

**What Really Matters in the Sino-American Competition?**

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**Towards a Sri Lankan Foreign Policy**

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**CEYLON TODAY**

**SL Navy Marks 71 Proud Years**

A supplement celebrating the 71st Anniversary of the Sri Lanka Navy is issued with today's edition of Ceylon Today.



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**FR Petition deeming Cabinet illegal**

**SC Orders Report on All Ministerial Portfolios**

**Instructs AG to submit detailed report**

**Initial submissions to be heard on 27 January 2022**

By KAMAL WEERARATNE

The Supreme Court yesterday instructed Attorney General Sanjay Rajaratnam to submit a detailed report pertaining to Ministerial and State Ministerial portfolios that are either defunct or active to date. The Apex Court gave this advice to

the Attorney General having perused a Fundamental Rights Petition that had been filed charging that the existing Cabinet Ministerial and State Ministerial posts were in violation of Articles of the Constitution. The Bench comprised Justices Vijith K. Malalgoda, Yasantha Kodagoda and Mahinda

Samayawardene. Secretary of the Sri Lanka Professionals National Front, Kapila Renuka Perera filed the Fundamental Rights Petition on 19 November. The petitioner has stated as per Articles 147 (1) of the Constitution the Cabinet should consist of only 30 Ministers and 40 State Ministers.

**Cannot assure LP gas issue 100% rectified - Alagiyawanna**

By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE

State Minister of Consumer Protection, Lasantha Alagiyawanna, yesterday (8) accepted in Parliament that there is an issue regarding the alkane composition...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

**SJB calls for Alagiyawanna's resignation**

By NABIYA VAFFOOR

The SJB urged that State Minister of Co-operative Services, Marketing Development and Consumer Protection Lasantha Alagiyawanna should resign, as he was unable to control the explosive gas cylinder problem, and challenged the Government authorities to guarantee that gas explosions will not continue.

Story Continued on PAGE 2



**Cops tow illegally parked vehicles**

By THAMEENAH RAZEEM

The Police launched a new operation in Colombo and other major cities to tow away vehicles that are parked on sidewalks.

Story Continued on PAGE 2

**Shanghai Salvage Company to remove X-press Pearl wreck**

By SULOCHANA RAMIAH MOHAN

X-Press Feeders, operators of the container ship X-Press Pearl, signed a contract with the Shanghai Salvage Company (SCC) on 2 December to remove the wreck from Sri Lankan territorial waters, its Singapore office said yesterday (8).

Sri Lankan authorities submitted their second compensation claim, which is being reviewed by the vessel owners P&I Club and discussions...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

**CAA protects service providers, not consumers**

- Sajith

By NABIYA VAFFOOR

Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa yesterday queried as to whether the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) was active or not.

He made these comments upon his observation of the manner in which CAA was conducting itself at present in the wake of various issues encountered by consumers.



Story Continued on PAGE 2

**Ruckus in House Speaker appoints 11-member probe committee**

By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE

Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena yesterday (8), appointed an 11-member committee headed by Deputy Speaker Ranjith Siyambalapatiya to probe the ruckus that took place in Parliament last Friday (3) and Saturday (4).

Ministers Bandula Gunawardena and Vasudeva Nanayakkara, State Ministers Chamal Rajapaksa and Susil Premajayantha, SLPP MP Anura Priyadarshana Yapa...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

**Interbank FX Market 'dead' 150 days**

By PANEETHA AMERESEKERE

The interbank foreign exchange (FX) market was 'dead' for the 150th consecutive market day to yesterday, with no outright transactions of worth taking place, coupled with all trades in the FX market, including bank-client trades too, since midnight 6 September, mandated to be executed under a controlled exchange rate (ER) regime of between Rs 202-203 to the US dollar, aiding in the spawning of a black market.

Story Continued on PAGE 2

**BIMSTEC Secretary-General calls on President**

Secretary-General of The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Tenzin Lekphell called on President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, yesterday (8).

This is Lekphell's first visit to Sri Lanka since being appointed as the Secretary-General of BIMSTEC on 6 November last year.



Story Continued on PAGE 2

**Suicide or accident? Three dead in Udarata Menike train tragedy**

By THAMEENAH RAZEEM

Three people were killed when the Udarata Menike was moving from Badulla to Colombo at around 11.45 a.m. yesterday (8).

The three collided with the train near...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

**Speaker refutes allegations of bias**

By GAGANI WEERAKOON AND METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE

Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena refuted allegations of Jathika Jana Balawegaya (JJB) Leader Anura Kumara Disسانayake, that the Speaker was biased towards the Government during the Committee Stage Debate on Expenditure...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

**Group of officials manipulating leadership - Bandula Says instrumental in creating dissension among Govt MPs**

By METHMALIE DISSANAYAKE

Trade Minister Dr. Bandula Gunawardena said in Parliament yesterday (8), a group of officials at the Finance Ministry and the Central Bank (CBSL) is manipulating the political leadership and Parliament, causing havoc in the country.



Story Continued on PAGE 2

**India's Top General dies in helicopter crash**

India's top military Commander has been killed in a helicopter crash in the Southern State of Tamil Nadu, the country's Air Force says.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat, his wife and 11 others died after the Mi-17V5 helicopter...



Story Continued on PAGE 2



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

## Speaker appoints...

...SJB MPs Gayantha Karunatileka and Rauff Hakeem and Ranjith Maddumabandara, JJB MP Vijitha Herath and ITAK MP M.A. Sumanthiran were appointed committee members.

They are required to probe the said incidents and submit a report with recommendations to avoid such scuffles happening in the future.

The Speaker, after announcing the names said that a group of SJB MPs met him and requested to ensure their safety in Parliament. "It is the duty of the Speaker to ensure the safety of all MPs in Parliament. Therefore, I have taken all steps to ensure their safety. I request all MPs not to repeat the incidents that took place last week," he said. The SJB boycotted Parliamentary Sittings on both Monday (6) and Tuesday (7) in protest of the alleged assault on SJB MP Manusha Nanayakkara on 3 December and the events that followed. They attended Sittings yesterday (8) after the Speaker requested all MPs to attend Sittings.

## Three dead in...

...the 103-mile post between Rosella and Watawala railway stations. The deceased are yet to be identified. Police Spokesman SSP Nihal Thalduwa said no evidence has so far been elicited to determine whether the three belong to the same family. However, one of the victims has been identified as a 40-year-old man. According to Rosella Railway Station sources, the three persons had inquired about the train schedule from railway employees and were on their way to the Watawala Station from the Rosella Station when the Udarata Menike train arrived. According to SSP Thalduwa, Police have already launched an investigation to establish whether the three committed suicide by leaping in front of the moving train or were hit by the train. The bodies were taken in the same train to the Nawalapitiya Railway Station and handed over to security personnel at the Station.

## SC Orders Report on...

However, the petitioner has pointed out that the present Cabinet of the SLPP Government comprises 32 Cabinet Ministers as well as 44 State Ministers.

Petitioner Perera has further noted that the aforesaid number further exceeded by 7 June this year and hence he has opined that the current Cabinet was in violation of the Articles of the Constitution. The petitioner has explained that hence all decisions that are reached by the current Cabinet should be deemed as unlawful as it is in violation of the Articles of the Constitution.

The petitioner has also informed the Apex Court that the two Ministerial portfolios created for Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa,

Namal Rajapaksa as the Monitoring Minister for Development, along with the State Ministerial posts held by Namal Rajapaksa, Chahal Rajapaksa, Dilum Amunugama and Dr. Sudarshani Fernandopulle were contrary to Law.

Hence the petitioner has prayed the SC to deem that the formulation of the current Cabinet is illegal and as such all decisions taken by them were null and void and to issue an order that the fundamental rights of citizens of this country has been flouted due to the action of the present Cabinet. Accordingly, the Supreme Court set 27 January next year to hear initial submissions regarding the Fundamental Rights Petition.

## India's top general dies in...

...came down in hills near Coonor city on Wednesday (8) morning.

One survivor is being treated for his injuries in hospital.

Gen Rawat, 63, was appointed India's first-ever Chief of Defence Staff in January 2019.

This brought together the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, and Gen Rawat had been in charge of a range of operations including in Indian-administered Kashmir.

The Indian Air Force said it had ordered an investigation into the accident, which happened in foggy weather. A cabinet security committee is holding an emergency session, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On Twitter, Modi said: "[Gen Rawat] brought with

him a rich experience of serving in the Army. India will never forget his exceptional service.

"A true patriot, he greatly contributed to modernising our armed forces and security apparatus. His insights and perspectives on strategic matters were exceptions. His passing away has saddened me deeply."

Images from the crash site showed thick plumes of smoke billowing from the mangled remains of the helicopter and local people trying to put out the fire.

The helicopter had just taken off from the army base in Sulur, and was headed for Wellington town, less than 100 km (62 miles) away, where Gen Rawat was set to visit the Defence Services Staff College.

The sole survivor of the

crash is a captain working at the college.

Although the Russian-made Mi-17V5 is among the most sophisticated military transport helicopters, India's ageing air force fleet is often blamed for a high number of crashes.

Former army chief J.J. Singh said it was "a safe, proven helicopter", adding that he himself had travelled on it in difficult situations.

In 2017, seven military personnel were killed in a crash in the north-eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh. The helicopter was on a training sortie.

A year before that, another of the helicopters had crashed immediately after take-off during a military drill in the northern state of Uttarakhand. No casualties were reported.

(BBC)

## Speaker refutes...

...Head of Housing and Urban Development and this behaviour has caused many controversies in Parliament recently. In a statement, the Speaker said, "During a media briefing, Dissanayake alleged that I was biased and violated Standing Orders on Monday (6) during the Committee Stage Debate on Housing and Urban Development Expenditure Head. This is completely false. As a result of the SJB boycotting Parliament on that day, the Expenditure Head was passed without holding a debate and a vote. When State Minister Nalaka Godaheva stood up to start the debate, I avoided that and continued the sitting without a debate. This is according to Standing Order 130 (5)."

Standing Order 130 (5) states that after a question has been proposed from the Chair for reducing or omitting any Project or Object, no motion shall be made or debate allowed upon any preceding Project or Object. There are CCTV records to prove what I did on that day. In such a backdrop, it is not fair to make allegations that I violated Standing Orders, he added. "I have given a fair amount of time to all the MPs to speak in the House, especially for the Opposition MPs. When compared to the last Parliament, the time allocated for the Opposition has been increased to 48 per cent from 33 per cent. By doing so, I wanted to give space for fruitful discussions in the Chamber, not for false accusations, insults, and useless discussions." Therefore, I request Dissanayake not to make false accusations without knowing the full details. Such conduct does not befit a seasoned politician like him, the Speaker said.

## CAA protects...

"It appears as if the CAA is virtually mandated to cater to the interests of the Corporate sector.

"The CAA's approach raises concerns as to whether it serves its channels as mandated or acting as an institution to serve the Service providers or Companies. The CAA has become the 'protector' of companies," he said. Premadasa alleged that the 'Gas Scam' bears ample testimony to the dismal failure of the Government. "There have been 458 gas-related explosions during the year so far and it is ridiculous for the Minister in charge to treat them as 'ordinary' explosions. The Minister of Consumer Affairs has become the 'Minister of Corporate Services' and the entire Government is in unison to deceive the people of the country," said Premadasa. Premadasa expressed these views yesterday (8) while addressing the public on the opening of the newly constructed building of Sri Khemananda Dhamma School, Punyawardanarama Temple in Udabaraagama, Ambalantota, under the 'Sasunata Aruna' programme.

## SJB calls for...

Addressing a media briefing, yesterday (8) MP Mayantha Disanayake said if this was any other country, on principle the Minister-in-charge of the subject would have resigned when several causalities take place due to an issue regarding their subject.

"Instead of resigning, Minister Alagiyananna is blaming the Government for the issue. It is a basic principle to resign from the post, since the Government is unable to provide a proper reason for the recent causalities and the dangerous situation that has arisen in nearly every household," he added.

Dissanayake further said they have been requesting a report on gas explosions, but the Government has neglected to hold a quality check and provide a report in this regard.

"The Government has advertised that they have changed the shrink wrapper in the gas cylinder seal. One gas Company has begun recalling old gas cylinders. The picture is clear right here. Its just that the Government is being unnecessarily hesitant on issuing a fair report in this regard. The Opposition leader has been requesting this report in Parliament a week ago," he added.

Dissanayake further said if the authority has commenced the distribution of the new stock of LP gas, the Government and the authorities should publicly assure that the new stock of LP gas will not result in any explosions or any causalities.

## Shanghai Salvage...

...were ongoing, Nick Roe of MTI Network Asia Ltd explained in an email to Ceylon Today.

Roe added that the SCC have set up a project team for the salvage operation and have already mobilised the necessary equipment.

The salvaging operation will ensure a complete removal and safe, proper disposal of the wreck and any debris and pollutants around the wreck.

The team will be supported by response tugs on a 24-hour watch to deal with debris or other forms of pollutants. Regular water sampling will be ongoing at the site, with representatives of ITOPI and Oil Spill Response ready to respond immediately if required.

Meanwhile, Resolve Marine has commenced the recovery of the containers and debris that were lost overboard during the vessel fire and subsequent sinking. The debris has been identified through side-sonar operations, undertaken during July and August, and its recovery and safe disposal is expected to be completed in due course.

"We continue to work with the Sri Lankan authorities towards the repatriation of the eight remaining crew members who are currently housed at a hotel in Colombo. We are eager to get them home to be reunited with their families," Roe added.

## Cops tow illegally...

Traffic police removed unauthorised parking in pedestrian walkways in various locations throughout Colombo yesterday (8) and said parking on sidewalks is a violation of the National Thoroughfares Act.

Police Spokesman SSP Nihal Thalduwa noted that actions have been taken to severely enforce the law regarding vehicles parked on sidewalks meant for pedestrians in the city of Colombo. "In the future, if there are any owners of vehicles parked on the sidewalks, they will be harshly warned. In the absence of the owners, the vehicle will be turned over to the local Police. We advise the public to be more careful when parking their vehicles so they do not regret it when the law is enforced," he added.

## Cannot assure...

...in gas cylinders and said that the Government should take the responsibility for the recent controversy following gas-related explosions.

The State Minister also said he cannot assure consumers that the gas cylinder issue is 100 per cent rectified. However, he and the authorities are trying their best to solve the issue and protect the consumers as soon as possible. No definite scientific explanation has been given on the issue of gas cylinder explosion, Alagiyananna added.

"I personally believe the reason for gas explosions is the changes in the alkane composition in gas cylinders. We, I and my officials are working hard to rectify issue from the beginning," he said.

Alagiyananna pointed out several issues surrounding gas companies regarding the quality of gas cylinders. The main issue is there are no standards to monitor alkane composition in gas cylinders. According to the Sri Lanka Standards Institute (SLSI), even these gas cylinders in question are qualified to be sold in the market. According to the reports we got after providing several gas samples to them, it is clear that the composition of gas cylinders has been changed. There are standards for pressure, not for the composition. Even if the cylinder has 100 per cent of Butane, it won't go above the given pressure standards. I should inform the House that no institution has regulated gas manufacturing since 1960s, he added.

Speaking further, he said that two gas companies did not even have any pressure gauges and they were provided equipment only on Sunday (5). Right now, the gas cylinders are released to the market after measuring the pressure. Steps will also be taken to collect gas cylinders which are not sealed and the Government is considering providing compensation for damages caused by gas explosions, Alagiyananna said.

## Group of officials...

Participating in the Committee Stage Debate on Trade Ministry's Expenditure Head, the Minister said these officials misled the leadership of the country to achieve their own agenda and as a result, the Government cannot fulfil the people's mandate.

"Owing to this situation, we end up fighting with one another. Everyone knows that there is a Forex crisis at the moment. This group takes undue advantage and creates chaos to provoke the public, when MPs lock horns during Parliamentary Sittings. It is a particular group of officials at the Finance Ministry and CBSL who resort to this," said the Minister.

### APPLICATION FOR A LICENCE UNDER SECTION 34 OF THE COMPANIES ACT NO. 7 OF 2007 FROM THE REGISTRAR OF COMPANIES.

In pursuance of Section 34 of the Companies Act No. 7 of 2007 an Application had been made to the Registrar of companies for a license

That an Association be formed under the name and style of the UNITED HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION ORGANIZATION to be registered with limited liability without the addition of the word LIMITED at the end of its name.

a. To provide with infrastructure facilities required for the development of the self-employed living in Sri Lanka and provide assistance with them on their economic, social, business and legal issues when they arise.

b. To provide with assistance for finding employment opportunities at international and Sri Lankan businesses for self-employed according to their skills and qualifications and to take action to protect their human rights, and to take action to provide with legal assistance when they confront with various issues.

c) To make representation on behalf of the self-employed living in the country who are with various skills but marginalized or who are in danger and formulate social protection schemes for them.

d) To implement various programs on pandemics, epidemics and other disease prevention methods for children, youth and elderly people living in Sri Lanka, conducting health clinics, implement rehabilitation programs, maintenance of physical training centers and sports centers and provide facilities for the welfare of the people

e) To provide with consultancy services required for all Sri Lankans living in the country without any ethnic, religious and caste differences specially, employees engaged in self-employment fields and to protecting their human rights and to getting their businesses to be successful while assisting for entrepreneurs who are engaged in various other business fields.

The association will not engage primary & secondary education for children. To other provisions of the Association are set out in exterior in the article of association, a copy of which may be inspected at the office of the Proposed organization at NO 1A/FQ/U 1A, SIRISARA UYANA, BASELINE ROAD, BORELLA, COLOMBO 08 NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that any person, company, or corporation Objecting to this application, may lodge such objections within three Weeks from the date of this advertisement, by a letter to the Registrar of Companies, Samagam Medura, 400, D.R. Wijewardena Mawatha, Colombo

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Ruckus in Parliament

# Amaraweera Says Speaker Should Put House in Order

By THAMBEENAH RAZEEM

While blaming the Speaker for not fully exercising his authority, Environment Minister Mahinda Amaraweera said the behaviour of some MPs was revolting and that steps against misconduct should be taken immediately.

He noted that the purpose of Parliament is for genuine political debate, not obscenities, and that situations such as these have not happened in Parliament since 1994.

"Parliament exists for conversations and debates on issues vital to the country, not to brag about one's accomplishments and the use of profanity. A Parliament like this serves no purpose for the country or the people. People are tired of politicians and political parties. Prices of goods are rising, farmers are not getting enough fertiliser on time and the LP gas cylinder at home is a ticking time bomb," he explained.

Amaraweera made these remarks while attending a recent event in the Weeraketiya neighbourhood where he had arranged a scheme to distribute nutrition packages to pregnant women

from low-income households in the area.

He said revenue sources have stopped and that houses in certain areas have been inundated for 30 to 40 days, but instead there are fights and swear words inside Parliament which is meant to discuss these public issues.

"We will take steps to bring this

subject to the Speaker's attention at the Party Leaders' meeting. What would happen to the country if some politicians and government employees steal or waste public funds while the people of our country are suffering? These positions and powers are just temporary. Politicians should be willing to make more sacrifices for the sake of the people," he said.

