plastic waste. Lobbying from local industry and pressures from major exporting countries, and availability of alternatives remain significant challenges in implementing bans. However, as discussed earlier, single-use plastics have the lowest recyclability and highest disposable rates. Therefore, implementing a combined approach of levies, bans, and extended producer responsibility (EPR) wherever necessary would enhance the positive impacts.

*(Ruwan Samaraweera is a Researcher Officer and an Ecological Economist working on environment, natural resources and climate change economic policy research at IPS. He holds a BSc (Hons) in Export Agriculture (Second Upper) from Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka. He is currently reading for an MSc in Agricultural Economics at the University of Peradeniya.)*



## Stamp Duty charges vary based on how property is acquired in Sri Lanka

By Saminda Jayasekara, Attorney-at-Law

According to the report on Land Tenure Considerations in Sri Lanka’s Proposed National REDD+ Strategy Sri Lanka UN-REDD Programme, 82.25% of the land in the country is owned by the Government while only 17.75% is owned privately. As the value of this land appreciates each year, and property is transacted between individuals, documentation and registering ownership become even more important.

To get more insight on title Deeds and lands in Sri Lanka, at LankaPropertyWeb, group interviewed the writer.

In Sri Lanka, land can be broadly classified into two types based on ownership. They are State-owned lands and private lands. State-owned lands are lands owned directly by the Government or any government or semi-government institutes including State-owned Companies. The ownership and the procedure of transferring ownership are decided and governed by the State Land Ordinance or relevant Act of Parliament for establishing the said institute (Ex: Urban Development Authority Act No. 41 of 1978) or Articles of Association if it’s a State-owned limited liability company (Ex: Lanka Phosphate Limited).

Private lands on the other hand can be owned by a person including but not limited to any individual, Corporate, Diplomatic Mission, Religious Place/ Organisation and a Charitable Trust. However, it is always subject to the Lands (Restrictions on Alienation) Act No. 38 of 2014 and its amendments.

“Owners of private lands have the freedom/right to make changes the way they want to the property, including whether they want to build a house, apartment, or use it for agricultural purposes. But it is subject to the Zoning and Development regulations of the Urban Development Authority. To prove the ownership of the property, they need to have a deed with the title of the property registered in the relevant Land Registry under their name,” the writer said.

According to Sec. 2 of the Prevention of Frauds Ordinance, every transaction related to land should be in writing and such documents should be executed in front of a Notary and two witnesses. In fact, a notorially attested document is a must for a transaction related to land or building. This document is called a deed and is an official record and proof of ownership of a property.

When inquired about the types of title Deeds in Sri Lanka, he said, “There are few document types someone can use to gain ownership of a property, and of them the common is the Deed of Transfer.”

If a person intends to purchase property, he pays the relevant consideration to the present owner and gains ownership of the property through a deed of Transfer attested by a notary. In a Deed of Transfer, details of the Vendor and the Purchaser, Consideration, and details of

the property are mentioned. It also describes how the vendor obtained the ownership to the property. The vendor may declare that the property has a good title, meaning that there are no encumbrances or lawsuits against it as well in the Deed of Transfer.

**What about stamp duty charges?**

Commenting on this, the writer said irrespective of the Consideration passed at the transaction, the purchaser has to pay stamp duty for the Deed based on the market value of the property determined by the Provincial Department of Revenue. If the property is purchased through a Bank Loan, then Bank Valuation should also be considered when paying Stamp Duty.

He also said that for the first Rs100,000/= of the property’s value, a stamp duty of 3% should be paid while for the balance value of the property, 4% should be paid as stamp duty to the relevant provincial council.

In the Attestation, the Notary must mention how the Vendor and Witnesses signed, how the consideration passed and the way stamp duty was paid.

Another way of getting ownership of a property is as a gift through a Deed of Gift. It can be used to give property to a family member, servant or employee because of love and affection, honest and loyal service or any other acceptable reason towards the beneficiary. In the Deed of Gift, the Grantor has to mention his relationship with the grantee. When asked about the exception in a Deed of gift, the writer said, “The Grantee must also sign in the Deed for acceptance of the Gift for it to become valid. If the Grantee is a minor, an adult can accept the gift on behalf of him. Deeds of Gift may also be drawn with specific conditions such as the life interest of the Grantor or someone in the family of the Grantor.”

The main difference between a Deed of Gift and Deed of Transfer is the consideration. In a Deed of gift, there is no consideration, but parties still have to pay stamp duty. Here stamp duty is calculated based on the acquired value of the property by the grantor and the value of any improvements made to the property (i.e. constructing or renovating a house/building). But, here the rate of stamp duty is lower than for a transfer. For the first Rs 50,000/- of the property value stamp duty of 3% should be paid and for the balance, the stamp duty is 2%. If a person has an undisturbed and uninterrupted possession of a property for more than 10 years, he can make a declaration on the said property using a Deed of Declaration. Once it is registered at the relevant land registry, the declarant’s title for the property will commence. Commenting on this, the writer said, “Banks and other financial institutes accept declaration titles only 10 years after the registration of the Deed. So if you register the property under your name today, you can only get a mortgage loan for the property 10 years from now.”

Prior to registering a Deed of Declaration at the Land Registry, the relevant land registrar will get confirmation

from the Government Divisional Secretariat on whether the declared property is owned by the State. If it’s a government property, the registration will be refused.

People can also acquire property through Last Wills written by the owner of the said property who nominates a person who will own his movable/ immovable assets after his death. Nominees can be anybody including Corporations, charities or religious places. The person should also nominate an executor in the Will. The executor shall file a Testamentary Case in the relevant District Court and has to prove that the Will is authentic. Once the case is concluded, the Court issues a probate and the Executor executes a Deed known as the ‘Executor’s conveyance’. Beneficiaries of the Last Will then get titles to the properties mentioned therein after the registration of the same.

Expressing his views on a Will, the writer said that one person can execute any number of Last Wills. But, the final one, will be the authoritative document. In it, the executor must expressly cancel his previous Last Wills as well. When a person passes away without a last Will, distribution of his properties will be based on the law of succession in the country. In the common law of succession, when a person dies, his spouse will inherit half the property and the balance will be distributed among the children. If there are no children, the remaining half will be distributed among parents/ siblings.

However, if the parties involved fall under any personal laws of the country such as the Kandyan Law, Muslim Law or Thesavalamai Law, the general laws of succession will not apply and the relevant provisions of the personal law will be considered when accounting for inheritance.

If the estate of the deceased person is more than Rs 4,000,000/- the next family member in line (i.e. spouse or eldest child) shall file a testamentary case at the relevant District Court. The court will issue a letter of Administration and the Administrator executes the Deed called ‘Administrator’s Conveyance’ to register the land at the Land Registry. The descendants and ascendants will then get the ownership of the properties according to the applicable law of succession.

A Partition Deed is a different type of legal document to claim ownership of a property. This is applicable when a property has co-owners and is used to distribute the land among all co-owners.

“Property can be partitioned in two ways. One is through a partition case where one co-owner files a case in the District Court against the other co-owner and the Court delivers a partition decree with the Final Partition Plan, and the other is through a partition Deed,” stated the writer.

In a partition case, the said Partition decree should be registered in the Land Registry, and claimants then get ownership of the property according to the final decree.

While in a Partition Deed, all co-owners agree to divide the property amicably. Here, a plan is prepared



according to the agreement and a partition deed is executed jointly. However, the beneficiaries do not acquire a perfect title compared to the title from a Partition Case.

**Matters to be considered prior to purchasing a Property**

**Title Search** – Prior to purchasing a property, anyone shall conduct a title search at the relevant land registry for a minimum period of 30 years. The only exception is if the title commences from a Partition Decree. The Notary must be satisfied about the clear chain of the title for the property prior to executing a deed.

**Local Authority documents** – Purchaser must obtain the following documents from the relevant Local Authority for the property prior to the purchase.

**Street line Certificate** – If there is a proposed road widening in the access road to the property by acquiring the subject property or part thereof, the Street Line Certificate will notify you.

**Building Line Certificate** – When you planto build something in the property, the Building Line Certificate notifies the amount of meters/feet to be kept free from the road within the property.

**Non- Vesting Certificate** - If the owner of the property has not paid Assessment rates to the Local Authority, there is a risk of the property being acquired by the said authority. However, when the payments are regular, the Authority issues this certificate stating that the property is not identified for vesting.

**Ownership Certificate** – Once a person purchases a property and registers the Deed in the Land Registry, application for registration in the Assessment registry at the Local authority should be done through a lawyer. The Ownership certificate shows who is the owner according to the Assessment Registry.

**Utilities** – Check whether the current owner of the property has paid for all utilities (Electricity/Water/ Telephone/Cable TV etc.). If it’s an Apartment, additionally check whether the Management fee has been paid.

**Special clearances due to the location** – If the property borders or is within close proximity to a waterway, sea shore, High-security sensitive location, Airport or any other important place, clearance from the relevant authorities have to be obtained. For instance, a property next to the President’s house has to get clearance from the President’s Security Division while a beachfront property shall obtain a clearance from the Coast Conservation Department.



To offer Digital Marketing Degree Programme

# Kelaniya University Signs MoU with Ogilvy Digital

The University of Kelaniya Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ogilvy Digital, the leading digital technology agency in the country to impart its industry expertise and knowledge for the University's specialised Digital Marketing Degree Programme.

The Digital Marketing Degree is the first such programme to be introduced by a State University.

With this MoU, Ogilvy Digital will partner with the Department of Marketing Management of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies of the University, to offer in-depth digital education to the students of this programme.

The MoU for the new degree programme was signed between Professor Nilanthi de Silva, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Kelaniya, and Irvin Weerackody, the Chairman of Phoenix Ogilvy Group.

Highlighting the importance of this collaboration, Vice Chancellor, Prof. Nilanthi de Silva said, "We cannot just wait on our own in isolation in the ivory towers of academia. We need to reach out to the areas that our graduates are



**Prof. Nilanthi de Silva**  
- Vice Chancellor

going to be working in and make sure they have the knowledge and skills to contribute significantly, and be productive in the sectors they are working in. I admire the drive and enthusiasm in the Department of Marketing Management to do things better, and I hope this partnership will bear good fruit in the future. I am sure that as an internationally-renowned firm, Ogilvy is conscious of what messages are being given out in its communications and the ethical element to it and our students too, therefore, will receive the necessary exposure to such practices."

Speaking on this occasion, Chairman



**Irvin Weerackody, Chairman Phoenix Ogilvy Group**

of the Group, Irvin Weerackody said, "We are happy and privileged to contribute our own knowledge and experience to make the Digital Marketing Degree Programme at the University of Kelaniya a success. As a pioneering digital technology company, this is the second occasion we are partnering with a seat of learning to impart digital education. Today, Digital Technology is the driving force in our lives. A whole new world is emerging before our lives, which will alter the way we live and the way we do things. The digital revolution is a quantum leap in technology. This technology can help Sri Lanka to be a



**Exchanging the MoU**

knowledge economy with the participation of the private sector. Today, we see Sri Lanka is moving towards a digital economy with the banking sector playing a significant role. It is said that one could withstand the invasion of an army, but not an invasion of ideas. It is in this context that this Degree assumes a great significance in Sri Lanka, and I am sure it could play a critical role in the development trajectory of this country."

The occasion was also attended and addressed by the University's Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, Dr. Narada Fernando and Head of the Department

of Marketing Management, Prof. Ravi Dissanayake.

As one of the oldest universities in Sri Lanka, the University of Kelaniya has a vision to become a centre of excellence in the creation and dissemination of knowledge for sustainable development. The University's mission is to nurture intellectual citizens through creativity and innovation, who contribute to national development.

As the strategic knowledge partner for the new degree programme, Ogilvy Digital shares the same vision and operates with a larger ambition of supporting and strengthening the digital economy of the country.

Under the MoU, it will develop the curriculum for the degree together with the university and be an advisor to the content and assessment methods of the programme and function as a member of the Certified Professional Marketing Graduate Programme's (CPMG) Accreditation Committee.

The company will further offer guest lectures for the degree, internship opportunities to undergraduates of the programme, and conduct knowledge sharing sessions with the University.

## Global recognition for Sri Lanka's LOLC Al-Falaah

Reaffirming yet again its status as the most-decorated Alternate Financial services brand in Sri Lanka, LOLC Al-Falaah bagged multiple accolades once again in the global arena, namely the Sixth Islamic Finance Forum South Asia (IFFSA) Awards 2020/21 and the Islamic Finance News Best Non-Bank Financial Institutes (IFN-NBFI) Global Poll Awards 2021.

At the IFFSA awards, the much awaited annual event by the Islamic Banking and Finance (IBF) fraternity in the South Asian region, LOLC Al-Falaah was crowned the IBF Leasing Company of the year and the IBF Window of the Year for the financial year ended 2019/2020. The company also won the Silver award for IBF Entity of the Year for the financial year ended 2019/20. The annual IFFSA Awards recognise high achievers, particularly in the South Asian region for their contributions and efforts to the industry. It is organised by UTO EduConsult and all award applications are stringently adjudicated by KPMG.

Meanwhile, competing against some of the global industry giants at the IFN-NBFI Global Poll Awards 2021, LOLC Al-Falaah emerged as the Best Islamic Leasing Provider, bringing glory and honour to Sri Lanka, once again. This is the third consecutive year that LOLC Al-Falaah has secured this top-position. IFN readers and market players from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America participated in the poll which is part of the prestigious IFN Awards which is known for their impartiality, independence and inclusiveness in honouring the most outstanding leaders in the global Islamic finance industry.

Expressing his views on the multiple achievements at both awards, Shiraz Refai, Deputy General Manager of LOLC



**Shiraz Refai, Deputy General Manager of LOLC Al-Falaah**

Al-Falaah said, "Concentration on constant innovation, providing tailor made financial solutions, commitment to develop the IBF industry and our stability built on prudent best-practices has developed a strong trust in us by our stakeholders over the years. As a result, these awards and recognitions compliment the dedication and commitment of our staff towards offering international service standards to our valued customers".