# Weather forecast: expect rains

By NAALIR JAMALDEEN

The Meteorology Department yesterday (8) said showers or thundershowers could occur in most parts of the country today (9) morning.

Based on current atmospheric conditions, the Department predicts showers or thundershowers can be expected in several places in Western, Sabaragamuwa and Central provinces and Galle and Matara districts in the evening or night.

Fairly heavy spells of above 75 millimetres can be expected at some places in these regions.

The public should be cautious of possible temporary heavy winds and lightning strikes and are also advised to take adequate precaution to

minimise possible damage.

Showers or thundershowers are expected today in the seas from Trincomalee extending to Hambantota via Batticaloa and Pottuvil.

Showers or thundershowers can be expected in seas surrounding the island in the evening or night.

Wind velocity is expected to be from 10 to 30 kmph from North Easterly direction surrounding the island. Wind velocity is expected to be increased from 30 to 40 kmph at times in the seas from Trincomalee extending to Colombo via Kankasanturai, Mannar and Puttalam and the seas from Galle to Hambantota. Conditions at sea would remain moderate at times and seas surrounding the island would remain fair.

## Compensation for X-Press Pearl Disaster MEPA seeks US\$ 40 m as second instalment

By SULOCHANA RAMIAH MOHAN

The Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) has submitted US\$ 40 million as the second instalment of compensation from X-Press Feeders for environmental damage caused by the X-Press Pearl Disaster and the wreck of the container ship. The first instalment was a US\$ 3.6 million interim payment made between 20 May and 3 June 2021.

MEPA Chairperson, Dharshani Lahandapura, told *Ceylon Today* that the interim report on environmental damage is nearing completion and that the report would be submitted to the Attorney General soon.

Lahandapura said the initial cost was US\$ 40 million, of which US\$ 3.6 million was paid, and that there is also a forecast that will be obtained as the assessments are completed.

She went on to say that Resolve Marine would remove the ship's underwater debris and transport it to the Colombo Port's Unity Container Terminal (UCT).

She also said the containers on the ship would be removed and relocated to the Hambantota Port yard. "The Shanghai Salvage Company (SCC) is attempting to recover the wreck soon and allow it to float, so that it can be towed to Hambantota Port," she said.

This is a one-of-a-kind mission, and those involved have said it is one of the most dangerous and critical operations they have ever undertaken, she pointed out.

Scrap will be disposed of in Sri Lanka. X-Press Feeders owns the rest of the wreck, she added. She went on to say that the debris would be collected at a yard in Wattala.

MEPA has imposed two conditions prior to the wreck's removal. "We said our priority is to conduct a proper risk assessment and an oil assessment on the wreck," she said, adding that 5-10 litres of bunker oil leak into the sea every day.

Concerning cargo compensation from shippers, she said they could not seize the ship and own the wreck. "If we do that, the ship's owner will have no liability, and Sri Lanka will be responsible for everything." The onus would be on us. Those traders who have lost their goods can seek compensation from insurance companies. While removing the wreck, we believe that the weather and timing are critical. "If we seize the ship, the wreck removal will be delayed, and we will have to wait for better weather," she explained. The AG, however, rejected the plea of seizing the wreck.

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## UNFPA Study to Combat Violence Against Women

# In 243 Homicides, 128 Husbands Were Found to be The Killers

By **SULOCHANA RAMIAH MOHAN**

The University of Kelaniya, in a survey commissioned by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) revealed that intimate partners, ex-partners and family members perpetrated 62% of homicides, out of the sample study of 243 killings between 2013 and 2015. Further, of the 243 homicides reviewed, 128 of the cases identified the perpetrators as the husbands.

The UNFPA recently commissioned a study, which is the first of its kind in Sri Lanka, to understand the contributory factors of unnatural deaths that women and girls face by analysing accidents, suicides and femicides in Sri Lanka from 2013 to 2015.

The survey was on the unnatural female deaths in five provinces in the country.

They also assessed that 69% of such incidences go unreported, which is a cause for alarm. This indicates that gender-based violence is often shrouded in silence. In light of this, the study aims to describe the problems associated with the judicial processes and outcomes relating to unnatural female deaths. It further aims to provide policy inputs and guidelines to address problems associated with the investigation and judicial processes.

The Study was



commissioned and entrusted to Resident Coordinator, UN Sri Lanka, Hanaa Singer Hamdy, on Tuesday (7) in the presence of Dr. Sudarshani Fernandopulle, Ministry of Primary Health Care, Epidemics and COVID Disease Control and Chairperson of the Select Committee of Parliament to ensure gender equity and equality and the Chairperson of the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus in Parliament, Rohini Kumari Wijerathna, Member of the Select Committee of Parliament to ensure gender equity and equality, and member of the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus in Parliament, Dr. Harini Amarasinghe, Member of the Select Committee of Parliament to ensure gender

equity and equality, and member of the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus in Parliament, Prof. Nilanthi de Silva, and many others.

Speaking at the event, Officer-in-Charge, UNFPA Sri Lanka, Sharika Cooray, said, "Femicide, is the intentional sex or gender-related killings of women and girls that do not occur in isolation, it is fuelled by a culture of impunity and norms that accepts any form of violence against women and girls. These are crimes that can be controlled and prevented and are sinister in nature as they are not only harmful to the victims and survivors but also to their families and the society as a whole. We must work together to break the silence on issues pertaining to gender-based violence. We must project and

create a network of awareness nationally to bring about a violence-free Sri Lanka for women and girls."

Highlighting the methodology and findings, Prof. P. Anuruddhi S. Edirisinghe, Cadre Chair and Professor of Forensic Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya said, "This book engages with the roles and influences of the medical, legal, judicial processes, the media, and the community in such deaths including possible social, cultural, gender and other norms and ideologies that may influence, delay and prevent judicial redress and media coverage. Most importantly, it also considers the ways in which some of these deaths could have been prevented."

## OBITUARY

**Ananda S Wijayasiri** passed away on 06.12.2021 after a brief illness. He was a renowned stage drama director and dramatist, film producer, film script writer, song writer, novelist, actor and singer. His creations include the stage dramas *Devolvayanakan*, *Julius Caesar* and *Othello and teledrama Galabodahasthiya*.



Ananda S Wijayasiri beloved husband of Irangani Wijayasiri, loving father of Suranji and Rajeendra Wijayasiri and grandfather of Sandul, Rashmi and Nuran.

His remains lie at 'The Respect' Jayaratne Funeral Parlour, Baudhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 8. The funeral will take place today (9) at Borella Cemetery at 5.00 p.m.

For more information : <https://www.facebook.com/ananda.wijayasiri.1>

**SEETHA KULASILI MEEWEWA** MEEWEWA- SEETHA KULASILI (RETIRED REGISTRAR OF BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS OF HEWAGAMA KORALA-ALL ISLAND JUSTICE OF PEACE). BELOVED WIFE OF SUNIL MEEWEWA (FORMERLY UNILEVERS AND MAS HOLDINGS), LOVING MOTHER AND MOTHER-IN-LAW OF DINANI (MAS) ANJULA JAYASEKARA (HNB), DAMITH MEEWEWA (BRANDIX) AND THILINI JAYAWARDENA (MAS). LOVING GRANDMOTHER OF SHENARA JAYASEKARA. LOVING SISTER OF RANJANI RAJAKARUNA. K.D. NIMALASIRI (AUSTRALIA), K.D. GAMANI BANDUSIRI, LATE K.D. ANANDA PUSHPASIRI, K.D. SARATH ANANDASIRI, K.D. LAL MAHINDASIRI, KUMUDU MALLIKA, CHANDANI RENUKA AND K.D. AJITH KUMARA (MEMBER OF KADUWELA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL).



REMAINS LIE AT A.F. RAYMONDS FUNERAL PARLOUR, CORTEGE LEAVES PARLOUR ON THURSDAY 9 DECEMBER 2021 AT 4 P.M. CREMATION AT GENENRAL CEMETERY, BORELLA AT 4.30 P.M. (NEW CREMATORIUM) NO 178/2, VIHARA MAWATHA, HEWAGAMA KADUWELA.

## If fertiliser is used based on soil composition

# Chemical fertiliser imports could be limited

– Aluthgamage

By **FAADHILA THASSIM**

Chemical fertiliser imports could be limited if farmers are aware of how to use fertiliser based on the composition of soil in their relevant areas, Minister of Agriculture, Mahindananda Aluthgamage said.

He added that thereby farmers should be made aware of the composition of the soil in their area of operation, following a soil test, for proper fertiliser application commencing from the Yala Season.

Aluthgamage further said the equipment required for soil testing has been handed over to 362 regional Agrarian Development Centres, while more equipment will be provided to 200 centres within the next year.

Meanwhile, a decision was taken to develop 7 out of the



22 farms that are under the purview of the Department of Agriculture to international standards at a cost of Rs 2.1 billion.

Aluthgamage said so, speaking at a discussion on the manner in which the amount allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture by way of the 2022 Budget will be spent.

## Appointment of Medical Administrators

# Section of GMOA jeopardising legitimate placements – MAFSL

By **DILANTHI JAYAMANNE**

The machinations of a section of Government Medical Officers Association (GMOA or the Union) prevented permanent appointment of qualified medical administrators to over 120 hospitals including the National Hospital of Nephrology, in Polonnaruwa which has resulted in them functioning under administrators who were serving only in 'acting' capacity, the Medical Administrators Forum Sri Lanka, (MAFSL or the Forum), stated.

MAFSL President Arjuna Thilakarathne urged Health Minister Keheliya Rambukwella and the Government to give them their due place instead of being intimidated by the Union which has a vested interest in the matter. Despite the Government spending Rs 16 million on each prospective MBBS qualified Doctor reading for a Post-Graduate Degree in Medical Administration (PG in Medical Admin) it was still unable to grant appointments owing to the opposition by a section of the Union members.

He alleged that 90 per cent of the Forum held membership with the GMOA which was more interested in fulfilling their political agenda and gathering political leverage rather than attending to issues of their membership.

The PG in Medical Admin was established in 1996. On 10 March 2021 those who had qualified themselves in PG Medical Admin received legal sanction which upheld their priority during appointments. But contrary to the provisions of the Gazette, a section of the GMOA has been calling for its

abrogation while stating that Medical Admin position should be open to all PG Degree holders without preference or priority.

Vice President of the MAFSL, Dr. Priyantha Karunaratne lamented that the Health Ministry was unable to fill the existing medical administrative vacancies upon the approval of Public Service Commission (PSC) due to this conflict of interest. Responding to queries, the Vice President of MAFSL which has a strength of 300 members, said that preliminary interviews to fill the vacant Medical Admin positions had not been conducted since 2016 owing to the Union's opposition. He accused the Union of 'apparently being in favour of weak medical administrators such as those who served only in 'acting' capacity, so that they could hold the upper hand.'

"We have discussed this issue with the Health Minister, who has agreed in principle with the Forum. It is unfortunate that the Union seems to be intimidating not only Minister Rambukwella's Ministry but also the Government by 'showing off' its strength," Dr. Karunaratne alleged.

The GMOA last week took umbrage when Jathika Jana Balawegaya (JJB) Parliamentarian Vijitha Herath accused the Union of pressurising the Health Ministry into not appointing medical administrators to Hospitals, in a bid to carry out its own agenda in the Health Ministry and State Hospitals.

The Union in turn accused the MP Herath of having used language which was unsavoury at the forum.

# Incentives for Dairy farming in 2022 – Aluthgamage

By **SULOCHANA RAMIAH MOHAN**

Ministry of Agriculture is ready to provide tax relief, low interest loans, land and all other necessary assistance to local investors interested in dairy farming and increasing the production of fresh milk has been announced as a Government policy to which a large sum of money has been allocated for 2022 Minister of Agriculture Mahindananda Aluthgamage said on Tuesday (7). He said by 2024, Sri Lanka should be able to produce 80 per cent of its fresh milk requirement.

The Minister pointed out that by increasing the production of fresh milk and encouraging its consumption, a large amount of money that goes to foreign countries for powdered milk could be saved annually.

He said these while addressing a workshop on challenges and methods of promoting liquid milk production at the BMICH.

"People in Sri Lanka need 720 million litres of liquid milk annually for consumption. However, the annual production of liquid milk in our country is around 420 million litres. Out of them our people consume very little. They also buy milk from rural dairy farmers and sell it to companies. Apart from that a programme to encourage people to drink liquid milk will be implemented. I invite young people to open liquid milk outlets in major cities including Colombo. We are ready to provide all necessary assistance for that," he said.

"The Department of Animal Production and Health has been working for a long time to raise milk production in the country or to increase the import of powdered milk. Farmers who have been involved in dairy farming in the country in the recent past have not been able to conceive former dairy cows. This is due to the shortage of artificial insemination officers. There are 600 such vacancies. We have spoken to the Ministry of Finance this year and we hope to fill all the vacancies and increase the production and consumption of liquid milk in the country by 80 per cent by 2024," he said.

State Minister of Livestock Development P.B. Herath said that rural dairy farmers could be educated and double the current milk intake. The Minister of State also said that this will increase the amount of liquid milk currently produced locally by about 25 per cent by 2022.

"Increasing the consumption of liquid milk and increasing the production of liquid milk in comparison has now been announced as a government policy. Accordingly, a large sum of money has been allocated to our State Ministry for the year 2022. Until 1977 the consumption of liquid milk in our country was at a high level. Due to the actions of successive governments, the consumption of liquid milk as well as the production of liquid milk has declined".

# Nine saved from drowning

Sri Lanka Coastguard (SLCG) life savers serving in life saving posts in Mirissa, Bentota, Mt Lavinia, and Gopalpuram, Trincomalee rescued nine locals from drowning in five rescue attempts made over the weekend, SLCG said.

They included a 24-year-old male from Malabe rescued from the seas close to Mirissa Beach, six males from Rajagiriywa, Balangoda and Hatton were rescued in

Mt Lavinia, a 29-year-old female from Anuradhapura was rescued in the vicinity of Gopalpuram beach in Trincomalee while a 30-year-old male from Bentota was rescued at Bentota beach.

So far, SLCG life savers have rescued 1,618 including 713 foreigners in a number of successful rescue attempts since the setting up of the SLCG Life Saving Unit in 2009.

(PA)





# No More Power Outages - Lokuge

By FAADHILA THASSIM

Minister of Power, Gamini Lokuge assured there will be no further power outages adding that the Ceylon Electricity Board Senior Engineers Association (CEBSEA), the Ceylon Electricity Board Engineers' Union (CEBEU) and other associated unions have reached an agreement that there will be no such outages.

He added President Gotabaya Rajapaksa held discussions in relation to the issues raised by the unions and the decisions and conditions were communicated and accepted by the unions.

Addressing a Media briefing held at SLPP headquarters yesterday (8), Lokuge further said the power outage was due to a breakdown at the Norochcholai Coal Power Plant, adding that as operations had been restored, there would be uninterrupted

power supply.

He added the issues raised by the CEB Unions pertaining to the Yugadana power plant deal will be thoroughly discussed adding that this is a matter that is also currently before Court.

The CEBEU previously called off the work-to-rule campaign on the basis that President Rajapaksa provided a favourable response to their demands.

## Chinese ship carrying compost not in Lankan waters - Aluthgamage

By FAADHILA THASSIM

Minister of Agriculture, Mahindananda Aluthgamage yesterday (8) informed the Court of Appeal that the Hippo Spirit vessel carrying the controversial Chinese fertiliser consignment has already left Sri Lankan territorial waters while stating that the said shipment was rejected and will not be accepted.

This was when the Writ Petition filed by the Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ) was taken before the Court of Appeal judges, Justices Achala Wengappuli and Dhammika Ganepola.

CEJ in the Petition stated that organic fertiliser from any country could not be imported into Sri Lanka under any circumstance. According to the regulations of the Plant Protection Ordinance imposed in 1981 and the Plant Protection Act No. 35 of 1999 as it prohibits the import of soil particles, living organisms, virus, bacteria or fungus cultures into the country, given that organic manure or compost is made of decomposing animal and plant parts which could consist of pathogens.

They added however that the samples collected from this controversial shipment imported from China that was tested by Sri Lankan authorities, contained bacteria and that the National Plant Quarantine Service did not issue any import permit particularly for this stock.

It was stated that based on these facts, the Director General of Agriculture had issued a letter addressing the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Ports Authority requesting to prevent the berthing of the vessel at the Colombo Port and that no fertiliser from this

consignment should be discharged into Sri Lankan territory, claiming that it carried a huge phytosanitary risk to Sri Lanka.

The Petition further stated that the Ceylon Fertiliser Company also obtained an Enjoining Order from the Commercial High Court against the Chinese Company, Qingdao Seawin Biotech Group Co. Ltd and preventing the People's Bank from making any payment under the Letter of Credit opened in favour of the company which has entered into a contract with Ceylon Fertiliser Company.

"However in spite of all these, the company officially informed the Director General of Agriculture that its consignment of fertiliser would reach Sri Lanka as scheduled" the Petitioners stated.

CEJ therefore filed an urgent motion to ensure that this stock of fertiliser is prevented from entering the country under political or public pressure. CEJ stated that at a previous hearing Court questioned the Attorney General whether the Government is in a position to assure that they will not allow the fertiliser to be unloaded and the legal officer who appeared for Aluthgamage informed the Court of Appeal yesterday (8) that the vessel carrying the fertiliser has already left Sri Lankan maritime space.

Aluthgamage previously stated that the fertiliser in question will not be retested adding that a payment for this shipment will not be made unless they go back and manufacture fertiliser that meets standards and specifications requested by Sri Lanka.



## Navy celebrates 71st Anniversary

Sri Lanka Navy celebrates its 71st Anniversary, today (9) and 1,768 naval personnel have been promoted to coincide with it.

To mark the Navy's customary celebrations, 84 officers and 1,684 ratings were promoted to their next higher ranks/rates with the recommendation of Commander of the Navy, Vice Admiral Nishantha Ulugetenne effective from today (9).

On the sidelines of these celebrations, capital ships of the Sri Lanka Navy will lay at anchor off the Galle Face Green and the ships will be there today (9) and tomorrow (10), allowing the public to catch a glimpse of naval power of the Sri Lanka Navy.

Meanwhile, ranges of celebratory events are conducted in each Naval Command, giving pride and place to naval customs and religious rituals.

As part of the religious segment of the 71st anniversary celebrations the 'Kanchuka Puja' and 'Flag Blessing' ceremonies were held at the Ruwanwelisaya and sacred Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi in Anuradhapura to receive the blessings. Similarly, the Christian Commemoration and Thanksgiving Service was held at St. Lucia's Cathedral, Colombo, and Hindu Puja at Shri Ponnambalawaneswarar Kovil and Islamic religious rituals at the Jumrah Mosque on Chatham Street.

Further, a Navy sponsored Reverse Osmosis (RO) plant built at Kelambiyawa in Polpithigama, Kurunegala was declared open by Deputy Area Commander Northwestern Naval Area today (9) to coincide with the 71st Anniversary of Sri Lanka Navy.

(NV)

## Govt doctors to counter moves in State sector pay hikes

By DILANTHI JAYAMANNE

Government doctors warned that they would counter any move made by recommendations from the Cabinet or a letter from a Minister to increase the pay of a section of government service employees including those in the health service without adhering to the National Wages Policy (NWP) or the recommendations given by the National Pay Commission (NPC).