Speaking of these international accolades, Conrad Dias, Director/CEO of LOLC Finance PLC said, "I am extremely pleased because LOLC Al-Falaah has been consistent with its growth and performance even during the pandemic. Even during these trying times, our staff has worked tirelessly and they have continued to achieve the company objectives whilst offering service excellence to our customers who are based across the nation. LOLC Al-Falaah is committed to progress further with this drive and passion for growth".

LOLC Al-Falaah posted a Profit before



**Conrad Dias, Director/CEO of LOLC Finance PLC**

Tax of Rs. 413.92 million from Rs. 318.45 million in the previous year, which marks a colossal 30 per cent growth - an outstanding achievement recorded during a disruptive year. The company maintained a Non-performing loan (NPL) level of 3.9 per cent against an industry average amongst finance companies which was of over 15 per cent. Furthermore, LOLC Al-Falaah continues to leverage on the technological expertise of the parent company LOLC Finance PLC to provide uninterrupted services to its customer base.

LOLC Al-Falaah, with over 14 years of experience in the Alternate Finance landscape of Sri Lanka, functions directly under the auspices of LOLC Finance PLC, which is Sri Lanka's largest non-Banking Financial institution (NBFI). LOLC Finance which is a regulated Finance Company of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) is rated [SL] A with stable outlook by ICRA Lanka Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of ICRA Ltd.

## Q+ Payment App & LANKAQR generate record-weekend sales for three top fashion retailers



House of Fashions, Fashion Bug & Cool Planet join ComBank's effort to support CBSL initiative to popularise Scan & Pay transactions country-wide

Three leading fashion retailers recorded cumulative sales over Rs 23 million in just three weekends in October and November as a result of promotions that offered cash backs and discounts for payments made via the Q+ Payment App on the LANKAQR platform.

The Commercial Bank of Ceylon conducted these promotions to support the LANKAQR National rollout campaign by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL), themed 'LANKAQR' to promote cashless digital payments via the LANKAQR platform and to popularise Scan & Pay transactions. Notably, Commercial Bank was the only Bank in the country to organise three islandwide promotions of this nature within a period of two months.

These promotions conducted soon after travel restrictions were lifted, were launched in collaboration with House of

Fashions, Fashion Bug and Cool Planet outlets and invited retail customers to enjoy cash backs and discounts of 25% when they scan the merchants' QR codes and pay for their purchases via the Q+ Payment App, which is the first QR-based payment application to be launched under LANKAQR. Customers could perform scan and pay transactions via any LANKAQR compatible app at these merchant outlets.

Over 3,200 'Scan & Pay' LANKAQR transactions took place during these promotions in a testament to the fact that both customers and the merchants have accepted the Q+ Payment app and LANKAQR platform as a safe, easy, and fast mode of payment for their needs, the Bank said.

The promotions were an opportunity for customers to not just enjoy discounts at their favourite clothing stores, but also enabled them to experience the convenience and security of subscribing to the latest digital payment method that goes beyond both cashless and card-less payments, the Bank added.

## Singer crowns 'Just Like Mom' cook-off champion

Singer, recently, concluded the finale of the cook-off challenge, which was the second phase of the 'Just Like Mom' campaign launched for this year's Mother's Day. Among the cook off challenge participants, Sachini Nuwarapaksha, who prepared the dish *Labu Kola Piravuma*, emerged as the champion of the overall competition bagging a valuable gold coin as the grand prize. Just Like Mom campaign invited the youth across the nation to replicate their favourite dishes prepared by their mothers while making memories in presenting those to their mothers with love.

Singer Marketing Director, Shanil Perera said, "As the market leader in consumer durables and appliances, we felt the need to go beyond just marketing and selling our products and create some engagement with our consumers. This time we reached out



**Winner image singer**



**Finalists plus winner singer image**

to the youth to create a unique cooking experience and to give them an opportunity to cook for their moms, as an extension of the Mother's Day activity we held this year. Our goal was to promote and encourage family moments when it comes to cooking".

To take part in this cook-off

challenge, contestants had to share three photos: one was a photo of their ingredient list, another the preparation, and then a picture of the final dish. They had to post the pictures on their Facebook or Instagram platforms with the hashtag #justlikemom while tagging Singer Sri



**Dehiattakandiya Branch**

Lanka social media pages. And lastly, take a screenshot of their post and inbox it to Singer Facebook or Instagram with a description of their dish, their name and contact details.

There were over 200 entries for the Just Like Mom competition, with different age categories and genders.

Five finalists were selected, who then participated in the live cook-off, to select the overall winner and becoming the Just Like Mom Cook-Off Champion. In addition to the grand prize winner, the other four finalists were rewarded with a Singer voucher worth Rs. 20,000 each.

The panel of judges consisted of three top culinary specialists in Sri Lanka - Anoma Wijethunga, the founder of Anoma's Kitchen, Chef Dushanthi Madanayake, a celebrity chef in Sri Lanka, and Jayani Senanayake, a food reviewer and the author of the food blog 'Peckish Me'. These panelists not only judged the challenge but also shared their immense knowledge gained through experience with the participants. Furthermore, this entire campaign was endorsed by popular social media influencers such as Danu, Lochi, and Mashi Siriwardena as well.



# LOOK

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## Vegan Breakfasts in Sri Lanka

By **AMA H. VANNIARACHCHI**  
CEYLON TODAY FEATURES

Vegan food recipes are known to be expensive, difficult to prepare, and rare to find, in today's urban food market. Vegan food has become a trend. However, this trend has separated vegan food from the ideology of veganism. This is the very reason that vegan food is labelled to be expensive as those foods are prepared to satisfy the taste buds of those who still crave the taste of meat in vegan food. Hence, vegan food in urban restaurants is prepared to match the taste of non-vegan foods, completely going against the ideology of veganism.

However, as we presented to you last week, vegan food is not difficult to find/make nor expensive to buy in Sri Lanka. These traditional Sri Lankan foods are purely vegan and stick within the ideology of veganism: plant-based, minimalism, animal-cruelty-free food, and lifestyle.

The traditional foods of Sri Lankans are mostly vegan as the traditional food of the Sinhalese and the Tamils of Sri Lanka are prepared mostly with coconut milk, water, and consists of rice and vegetables. Their snacks, desserts, and drinks are also mostly vegan. The oils they use are coconut or sesame oil.

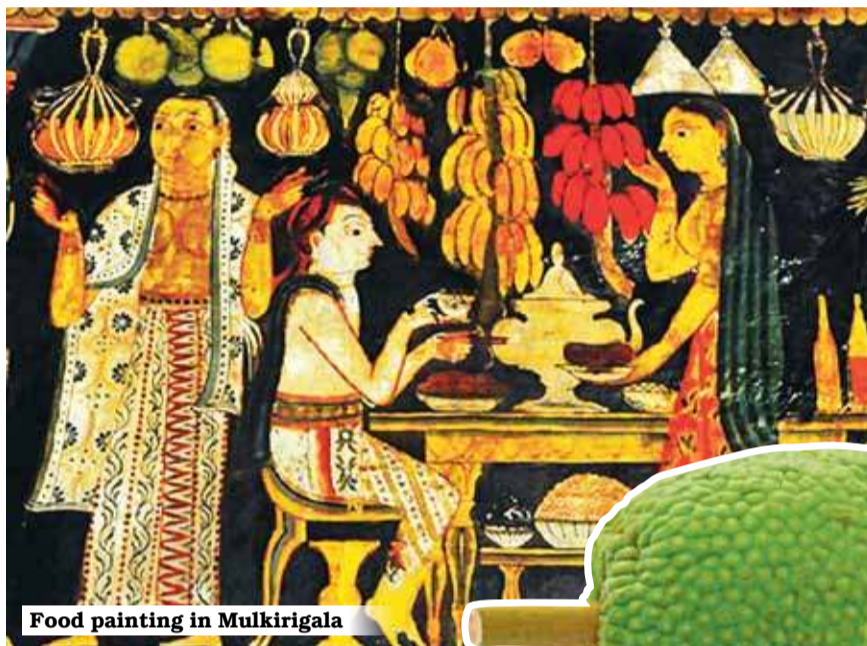
Today, we will present you some ideas for a traditional vegan breakfast that you can prepare at home. These breakfast foods are delicious and nutritious. These are not instant food and you will have to add a little bit of love, care, and time into the preparation.

To enlighten us about the traditional vegan breakfast of Southern Sri Lanka we spoke to Nimala Wickramasinghe, who is originally from Matara. As she explains, rice is eaten thrice a day and herbal drinks are consumed in the evening with a homemade sweetmeat or snack. The three main meals, snacks, sweets, and drinks are prepared with rice, jackfruit, breadfruit, coconut, kithul treacle, kithul jaggery, various yams, and grains.

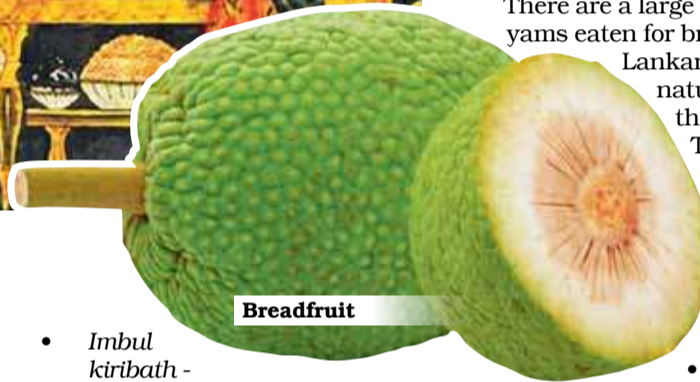
### Rice

One of the most famous breakfasts is diyabath, she said. Diyabath is made of rice from the previous night's meal. The leftover rice of the clay pot is left with water overnight. In the morning, coconut milk, curry leaf, red onions, salt, and green chilli are added.

- Usually, many people eat red rice and pol sambol for breakfast.
- Red rice with coconut milk curry (*kiri hodl*).
- Red rice and tomato curry.
- *Olu bath* is olu seeds and rice cooked together. Olu seeds are cleaned and washed. Then it is boiled and while it is boiling coconut, salt is added. This is often eaten with a *lunu miris*.



Food painting in Mulkirigala



Breadfruit

These traditional Sri Lankan foods are purely vegan and stick within the ideology of veganism; plant-based, minimalism, animal-cruelty-free food, and lifestyle.

The traditional foods of Sri Lankans are mostly vegan as the traditional food of the Sinhalese and the Tamils of Sri Lanka are prepared mostly with coconut milk, water, and consists of rice and vegetables



Jackfruit

trefoil *kanda* - this can be made together or separately.

### Roti

Coconut roti known as pol roti is eaten with *seeni sambol*.

### String Hoppers

Eaten with *kaha mallum* (a type of coconut sambol).

### Hoppers

Eaten with *lunu miris*.

### Yams

There are a large number of yams eaten for breakfast by Sri Lankans. These are naturally grown in the home garden. They are cleaned, boiled and eaten with scraped coconut and *lunu miris*.

- *Hulan keeriya ala*
- *Bathala*
- *Higurala*

*Rajala* and *Kondol ala* (purple and white) Jackfruit and breadfruit are also common breakfast foods. Breadfruit is boiled and eaten with *lunu miris* and scraped coconut.

### Desserts

- Curd and kithul treacle
- *Kalu pittu* (*kurakkan pittu*) coconut and wood apple juice (*divul kiri*). Wood Apple juice is also eaten with red rice and coconut.
- *Kalu pittu* or *kurakkan pittu* can be eaten with kithul treacle and scraped coconut.
- *Veralu*, also known as the Ceylon olive, is a common and delicious fruit in Sri Lanka. The flesh of ripe fruits is mixed with scraped coconut, sugar and salt and made into a thick paste.

### Snacks

- Delicious snacks are made of jackfruit and breadfruit. They are boiled, strained and dried well. This drying process is continued for several days and they are kept in the *atuwa* in the kitchen. Hence, they are called *atu kos* and *del*.
- Another snack is made with jackfruit, kithul jaggery and coconut. These are mixed together and made into small balls (*guli*). Jackfruit pieces are also fried and eaten with kithul jaggery.

### Evening drinks

- Herbal drinks made of *belimal*, *ranawara* are consumed with kithul jaggery.
- A drink made of the *kirala* (mangrove apple) fruit juice had been common in Matara, a few decades ago.



Fresh Faced

Adam Levine's face tattoo was nowhere to be seen as he leaves a hotel with wife Behati Prinsloo in Miami



Fans First

Winnie Harlow stops for selfies at Universal Studios in Los Angeles



Hug It Out

Anne Hathaway embraces Jessica Chastain at Searchlight Pictures' Tastemaker event for *The Eyes of Tammy Faye* in New York



Caffeine Queen

Selling Sunset newbie Emma Hernan grabs a cup of coffee while rocking a black-on-black look in LA



Bathala with scraped coconut (Pic courtesy Nutrisense)



Pol Sambola



Sting hoppers (Pix courtesy House of Curry)



# Soak Up the Christmas Spirit at Hilton



From a decadent Christmas Lunch at the Graze Kitchen to a New Year's Eve countdown in the outdoors, this magical home gives reason to be merry this year-end.

Christmas is a magical holiday season that brings with it joy, peace, love and heart-warming thoughts. Soak up the spirit of Christmas at Hilton Colombo, your home-away from home.

With the unveiling of the hotel's festive line-up from Christmas Eve through to New Year's Eve, diners can expect a range of truly unique

culinary highlights as well as festive favourites that will cater to all palates. Whether it is a Classic Turkey from Chef's table or a unique festive meal at the restaurants, the seasonal program promises a culinary getaway where guests can celebrate with loved ones.

On Christmas Eve, Christmas day and Christmas night, Graze Kitchen and Emperor's Wok will prepare gastronomic festive favourites to suit everyone. The festive afternoon Tea at LAB from 20 to 25 is the ultimate gastronomical pampering in between

meals. CAFÉ KAI will offer a range of Christmas goodies; from roasts to Christmas cake, Christmas pudding, traditional minced pies, yule logs, breudher, stollen, love cake, assorted homemade chocolates in various shapes and sizes and scrumptious cookies, from the 1- 29 December.