Secretary of the Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA), Dr. Senal Fernando accused the former government of violating the NWP by increasing the salaries of judges. It created severe discrepancies in the salaries of several sections in the State service. "We appreciate

the fact that teachers and the health services were affected by these ad hoc decisions taken by Cabinet or parliamentarians who send letters reassuring one category of the State service that their wage issues would be resolved," he observed.

Dr. Fernando warned that any attempts to introduce salary revisions of any profession in particular would only result in more strikes unless it is done according to the NWP according to recommendations of the NPC. Sources of the NPC when contacted for comment said that it was looking at the salary scales of State sector employees in a bid to follow a new pay scale for the State service with the 2022 budgetary recommendations.

## Sialkot lynching BASL urges PM Khan to ensure impartial probe

By FAADHILA THASSIM

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) in a letter to Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan requested him to closely monitor the progress of investigations into the lynching of the late Priyantha Kumara in Sialkot over alleged blasphemy. The letter by the President of BASL, Saliya Pieris PC and Secretary Rajeev Amarasuriya sent to Khan through the Pakistan High Commissioner to Sri Lanka noted that BASL has already reached out and sought the assistance of the Pakistan Bar to monitor the progress of investigations.

BASL further called upon the Pakistan Government and its law enforcement agencies to ensure the conduct of an impartial and thorough investigation into the murder and enforce the law in its fullest to protect the rights of the deceased.

## Keselwatte Fawaz murder case One suspect ordered to be remanded till 21 Dec

By HANSI NANAYAKKARA

Colombo Chief Magistrate Buddhika Sri Ragala yesterday (8) ordered another suspect who was arrested and produced on charges of assault and murder of Keselwatte Fawaz, to be remanded till 21 December.

The suspect has been identified as Anushka Udayanga alias Saibapillai Ahmad. The CCD making submissions to Ragala stated that the motorcar used for the murder has been located near the Kelaniya Temple based on a statement recorded from one of the suspects arrested in connection to the case.

The suspects have been charged with assault and manslaughter by the CCD before the Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court.



Pic by Laksiri Rukman

## Power plant contracts with foreign entities Colombo protest calls Govt to cancel deals

By THAMEENAH RAZEEM

Hundreds of protestors gathered on the streets of Colombo yesterday (8) to oppose selling national resources to foreigners and for the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) to be given authority to initiate LNG power plant operations.

The CPC, Sri Lanka Ports Authority, and Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) led the Colombo protests,

blaming the Government of dysfunction and fraudulent activities in pushing for investments.

Some demonstrators held signs that read, "The Government is breaching Tender Procedure," "Stop selling the country to China for Dollars," and "Stop selling power plants."

Protesters marched from Colombo Fort Railway Station to the Presidential Secretariat.

## Korean grant of \$4M to bolster Govt Analyst Dept

An agreement was signed between the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Government Analyst Department and the Ministry of Justice yesterday (8) to strengthen forensic drug analysis capabilities of the Government Analyst Department.

This project will be implemented with a grant aid of USD 4 million provided by the Government of the Republic of Korea and includes enhancing laboratory equipment in narcotic drug and forensic toxicology lab, provision of training on narcotic drugs and forensic toxicology and development of a laboratory information management system for the Department.

M.U.M. Ali Sabry, Minister of Justice, M.M.P.K. Mayadunne, Secretary, Ministry of Justice, Kang Young Hwa, Country Director, KOICA and. Gowri Ramanah, Government Analyst were participated in the occasion.

(ER)



## CAA instructs Litro Gas to recall old stocks Consumers to get replacement on Old Cylinders

By THAMEENAH RAZEEM

Litro Gas Lanka Limited (LGL) has been advised by the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) to recall all unused LP gas cylinders supplied to Dealers and Consumers before 4 December.

According to CAA sources, the unused gas cylinders with the old polythene seal will be replaced with cylinders carrying a new seal, as per the laid down criteria. Consumers have been advised to return the unused Litro LP Gas cylinders to the nearest Gas

Distribution Centre for replacements. LGL began supplies of household LP Gas on 6 December according to CAA regulations.

The CAA sanctioned the release of LP Gas to the market on 4 December under three preconditions, viz: non-supply

of previously imported LP Gas stocks to the market, adding Mercaptan to new stocks before they are released to the market and sample testing Gas cylinders, 'one in every 100' during the manufacturing process, serialising and declaring them to the CAA.



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## LP Gas Cylinder Mystery

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), the Renaissance Italian best known for his political treatise 'The Prince' (*Il Principe*) who has often been called the father of modern political philosophy and Political Science, justified evil means including murder to obtain, maintain and retain political power.

Prof. G.H. Sabine in his magnum opus *A History of Western Political Theory* that was a must read for any university student in the subject, says that Machiavelli has been especially known for qualities such as indifference to the use of immoral means for political purposes and the belief that government depends largely on force and craft.

Even today, this trait is seen in some politicians and sabotage is resorted to, to serve those ends destroying life and limb.

Although political murders have been committed not only in ancient Lanka but even in recent times in our history, deliberate acts of sabotage to put the country and the people in difficulty did not exist earlier.

The present tendency to engage in acts of sabotage in pursuit of political power seems to be a microcosm of the macrocosm that agencies such as the CIA are.

Mystery surrounds the domestic cooking LP cylinder gas leaks and those who use liquid petroleum gas (LPG) for cooking are in a state of shock and being in a quandary unable to decide what to do with the gas cylinders they have with them.

Although the two gas companies have resumed issuing gas cylinders with the correct composition to the market, it is not clear whether gas cylinders with the wrong gas composition and faulty valves that have already been sold would be taken back relieving the consumers of having to be with a virtual time bomb in their kitchens, even the ticking caused by the swirling gases being audible!

Why one gas company issued cylinders with the devilish cocktail that caused the first incident on 4 February 2021 and the other company had stopped doing so one day before the first explosion took place, is a big mystery.

Racketeers masquerading as businessmen seem to have had a hand in it. Nothing is impossible for an unscrupulous racketeer.

In Algeria, in the 1950s traders mixed burnt aircraft engine oil with cooking oil and over 10,000 people who consumed it got paralysed.

Exerting political influence with the aim of sabotaging the smooth operation of day-to-day functions to obtain political power in haste with the salivating call to the government, "Go home if you are unable to rule" betrays their craze for leadership.

Six months after the 15 February Parliamentary Election of 1989, the second in command is reported to have said, "We have been in power for only six months and a lot of people will have to die for us to be in power".

It is well-known that businessmen as well as racketeers contribute to the electioneering funds of more than one major political party or alliance vying for political power in return for favours expected from whichever party coming to power and also give money to political leaders who matter.

The latest trend is for prominent professionals and leading professional associations to promote a candidate or a party to get elected and expect to get bonanzas in the form of high positions in State sector institutions or national list parliamentary posts and other personal benefits, which ultimately becomes a headache to the elected.

On the other hand, politicians probably can get their sympathiser businessmen or industrialists to use another as cat's paw to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them as could have happened in the case of the gas cylinder happening. A politician itching to come to power is capable of perpetrating crimes that are even more vicious!

Ceylon Electricity Board Chairman has said that the recent power outage was deliberate although it may not have been sabotage thereby hinting at the possibility of it being so. Earlier on the Minister of Agriculture said the required stocks of chemical fertiliser for the last Yala season was available but that the fertiliser was hoarded by big time dealers to create a scarcity and sell at exorbitant prices. It had the domino effect of reducing production, lowering farmers' income, lessening exports and affecting the people's lives to the extent of bringing about their very deaths!

Who can say for sure that it was not at the behest of interested politicians that the traders did so?

The protests that were ravaging the country for months amidst an unprecedented health crisis had the stamp of well-organised acts of sabotage. The so-called farmers exposing their identity were seen reciting verses to bring out their grievances little realising that their prior preparedness was evident.

It is reiterated that there is a democratic procedure of changing a regime, so it is foolish and vicious to entertain hopes of sending governments home by a mere call.

It is noteworthy that illegal concepts such as being the alternate leader, alternate government and even alternate parliament have come into being in the impatience to enjoy political power: Whereas in the modern home of democracy UK, they have only shadow prime ministers, shadow Cabinets and governments in waiting.

The milk of human kindness, which politicians of the past had in ample measure, especially in the old Galle Face Parliament days, whether they were in power or out of power, of the Left or Right political dispensation, is lamentably sorely lacking today, smacking of a la Machiavelli!



# What Really Matters in the Sino-American Competition?

By **JOSEPH S. NYE, JR.**

The United States and China are competing for dominance in technology. America has long been at the forefront in developing the technologies (bio, nano, information) that are central to economic growth in the twenty-first century. Moreover, US research universities dominate higher education globally. In Shanghai Jiao Tong University's annual Academic Ranking of World Universities, 16 of the top 20 institutions are in the US; none is in China.

But China is investing heavily in research and development, and it is already competing with the US in key fields, not least artificial intelligence (AI), where it aims to be the global leader by 2030. Some experts believe that China is well placed to achieve that goal, owing to its enormous data resources, a lack of privacy restraints on how that data is used, and the fact that advances in machine learning will require trained engineers more than cutting-edge scientists. Given the importance of machine learning as a general-purpose technology that affects many other domains, China's gains in AI are of particular significance.

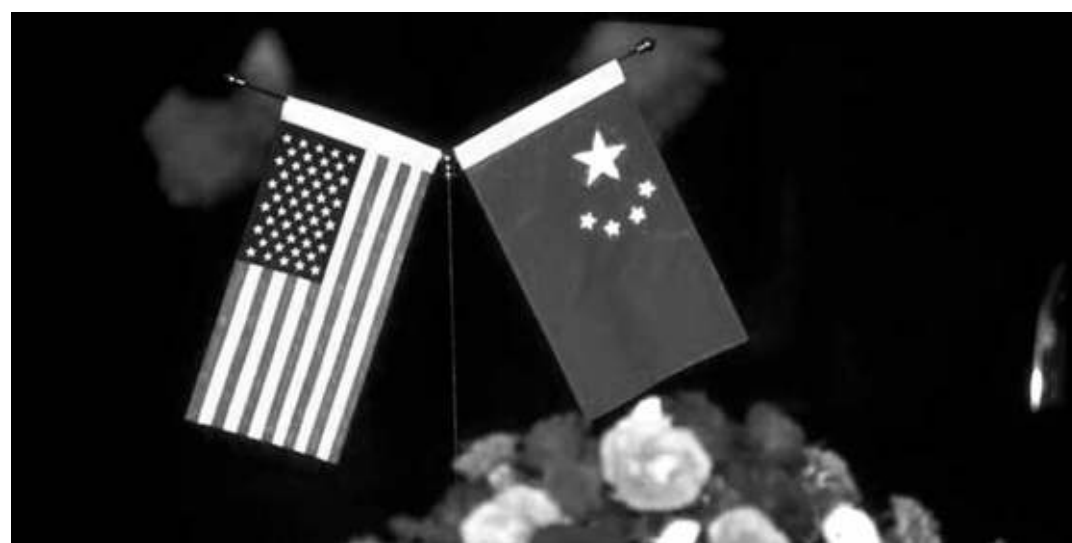
Moreover, Chinese technological progress is no longer based solely on imitation. Former US President Donald Trump's administration punished China for its cybertheft of intellectual property, coerced IP transfers, and unfair trade practices. Insisting on reciprocity, the US argued that if China could ban Google and Facebook from its market for security reasons, the US can take similar steps against Chinese giants like Huawei and ZTE. But China is still innovating.

### 2008 global financial crisis

After the 2008 global financial crisis and the ensuing Great Recession, Chinese leaders increasingly came to believe that America was in decline. Abandoning Deng Xiaoping's moderate policy of keeping a low profile and biding one's time, China adopted a more assertive approach that included building (and militarizing) artificial islands in the South China Sea, economic coercion against Australia, and the abrogation of its guarantees with respect to Hong Kong. In response, some people in the US began to talk about the need for a general "decoupling." But as important as it is to unwind technology supply chains that directly relate to national security, it is a mistake to think that the US can decouple its economy completely from China without incurring enormous costs.

That deep economic interdependence is what makes the US relationship with China different from its relationship with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. With the Soviets, the US was playing a one-dimensional chess game in which the two sides were highly interdependent in the military sphere but not in economic or transnational relations.

With China, by contrast, the US is playing three-dimensional chess with vastly different distributions of power at the military, economic, and transnational levels. If we



ignore the power relations on the economic or transnational boards, not to mention the vertical interactions between the boards, we will suffer. A good China strategy therefore must avoid military determinism and encompass all three dimensions of interdependence.

### Disruptive populism

The rules governing economic relations needs to be revised. Well before the pandemic, China's hybrid state capitalism followed a mercantilist model that distorted the functioning of the World Trade Organization and contributed to the rise of disruptive populism in Western democracies.

Today, America's allies are far more cognisant of the security and political risks entailed in China's espionage, coerced technology transfers, strategic commercial interactions, and asymmetric agreements. The result will be more decoupling of technology supply chains, particularly where national security is at stake. Negotiating new trade rules can help prevent that decoupling from escalating. Against this backdrop, middle powers could come together to create a trade agreement for information and communication technology that would be open to countries meeting basic democratic standards.

One size will not fit all. In areas like nuclear non-proliferation, peacekeeping, public health, and climate change, the US can find common institutional ground with China. But in other areas, it makes more sense to set our own democratic standards. The door can remain open to China in the long run; but we should accept that the run could be very long indeed.

Notwithstanding China's growing strength and influence, working with likeminded partners would improve the odds that liberal norms prevail in the trade and technology domains. Establishing a stronger transatlantic consensus on global governance is important. But only by cooperating with Japan, South Korea, and other Asian economies can the West shape global trade and investment rules and standards for technology, thereby ensuring a

more level playing field for companies operating abroad.

Taken together, democratic countries' economies will exceed China's well into this century; but only if they pull together. That diplomatic factor will be more important than the question of China's technological development. In assessing the future of the US-China power balance, technology matters, but alliances matter even more.

### US response

Finally, a successful US response to China's technological challenge will depend upon improvements at home as much as on external actions. Increased support for research and development is important. Complacency is always a danger, but so, too, is lack of confidence or an overreaction driven by exaggerated fears. As former MIT Provost John Deutch contends, if the US attains its improvements in innovation potential, "China's great leap forward will likely at best be a few steps toward closing the innovation leadership gap that the United States currently enjoys."

Immigration also will play an important role in maintaining America's technology lead. In 2015, when I asked former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew why he did not think China would surpass the US, he pointed to America's ability to draw upon the talents of the whole world – a possibility that is barred by China's ethnic Han nationalism. It is no accident that many Silicon Valley companies have Asian founders or CEOs.

With enough time and travel, technology inevitably spreads. If the US lets its fears about tech leakage shut it off from such valuable human imports, it will surrender one of its biggest advantages. An overly restrictive immigration policy could severely curtail technological innovation – a fact that must not get lost in the heated politics of strategic competition.

**Joseph S. Nye, Jr. is a professor at Harvard University and author of *Do Morals Matter? Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump* (Oxford University Press, 2020) (Courtesy-[www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org))**



# Towards a Sri Lankan Foreign Policy

By UDITHA DEVAPRIYA

What should Sri Lanka's foreign policy be? What are the factors that should guide it? What priorities must we set, what responsibilities must we have? How do we distinguish between friends and foes? What kind of relationship do we maintain with the latter? More crucially, how can we forge a foreign policy lasting into the long term, instead of letting it be a caprice of leaders, parties, and Governments?

At present, Sri Lanka's foreign policy suffers from three weaknesses. Firstly, it does not give pride of place to the people who matter. This is why most diplomatic postings turn out to be political appointments. Secondly, it lacks coherence and consistency. This is why, as Rajiva Wijesinha notes in his book *Representing Sri Lanka*, the second Mahinda Rajapaksa regime conducted a stellar campaign of responding to our foes, and later disastrously replaced this policy of engaging with their allegations with one of evading them.

Thirdly and most devastatingly, we are still carrying a colonial baggage, or as I like to call it, a postcolonial colonial baggage. This is why, again as Dr. Wijesinha points out in his excellent work, even as avowedly nationalist an administration like Mahinda Rajapaksa's could allow those who thought condescendingly of Third World solidarity and thought the world of the West to find their way to high places. Ironically enough, while these same individuals went back on their political paymasters and switched sides, the more effective officials, who had worked on time and overtime to defend national interests, forge ties with the Global South, and respond effectively to Western allegations, were sacked or let down.

Without addressing these issues, no amount of rhetoric or cosmetic reforms will set our foreign policy right. This is evident enough. The disastrous policies of the last regime have given way to the disastrous policies of this regime. Contrary to commentators who see their policies as different, I view them on a continuum. I do so for a simple reason: regardless of ideological differences between these two regimes, in the realm of foreign affairs they more or less adhere to the same philosophy, that of loyalty to one bloc or the other.

The high point of Sri Lanka's relations with the world was the second Sirimavo Bandaranaike administration. That administration remains a case in point for the truism



that a successful foreign policy does not always translate into a successful domestic policy; this is why, while taking the lead in the Non-Aligned Movement and hosting its fifth summit in Colombo, the Government fell massively to the Opposition barely a year later. However, insofar as foreign affairs are concerned, Bandaranaike maintained friendships, managed hostilities, and mediated conflicts elsewhere, at a level that has not been equalled or surpassed since, with the exception of the first Mahinda Rajapaksa regime and, despite the fact the President of the day did not always listen to him, Lakshman Kadirgamar's tenure.

Everything changed under the J. R. Jayewardene Presidency. To quote Rajiva Wijesinha, that Government "spawned a breed of diplomats who thought the Cubans uncivilised and the Africans unreliable." Such attitudes did not infect just our foreign service, but our political consciousness as well, so much so that today, even the most explicitly nationalist and insular among us cave into a pro-Western mindset, whether we talk of economic policy or foreign relations. Indeed, much of the reason for Mahinda Rajapaksa's downward spiral during his second presidency was the access these elements had been granted to the Foreign Service, a trend which ran counter to, but also in a way supplemented, his Government's even more disastrous goal of not responding to Western allegations.

Perhaps the most damning thing to come out of this is the fact that Sri Lankan people, in general, sway between these two polarising mentalities: that of shunning our enemies and that of caving into them. In his book, Dr. Wijesinha shows us how these two coincided with and

Much as Sri Lanka's ruling class tried to remake foreign policy in their image, it ultimately became shaped by circumstances beyond their control. In the *Yahapalana* era we saw how, after openly clashing with Beijing, the UNP had to return with a begging bowl. We are seeing similar developments with the present regime as well

reinforced each other, and how the same people who were to be the leading lights of the avowedly pro-Western *Yahapalana* Government were appointed to high positions under the Rajapaksa Government. How colonial-minded we have become, in this regard, came out some time ago, when Dayan Jayatilaka was appointed as Sajith Premadasa's Senior Adviser on International Relations: among the many overwhelmingly negative responses on Twitter, one commentator bemoaned that Premadasa had appointed someone who would liaise, not with the West, but with what he saw as inferior Cubans and Africans.

The central challenge is to become more local while becoming more international in our outlook. This is not really a difficult challenge. It is possible. All we need to do is rethink our conceptions of the world and our assumptions about the international system. We need to consider who our friends are and decide whether relationships should be based on relevant criteria, like national interests, or irrelevant criteria, like party ideology.

The fact that it took the latter into account and prioritised them explains the policy detours of the *Yahapalana* Government, particularly its badmouthing of China and its obeisance to Western powers. We obviously need to steer clear of such extremities, embracing a middle way through which we can recognise our friends, not for how their politics coheres with the ideology of the country's elites, but for what they can bring to the country.

The recent debacle over fertilisers from China shows that even the most solid of friendships won't survive official bungling. By contrast, the Government's and the Opposition's response to Priyantha Kumara's murder in Pakistan was well thought out and quite rational, balancing a recognition of our ties with that fine country and the urgency of the need to deliver justice to the victim and his killers. Diplomacy is the art of knowing the interests that bind countries together. Those interests should be based on relevant considerations, not irrelevant criteria like the political-economic models of those our leaders consider as their friends.

Historically speaking, of course, Sri Lanka's foreign policy has tended to adjust to external factors. That this has been so despite the best attempts of its leaders and other interests to tilt towards one power bloc over another shows how those factors prevailed, and continue to prevail, over other considerations. A case in point would be Sri Lanka's attitude to China in the first few years of her independence: although the country refused to recognise Beijing and establish formal relations with it, when its trade balance began to record steep declines Colombo sent a delegation there, notwithstanding US opposition.

These delegations led to the Rubber-Rice Pact, an agreement that continued to be opposed, right up to its enactment, by certain MPs, prime among them the then Finance Minister J. R. Jayewardene. However, with no alternative in sight, Colombo stayed with Beijing.

It must be noted that 13 years later the UNP, led by the same person who had been Prime Minister in that earlier period, Dudley Senanayake, promised to revisit relations with China, only to reverse gear on several issues after assuming office. Senanayake had considered getting Sri Lanka in ASEAN, perhaps to ally the country with the comprador elite's preferred Cold War powers. Yet, on two occasions, both under UNP Governments, we failed to get in: first under Dudley Senanayake, who feared losing the benefits of the Rubber-Rice Pact if it were rescinded, and later under J. R. Jayewardene, whose emissary Ranasinghe Premadasa failed to convince ASEAN leaders that Sri Lanka was a prospect worth having.

The point I am trying to make is that, as much as Sri Lanka's ruling class tried to remake foreign policy in their image, it ultimately became shaped by circumstances beyond their control. In the *Yahapalana* era we saw how, after openly clashing with Beijing, the UNP had to return with a begging bowl. We are seeing similar developments with the present regime as well: despite being elected to power on a nationalist and, as per liberal accounts, deeply anti-Western platform, the Gotabaya Rajapaksa administration has, under the pressures of a pandemic, been forced to conduct a delicate balancing act between our traditional allies, in particular China, and other countries, including India and the US.

Nationalist and liberal commentators alike may bemoan these developments. But in the long run, foreign policy adjusts, not to the preferences of political interest groups, but rather to objective conditions which are not always of our choosing. It is by recognising this that we can hope to conduct foreign affairs on the basis of the national interest.

Sri Lanka is yet to formally acknowledge these truisms. It did under Sirimavo Bandaranaike, when we had world-class diplomats conducting negotiations and maintaining friendly ties with everyone we could ever hope to count on. We have gone back, in many respects, since those days. To return to where we were before we reversed gear, of course, is a priority the present Government must look into. Here we should take the pandemic, not as a threat, but rather an opportunity: an opportunity to course-correct. It is not too late.

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## The Carpetbaggers

Truth is stranger than fiction: A soap opera that's a thinly veiled biopic on the contemptible eccentric billionaire tycoon Howard Hughes. It's based on the best-selling novel by Harold Robbins and adapted to the screen by John Michael Hayes.

Edward Dmytryk directs it with an eye for piling on the dirt and shows how he managed to move from making meaningful small noir films in the 1940s to becoming a journeyman director creating this meaningless big-budget studio films (this one was budgeted at \$3 million and grossed ten times that much) in the 1960s, with a stop along the way as an imprisoned blacklisted director and later an informer on Hollywood Commies getting him back in the good graces of the studios.

George Peppard plays with vigor the domineering, glowering playboy Jonas Cord Jr., the airplane manufacturer turned movie director who is one-dimensionally ruthless in his aims to acquire immense wealth and be a bigger success than his father.

The sleazy pulp film was a blockbuster smash hit upon its release, proving to Hollywood that bad taste pays rich dividends.

Alan Ladd, by this time in the down side of his career and a heavy boozier, plays one of the few characters in the film who is bearable and stands out for his valiant performance as the good ole cowpoke Nevada Smith who still seems human and is around to offer Jonas moral guidance.

It was the 43-year-old Ladd's last film appearance, he died



of an accidental overdose of sedatives and alcohol after the film was shot. The flashy role goes to sexpot Carroll Baker, who has the right body parts for the part of the Harlowesque

figure and makes the most of her juicy role.

In 1925, Jonas Cord Junior's father dies of a stroke and the wastrel son inherits the Cord Chemical factory, a

manufacturer of dynamite and other explosives.

The twentysomething son immediately assumes control of the company, gets rid of the minority shareholders in a buyout, gets his father's lawyer Mac McAllister to stay on and run the company after giving him a considerable raise.

Old family pal Nevada Smith takes a powder, while Rina Marlowe, the girlfriend Jonas brought home only to have his father steal her from him by marrying her, exits to Europe when Jonas rejects her advances.

The ambitious cold-hearted Jonas expands dad's firm into aviation and plastics, marries the flippant Monica Winthrop and becomes an even more rotten guy than first thought by totally ignoring his bride.

Smith goes to Hollywood and catches on as a popular silent film cowboy idol (some say Ladd was playing the part of Ken Maynard, silent-screen cowboy star and friend of Hughes's father), and Jonas produces his films.

Marlow becomes a fashion model and actress, who Jonas produces films for and makes into a star.

Then Jonas has to battle movie mogul Bernard B. Norman and duplicitous agent Dan Pierce, and when he tires of Marlow he converts ex-prostitute Jennie Denton into a star to replace Marlow.

Jennie Denton's character was supposedly inspired to be on Jane Russell, a Hughes protégé.

There's even an unearned moralistic conclusion whereby Jonas gets his comeuppance and the heel becomes a repentant figure going back to his good wife after being humbled and realizing the folly of his ways.



# Escaping the Pandemic

By **PROF. TISSA VITARANA**

The global economic crisis has been aggravated by the health crisis due to COVID-19. In Sri Lanka these have been compounded by a severe food crisis. The impact of the global economic crisis has been mainly the result of the neo-liberal policies, based on a market economy, followed since 1977 by rightist forces, both abroad and here. Led by the UNP, serving the interests of the USA and its Imperialist allies, the local comprador, capitalist class. This has undermined the gains that were made since 1956 through the establishment of a national economy regulated by the Centre Left (SLFP, LSSP, CP) Governments serving the people, and the national capitalist class. The SLPP-led Government returned to the national economic path after its massive victory over the UNP led "Yahapalanaya" Government. But already the people are disappointed that there has not been any change for the better in their situation. There is a massive increase in the price of food due to uncontrolled exploitation by the private sector. With 60 per cent of families living below the poverty line and the malnutrition rate going to a high level of 18 per cent not only are the people unable to buy much of their essential food requirements, many of them having to manage with one meal a day. People are asking "why there is no change" with the present Government coming into power and making Basil Rajapaksa the Minister of Finance. The short answer is the failure to follow the progressive path taken by the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Government under the guidance of the LSSP leader Dr. N.M. Perera as the Finance Minister.

The Foreign Exchange situation has also deteriorated sharply. The Foreign Exchange Reserve which used to average USD 8 Billion (sufficient for 6 months imports) has fallen to less than USD 2 Billion (sufficient for 1.3 months). This poses a serious threat to obtaining our imports, and impedes the use of Letters Of Credit (LOC), so that importers may have to make the payments in advance. An import shortage, even of essential items like medicines, can occur. I would suggest that the Government should take firmer action to drastically reduce non-essential imports so as to conserve the foreign exchange. The Government should have a better planned programme to increase

exports by promoting the hi-tech institutes in the areas of nanotechnology (SLINTEC) and biotechnology (SLIBTEC) to develop large scale industries, as well as small and medium (SME) industries. I am informed that besides helping to promote over 12000 SME's for the local market, and over a 1000 are now exporting their products, with the help of the Vidatha Centres. These were established during my 10 year term as Minister of Science and Technology. I hope that the Government will give more assistance to these institutions and promote their research efforts. For instance at SLINTEC Dr. Nilwala Kottegoda and her team have produced nano particles with 43 per cent nitrogen (ten times more than what was imported recently from India) to solve the fertiliser problem.

## Step by step process

While welcoming the decision of the President to replace chemical fertilisers with organic, the process should be done step by step on a scientific basis. The decision to produce the organic fertiliser through the private sector companies on a commercial scale may lead to exploitation of the farmers. This should be reconsidered as it is possible to train the farmers to produce their own organic fertiliser. Dr. Lionel Weerakoon, who is a former director of research in the Agriculture Department with years of research behind him, is an expert in the fertiliser field and his advice should be obtained. He is a representative for the South Asian region of the World Commission of the La Via Campesina (which is a farmer federation with over 200 million members worldwide). He along with his team fine-tuned his technology and used it while I was Governor in the North Central Province. He is now assisting the Governor of the Eastern Province in all 3 Districts. His methodology should be extended to all parts of the island. He has modeled his methods on those of Subash Pallickar, whose successful campaign in India has led to him being called the 'Gandhi of the farmers'. Their approach is by getting the farmers to produce the organic fertiliser to suit their individual needs on a scientific basis. I would recommend this approach to avoid further exploitation of our farmers who are already deeply in debt. This together with the replacement of monocrops by mixed farming,



**Dr. Lionel Weerakoon encourages farmers to produce organic fertiliser to suit their individual needs on a scientific basis**

The decision to produce organic fertiliser through private sector companies on a commercial scale may lead to exploitation of the farmers. This should be reconsidered as it is possible to train the farmers to produce their own organic fertiliser. Dr. Lionel Weerakoon, who is a former director of research in the Agriculture Department with years of research behind him, is an expert in the fertiliser field and his advice should be obtained

including leguminous plants like green gram will provide adequate nitrogen to the soil.

While the above measures provide healthy food, the solution of the food crisis also requires eliminating the exploitation of the farmer and the consumer by a whole ring of profiteering middleman, both traders and mill owners. This was overcome during the time of Dr. N. M. Perera by his active promotion of the state. Besides getting rural banks to prevent farmers getting into debt, he got the state to compete with the private sector in the marketing of the farmers produce. He mobilised progressive elements in the government as well as the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) to form more farmer cooperatives as well as consumer cooperatives that directly interacted, doing away with the profiteering middleman. The consumer cooperatives were able to give all the essential food items at a low cost, while ensuring quality. He even gave the poorest sections of the population a free measure of rice. No one died of hunger or starvation in Sri Lanka, while thousands were dying in other third world countries, due the severe drought that had affected the whole world. The magnitude of the food crisis in 1972/73 is evident when the price of a ton of sugar, which was imported at £ 40 per ton, went up to £ 600 per ton. No doubt there were queues due to the limited number of cooperative outlets. Outsourcing to traders was not done so as to prevent profiteering and black marketing, which was entrenched in society.

## Covid-19

The other major health problem beside starvation confronting our people is the worldwide pandemic of Covid-19 which is continuing with the emergence of the new variant Omicron which is said to be 500 times more transmissible than the existing Delta virus. I feel that the magnitude of the Covid problem could have been reduced earlier if my suggestion at the Parliamentary Health Advisory Committee, chaired by the Minister of Health, had been implemented. At the early stage of the appearance of community spread occurring at that time I stated that the cluster control system would not suffice. A community based intensive campaign to educate every citizen and to ensure that they observed the health rules to prevent transmission had to be ensured. This was to set up properly trained

volunteer Covid committees throughout the country right down to village and work place levels. The Covid committee should be officially empowered to strongly reprimand those not observing the 4 health rules for its prevention. (The wearing of proper mask outside the home at all times, adequate self-distancing, the washing of hands with soap and water after touching any object that has been recently touched by others, and avoiding crowds.) It must be remembered that vaccination only prevents a person falling severely ill and dying, but does not prevent transmission of infection through the vaccinated person. The practice of these health rules should become automatic by every individual in the country if transmission is to be prevented. This needs the Covid committees not only to educate the people in the village or work place, but also to ensure that everyone obeys the health rules.

The Government must be commended for its procuring vaccines to immunise a significant proportion of the population. This together with the immunity developed as a result of the natural spread of the virus in the community will provide sufficient herd immunity. Since the immunity from vaccination lasts only for a short period of less than six months the question is whether repeated injections are necessary after the third dose is given. In my view this is only necessary in the vulnerable groups (those over 60 and those with relevant co-morbidities). Many people are confused by the need to make a choice from among many vaccines. While the vaccines produced in countries like UK, India and China are based on the traditional methods used and are safe and effective, I am reluctant to support the Government policy of persisting with the new mRNA vaccines (which have not been used before on humans). This is a pure genetic material which is less stable than DNA and is capable of bringing about various undesirable changes within the genetic material in our body cells. There have been many reports of reactions after the use of the Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines even in Sri Lanka and I know of cases that have had to be admitted to hospital. As the herd immunity builds up as expected within our community vaccination is indicated only in vulnerable groups then the safer conventional vaccines should be used even if they are more expensive than the mRNA vaccines.

# Call for action on plastic pellets

By **MICHAEL GREGSON**

The International Maritime Organisation has agreed to discuss a proposal to reclassify plastic pellets as hazardous substances. The request will be considered at the London headquarters of the UN agency in the spring.

The move comes after the nature conservation group, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), presented the IMO with a petition signed by more than 72,000 people demanding that action be taken to prevent more spillages of the pellets, better known as nurdles.

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

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

Since the disaster, nurdles have been washing up in their billions along hundreds of miles of the country's coastline, and are expected to make landfall across Indian Ocean coastlines from Indonesia and Malaysia to Somalia. In some places they are up to 2 metres deep. They have been found in the bodies of dead dolphins and the mouths of fish. About 1,680 tonnes of nurdles were released into the ocean. It is the largest plastic spill in history, according to the UN report.

Nurdles, the colloquial term for "pre-production plastic pellets", are the little-known building block for all our plastic products. The tiny beads can



**Nurdles, a threat to the environment are not yet deemed hazardous under the IMO's dangerous goods code for safe handling and storage**

be made of polyethylene, polypropylene, polystyrene, polyvinyl chloride and other plastics.

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

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

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

"The pellets themselves are a mixture of chemicals – they are fossil

fuels," says Tom Gammage, of the EIA. "But they act as toxic sponges. A lot of toxic chemicals – which in the case of Sri Lanka are already in the water – are hydrophobic [repel water], so they gather on the surface of microplastics."

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

Now environmentalists have joined forces with the Sri Lankan government in an attempt to turn the XPress Pearl disaster into a catalyst for change. "There is nothing to stop what happened in Sri Lanka happening again," says Gammage.

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

Such incidents are preventable, campaigners say. "The sinking of the X-Press Pearl – and spill of chemical products and plastic pellets into the seas of Sri Lanka – caused untold damage to marine life and destroyed local livelihoods," says Hemantha Withanage, director of the Centre for Environmental Justice in Sri Lanka.

But at last awareness is growing about the huge threat posed by the tiny pellets and pressure is growing for the IMO to act – before another country suffers the same way as Sri Lanka.



# Germany's Scholz to Take Over from Merkel as Chancellor

Olaf Scholz will be sworn in as German chancellor on Wednesday (8), leading a three-party Government that takes over from Angela Merkel after 16 years in office.

The German Parliament, where his coalition has a substantial majority, will first vote him into office.

His new government is formed of Social Democrats, Greens and Free Democrats.

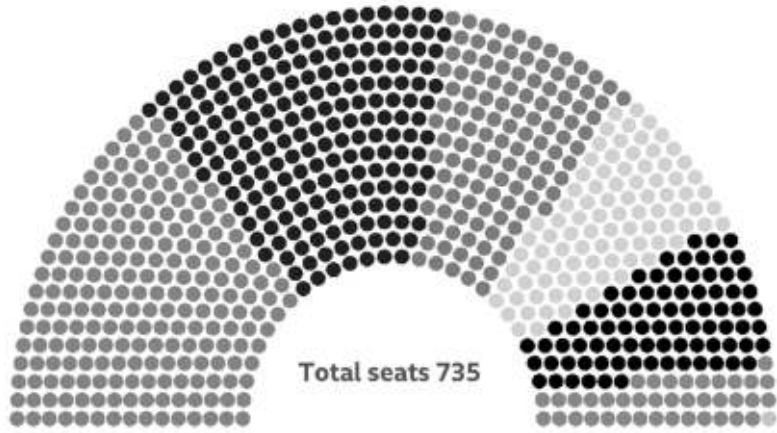
The handover of power also marks an end to Merkel's 31-year political career.

Scholz, a soft-spoken 63-year-old, steered the Social Democrats to election victory in late September, positioning himself as continuity candidate because he played a key role in the Merkel government as vice-chancellor.

After the vote in the German Parliament, the Bundestag, he will go to see President Frank-Walter Steinmeier before returning at

## How the new German parliament looks

- SPD (206)
- CDU-CSU (196)
- Greens (118)
- FDP (92)
- AfD (83)
- Linke (39)
- SSW (1)



Source: German Federal Returning Officer

BBC

midday (11:00 GMT) to be sworn in. Since the election his party has worked with the Greens and business-friendly Free Democrats

on a coalition deal, which was finally signed on Tuesday (7). He is set to take over from Merkel at 15:00.

The new government has ambitious plans to fight climate change by phasing out coal early and focusing on renewable energy, but their initial priority will be on tackling the coronavirus pandemic. Health authorities have recorded another 69,601 cases in the past 24 hours and a further 527 deaths - the highest number since last winter.

First elected in December 1990, Angela Merkel was immediately given a ministerial job by then Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

But she then helped oust him and became Christian Democrat leader in 2000, before becoming chancellor herself in November 2005.

She will still have an office close to the Bundestag, in a flat that was once used by Margot Honecker, once dubbed the most powerful woman in communist East Germany.



Olaf Scholz played a key role in the Merkel Government as Finance Minister and vice chancellor (BBC)

## Vaccines should work against Omicron COVID variant - WHO



Lab tests in South Africa suggest Omicron could evade the Pfizer jab (BBC)

Existing vaccines should still protect people who contract the Omicron variant from severe COVID cases, a World Health Organisation (WHO) official says.

It comes as the first lab tests of the new variant in South Africa suggest it can partially evade the Pfizer jab.

Researchers say there was a 'very large drop' in how well the vaccine's antibodies neutralised the new strain.

But the WHO's Dr Mike Ryan said there was no sign Omicron would be better at evading vaccines than other variants.

"We have highly effective vaccines that have proved effective against all the variants so far, in terms of severe disease and hospitalisation, and there's no reason to expect that it wouldn't be so" for Omicron, Dr Ryan, the WHO's emergencies director, told AFP news agency.