Christmas is not complete without carols. This year too, the sensational duo Lydia on Violin and Tilanka on Flute will perform at the Lobby from the 10 - 25 December from 7.15 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. The choral group

'Choro Calibre' will perform at the LAB on the 24 of December from 8.00 p.m. to 8.45 p.m. whilst children can enjoy Santa's company daily from the 20 to 25 from 7.00 p.m. - 9.00 p.m. Also from 12.00 p.m. - 3.00p.m. on Christmas day.

Guests could also enjoy New Year's Eve at Hilton Colombo where all the restaurants will dish-out festive menus; an extensive buffet at Graze Kitchen and an extravagant set menu at Emperor's work and whilst the LAB will feature live entertainment.

SunsetBlu, the restaurant by the pool will welcome guests to their a la carte menu and good vibes throughout the festive season.

Orders for hampers, Christmas roasts and goodies can be placed online on our website or by simply dropping by at Café Kai anytime between 7.00 a.m. and 10.00 p.m.

Hilton Colombo is a magical choice for all your festive celebrations and will help you decide where to spend this special time of year with family and friends.

*(Pix by Ashan Gamage)*

## Sysco LABS Celebrates Inclusion Month



Sysco LABS Sri Lanka, the innovation arm of Sysco, the world's global foodservice leader, commemorated Inclusion Month recently, hosting a thought-provoking panel discussion titled 'Diversity in Motion - a diversity, inclusion and equity panel discussion'. The discussion explored diversity and inclusion in Sri Lankan workplaces, the challenges and scrutiny faced by individuals belonging to these groups and the importance placed on organisations to foster a more inclusive environment for everyone.

As an equal opportunity employer, Sysco LABS is committed to driving a sound Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) strategy and policy framework. By organising the panel discussion, Sysco LABS intended to delve into deeply rooted diversity and inclusion issues while also addressing how social issues affect the dynamics of the workplace and how corporates in Sri Lanka can embrace these changes.

The discussion focused on four key areas important to Sri Lankans - ethnicity and religion, females at work, persons with disability, sexual orientation and gender identities. The eminent expert panellists, Vice President, Diversity Collective Lanka - Bani Chandrasena, Executive Director and Founder Equal Ground - Rosanna Flamer-Caldera, President and Founder, Sri Lanka Unites and Global Unites - Prashan De Visser, and Co-founder at Enable Lanka Foundation - Janitha Rukmal, elaborated on what these concepts mean in practice, the skills necessary, and how individuals can strengthen their organisations. Director Marketing, Sysco LABS, Kushani Kalpage, moderated the event.

Offering an earnest analogy, Prasan De Visser emphasised the value of embracing diversity. He said, "You can dig for oil or gas but if you dig deeper into the beauty of your diversity, there is a far greater more valuable resource in our nation that we have not tapped."

Advocating for definitive action by corporates and society too, he opined, "This is a vital issue that we must address, and every Sri Lankan needs to be part of it. It is an important conversation in the workplace, in schools, our villages, and communities."

Providing an insight into the female workforce in Sri Lanka, Chandrasena observed that contribution of females in workplaces and in employment cannot be overstressed. She said, "Having diversity makes a huge difference in how decisions are

made and how you review situations and problems." Moreover, she also noted in companies which promoted ethnic diversity and encouraged female participation especially in the boardroom, a co-relation existed with increase in revenues compared to companies that did not.

Discussing the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and efforts towards social progression, Rukmal explained, "Stigma is the first barrier. The main challenges we encounter begin from society itself where there is an unyielding stigma, and opportunities that should be given to persons with disabilities have been taken away."

The second barrier is the lack of infrastructure to accommodate persons with disabilities in meaningful ways in society." He requested that companies should "open up opportunities for these people beginning with accessibility in the workplace and then attitudes of co-workers, creating an environment for a person to work."

Championing change for the LGBTQ+ community, Rosanna Flamer-Caldera pointed out that most of the issues stemmed from archaic mindsets and ignorance about this community.

Further elaborating, Rosanna pointed out that most of the issues stemmed from archaic mindsets and ignorance about this community. She said, "We look at not only educating and sensitising the public but also educating and sensitising our own LGBTQ+ community because of years and years of marginalisation and discrimination. We have a lot of bright amazing creative and very intelligent individuals who can contribute a lot to the growth of this country."

Kalpage noted that at Sysco LABS, the D&I journey is to acknowledge each person's role in creating a more gender equal world. She added, "I hope this session will inspire your own learning journey and build deeper empathy for the people around you." You can watch the full discussion on the Sysco LABS blog.

**The Panellists:**  
Vice President, Diversity Collective Lanka - Bani Chandrasena,  
President and Founder, Sri Lanka Unites and Global Unites - Prashan De Visser  
Executive Director and Founder, Equal Ground - Rosanna Flamer-Caldera  
Co-founder at Enable Lanka Foundation - Janitha Rukmal  
Director Marketing at Sysco LABS - Kushani Kalpage

## Hemas Launches Special AYATI Song and Ideation Zone



Trustee of Hemas Outreach Foundation and Managing Director of Hemas Pharmaceuticals (Pvt) Ltd - Jude Fernando, Executive Director of Hemas Outreach Foundation and AYATI Trust Sri Lanka - Shriromi Masakorala, Vice Chancellor of University of Kelaniya and Chairperson of AYATI Trust Sri Lanka - Prof. Nilanthi de Silva, Group CEO of Hemas Holdings PLC - Kasturi Chellaraja Wilson, Dean - Faculty of Medicine of University of Kelaniya - Prof. Janaki Hewawasanthi, Brand Ambassador of Hemas Outreach Foundation and Trustee of AYATI Trust Sri Lanka - Roshan Mahanama and Director of Colombo North Teaching Hospital - Ragama Dr. L. Ranaweera

Hemas Outreach Foundation, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of the Hemas Group marked International Day of Persons with Disabilities on the 3 December, with the release of a special song by Bhatthiya and Santhush (BNS) dedicated to children with disabilities as well as the launch of an 'Ideation Zone' at the AYATI National Centre for Children with Disabilities in Ragama. Hemas, a truly Sri Lankan company that believes in championing an inclusive world where no child is left behind, joined the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Kelaniya in 2016 to set up the AYATI Trust Sri Lanka, together with MAS Holdings Pvt. Ltd., Roshan Wijerama Foundation, Rotary District 3220, and built the centre with support from the Sri Lanka Army.

The dynamic musical duo BNS developed the AYATI song, to support the Centre's campaign to eradicate the stigma related to disability, especially Down Syndrome. The lyrics of the song are based on the reality faced by children with disabilities and impresses on people that they too need to be loved, given equal opportunities to attend schools together with other children. Such inclusivity enables them to socialise with others, become independent and integrate into society as productive citizens in the country.