He said initial data suggested Omicron did not make people sicker than the Delta and other strains. "If anything, the direction is towards less severity," he said.

The new South African study - which has not yet been peer-reviewed - found the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine may result in up to 40 times fewer neutralising antibodies against Omicron than against the original COVID strain.

But Omicron's ability to escape vaccine antibodies is "incomplete", said Prof Alex Sigal, a virologist at the Africa Health Research Institute, who led the research.

He said the results, based on blood tests from 12 people, were

'better than I expected of Omicron'.

Prof Sigal said vaccination, combined with previous infection, could still neutralise against the variant. That suggests boosters may bring a significant benefit.

Scientists believe previous infection, followed by vaccination or a booster, is likely to increase the neutralisation level and will probably protect people against severe disease.

More data on how well the Pfizer jab works against Omicron is expected to be released in the coming days.

There is no significant data yet on how the Moderna, Johnson & Johnson and other jabs hold up against the new variant.

Omicron is the most heavily mutated version of coronavirus found so far.

It was first identified in South Africa, where there is now a surge in the number of people catching COVID multiple times.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman said early signs suggested Omicron could be more transmissible than the current Delta strain.

But Omicron's ability to cause severe disease is not yet clear.

Dr Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious diseases expert, said early evidence suggests Omicron could be more transmissible but less severe.

There have been more than 267 million cases and more than five million deaths around the globe since the pandemic started in 2020, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

(BBC)

## Paris, France

# China is biggest captor of journalists - Report

A new report by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) says China is 'the world's biggest captor of journalists' with at least 127 reporters currently detained.

It said China was conducting an 'unprecedented campaign of repression' worldwide against journalism.

China has justified the arrests of reporters and citizen journalists by accusing them of provoking trouble.

RSF also noted that press restrictions had worsened with the pandemic.

At least 10 journalists and online commentators have been detained for reporting about the COVID-19 crisis in Wuhan.

One of them, former lawyer Zhang Zhan, had initially travelled to Wuhan in February 2020 after reading an online post by a resident about life in the city during the outbreak.

Once there, she began documenting what she saw on the streets and hospitals in livestreams and essays, despite threats by authorities, and her reports were widely shared on social media.

She was later found guilty of 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble' - a charge that is commonly levelled against activists and whistleblowers seen as undermining the government's efforts to control information in the country.

The advocacy group's 42-page report also listed how Chinese authorities used the fight against terrorism as a pretext to detain



Zhang Zhan was named in the report as one of the journalists detained in China (BBC)

Uyghur journalists reporting on Xinjiang.

China has been accused of committing crimes against humanity against what it sees as Islamists and separatists in the majority-Uyghur region.

The report said other methods used included: using its overseas diplomatic missions to attack journalists; media blockades; censorship of topics; forcing local journalists to study Communist Party ideology and download a propaganda application on their phones; and expelling or intimidating journalists.

The BBC's John Sudworth left Beijing for Taipei in April following pressure and threats from the Chinese authorities for his reporting

of China's treatment of the Uyghurs.

China also revoked the company's licence to broadcast within the country in February.

A member of Bloomberg News' bureau in Beijing, Haze Fan, has also been detained since late 2020, with no information forthcoming on her case.

She was last seen being escorted from her apartment building by plainclothes officials on what Chinese authorities allege were suspicion of national security law violations.

RSF ranks China 177<sup>th</sup> out of 180 in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index, just two places above North Korea.

(BBC)

## Yangon, Myanmar

# Soldiers accused of shooting, burning 13 villagers

Soldiers have been accused of killing 13 people from a village in central Myanmar, 11 of whose burned bodies were discovered on Tuesday.

The incident occurred near the city of Monywa, after local militias opposing military rule carried out at least two bomb attacks on a military convoy.

Locals say soldiers then swept through nearby villages, rounding up and killing six men and five teenagers.

The military junta is yet to comment on the incident.

Locals say that people's defence forces volunteers - armed groups formed to resist military rule in towns and villages - from the area planted two improvised explosives on a road used by the military in an attempted attack.

One of these devices detonated early, killing the two men planting it. When the second device exploded, two more men were reportedly detained and shot dead.

Residents allege the military then swept through nearby villages, rounding up and capturing six men and five teenage boys, who were in hiding. Their hands were tied, and they were shot before their bodies set alight.

Armed volunteer people's defence forces in towns and villages in



Myanmar military's violent suppression of pro-military protests has led to more attacks on military targets (BBC)

Myanmar have carried out hundreds of bombings and assassinations targeting officials working with the military government after the violent suppression of pro-democracy rallies made peaceful protest almost impossible.

Mass protests had broken out across Myanmar after the military seized control of the South East Asian country in February and declared a year-long state of emergency following a general election.

The military claimed there had been widespread fraud during the election late last year, which had

returned elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) Party to power. The election commission has dismissed these claims.

Since then, the military has engaged in a brutal campaign of repression, killing at least 1,303 people in the demonstrations and arresting more than 10,600.

Earlier this week, Suu Kyi was sentenced to four years in prison for inciting dissent and breaking COVID-19 rules, in the first of a series of verdicts that could see her jailed for life.

(BBC)



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## Wednesday Markets

### Rs 30B Shareholder Wealth Wiped Out

By **PANEETHA AMERSEKERE**

The bourse yesterday fell amidst sustained net foreign outflows (NFOs) due to uncertainty, resulting in the 'benchmark' ASPI falling by 0.61 per cent to 11,021.07 points, the 'more sensitive' S&P SL 20 Index by 0.12 per cent to 11,021.07 points and shareholder wealth lost Rs 29.95 billion on a Rs 5.67 billion turnover and on a 617.37 million share volume.

The bourse suffered an NFO of Rs 21.89 million yesterday and in the calendar year to date to Rs 50.17 billion, its second largest ever, with its highest being Rs 51.04 billion established last year due to similar uncertainty. The number of days of NFOs the bourse has suffered in the calendar year to yesterday is a record 192 days in its 125 year old history, with the second highest being last year with a figure of 188 market days.

#### 9th Day Fall

Government of Sri Lanka's (GoSL's) at least theoretical money printing borrowing costs (MPBCs) fell for the ninth consecutive market day to yesterday, this time, too, sharply, by 1.64 per cent (Rs 715.45 million) to Rs 42,983.08 million compared to the rate of the fall in GoSL's face value (FV)MP 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.

#### 2nd Highest

GoSL's FVMP debt increased by Rs 3,850 million to reach its second highest figure of Rs 1,819,853.58 million (Rs 1.8199 trillion) due to a lack of revenue. As this increase was to meet an external commitment it was non-demand pull inflationary causing. GoSL's FVMP debt has been over Rs one trillion for a record consecutive 95 market days to yesterday.

#### \$55M Drain

Money market liquidity during yesterday's trading decreased by Rs 11,215 million (US\$ 55.45 million), vis-à-vis, at the discounted, administered, benchmark 'spot' price of Rs 202.25 to the dollar as at Tuesday, due to the possible settlement/s GoSL's foreign debt servicing commitments and/or the release of US dollars from the country's Spartan foreign reserves to make imports of so called essential items.

#### Short 63rd Day

Money market was short for the 63rd consecutive market day to yesterday, thereby causing persistent rate pressure, with market shortfall increasing by 2.31 per cent (Rs 7,365 million) to Rs 325,810 million. Central Bank of Sri Lanka's (CBSL's) open market operations (OMO) data don't capture transactions between 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.

#### Dead 150 days

The interbank foreign exchange (FX) market was 'dead' for the 150th consecutive market day to yesterday, with no outright transactions of worth taking place, coupled with all trades in the FX market, including bank-client trades too, since midnight 6 September, mandated to be executed under a controlled exchange rate (ER) regime of between Rs 202-203 to the dollar, aiding in the spawning of a black market.

## LOLC General Insurance IPO opens on 16th December

LOLC General Insurance Limited has announced an Initial Public Offering (IPO) which will open on 16 December 2021. 120,000,000 shares held by LOLC Asset Holdings Limited will be offered for sale at a price of LKR7.90 per share. The offer size will amount to LKR948,000,000. Post IPO LOLC Group Companies; LOLC Asset Holdings Limited will have a shareholding of 63.75% and LOLC Financial Sector Holdings (Pvt) Ltd will have a shareholding of 26.25%. LOLC General Insurance Limited is one of the fastest growing General Insurance Companies in Sri Lanka. The Company has been operating in the insurance industry for over 10 years and has established itself as a key player within the industry.

# Countering Loan Default Prompt Implementation of Debt Restructuring Vital – Prof. Ricardo Hausmann

## Year 2021 Tax policy revision disastrous to the economy

By **RAJESH SEETHARAM**

A World-renowned economist on Tuesday (7) said in the event of a severe public debt crisis, a debt restructuring process should be initiated without further delay.

"When a country is insolvent, it is better to opt for a debt restructuring programme at the earliest and that the more it delays, the worse it becomes", founder and Director of Harvard's Growth Lab and the Rafik Hariri Professor of the Practice of International Political Economy at Harvard Kennedy School, Professor Ricardo Hausmann said at the recently concluded Sri Lanka Economic Summit organised by the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.

He also said changes in tax policy made in the 2021 Budget could cause Sri Lanka's credit ratings downgrades and additional macroeconomic consequences to coincide with the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the period 2015 to 2018, tax revenues had improved, however in late 2019, the Government reverted to Tax



Prof. Ricardo Hausmann

Reforms by reducing VAT, increase tax threshold and abolishing certain taxes like the PAYE.

"Then a few months later, the world was affected by COVID-19. I happened to work in Albania, Guatemala and Honduras at the time. In 2019, these countries had ratings similar to Sri Lanka. They had the privilege of borrowing at low rates during the

pandemic. Quite in contrast, Sri Lankan ratings were downgraded in 2020, mainly due to loss of tax revenue and with it lost its access to International markets resulting in the current crises.

"To manage the crisis, Sri Lanka has adopted ad hoc policies like capital controls and import restrictions, which create black-market premiums. Sri Lanka has not formulated a credible Fiscal Plan or a Debt Restructuring plan. Inflation is accelerating and so are black market premiums. Under such circumstances of import restrictions and foreign exchange controls, it would be unfavourable to attract new investments.

"The current management of the macro economy reminds me of Latin America in the 1980s and the management of the Venezuelan economy in recent years.

"The 1980s debt crisis was the most traumatic event in Latin America's economic history, known as the lost decade of the continent, it also led to ousting of several dictatorial leaders in Latin America. Thus many Latin

American countries gradually transformed into democracies. Heavy borrowings in the 1960s and 1970s, import restrictions, price controls, 'dependency theory' and sudden hike in oil prices in the mid 1970s, were some of the causes for the said debt crises," said Hausmann.

Hausmann observes that the World Economic Outlook projections for Sri Lanka in 2024, is that GDP growth would be 12 per cent lower than what was projected during October 2019.

Prof. Hausmann said Sri Lanka should come up with a viable Fiscal plan, which includes raising Tax Revenues, and an Exchange rate based on market forces to come out of the current crises.

Furthermore, he said Sri Lanka did the right thing by moving from an Agricultural-based economy to Apparels in the 1990s, but had failed to diversify its exports from that point. However, other countries in Asia which indulged in apparels, gradually moved over to Pharmaceuticals, Electronics, IT, Automobiles, Chemicals and machinery.

## Fitch Ratings 2022 Outlook: Asia-Pacific Sovereigns APAC Sovereigns to make headway on Policy Normalisation in 2022

Global credit rating industry giant Fitch Ratings projects fiscal deficits to narrow in nearly all APAC sovereigns in 2022, as relief measures unwind and revenue ratios rise with the recovery of domestic demand. The narrowing of deficits will generally be modest, however, as governments exercise caution in withdrawing support in view of fragile recoveries and risks to the outlook.

Consolidation strategies were delayed in APAC emerging markets in 2021, as authorities grappled with further outbreaks of COVID-19. For example, Malaysia (BBB+/Stable) rolled out a series of fiscal support packages in 2021. Indonesia (BBB/Stable) relaxed budget targets for 2021 and 2022, even though the authorities aim to bring the deficit back to within their three per cent of GDP ceiling by 2023.

Consolidation efforts are proceeding more steadily in developed markets, where fiscal relief packages were

Modest Narrowing of Fiscal Deficits in APAC  
(General government balance as % of GDP)



larger relative to GDP than in emerging markets and where vaccine rollouts are more advanced.

In contrast to most other APAC sovereigns, we expect fiscal and monetary policies in China (A+/Stable) to loosen in 2022, as the authorities seek to cushion the economic impact of other initiatives that are slowing growth. These include measures to contain property-sector financial excesses, a regulatory crackdown on internet-based companies, and the imposition of mobility restrictions in pursuit of "zero-COVID".

Fitch Ratings see the

sector outlook for APAC sovereigns in 2022 as improving, but China's economic slowdown stands among a number of factors that could pose challenges. Others include the potential for further COVID-19 outbreaks and new variants such as Omicron, and difficult financing conditions associated with US monetary tightening and dollar appreciation. The path of policy normalisation could influence sovereign ratings in APAC, particularly for those on Negative Outlook, such as India (BBB-/Negative), Japan (A/Negative) and the Philippines (BBB/Negative).

## Market Pull for T Bill Investments Reflection of pervasive uncertainty

By **PANEETHA AMERSEKERE**

Yesterday's weekly Treasury (T) Bill auction was a reflection of the uncertainty gripping the market, with the latter's preference to invest in riskless, but low returns T Bills, rather than invest in the lucrative private sector, the engine of growth.

Consequently, Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) accepted 165.11 per cent (Rs 29,719 million) vis-a-vis the original issue of Rs 18,000 million T Bills of 91 day maturities offered, at a weighted average yield (WAY) of 7.05 per cent, a week on week (WoW) fall of 18 basis points (bps).

This phenomenon of CBSL accepting over 100 per cent

of the offers made for the 91 day maturities in order to artificially maintain a low interest rate regime has been going on for the past 36 consecutive weeks to yesterday.

Meanwhile, CBSL accepted 131.92 per cent (Rs 31,661 million) vis-a-vis the original offer of Rs 24,000 million of 182 day maturity at a WAY of 7.84 per cent, down 13 bps, WoW and that of the benchmark 364 day maturity, a miserly 19.25 per cent (Rs 4,620 million) of the original offer to artificially compress rates amidst a sea of sustained inflationary pressure and uncertainty, compared to its original offer of Rs 24,000 million at a WAY of 8.11 per cent, down, a measly one bp, WoW.

CBSL's recent history of controlling rates at least with regard to the 364 day maturities, by selling only spartan amounts, was a practice that began 46 weeks ago, starting with the weekly T Bill auction of 26 January.

Subsequently, CBSL sold the full complement of Rs 66,000 million worth of T Bills offered to the market yesterday, but not in the original quantities earmarked for the respective maturities in question.

Meanwhile, CBSL also has to repay maturing T Bills totalling Rs 50,880 million to the market by tomorrow. Their splits are Rs 29,869 million worth of 91 day maturities, Rs 3,439 million worth of 182 day maturities and Rs 17,572 million worth of 364 day maturities,

## Sri Lanka Economic Summit 2021

### HCL Sri Lanka committed to scaling operations – HCL VP

By **RAJESH SEETHARAM**

As of now, fifty Fortune 500 companies are serviced from HCL Sri Lanka, said HCL Vice President, Srimathi Shivashankar at the Sri Lanka Economic summit 2021.

"HCL is really committed to building Sri Lanka and scaling up operations here. We have the capacity to expand as HCL caters the global 2000 and Fortune 500 companies."

Speaking on the tech industry, she said global companies would invest in countries where there is talented human resource. "To build a USD 5 billion IT industry in Sri Lanka, do we have the right talent? she queried and said "Thus it is important to invest in nurturing talent".

"HCL Sri Lanka has launched many programmes like 'SIGHT', which is a science and IT programme where we have announced million rupee awards to youngsters who can come up with innovative ideas. They also can get mentorship from HCL. Among countries we have exposure to, we find Sri Lankan students to be the best in Science and Mathematics," Shivashankar said.

"There are other work-integrated programmes for students who have completed A-Levels, where they can do higher education while obtaining work experience. Globally such programmes are in demand compared to traditional academic programmes.

"After nurturing human talent, it is important to market Sri Lanka as a place for talented human resource. What my customers in the USA and Europe hear about Sri Lanka is important. Branding Sri Lanka is very vital," Shivashankar added.

Speaking on the brain drain, she said, "I have seen lots of talented Sri Lankan techies abroad. Some of them are CIO's in big corporations. Investments like HCL can reverse brain drain. To attract talented people to the country and to retain the talents within Sri Lanka, branding and image building of Sri Lanka play a major role. Government, NGO's, Private sector can all play a pivotal role in building the brand image of Sri Lanka."

"Also, there are many CIOs and many Sri Lankans abroad. The Government, NGOs, everyone should come together to reverse the brain drain and HCL wants to scale up in Sri Lanka," Shivashankar said.

Speaking at the summit, ICTA Chairman and Director General of the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka, Oshada Senanayake said startups are playing a major role in building the Sri Lankan IT industry. He further said the Northern Province is leading the Sri Lankan startup culture.



## Pandemic recovery

# HNB Disburses Rs 20M in Grants to MSMEs

Sri Lanka's private sector bank with the largest microfinance portfolio, HNB PLC, has disbursed Rs 20 million in grants to 200 micro entrepreneurs and businesses across the country, providing them much-needed support as they seek to rebuild their livelihoods from the devastation caused by COVID-19.

The timely intervention in support of HNB's microfinance customers is part of the 'HNB Oba Venuwen Api' initiative launched by the Bank to assist the country in recovering from the pandemic. The Bank disbursed grants among 117 microfinance customers under the first phase of the initiative last year. Under the second phase of the project, HNB supported 83 microfinance customers this year.

"Both the human and the economic cost of the pandemic has been enormous and the brunt of this has



been felt by small businesses and entrepreneurs," HNB Managing Director and CEO and HNB Sustainability Foundation Chairman, Jonathan Alles said. "As a bank with a long history and extensive expertise in serving the SME sector, HNB is ready to partner in the progress of entrepreneurs in their time of need."

These grants provide up to Rs 100,000 to each beneficiary, for the purposes of reviving and continuing their business, reaffirming HNB's enduring commitment to the Micro,

Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector. The grants are drawn from a fund set up by HNB's Sustainability Foundation and are provided in two phases to a selection of microfinance customers significantly impacted by the pandemic.

The funds provided through the grants will be utilised primarily towards funding urgent working capital requirements, which had been severely depleted due to disruptions resulting from the COVID pandemic.

## In partnership with Nalanda alumni Sampath Cards launches Affinity Credit Cards

Sampath Bank joined hands with the Nalanda College Old Boys' Association to introduce an exclusive line-up of Sampath - Nalanda College Old Boys' Association Visa Signature and Visa Standard affinity Credit Cards.

With this, the Association earns the distinction of becoming the first to secure

a Visa Signature affinity Credit Card for a school in Sri Lanka.

The fraternity of the Nalanda College Old Boys' Association will now be able to access the extensive suite of benefits and privileges that Sampath Cards is renowned for, with these dedicated credit cards that bear their alma mater's insignia.



**Thilak Waththuhewa, Principal, Nalanda College (fourth from left) receives his Sampath - Nalanda College Old Boys' Association Visa Signature affinity Credit Card from Deepal De Silva, Deputy General Manager - Operations and Branch Banking, Sampath Bank**

## Damith Pallewatte appointed Chair of Lanka Ventures, LVL Energy Fund

Senior banker, Damith Pallewatte, who counts over 25 years of experience in key leadership positions at three of Sri Lanka's leading banks, has been appointed the Chairman of Lanka Ventures PLC and LVL Energy Fund PLC.

Pallewatte, whose appointment is effective from 26 November 2021, will also serve as a Non-Independent and Non-Executive Director of the two companies, both of which are listed on the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE).

Lanka Ventures PLC (LVL) is a venture capital company incorporated in 1992 having current majority shareholding with Acuity Partners (Private) Limited, a joint venture company equally held by Hatton National Bank PLC and



**Damith Pallewatte**

DFCC Bank PLC. In June 2006, LVL formed a fully-owned subsidiary under the name LVL Energy Fund (Private) Limited (LEF) to channel its investments in the energy sector. Pallewatte holds a MBA from the Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM), University of Sri Jaywardenepura as well as a wide array of globally-recognised professional qualifications. At present, he serves as the Deputy General Manager (DGM) - Wholesale Banking Group of HNB PLC, overseeing several critical business verticals including Corporate Banking, Emerging Corporates, Trade Finance, Financial Institutions, Islamic Banking, Transaction Banking and Project Finance.

## How LEARN is empowering academics across asia

The Lankan Education and Research Network (LEARN) has been improving network connectivity in South Asia, enhancing the National Research and Education Network (NREN) to connect local educational institutions and academic bodies with the world.

LEARN has also launched several initiatives to strengthen collaboration between local and international academia and NREN engineers, the latest of which is the UPROUSE with LEARN programme.

Together with APNIC, the Royal University of Bhutan, and the Laos Education and Research Network, LEARN is uplifting the NRENs of the two respective Nations, while also aiding several other



countries in the region. The project's Principal Investigator, Prof. Roshan Ragel, and a member of Administrative Support from Sri Lanka, Engineer Thilina Pathirana, provided insights into the programme.

Thilina shared, "It began with a conversation I had

with Sonam Penjor of Bhutan, who I had just met at a conference. Seeing LEARN's work, he requested a training programme for the Bhutanese NREN. Overhearing this, Sotsay Sengvong made the same request on behalf of Laos." Thus, the UPROUSE with

LEARN initiative began to take shape. Under the guidance of Prof. Ragel, a proposal was soon pitched and funding was approved under a grant by the Asi@Connect project.

"Our focus was to uplift the networks of Laos and Bhutan. We're not just conducting workshops, but rather following up and assisting them in applying this knowledge," shared Prof. Ragel.

Thus, UPROUSE with LEARN aims to build capacity, promote R&E collaboration, and provide technical backstopping for three primary areas of network development; namely, IPv6 Implementation, Network Security and Performance, and Domain Name System (DNS) and DNS Security.

## Huawei Sri Lanka launches 'Seeds for the Future 2021'

18-Talented University Students from ICT careers join the programme this year

Huawei Sri Lanka launched its flagship Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme Huawei Seeds for the Future for the sixth year in 2021 with an opening ceremony held on 6 December 2021 under the patronage of the Ministry of Education and the Embassy of China in Sri Lanka. Minister of Education Dinesh Gunawardena, Ambassador of China to Sri Lanka, Qi Zhenhong, Huawei Sri Lanka CEO Liang Yi took part in the event online with students and officials from Huawei Sri Lanka.

Huawei Seeds for the Future helps develop local ICT talents, enhance knowledge transfer, promote a greater understanding and interest in the telecommunications sector, and encourage regional building and participation in the digital community.

This time, 18 Sri Lankan students representing six Universities will receive virtual training, ICT courses, collective and Chinese culture courses to inspire the next generation of leaders through technology. The programme also gives access to knowledge on the ICT industry for tertiary students and delivers them insight on ICT



**Huawei Seeds for the Future launching ceremony**

industries and Huawei's latest technologies.

"The future generation and students are the greatest assets that we have in our country. Investing in people is the centre of our government strategy and policy under the Patronage of our President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. And as the Government of Sri Lanka it is our top priority and we are committed to accelerating more and better investments in human capital development of the country' - health, education, and social protection. The programs such as 'Huawei Seeds for the Future' will enable the technology transformation of future generations

of Sri Lanka", Minister of Education Dinesh Gunawardena said addressing the event.

Meanwhile speaking at the event Ambassador of China to Sri Lanka Qi Zhenhong said he believes, "ICT technology talents are fundamental and crucial for taking the advantage of the benefits of digital transformation." Quoting Chinese President Xi Jinping's speech at the 28th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting that "We need to further develop the digital infrastructure, speed up digital transformation, strive to bridge the digital divide, and promote development of the digital economy in an all-round way."

## Delo's 30,000 km oil drain interval helps heavy duty vehicles

Chevron Lubricants Lanka PLC achieved new heights of product development and technology. Delo took a monumental step forward in the lubricant market by proving an oil drain interval of 30,000 kilometres providing Heavy Duty Diesel Engine vehicle owners with extended service intervals and a plethora of other benefits.

In 2020, Delo underwent a trial in Sri Lanka with reputed local fleet operators - Freight Link & Auto Ezone, carrying out bi-weekly tests on vehicles with single oil drain through an independent test lab in Singapore, whose results proved the 30,000km mileage on two test cycles. Using ISOSYN technology, Delo, has utilised the expertise and experience to develop top tier products that combine premium base oils with high-performance additives to deliver protection to engine parts, granting Delo users performance advantage of 30,000 kilometres on single oil drain, extended engine protection, confidence, durability and savings a spokesman for the Company said.

This innovative technological advancement will grant businesses a stronghold in these uncertain times by enhancing savings potentially of up to 17% through maintenance, service and operational cost reductions, supporting corporate, small and medium sized fleet operators to overcome the difficult economic conditions that the country is currently facing. This development will help



increase availability, reliability and durability of vehicles for fleet operators, enabling them to operate vehicles on the road whilst minimizing service downtime and breakdowns, increasing the ability of engines to withstand damages and generate more income. Furthermore, this development is expected to encourage sustainability through the extended drain intervals, which may then lead to reduced disposal of used oil and help provide vital support to promote environmental protection.

Najam Shamsuddin, MD and CEO of Chevron Lubricants Lanka PLC said, "We have always focused on providing our customers with the best products to protect their vehicles and thereby enable them to gain the maximum benefits."

## Dialog Borella Service Centre re-launched



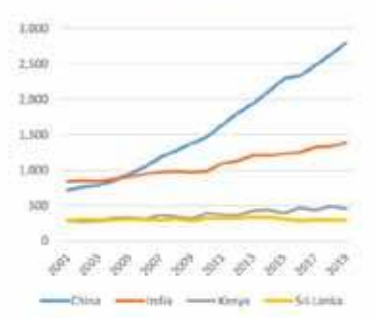
**Apogee International (Pvt) Ltd Executive Director, Ramantha Alles, recently, opened the renovated Dialog Axiata Service Centre in Borella. Apogee International General Manager Project, Dushan Roberts and Senior Manager Sales, Ruwan Hewage also attended the occasion**

*Pix By Amitha Thennakoon*



# Sri Lanka Plantations at the Crossroads - Thrive or Survive?

Figure 1: Tea production of main tea producing countries (1000 tonnes)



Source: FAO Statistics

Figure 2: Sri Lanka's world market share of tea (by volume)

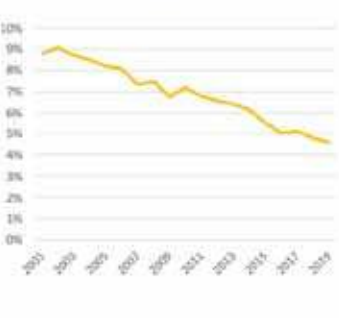
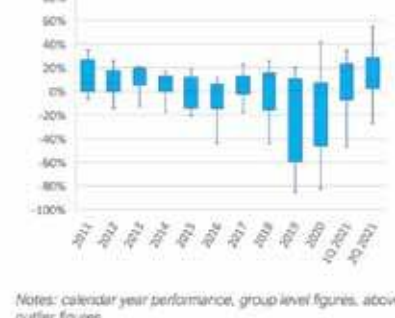


Figure 3: Profitability indicators of the listed RPCs



Return on Equity



Notes: calendar year performance, group level figures, above charts are without the outlier figures  
Sources: RPC annual reports, ICRA Lanka Research

Plantation industry is one of the oldest industries in Sri Lanka and plays a pivotal role in bringing foreign exchange earnings to the country. Once a flourishing industry, it is now facing a decisive period ahead regarding its long-term viability as it demands a great deal of capital expenditure in the next five to ten years. In this report we assessed the ability of the Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs) to finance these expenditures via (1) internal generation, (2) capital infusion, or (3) borrowing. Our findings indicate that majority of the RPCs neither produce sufficient internal generation nor receive adequate capital infusions from the parent companies to finance these investments and as it stands, due to relatively moderate leverage among many RPCs, borrowing is also not a viable long-term option.

## Assessment of long-term viability

The plantation sector has been facing headwinds in the past few decades. Declining production levels, shrinking market share, and meagre profitability pose a major threat to the long-term viability of the industry.

In the past two decades, tea production by Sri Lanka's main competitors; China, India and Kenya, grew roughly at around 8%, 3% and 2% respectively on CAGR basis while the same for Sri Lanka remained more-or-less flat. In fact, Sri Lanka's total tea production slumped in 2020 for third consecutive year since 2017. Sri Lanka ranks fourth on the tea production in terms of the volume. The nation's global market share continues to fall amid stiff competition among the major tea producing countries. In the decade starting from 1960, before the industry was nationalised, Sri Lanka held a market share of over 20% which has now declined to an alarming 5%.

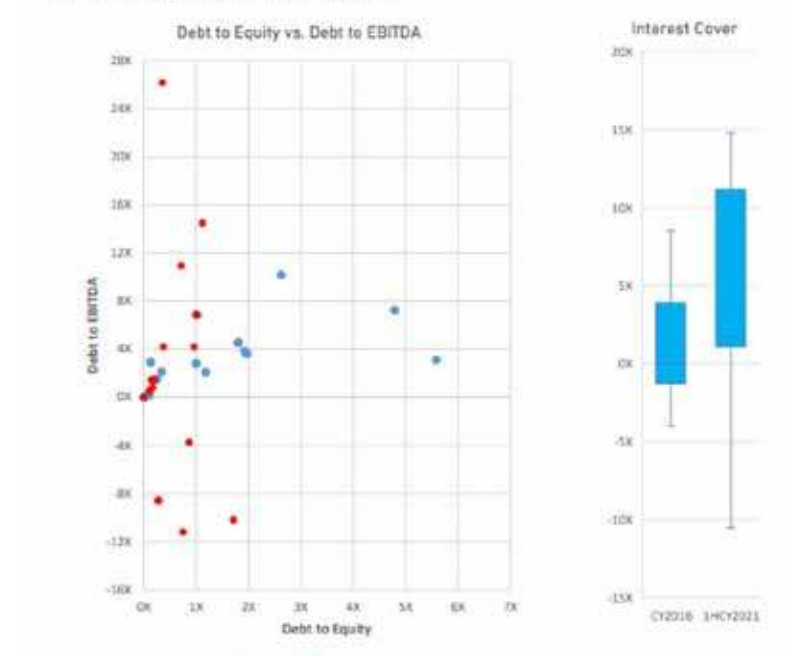
When it comes to profitability, the industry is characterised by volatile revenue growth and high degree of variability in profitability. Only a handful of RPCs managed to remain highly profitable while at least 25% of the companies were consistently making losses in the last decade. From CY2015 to CY2020, with the exception of CY2017, around 50% of the RPCs were making losses. Losses in CY2019 and CY2020 were substantial as seen from the augmented negative ROEs (as high as 80% among some RPCs). An overarching trend that can be observed within the industry is that median net profit margin for the last decade

Untangling the issue

Figure 4: Price of tea and rubber



Figure 5: Debt affordability among the listed RPCs



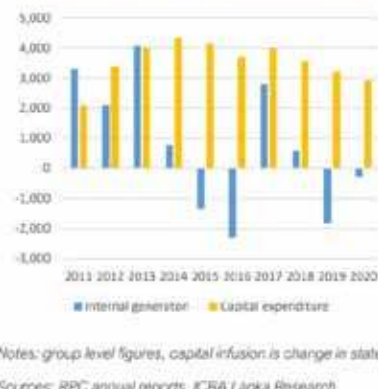
was around 3- to 4 per cent for most years. However, profitability saw a notable increase in 2021CY as rising global demand for tea together with supply disruptions from countries like India and China caused prices of tea and rubber to peak.

Poor performance of the industry with respect to its peers is a culmination of intricately intertwined set of problems. A closer examination allows one to narrow this down to five broad issues. Firstly, prices of tea and rubber, two key crops of the RPCs, are highly volatile, being commodities. Secondly, crop yields are sensitive to vagaries of weather and climatic conditions and adverse weather conditions could lead to revenue losses. Third, lower crop yields generated due to failure to invest in replanting as there is a dominance of older tea bushes (1). Fourth is the scarcity of labour which has a substantial impact on the productivity (2). Fifth is haphazard policy changes by the government, often without any scientific basis, which has caused serious damage to the sector and the profitability of RPCs (3).

## The way forward

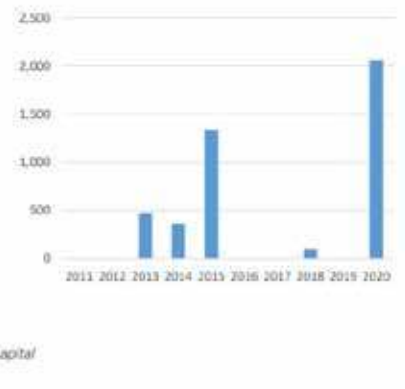
In this context, some RPCs have adopted some strategies in an attempt to improve their profitability and long-term viability. Broadly these strategies can be recognised as replanting, factory upgrade, mechanisation, and diversification. Replanting refers to the process of replanting old plants with newer, vegetatively propagated, more weather resistant varieties. This would generate higher yields, thereby higher revenues. Factory renovations and plant upgrades are also considered mandatory to ensure capacity expansions, quality improvements and increased efficiency. In addition, mechanisation of field and factory operations to minimise dependency on labour will mitigate the risk of escalating cost of production. Some RPCs have already embarked on diversification to curtail the risks associated with volatility in prices. The plantation companies are looking at expanding their product portfolio with relatively less labour-intensive crops that offer better price stability, such as Cinnamon, Pepper etc. RPCs are also taking measures to improve their non-core income generation and have incorporated

Figure 5: Aggregate internal generation against aggregate capital expenditure by the RPCs (LKR Mn)



Notes: group level figures, capital infusion is change in stated capital  
Sources: RPC annual reports, ICRA Lanka Research

Figure 6: Aggregate capital infusion of the RPCs (LKR Mn)



When it comes to profitability, the industry is characterised by volatile revenue growth and high degree of variability in profitability

leisure, tourism and renewable energy into the sector. Promoting eco, natural and tea tourism and the establishment of theme parks are some initiatives RPCs have taken thus far. Renewable energy, first adapted to promote low-impact operations and manage costs in the long run, is now being expanded and considered a potential income generating source as investments are being made especially in hydro and solar energy. The above-mentioned strategies require consistent stream of annual investments by companies for next 5 to 10 years. For instance, it has been estimated that the cost of replanting alone would cost about LKR 1.5 Mn per hectare [2]. During the latest Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance made several remarks on the need to make these investments. However, it is not clear what sort of support the industry is going to receive from the government in this regard.

How can the RPCs finance these costs? Three modes are available for RPCs to finance these investments; profits generated internally, capital infusion, or borrowing. In the last 10-year period, the industry's annual aggregate

capital expenditure peaked to LKR 4.3 billion in 2014 before gradually declining to about LKR 3 billion by 2020. During this reference period, aggregate retained profits, except in two instances, have always remained below the capital expenditure indicating that the RPCs have funded the said investments through other means. Given the volatility in net profits and weaknesses in profitability among a large number of the RPCs, there is very limited ability for the RPCs to utilise internal generation to fund investments.

The aggregate annual capital infusion level is nil for most years and highly irregular over the past decade. In addition, the capital infusion among the RPCs remained highly asymmetric, meaning that only a smaller proportion of the RPCs in fact have received capital infusion from the respective parents to drive investments. Therefore, parent companies of the majority of the RPCs either do not possess or are unwilling to inject capital to their respective RPCs to fund capital expenditure.

Borrowing is the third option

available for RPCs to finance the capital investments. To assess the debt-affordability among the RPCs, we looked at how the relevant ratios have changed from the industry's worst year in terms of financial performance in the last decade (i.e., CY2016) to the latest figures (i.e., 1H CY2021). There is a clear shift from CY2016 to 1H2021 indicating improved debt-affordability. The gearing levels have increased in CY2021 relative to CY2016 indicating greater access to debt financing with improved performance. More importantly, leverage (debt/EBITDA) also has improved significantly, even though three companies are on the higher side. However, the volatility of the earnings and cash-flows remain the bigger challenge in accessing debt, as it affects the consistent/stable debt servicing ability of the RPCs.

## Conclusion

The sector faces price volatilities, vagaries of weather, dwindling crop yields, labour shortages, and the challenge of arbitrary and inconsistent government policy changes often without any scientific basis. Facing up to these challenges are daunting. In addition, the long-term viability of the plantation industry hinges on the need to make investments in upgrading assets, acquiring technology, and changing business models. Required investments in this regard are substantial and have relatively a longer gestation period. Regrettably, as it stands, only few RPCs have the ability and the financial strength to commit to a credible plan to transition out from the current state of affairs.

(ICRA Lanka Limited)

## Key Takeaways

- The Plantation sector has been facing headwinds in the past few decades. Declining production levels, shrinking market share, and meagre profitability pose a major threat to the long-term viability of the industry.
- Poor performance of the industry with respect to its peers is a culmination of intricately intertwined set of problems. Low yielding crops, labour issues, government policy changes, price volatility, and vagaries of weather are among the top problems to the industry.
- When it comes to profitability, the industry is characterised by volatile revenue growth and high degree of variability in profitability. Only a handful of RPCs managed to remain highly profitable while at least 25% of the companies were consistently making losses in the last decade. From CY2015 to CY2020, with the exception of CY2017, around 50% of the RPCs were making losses.
- Majority of the RPCs neither produce sufficient internal generation nor receive adequate capital infusions from the parent companies to finance these investments and as it stands, due to relatively moderate leverage among many RPCs, borrowing is also not a viable long-term option.

The scale and longevity of the global inflation shock has taken most forecasters and central banks by surprise and is bringing forward the start of global monetary policy normalisation, says Fitch Ratings in its latest Global Economic Outlook (GEO), published Yesterday (8).

A strong recovery in global aggregate demand in nominal terms over the past year has not been matched by an equal recovery in output. Supply bottlenecks resulted in real GDP expanding by less than expected in 3Q21, with prices increasing by more than anticipated.