"At Hemas, we strive to enrich the lives of the communities of our nation and we work through the Hemas Outreach Foundation to create a more inclusive world. All children must be given the opportunity to unleash their full potential and it is vital that each of us play our part to empower children with disabilities and their families to lead a dignified life." Group CEO Hemas Holdings PLC said Kasturi Chellaraja Wilson, commenting on the initiative, further adding, "As a part of our commitment to make healthful living happen across the nation we launched the 'Piyawara' program in 2002. This program was initiated focusing on early childhood development in Sri Lanka to enrich the lives of children from underprivileged communities since we believe no child should be left behind. Earlier this year we launched 'Eka Se Salakamu' (Treat All Alike) a social movement aimed towards empowering children and families with Down Syndrome, creating a platform to recognise their rights and promote inclusivity in today's society."

With over 20 per cent of children in Sri Lanka estimated to have some form of a disability, the AYATI Trust works towards creating an inclusive society to prevent those with disabilities from being subjected to prejudice and lack of access to specialised services.



Vice Chancellor of University of Kelaniya and Chairperson of AYATI Trust Sri Lanka - Prof. Nilanthi de Silva and Director of Colombo North Teaching Hospital - Ragama - Dr. L. Ranaweera together with a child from the Ayati Centre ceremoniously cutting the ribbon

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kelaniya and Chairperson of AYATI Trust Sri Lanka, Prof. Nilanthi de Silva, spoke about the importance of the work done by the Centre. "This year's theme for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is 'Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible, and sustainable post-COVID-19 world'. Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic combined with myths and lack of awareness and understanding about disabilities has led to the worsening of social isolation experienced by countless numbers of children. Though many children with disabilities have their innate talents, they are not given opportunities to shine in the same way as other children. At the AYATI Centre, we work towards bridging this gap. The AYATI Centre and the Department of Disability Studies of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya aims to become a centre of excellence in Asia for care for children with disabilities."

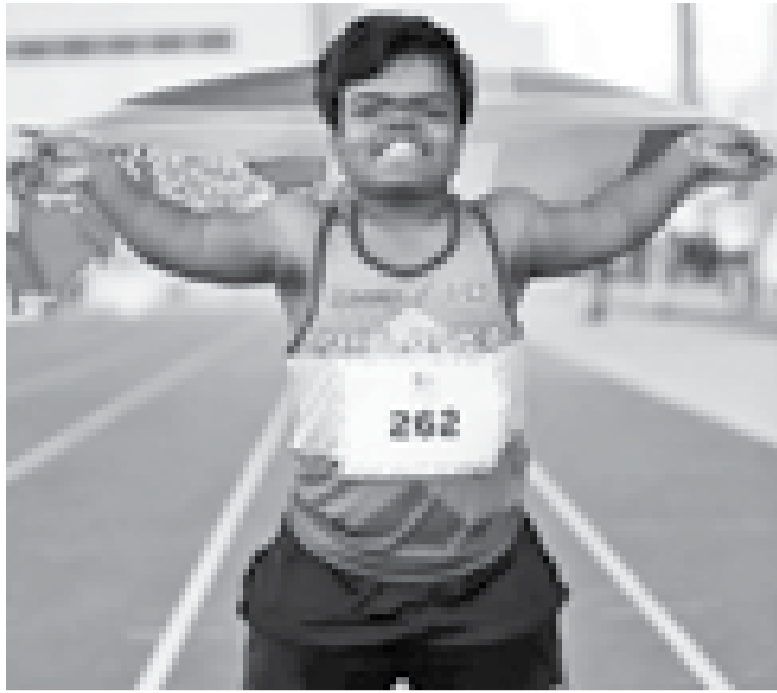
The 'My World' Ideation Zone was also launched at the AYATI National Centre and is designed to provide art therapy for children to express their thoughts visually as a form of communication that helps the therapist to have a better understanding of the child. The Ideation Zone will make learning fun by stimulating their vision, cognitive and motor skills, and comprehension and promoting socially acceptable behaviours as part of their holistic development. The special garden has a play boutique and a playhouse for children to express themselves freely, and make it easy for therapists to communicate with them. The Ideation Zone is also meant as a place for respite for the caregivers and encourages them to seek help if required.

The AYATI Centre was commissioned in January 2020, and over 7,000 children across the country are registered with the Centre to date. All services at AYATI are provided free of charge under one roof by the best medical and healthcare professionals attached to the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya.





Galeena Basnayaka



Jason Jayawardana



Mohammad Safran

## Asian Youth Para Games 2021

# SL Finish with 12 Medals

■ Galeena stars with three Golds and a Silver ■ Gateway's Jason Shines with two Silvers

Galeena Basnayaka was the star of Sri Lanka team when she won three golds and a silver, as Sri Lanka finished with 12 medals at the Asian Youth Para Games 2021 concluded in Manama, Bahrain yesterday.

Galeena from Lyceum International School won gold medals in the 50m Free Style (S1-10), 100m Free Style (S6-10) and 400m Free style (S6-10). Mohammad Safran of Muslim MV, Kekuagolla also bagged a gold medal in the F42-47 Under-17 Long Jump event.

Galeena clinched a silver medal in the S6-10 100m Butterfly event, while Jason Jayawardana of Gateway College

Colombo clinched two silver medals in the F40-41 Discus Throw and F40 Shot Put events. Mohammad Safran also won a second medal, this time a silver, in the F42-47 Under-17 100m event.

Janani Wickramasinghe of Suradutha Balika Vidyalaya, Kuliyaipitiya bagged three bronze medals in the T47 200m, F42-47 Long Jump and T42-47 100m, while Naveed Rasheen of D.S. Senanayaka College clinched a Bronze in the S6-10 400m Free Style event.

Around 750 Para athletes from 30 countries (under-23 years of age), were seen in action for the past five days competing across nine sports - Para

athletics, Para badminton, boccia, goalball, Para powerlifting, Para swimming, Para table tennis, Para taekwondo and wheelchair basketball.

### Gold Medals

**S1-10 - 50m Free Style** - Galeena Basnayaka (Lyceum International School)

**S6-10 - 100m Free Style** - Galeena Basnayaka (Lyceum International School)

**S6-10 - 400m Free Style** - Galeena Basnayaka (Lyceum International School)

**F42-47 - Under 17 Long Jump** - Mohammad Safran (Muslim MV, Kekuagolla)

### Silver Medals

**S6-10- 100m Butterfly** - Galeena Basnayaka (Lyceum International School)

**F40-41 Discus Throw** - Jason Jayawardana (Gateway College Colombo)

**F42-47 - Under-17 100m** - Mohammad Safran (Muslim MV, Kekuagolla)

**F40 - Shot Put** - Jason Jayawardana (Gateway College Colombo)

### Bronze Medals

**T47- 200m** - Janani Wickramasinghe (Suradutha Balika Vidyalaya, Kuliyaipitiya)

**F42-47 - Long Jump** - Janani Wickramasinghe (Suradutha Balika Vidyalaya, Kuliyaipitiya)

**T42-47-100m** - Janani Wickramasinghe (Suradutha Balika Vidyalaya, Kuliyaipitiya)

**S6-10 - 400m Free Style** - Naveed Rasheen (D.S. Senanayaka College)

### Other

**4th F42-47 Long Jump** - Isuru Weerakkody (Lumbini College)

**7th T42-47 200m** - Isuru Weerakkody (Lumbini College)

**7th T12 - 200m** - Ravindu Samarakoon (Richmond College) Supporter (Pansilu Pahan)

## Macksons comes onboard as League Partner of LPL 2021

Macksons, a leading Sri Lankan Conglomerate, has announced their sponsorship of the 2021 Lanka Premier League Twenty20 franchise cricket tournament. Macksons Holdings, the renowned paint manufacturer of Multilac and tile manufacturer of Macktiles, came on board as an official 'League Partner' of the tournament.

The 2021 tournament is the second edition of the LPL and will feature five teams battling each other to win the championship. The inaugural edition was held in November - December 2020, where the Jaffna Stallions emerged as the inaugural champions.

The agreement was signed between IPG CEO/Co-Founder Anil Mohan and Macksons Director/CEO Shimmer Milfer.

Director/COO of Macksons Sajjaad stated: "We are always very proud of the fact that we are a Sri Lankan company. When we were given the opportunity to work with LPL, we believed it is a great opportunity for us to showcase our loyalty to our country. We believe LPL has been instrumental in signaling a new dawn in Sri Lanka Cricket. Our beautiful nation has so much to offer and cricket is a part of that. I would like to thank Honorable Minister of Youth and Sports, Namal Rajapaksa."



(From left) Senior Vice President Macksons Group Nilrukshi de Silva, IPG CEO/Co-Founder Anil Mohan, Macksons Director/CEO Shimmer Milfer and Macksons Director/COO Sajjaad at the sponsorship announcement ceremony held at Hotel Mandarin, Colombo.

He further added, "It is an honor to be a sponsor of the Lanka Premier League, a promising and inspiring tournament in Sri Lanka cricket. We look forward to working with Sri Lanka Cricket and IPG Group to create and provide a thrilling cricketing experience to fans throughout the nation. Our paints Multilac, our tiles Macktiles, our cricket LPL."

Due to the prevailing pandemic, on the advice of the

Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka Cricket, have opened ticket sales for up to 50 percent of stadium capacity for the second season of the tournament, which is schedule to kicked off on 5 December and will be held until 23 December 2021.

The league matches will take place at the R. Premadasa Stadium, Colombo, whereas the final rounds will be hosted at the Mahinda Rajapaksa International Stadium, Hambantota.

## Sachithra elected President of Colombo District Softball Federation

Dr. Sachithra Weerasekera was recently appointed President of the Colombo District Softball Federation. He is an old boy of Ananda College, Colombo, and is currently attached to the Sri Lanka Police as a doctor and is also involved

in various social service activities.

Dr. Weerasekera said his main objective is to develop the attitudes of the players through proper training and workshops after identifying talented players by conducting tournaments.



## Under-19 Inter Schools Division Three Tier 'B' Cricket Tournament

# Maris Stella meet Hindu Matale in first semi-final today

The first semi-final of the Under-19 Inter Schools Division Three Tier 'B' Cricket tournament conducted by Sri Lanka Schools Cricket Association (SLSCA) with sponsorship of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) will be held today at Ananda Shashthralaya ground Kotte, when Maris Stella College Thimbirigaskatuwa meet Hindu College Matale.

Maris Stella College Thimbirigaskatuwa were the champions of their group. They beat Taxila College Gampaha, Chadrajothi MV Yakkala, Batuwatte MV Ragama, York International School Yakkala and Basilica College Ragama in their first-round fixtures.

Hindu College Matale were the champions of their group. They beat Science College Matale, Vijaya College Matale, Naminioya MV, Christchurch College Matale and Kaikawala Central College in their first-round fixtures.

Maris Stella beat S. Thomas' College Guruthalawa, Wadduwa Central College and President's College Maharagama in the final round matches. They beat Wickramabahu National School in the quarter-finals.

Hindu College beat Sri Sumangala College Wariyapola, Madeena NS Akurana and Sri Sumangala College Hikkaduwa in the final round matches. They beat St. Michael's College Batticaloa in the quarter-final.

L. Dinuka N.T. Silva leads Maris Stella, while Hindu Matale will be led by Kailasham Kumeshan.

**Maris Stella squad:** L. Dinuka Silva (Captain), Shakila de Silva (Vice Captain), Savindu H. Perera, K. Pasindu Silva, Himaj J. Perera, Senuk Dinuwara, Himasha Fonseka, Kasun N. Rodrigo, Ashindu D. Perera, Yohan Fernando, Sonal Nethmina, Kanishka Gamage, Mishen R. Gomez, Samod Appuhamy, Suwasahas Yapa, Shenal Randunu, Vinila Perera, Lasith A. Silva, Mevan

Fernando (Head Coach), Roshan Jayasinghe (Asst. Coach), Rev. Bro. Anthony Francis (Master-in-charge)

**Hindu Matale squad:** Kailasham Kumeshan (Captain), Ganeshwaran Sujeevan, Sarveshwaran Sanoj, Balakrishnan Abhishek, Adithya Dilrukshan, Kumar Sangeetha, Mageeswaran Manoj, Jeendararajan Nimeshan, Sritharan Divyakanth Lingeshwaran Mayuran, Navaneethan Rishiwaran, Sundarraj Sasikaran, Kumar Dilrukshan, Manoharan Praveen, Kugan Shan, Vadivel Sabeshmenan, Morgan Sudhan, Dayabaran Kiruban, Vijayakumar Lanoj, Ramakrishnan Diluxshan, Suresh Puvialakash, Indrawansha Herath (Deputy Principal and MIC), K. Pradeep Kumar (Coach)

In the other semi-final on Thursday (9th), Pannala National School will meet Sri Sumangala MV Kelaniya at the same venue.

(IR)

## Djokovic named in Serbia team for 2022 ATP Cup in Sydney

Novak Djokovic was named in Serbia's team for the men's season-opening ATP Cup in January in Sydney, although the world number one has yet to commit to the Australian Open following the organisers' mandate for COVID-19 vaccinations.

Djokovic, who has won a record nine titles at Melbourne Park including the last three, has repeatedly declined to reveal whether he has been vaccinated against COVID-19, with Australian Open organisers Tennis Australia confirming that all players would have to be vaccinated to compete in Melbourne.

To play without being vaccinated in Sydney, the capital of New South Wales State, the State Government would have to apply for an exemption for

Djokovic and the 34-year-old would have to undergo



Novak Djokovic

14 days quarantine upon arrival.

That same option was also open to Australian Open organisers, but the Government in

Victoria, of which Melbourne is the capital, has said it would not apply for exemptions.

The draw for the third edition of the ATP Cup team event was held in Sydney on Tuesday and organisers said top seed Serbia, headlined by Djokovic, would be in Group A along with Norway, Chile and Spain.

**The winners of each of the four groups will advance to the semi-finals.**

**Group A** - Serbia, Norway, Chile, Spain

**Group B** - Russia, Italy, Austria, Australia

**Group C** - Germany, Canada, Britain, United States

**Group D** - Greece, Poland, Argentina, Georgia

(Reuters)

## All Blacks captain Cane signs new deal to stay in NZ

All Blacks captain Sam Cane has agreed a new contract that will keep him in New Zealand until the end of the 2025 season, New Zealand Rugby (NZR) said on Tuesday.