Fitch has cut its 2021 growth forecasts for the US, Germany and Japan, reflecting recent supply-chain-related disruptions to industrial production. And Fitch has revised down global GDP growth

# Inflation is prompting global monetary policy normalisation - Fitch Ratings

by 0.3pp since the September GEO, to 5.7%. This is still the fastest rate since 1973 though.

Fitch's world growth forecast for 2022 has also been cut, to 4.2% from 4.4%, but this primarily reflects a more intense slowdown in China. The policy response there has been slower than expected with just two cuts to the reserve requirement ratio announced this year, and while we anticipate more easing announcements in the next few months, we now expect China's growth to fall to 4.8% in 2022 from 8.0% in 2021.

Fitch has revised US growth in 2021 to 5.7% (from 6.2% in the

September GEO) and cut 2022 growth to 3.7% (from 3.9%). We also lowered our eurozone growth forecast for 2021 to 5.0% (from 5.2%), but our forecast for 2022 is unchanged at 4.5%. Growth in emerging markets excluding China is forecast at 5.7% in 2021 and 4.6% in 2022, both 0.1pp lower than in September, partly reflecting a sharp deterioration in Brazil's economic outlook.

"There are now signs that price level shocks related to pandemic shortages are starting to morph into ongoing inflation. With monetary policy settings still super-loose, this is worrying

central bankers," said Brian Coulton, Fitch Chief Economist.

The sharp rise in global consumer goods prices since March primarily reflects a surge in goods demand, fuelled by stimulus measures, particularly in the US. Goods prices should stabilise in 2022 as spending switches back to services, strong investment boosts goods supply, and fiscal stimulus unwinds.

But there have been widespread upward revisions to our inflation forecasts and the increasing prospect of inflation pressures broadening is making central banks nervous. Inflation

has become a public concern - now amplified by energy price shocks - and inflation expectations have increased. US wage growth now exceeds pre-pandemic rates as the labour supply recovery lags. Stimulus is taking US GDP above pre-pandemic trends and the US output gap will turn positive in 2022. US core CPI inflation is expected to settle at around 3% in late 2022 and 2023, significantly higher than pre-pandemic rates.

Fitch now expects the Fed to raise interest rates in September 2022 and the Bank of England (BOE) later this

month, both far sooner than we had expected. High inflation is raising policy tensions. The Omicron COVID-19 variant of concern represents a downside risk to growth but could adversely affect supply leading to further price increases, implying risks if central banks delay normalisation.

Monetary policy responses are becoming more divergent, with ECB interest rates still likely to remain on hold through 2023 and the PBOC expected to cut interest rates in 2022. Further strengthening in the US dollar is expected.

A stronger dollar and weaker Chinese growth could weigh on commodity prices in 2022, adding to constraints on emerging-market growth, including from domestic monetary-policy tightening. Fitch statement concluded.



# LOOK

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## Embrace the Art of Nothing-ness

By **KHALIDHA NAUSHAD**  
CEYLON TODAY FEATURES

We all know how to do nothing. By 'doing nothing,' I don't mean lazing on your couch and scrolling through social media, watching Netflix or listening to music. It means sitting down, doing absolutely nothing and completely free from distractions. Did you know that 'doing nothing' is a form of art? Well now, most of you reading this might wonder how 'doing nothing' can be considered as art. This applies when you do nothing and actually enjoy 'nothingness.' Even though most of us lay around and waste time, our minds are often on other things that make us feel obliged to do something productive. In this case, you actually aren't embracing the art of nothing-ness.

It's not wrong to feel a bigger desire to focus and pursue goals. We often want to keep running in this world that only rewards constant doing. We take pleasure in taking time to charge our phone's battery, but disregard charging our own because we are accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you are like many Sri Lankans, you will probably have to stop and think about it because we don't 'do nothing' very often.

People experience burnouts at record-breaking speeds only because we tend to pick our phone and scroll through social media or do something when boredom strikes. To fight the burnouts, you might need a break from everything. And the simple solution is to be a couch-potato. In case you feel uncomfortable just by hearing the idea of spending time doing nothing, you are not alone because it's already considered a thing of the past. Society has eventually shifted towards prioritising hyper-productivity, making the notion of 'doing nothing' seem unproductive and inefficient. It's no wonder people have such a hard time relaxing and enjoying moments of nothingness.

The lists and plans you aim to achieve are just based on goal-setting, to-do-lists and strategising your day-to-day life. If you have not been busy running around and getting stuff done, you feel burdened with guilt. We keep running behind it but what if we are tired at some point? When the heavy wave of creative block washes over you is when you realise you need to switch off completely. You feel so tired and exhausted that you get the sudden urge to pause and do nothing at all for once. You feel the polite reminder from your mind and body to relieve yourself from all pressure and that you are on the verge of a creative burnout.

Why 'doing nothing' is considered a form of art can be understood well here. You can actually be surprised by how doing absolutely nothing can benefit and make changes in you. Firstly, let's look into the dangers of always doing.

### Why 'always doing' is bad

Remember *The Lazy Song* by Bruno Mars? He was right.

*Today I don't feel like doing anything  
I just wanna lay in my bed  
Don't feel like picking up my phone, so leave a message at the tone  
'Cause today I swear I'm not doing anything'*  
How brave and precious is it to just stop and



say, "today, I don't feel like doing anything." Thanks, Bruno! Moving to the topic, why is 'always doing' bad?

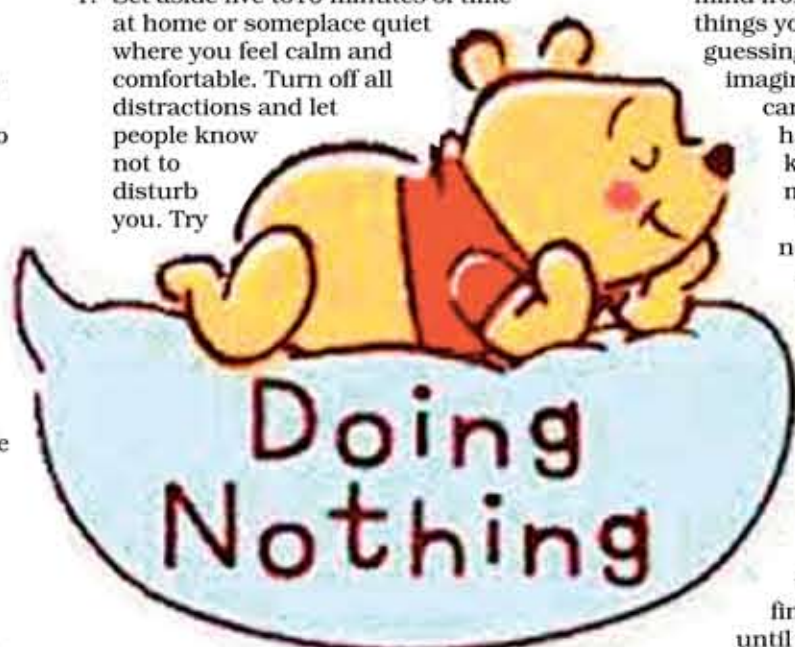
Our culture doesn't accept or respect and promote 'doing nothing' because they associate it with laziness and irresponsibility. Despite not caring about culture or other's opinions, we actually feel bad for not 'doing nothing.' That is because we were taught "the longer we work, the more we accomplish." Well, not exactly.

The moment you begin to learn what your mind and body tries to convey is when you know that you really need a break. You feel overwhelmed and exhausted by everything you have to do, you still continue to do it because you feel guilty for not doing enough. 'Always doing' can drain you and make you exasperated by things in life. It pulls out the energy within and affects you not only physically but your mental health too. It attacks your personal life, career and relationships because you are just tired. Tired of everything.

### How to master the art of relaxation

The website Chopra guides you on how you can enjoy 'nothingness.'

1. Set aside five to 10 minutes of time at home or someplace quiet where you feel calm and comfortable. Turn off all distractions and let people know not to disturb you. Try



- placing your phone in a different room from the one you are in as this is a powerful distraction.
2. Now, close your eyes if you feel comfortable—and then simply do nothing, whatever that means to you. The idea is that if someone were to call and ask what you were up to in that moment, you would say, legitimately, 'nothing.'
3. After five to 10 minutes, stop and observe how you feel. Was it uncomfortable? Was it relaxing? There will be many feelings and thoughts that arise, just observe them all without judgment. This is a starting point to help you test the waters and begin tapping into your inner world where your needs and desires lie. You will find it requires a bit of practice at first. Try doing this each day for a couple of weeks, put it in your calendar, and see how it evolves and what begins to emerge.

There are many ways to engage in idle activity; it's an art that you will refine over time. If you need some ideas here are some creative ways to spend time enjoying the sweetness of doing nothing:

- Take an epsom salt bath.
- Disconnect from technology for a day.
- Read a good book.
- Perform breathing exercises.
- Have a day of rest.
- Watch your children play.
- Take time to smell the roses (of course!).
- Discover your inner artist.
- Give someone a hug.
- Take an afternoon nap.
- Watch the sunset or stare at the stars at night.
- Have dinner with a dear friend or loved one.
- Enjoy your food.
- Take a walk in nature.
- Meditate.

### Do nothing without falling down the rabbit hole

'Doing nothing' could be complicated for an overthinker like me because I engage in activities or get things done, only to distract my mind from overthinking. Thinking about all the things you could have done differently, second-guessing every decision you make, and

imagining all the worst-case scenarios in life can be exhausting. But, overthinking is a hard habit to break. And if you are the kind of person who overthinks with too much idle time, you are not alone.

Try not to try too hard at doing nothing and go easy on yourself. But if you're not someone who naturally likes to spend idle time in reverie or in meditation, you can add something - 'doing nothing' - to your to-do list, thereby piling on more pressure.

Give yourself permission not to do anything. Have trust that if you relax for a little, the world will not come crashing down around you. Because the truth is, we always have things we could be doing - you'll never find a minute to do nothing if you wait until your to-do list or reading list is at zero.



**Effortless Beauty**

Sofia Vergara goes for a casual cool look with ripped jeans and an oversized sweaters while out in Beverly Hills



**She's Your Woman**

Doja Cat performs at the 99.7 NOW! Presents: Poptopia Show



**Family Date Night**

Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez go to the movies with their children



**Happier Than Ever**

Billie Eilish and Olivia Rodrigo bonds at the Variety Hitmakers brunch





# Best of the Small Screen Awarded

State Awards Ceremony of Television Art 2019/2020

The 15th State Awards Ceremony of Television Art was held recently at BMICH under the aegis of the State Minister of National heritage, Performing Arts, and Rural Arts promotion Vidura Wickramanayake. Director of Cultural Affairs Tharani Anoja Gamage, the Chairman of the State Advisory Council of Television Dr. Tudor Weerasingha, Dr. Uditha Gayashan Gunasekara and other guests and experts in the television field also took part in the awards ceremony.

The highlight of the event was tele-drama excellence awards for the year 2019 in which the ITN's *Badde Kulawamiya* tele-drama bagged multiple awards including: Best Tele-drama, Best Director (Ananda Abenayake), Best Actress (Nadee Kammellaweera), and Best Actor (Mahendra Perera).

In the awards for 2020 Ananda Abenayake again bagged the Best Director award for his tele-drama *Weeraya Gedara Awith*. Following the previous year's feet the tele-drama of Abenayake's direction again won multiple awards including Best Actor (Roshan Ravindra), Best Actress (Jayani Senanayake), Best Supporting Actor (Xavier Kanishka), and Best Supporting Actress (Dinupa Kodagoda). A special jury appreciation awards were given to Nethali Nanayakkara and Sanjaya Murumudali for their contribution



Best Actor and Actress duo (2020) Roshan Ravindra and Jayani Senanayake

towards the betterment of the small screen.

(SH) (Pix by Sarath Kumara)



Nethali Nanayakkara accepting the special Jury Award



Sanjaya Murumudali accepting special Jury Award



# IVIES Offers World-class Facilities

Founded on the values of trust, love, care and development – ingredients for a well-nurtured child - The IVIES, located at Battaramulla and Wattala, opens its doors to pre-school children up to five years of age. Launched as an innovative, premium and fully-fledged early years education provider for children between the ages of four months to five years, the facility also offers specialised after-school care from aged of six to 10 years. The IVIES provides state-of-art, purpose-built childcare facilities, a diverse and thoughtful curriculum and run by passionate, highly-skilled team of professionals.

Commenting on the launch, Director Operations, The IVIES, Vindya Wijesuriya said, "The first five years of a child are the most formative ones which need a strong foundation of mental and physical stimulation, well-being and care. Keeping this in mind, The IVIES strives to provide an affectionate, caring, nurturing, stimulating learning environment, which aids moulding a holistically developed child.

"More importantly, the staff at The IVIES are highly skilled and trained to closely observe children at play and use the emerging learning opportunities to enforce self-esteem, self-confidence and



build empathy among children which helps them become responsible and independent learners" Vindya further added.

The IVIES is being spearheaded by industry experts with decades of experience in early child development and learning. The low child-to-teacher ratio ensures every child receives the individual attention they deserve. Educators at The IVIES are skilled and qualified in early years education, child psychology and in handling special needs children and are equipped to

cater to children on a one-on-one basis. Well-maintained observation records developed by The IVIES help maintain a steady communication line with parents and builds history during a child's stay with the facility.

Play-based learning is most effective for children from birth to five years. Keeping this in mind, The IVIES has developed a curriculum that encompasses the natural desire of children to learn, play and explore. Play is the foundation of learning for children as this is how they make sense

of the world around them, hypothesise and experiment, learn to negotiate and understand their feelings. The play-based curriculum at The IVIES ensures the children are happy to come to school each day and enjoy learning through play. The carefully planned curriculum covers all learning domains, which includes physical, social and emotional, language, and cognitive aspects.

Furthermore, singing, story time, pretend play and experimental activities enable children develop creativity and imaginary skills.

What sets The IVIES apart is its purpose-built facilities that keep the child's safety and comfort in mind – their second home. The facilities include safety gates, air-conditioning, hot water, child-sized toilets, separate shower cubicles, CCTV, child-sized beds and the facilities is powered by generators for backup power. The IVIES facilities operate for long hours, keeping the need of parents in mind. Additional services include holiday care, weekend care and occasional care.

The IVIES fulfils a long-felt need for a well-resourced pre-school and daycare facility where parents can rely on. The facility has ambitious plans to expand to more locations in the near future.



Vindya Wijesuriya



# ORAP Holds 13th AGM

The 13th annual general meeting of the Old Royalist Association Piliyandala (ORAP) was held on 27 November at the Vinrich Lake Resort.

ORAP was established in 2009 only with six members. Now it has grown over 250 members. The ORAP is the only regionally recognised body of Royal College Union within the country. Even though 72 members attended for the AGM, it was held

adhering to safety rules and regulations, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic situation. The newly appointed executive committee for the year 2021/ 2022 comprises 29 members. President - Major Retd Sunanda Mendis, Secretary - Laksara Aravinda, Treasurer - Harshana Adikari, Chief Organiser - Gp Capt Janaka Perera. Three deputies to key positions, six Ex- Officio members

and 16 Executive committee members.

At present ORAP conducts annual programmes such as Seminar for GCE O/L by Science subject (Shilpa Yathtra), Medical Camp, Scholarship programme, fund donations for needy children, fund donation for Royal college past teachers association, donations for area hospitals - needy items/equipments and so on.



# Dialog Powers 87th Battle of the Saints

## Josephian – Peterite Big Match on 13 and 14 December at the SSC

Sri Lanka's premier Catholic boys' schools, St. Joseph's College, Colombo and St. Peter's College, Colombo, are set to battle it out for the Rev. Father Maurice J. Le Goc Trophy on 13 and 14 December at the SSC Grounds, Colombo.

The 'Battle of the Saints', which is renowned for its exciting and competitive brand of cricket, is the only annual two-day cricket encounter that strategically limits the first innings to 60 overs each to create greater interest and result orientation.

In the 2021 encounter the lads from Darley Road will be led by Sri Lanka Under-19 Captain, the brilliant allrounder Dunith Wellalage, while the boys from Bambalapitiya will be under the captaincy of the stylish batter and 5th year Coloursman, Nipunaka Fonseka.

"The global pandemic has crippled the world, and yet we are fortunate to embrace a unique tradition, a game of cricket which helps protect and preserve traditions, values and history," Rev. Fr. Rohitha Rodrigo, the Rector of the hosting school, St. Peter's College, Colombo, said. "The Joe-Pete fosters a unique sense of brotherhood, unity, peace and harmony, and this year even without spectators at the grounds, the spirit will prevail. Let me express my gratitude to all who fought back with courage, discipline and responsibility during the pandemic to overcome the challenges. My sincere thanks to our Principal sponsor Dialog Axiata for



(L-R) Rev. Fr. Ranjith Andradi, Rector, St. Joseph's College, Trinesh Fernando, General Counsel/Vice President, Group Legal and Regulatory, Dialog Axiata PLC, Rev. Fr. Rohitha Rodrigo, Rector, St. Peter's College.

their support for our inspirational brand."

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

St. Joseph's College leads the series

tally with 12 wins, their last win coming under the captaincy of Ruwantha Fernando in 2008, while St. Peter's College were the winners of the 2016 encounter under Vinu Mohotty, bringing their tally to 10 wins, which ensured the Rev. Father Maurice J. Legoc Trophy was kept securely in the trophy cabinet in Bambalapitiya.

This year due to the pandemic to ensure the health and safety of all, spectators will not be present, but it is expected that large numbers of passionate past and present students will watch safely from private, remote locations. Additionally, all the very important requirements and safety

protocols of the Ministry of Health will be followed.

The highly anticipated Josephian-Peterite limited overs match played for the 'Fr. Peter A. Pillai Memorial Trophy' which was the first one day encounter among schools commencing in 1975, has always attracted the highest number of spectators for a school's 50 over cricket match, is scheduled to be played on the following Thursday, 16 December, also behind closed doors at the same venue. The Josephian's lead the one-day encounter 23-20 with 2 matches ending with no result.

Adding excitement to the games this year is the fact that six players - Dunith Wellalage, Shevon Daniel, Sadeesh Jayawardena from St Joseph's, and Wanuja Sahan, Danal Hemananda, Lahiru Dewatage from St Peters, played against the touring Bangladesh U-19 team and five of them are presently playing against the touring English juniors.

Dunith Wellalage, Captain of St Joseph's was appointed the Sri Lanka U-19 Captain for both tours, while Wanuja Sahan of St Peter's and Shevon Daniel of St Joseph's were regular match winners during the two series. The five playing in the English tour are tipped to be in the Sri Lanka squad which leaves on 19 December for the U-19 Asia Cup in UAE and the U-19 World Cup in the West Indies.

The two schools have produced many National Caps. Current Sri

Lanka Test skipper Dimuth Karunaratne, Angelo Mathews, Chaminda Vaas, Thisara Perera, Ashley de Silva, Michael Van Dort, Roshen Silva, Priyamal Perera and Sadeera Samarawickrama are the Josephians who represented Sri Lanka, while the Peterites are Roy Dias, Rumesh Ratnayake, Vinodhan John, Amal Silva, Russel Arnold, Kaushal Lokuarachchi, Malinda Warnapura and Angelo Perera.

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

One of Sri Lanka's largest banks, Hatton National Bank, has also come forth as a co-sponsor for this year's prestigious 'Battle of the Saints' encounter.

Dialog Axiata is the proud sponsor of the Sri Lanka National Cricket, Volleyball and Netball teams. The Company also has a close association with the President's Gold Cup Volleyball, Junior Volleyball, National Junior and Senior Netball tournaments, Schools Rugby League, Knockout and Sevens tournaments, Premier Football and Paralympic sports - by powering the Army Para Games, National Para Games and the Sri Lankan contingent to the World Paralympic Games.

## RTC 'Christmas with the Kids' on 22 December

A worthy cause at a time in need, 'RTC Christmas with the Kids' will be a programme for the children of the families living inside the Racecourse in Nuwara Eliya. The children will be treated with a day's activity and gifts.

Organized and conducted by the Royal Turf Club (RTC) in Nuwara Eliya, the programme will be an open event for families within the racecourse. The main objective of this event is to share love, joy and care among those who are in need, while also opening doors to those who wish to participate and share the day with the deserving children.

"The pandemic and adverse weather conditions in Nuwara Eliya have affected many families and only made it hard for most of them to celebrate Christmas. To light up and be joyful, Royal Turf Club is prepared to celebrate Christmas with these beloved children. Christmas will be more meaningful when we share our kindness generously by offering a hand to families in hardship," the RTC President said, issuing a statement.

The programme will be conducted, mainly for the children of the families at the Racecourse, but RTC will willingly accept generous contributions from the horse racing fraternity of Sri Lanka, who are eager to be a part of this worthy cause.

The day's proceedings will commence at 9.30 a.m. and is expected to wind up by 3.30 p.m. with many activities lined up. RTC is making all arrangements to conduct children's games, interactive activities, meals and snacks to all children, in addition to gifts, toys, garments and more importantly school utensils such as books, bags and stationery.

"Anyone willing to contribute, could do so in the form they wish, such as gifts, books and other ways. We at RTC believe these children are in great need of love and attention during these hard times. As a responsible club, it is our duty to look into other areas too," the statement added

Intended participants and generous contributions could be forwarded or handed over to the RTC main office situated at the Racecourse in Nuwara Eliya.

## SA name 21-member squad for India Tests

# Duanne Olivier returns

Duanne Olivier could make a Test comeback after an absence of almost three years after being named in a 21-player squad for the upcoming three-Test series against India. The squad includes two new faces - seamer Sisanda Magala and top-order batter Ryan Rickelton, who were both part of the ODI line-up that played in the series against Netherlands, which had to be postponed because of the latest Covid-19 outbreak - and recalls for offspin-bowling allrounder Prenelan Subrayen and quick bowler Glenton Stuurman, who have been part of previous Test squads but haven't been capped.

The rest of the group is largely the same as the one that toured West Indies in June, which is when South Africa last played Test cricket. That series, which South Africa won 2-0, was Dean Elgar's first as the regular captain. The upcoming one against India will be his first in charge at home. His vice-captain, Temba Bavuma, who was on tour in the Caribbean but missed the Tests because of injury, is also in the squad.

South Africa have given themselves several options in all departments, especially in the bowling attack. Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje are

expected to lead the pack, with Lungi Ngidi included after recovering from Covid-19, two left-armers in Marco Jansen and Beuran Hendricks, and two right-arm options in Stuurman and Magala.

A lot of the focus, though, will be on Olivier, who has been in exceptional form for the Lions and leads the first-class wickets chart this season with 28 strikes at 11.14, including two five-wicket hauls.

Olivier spoke to ESPNcricinfo after the last round of fixtures and confirmed that he had been in discussion with selection convener Victor Mpitsang and was available for South Africa again after his Kolpak-enforced absence. He is the second Kolpak-returnee to be selected for a national squad after Wayne Parnell, who played against Netherlands.

Conditions, on the whole, are expected to favour quicks, especially at SuperSport Park and Wanderers, where the first two Tests are scheduled to be played, but Newlands could offer something for spinners and South Africa have three of them too. Keshav Maharaj remains the first pick, and will have back-up in allrounders George Linde and Subrayen. Tabraiz Shamsi, who was part of the Test squad in West Indies, has not been selected while there was



also no room for the second-highest wicket-taker - behind Olivier - in the first-class competition, Simon Harmer. But South Africa have included one seam-bowling allrounder in Wiaan Mulder.

The batting line-up has a more familiar look to it, with Sarel Erwee providing back-up to Elgar and Aiden Markram at the top of the order, and Rassie van der Dussen, Bavuma, Kyle Verreynne and de Kock expected to make up the top six.

Rickelton, the other back-up batter who is in tenth place on the first-class run chart, has been preferred over

Tony de Zorzi and Pieter Malan, who are leading run-scorers in the ongoing series between South Africa A and India A.

This is South Africa's first series in the 2021-2023 cycle of the World Test Championship, and first series at home since they hosted Sri Lanka over the festive period last summer. They finished fifth in the previous edition of the ICC tournament, winning two series - against Sri Lanka and West Indies - and losing three - to England, India and Pakistan. It also marks the start of a busy summer for South Africa in which they host India, travel to New Zealand, and host Bangladesh, before a winter tour in England, and it was all very nearly derailed after the discovery of Omicron, the new Covid-19 variant last month.

The series has been pushed out by a week - it was initially scheduled to be played from December 17, and the first Test will now start on Boxing Day. The players will be in a biosecure bubble for the duration of the series, although they can expect to see some fans. As things stand in South Africa, 2,000 fully-vaccinated fans are permitted at sporting venues but this may change if further restrictions come into place in the next few weeks.

## Australia bowlers dominate day one of the Ashes

Australia dealt their English foes an early Ashes blow on day one of the first Test in a stunning bowling performance in Brisbane before rain washed out the final session.

Joe Root won the toss and elected to bat, though his plans for England took a turn in the session's opening moments.

Australian new ball tearaway quick Mitchell Starc struck with the first ball of the series, hitting the base of Rory Burns' leg stump as he shuffled across. It was just the second occasion a wicket has fallen on the first ball of an Ashes series, with Stan Worthington caught by Bert Oldfield off the bowling of Ernest McCormick in 1936.

Josh Hazlewood kept the foot down for Australia at the other end, removing Dawid Malan and Joe Root to leave the tourists

reeling at 11/3. Ben Stokes and Haseeb Hameed dug in until the first drinks break, though captain Pat Cummins removed Stokes with a beauty, finding the shoulder of the left-hander's bat after refreshments.

Hameed was joined by Ollie Pope, and the pair dug in despite the efforts of the deployed Nathan Lyon, sat on 399 Test wickets.

Hameed's work was undone immediately after lunch, with Captain Cummins again finding the edge, as Steve Smith took a solid catch.

It brought Jos Buttler out, who channelled his white-ball form from the T20 World Cup seemingly, countering with an array of strokes of both the front and back foot.

Buttler and Pope raced to a fifty-run stand, though any

aspirations of building on their start were quashed a ball after the pair reached the milestone.

Buttler (39) edged a good Starc delivery to Alex Carey, and Cameron Green enjoyed his first Test wicket soon after, with Pope (35) top-edging to Josh Hazlewood in the deep.

England were unable to cause late-innings drama, falling to 147 all out, with Pat Cummins leading from the front with figures of 5/38.

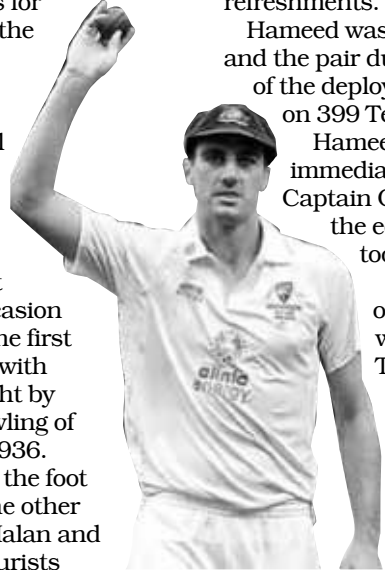
As the teams made their way off for the tea break taken at the end of the innings, rain fell across the ground, causing a further break in play.

Despite the rain abating after a while, overcast conditions and a wet outfield ensured that no further play took place.

**Scores**  
Rory Burns b Mitchell Starc 00  
Haseeb Hameed c Steve Smith b Pat Cummins 25  
Dawid Malan c Alex Carey b Josh Hazlewood 06  
Joe Root CPT c David Warner b Josh Hazlewood 00

Ben Stokes c Marnus Labuschagne b Pat Cummins 05  
Ollie Pope c Josh Hazlewood b Cameron Green 35  
Jos Buttler WKT c Alex Carey b Mitchell Starc 39  
Chris Woakes c Josh Hazlewood b Pat Cummins 21  
Ollie Robinson c Alex Carey b Pat Cummins 00  
Mark Wood C Harris b Cummins 08

Jack Leach not out 02  
Extras (w1, lb5) 06  
**Total** (All out in 50.1 overs) 147  
Fall of Wickets 1-0 (R Burns, 0.1 ov), 2-11 (D Malan, 3.2 ov), 3-11 (J Root, 5.5 ov), 4-29 (B Stokes, 12.4 ov), 5-60 (H Hameed, 26.4 ov), 6-112 (J Buttler, 40.3 ov), 7-118 (O Pope, 43.1 ov), 8-122 (O Robinson, 44.3 ov), 9-144 (M Wood, 48.3 ov), 10-147 (C Woakes, 50.1 ov)  
**Bowling** : Mitchell Starc 12-2-35-2, Josh Hazlewood 13-4-42-2, Pat Cummins 13.1-3-38-5, Nathan Lyon 9-2-21-0, Cameron Green 3-1-6-1





Lanka Premier League

# Salt, Zardan shine as Giants beat Stars

Dambulla Giants opener Phil Salt scored 62, while Najibullah Zardan made a half century to enable them put up a mammoth 195 for 6. Salt's 62 came in 34 deliveries which saw 8 fours and two sixes, where he guided them to pass 100 in the 11th over before departing. Zardan and skipper Dasun Shanaka (38) added another 77 runs in 47 deliveries, with Shanaka hammering 38 off 25 which saw three fours and two sixes. Giants openers put on 57 runs for the first wicket, but then lost three quick wickets. In reply, Colombo Stars made only 177 (all out) where none of their batters get going, though most of them got starts with four of them scoring 20s, but could not go beyond that as Dambulla Giants took regular wickets. Mini cameo from Seekkuge Prasanna (17 off 8) and Dushmantha Chameera (15 off 7) got Colombo Stars closer to the target, but it was too much of an

ask for the lower order batters to chase down. Dambulla Giants: 195-6 (20.0) (Phil Salt 62, Najibullah Zardan 54, Dasun Shanaka 38, Dushmantha Chameera 3-34) Colombo Stars: 177 (18.5) (Tom Banton 23, Kusal Perera 20, Dhananjaya de Silva 21, Nuwan Pradeep 3-50, Tharindu Rathnayaka 2-17, Imran Tahir 2-36)

Pix by Kelum Chamara



Phil Salt

Najibullah Zardan

# Australia joins US in diplomatic boycott of Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics

Australia has joined the United States in announcing a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics as a protest against alleged human rights abuses in China. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has confirmed the move which means that no senior Government officials will attend the Games in the Chinese capital. The news comes just two days after the US agreed to employ a diplomatic boycott due to "ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses". Morrison highlighted alleged human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region as the reason for the decision, though he never used the word 'boycott'. Australian athletes will still be able to compete at the Games, Morrison confirmed. "People have been very aware that we have been raising a number of issues that have not been received well in China and there's been a disagreement between us on those matters," said Morrison in Sydney this morning. "The human rights abuses in Xinjiang and many other issues that Australia has consistently raised - we have been very pleased and very happy to talk to the Chinese Government about these issues and there's been no obstacle to that occurring on our side, but the Chinese Government has consistently not accepted those opportunities for us to meet about these issues."

Australia relations lies squarely on the Australian side. China once again urges the Australian side to take practical measures to create favourable conditions for "The blame for the current predicament of expectation to improve China-Australia relations." "The Australian side's statement that it will not send officials to the Beijing Winter Olympics runs counter to its publicly pronounced. The Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) said it welcomed Morrison's support for the team's participation at Beijing 2022, but added that "diplomatic options are a matter for Government and that politics and sport should be separated". A total of 40 athletes are expected to represent Australia at the Games and AOC Chief Executive Officer Matt Carroll said preparations have not been impacted by today's announcement. "We are heartened by the Prime Minister's support for our team and we thank the Government for its assistance with arrangements to ensure our athletes can travel to Beijing and represent their country with pride," said Carroll. "The AOC is very focused on ensuring that team members are able to safely travel to China given the complexity of the COVID environment with our athletes departing from overseas locations. "Getting the athletes to Beijing safely, competing safely and bringing them home safely remains our greatest challenge. "Our Australian athletes have been training and competing with this Olympic dream for four years now and we are doing everything in our power to ensure we can help them succeed. "Human rights are extremely important, but the considered view of diplomats is that keeping channels of communication open is far more impactful than shutting them down." Criticism over China's record on human rights includes an alleged genocide against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang and its actions in Tibet and Hong Kong. This debate, along with the coronavirus crisis, has overshadowed much of the build-up to the Games.

Sri Lanka - England U19 Youth ODI series

## All-rounder Raveen de Silva leads SL to series win

Sri Lanka beat England by 126 runs in the 4th Youth ODI at the SSC yesterday to clinch the 5-match series, as they took an unassailable 3-1 lead. Deputy skipper Raveen de Silva was the star as he scored 59 in 87 deliveries with 4 boundaries and a six and claimed 3 wickets for just 6 runs. Sri Lanka won the toss and electing to bat first scored 243 runs for 7 wickets. Pawan Pathiraja continued his good form with the bat to score 60 runs in 104 deliveries with 2 boundaries. Along with Raveen de Silva the pair were involved in a stand of 111 runs stand for the 5th wicket. Shevon Daniel (39), Chamindu Wickramasinghe (19), Yasiru Rodrigo (15\*), Dunith Wellalage (15) and Ranudha Somarathne (11) were the other batters to reach double figures. Ben Cliff claimed 3 wickets for 43 runs and Nathan Barnwell 2 wickets for 39 runs. England were bowled out for 117 runs in 33.3 overs. Opener George Thomas top scored with 40 runs, while Harry Crawshaw (31), Jacob Bethell (11) and Will Luxton (10) helped to build their inning. Raveen de Silva claimed 3 wickets for 6 runs and Matheesha Pathirana 2 wickets for 8 runs. Pawan Pathiraja and Dunith Wellalage are the leading batter and bowler respectively. **Scores:** Sri Lanka: 243/7 (50) (Pawan Pathiraja 60, Raveen de Silva 59, Shevon Daniel 39, Ben Cliff 3/43, Nathan Barnwell 2/39) England: 117 (33.3) (George Thomas 40, Harry Crawshaw 31, Raveen de Silva 3/6, Matheesha Pathirana 2/8)



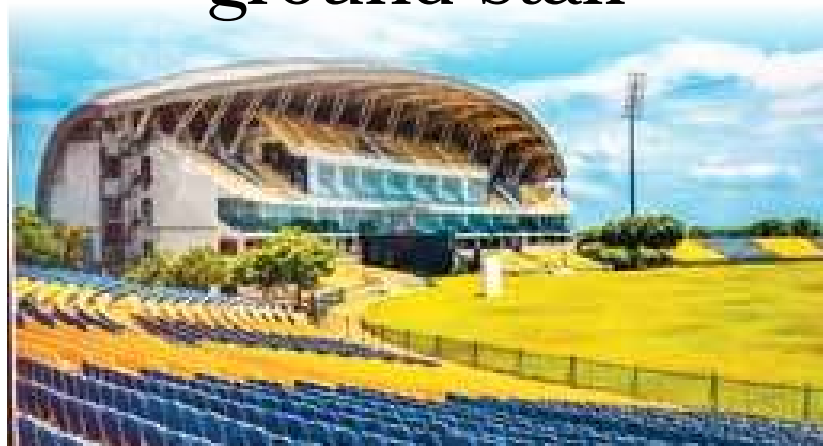
U-19 Inter Schools Division Three Tier 'B' Cricket Tournament

## Maris Stella crush Hindu Matale to reach final

Maris Stella College Thimbrigaskatuwa entered the 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), when they comfortably beat Hindu College Matale by 9 wickets in the semi-final played at Ananda Shashthralaya ground Kotte yesterday. **Scores:** Hindu Matale: 54 (23.2) (Vinila Perera 4/17, Dinuka Silva 3/6, Kanishka Gamage 2/3) Maris Stella: 55/1 (5.3) (Senuk Dinwara 42 n.o.)

(TR)

## Elephant attack reportedly kills two SLC ground staff



Two Sri Lanka Cricket ground staff at the Sooriyawewa Stadium in Hambantota have died in what is believed to have been an elephant attack, the board confirmed. Not many details have been released with regard to the attacks, though it is being speculated the attack may have been as a result of a sole elephant. The bodies of the two staff members, who were cycling home after work around 9pm local time, are understood to have been found several hundred metres apart. The incident, which occurred in the vicinity of the stadium, comes a little over a week prior to the ongoing Lanka Premier League matches shifting from Colombo to Hambantota for the Eliminator, Qualifiers and Final. The Eliminator and first Qualifier will take place on December 19. Elephant attacks are not uncommon in rural Sri Lanka, with the human-elephant conflict a longstanding issue.

The problem has become more widespread since the end of the 30-year civil war in 2009, following which the country's development plans saw areas previously straddled by native wildlife encroached upon by humans resulting in habitat loss. Hambantota has been one of the areas which has been most affected in this sense. Last year, 10 elephants and four humans killed in the area alone. Hambantota, once known for its wildlife, is now in the midst of a major development drive. It currently boasts of a port, airport and highway, while the establishment of a new city will reportedly use up some 20,000 acres of land. An elephant management zone has been proposed by way of a solution, though this has yet to be gazetted by the government, something which had resulted in protests by farmers in Hambantota earlier this year.

(ESPN)



## Rohit Sharma new ODI Captain

BCCI has named Rohit Sharma as the new ODI captain of the Indian cricket team. He will take over from Virat Kohli starting with the three-match ODI series against South Africa in January 2022. "The All-India Senior Selection Committee also decided to name Rohit Sharma as the Captain of the ODI & T20I teams going forward," the BCCI tweeted on Thursday.

## Himasha tests positive for doping



Himasha Eashan

Former Sri Lanka and South Asia 100m record holder Himasha Eashan tested positive for performance enhancing substances and was given a provisional suspension. Eashan's out of competition sample was collected on 26 October at the Narahenpita Army Quarters, Colombo, which has now tested positive for substances which were included in the 2021 World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) prohibited list. He has been called for a hearing on 15 November at the Sri Lanka Anti-Doping Agency (SLADA) where further inquiries will be carried out before determining further legal proceedings. This is the second time that Eashan testing positive for a banned substance. The first instance occurred in 2012 when he was a minor and was given one year ban which was brought down to 9 months following an appeal.