The openside flanker, who has played 77 tests since his debut in 2012, will continue to play for the Waikato Chiefs in Super Rugby and has an option to take a sabbatical in

2024. "My passion for the game is as strong as when I started playing; so, it was an easy decision for me to extend my contract," the 29-year-old said in an NZR statement.

New Zealand coach Ian Foster, who named Cane as skipper when Kieran Read retired after the 2019 World Cup, said he was 'delighted' with the news. (Reuters)





# Jaffna Kings back to winning ways

Defending Champion Jaffna Kings (then Jaffna Stallions) registered their first win of the LPL 2021 when they beat Dambulla Giants by eight wickets in a one-sided encounter at R. Premadasa Stadium yesterday.

Dambulla coming from a win in their first game, lost opener Niroshan Dickwella in the second over, and then kept losing wickets thereafter as Jaffna bowlers were all over the Giants.

It was Suranga Lakmal who started proceedings with Dickwella's wicket, and followed up with another removing one drop batsman Lahiru Udara. Maheesh Theekshana who opened the bowling with Lakmal, removed the other opener Phil Salt for 13, and then had a double strike in the 10th over removing Dasun Shanaka and Najibullah Zardan, leaving them five down for 58 and finishing with 3 for 22.

Wanindu Hasaranga de Silva then

claimed 3 for 16 putting them in further trouble before finally being bowled out for just 110 runs.

Jaffna Kings had no trouble chasing down the target. Avishka Fernando got his opening slot back and responded with 33, while Tom Kohler Cadmore made an unbeaten 45, taking the game away from Dambulla. Shoaib Malik who came at number four when Avishka departed hammered three sixes adding 26 of 10, and things finished off quickly as they chased the tally down in just 12.3 overs.

## Scores

**Dambulla Giants:** 110 (19.3) (Nuwanidu Fernando 23, Maheesh Theekshana 3-22, Suranga Lakmal 2-28, Wanindu Hasaranga de Silva 3-16, Jayden Seales 2-33)

**Jaffna Kings:** 114-2 (12.3) (Avishka Fernando 33, Tom Kohler Cadmore 45 n.o., Shoaib Malik 26 n.o.)



## 106<sup>th</sup> Colombo Tennis Championship

### Thehan, Chathurya clinch men's doubles title

### Savini, Janali women's champs



Thehan Wijemanne and Chathurya Nilaweera

Thehan Wijemanne and Chathurya Nilaweera teamed up to dominate Kaveesha Rathnayake and Rostom Ali in two straight sets (6/2, 6/2) to clinch the Men's open doubles final at the 106th Colombo Tennis Championship yesterday.

In the Women's doubles final, Savini Jayasuriya and Janali Manamperi defeated Anjalika Kurera and Oneli Perera in a thrilling three setter (1/6, 6/2, 10/8).



Savini Jayasuriya and Janali Manamperi



Action from the match

## Super League

# Lakshitha, Rifkhan goals help Defenders beat Ratnam

One goal in each half from Lakshitha Jayathunga and Rifkhan Mohamed helped Defenders FC to defeat Ratnam SC 2-1 in another Super League fixture worked off at Sugathadasa Stadium yesterday.

Defenders FC drew first blood in the 40th minute when a brilliant cross from the left wing found Lakshitha Jayathunga who rose to the occasion to head the ball to the bottom corner to go up 1-0 into half time.

Within three minute into the

second half, Defenders doubled their lead through a penalty after their striker was fouled inside the penalty area. Making maximum use of the opportunity Rifkhan Mohamed made not mistake to convert the opportunity to double their lead.

Ratnam SC pulled one back in the 76th minute through Mohamed Hakeem, but it was too little too late for them to make a comeback, as Defenders FC held their nerve to wrap up victory with ease.

## Follow-on looms for Bangladesh after Sajid Khan's six-for

Sajid Khan's maiden six-wicket haul left Bangladesh in danger of being made to follow-on with one day of the Dhaka Test to go. It remains to be seen if the weather will halt Pakistan's push for full WTC points, though.

On Tuesday, play was called off at 4.30 p.m., an hour before the scheduled close. Conditions continued to remain murky all day. Yet, it was better than on the three previous days where heavy rain allowed just 63.2 overs to be bowled in the Test.

Pakistan got busy as soon as play commenced at 10:50 a.m. They first declaring on 300 for four, with half-centuries from Mohammad Rizwan and Fawad Alam.

Then, despite being hamstrung by the umpires' diktat that play wouldn't continue if they operate with fast bowlers, Pakistan made inroads with spin.

Debutant Mahmudul Hasan Joy tried to charge off spinner Sajid, only managing to edge to slip. Then, Hasan Ali made his presence felt at point, first with a simple catch to dismiss Shadman Islam before running out Mominul Haque with a direct hit.

Mushfiqur Rahim was the next to go, one ball after surviving a close lbw call, as he tried to swing Sajid across the line with Fawad taking the catch at short midwicket. Then, Liton Das, sent ahead of Shakib Al Hasan, tried to attack Sajid but only hit one back to the bowler as Bangladesh slipped to 46 for 5.

Sajid then completed his five-for when he trapped Najmul Hossain Shanto for 30. Shanto couldn't capitalise on his reprieves, first being dropped on 13 and later when he was caught behind off a Nauman Ali no-ball. Shakib tried to bristle his



Sajid Khan celebrates a wicket

way for runs, but Bangladesh kept losing wickets. Mehidy Hasan Miraz became Sajid's sixth victim. Shakib and Taijul Islam then survived 5.2 overs before play was called off.

Pakistan had earlier declared their first innings on 300 immediately after Fawad reached his second Test half-century. Rizwan made an unbeaten 53 off 94 balls, with the pair's unbroken fifth-wicket stand worth 103.

Rizwan endured slices of luck; he was dropped on 30 apart from surviving two lbw calls from the on-field umpires, both reversed through DRS.

Bangladesh had started well with pacers Ebadot Hossain and Khaled Ahmed bowling well in tandem, with the wickets of Azhar Ali and Babar Azam respectively. It was Khaled's first Test wicket, having bowled 69.4 overs over three Tests since his debut in November 2018.

## At stumps:

**Pakistan:** 300-4 (Babar 76, Azhar 56, Taijul 2-73)  
**Bangladesh:** 76 for 7 (Sajid 6-35)

(ESPN)

## SL - England U-19 Youth ODI series

# Confident Sri Lanka out to clinch series

The fourth Youth ODI between Sri Lanka and the visiting England U-19 will be held today (8th) at the SSC.

Sri Lanka is leading the series 2-1. England won the first ODI by 25 runs, while Sri Lanka

won the second and third games by 148 runs and 2 wickets respectively.

Sri Lanka's Pawan Pathiraja is the leading batter so far. He has scored 135 runs in 3 innings with a century. He made 113 runs in

the second game, while skipper Dunith Wellalage is the leading wicket taker. He has claimed 9 wickets for 44 runs with a 5-wicket haul. He has also scored 124 runs in 3 innings with a half century.