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LYNCHING OF PRIYANTHA KUMARA
PAKISTANI REACTION
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'DAY OF SHAME'



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THE STORY
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AYESHA'S
SONGS HEAL
THE WORLD

LONG TERM PLAN TO OVERCOME ECONOMIC CRISIS

GOVT CONFIDENT OF REPAYING ALL FOREIGN DEBT

- FINANCE MINISTER

Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa said although the country is going through a major crisis in foreign exchange reserves, the Government will meet all foreign debt due next year, adding that the President and the Prime Minister have also as-

sured their fullest support in this task. He said despite the Opposition's allegations, the Government has a long term, well-thought out plan to rescue the country from the economic crisis.

Delivering the reply speech at

the Third Reading of the Budget 2022 in Parliament on Friday, December 10, the Minister said that the Government is expected to service US\$ 500 million in foreign debt in January 2022 and US\$ 1,000 million in July 2022. He said that the

Government has an appropriate plan to service these debts. "We will pay every dollar that is due and we give that assurance with the greatest responsibility," he said.

The Third Reading of Budget 2022 was passed by [SEE PAGE 2](#)

Foreign vessel with 250 kg of heroin in Navy net

By Leon Berenger

A foreign vessel with 250 kilograms of heroin was busted by the Navy, 900 nautical miles off the country's Southern coast yesterday, a senior official said.

Six foreign nationals from a South Asian country were also arrested along with the vessel and the narcotics, Navy Spokesperson, Captain Indika De Silva said.

He said the vessel was being escorted to Sri Lankan waters and it may take at least three days for it to reach a local port.

Undercover naval operatives along with sleuths from the Police Narcotic Bureau had kept the vessel under close surveillance for several weeks before they decided to move in yesterday. [SEE PAGE 2](#)



Visiting Leader of the Bohra community, Dr. Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin Saheb, met President Gotabaya Rajapaksa at the President's private residence in Mirihana yesterday morning. President Rajapaksa appreciated the contribution by the Bohra community to the Sri Lankan economy through investment and trade. Dr. Saifuddin praised the Government's Covid-19 control program and said Sri Lanka was one of the countries that he loved to visit. He also made a contribution to the Itukama Covid-19 Fund. Almost one million members of the Bohra community live in several countries including India, Pakistan, the US, UK, Canada, Sri Lanka and Australia.

43rd OBSERVER-SLT-MOBTEL SCHOOL CRICKETER OF THE YEAR 2021
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Observer-SLT Mobitel Most Popular School Cricketers

Sadisha Rajapakse and Nimesha Tharuni crowned winners

Sadisha Rajapakse of Royal College, Colombo 7 and W.P. Nimesha Tharuni of Marapola MV, Veyangoda have been voted the Observer-SLT Mobitel Most Popular School Cricketers of the Year. Rajapaksa, who top scored with 66 runs off 77 balls with seven bound-

aries and captured 2 wickets for 17 runs for Sri Lanka under-19 in their fifth and final Youth One Day International against the touring England under-19 team at the SSC grounds on Friday, polled 21,000 votes in the final week's voting which concluded yesterday. [SEE PAGE 2](#)

Parliament meets from Jan. 11-13

Secretary General of Parliament Dhammika Dasanayake said the Committee on Parliamentary Business which met on Thursday, December 9 un-

der the chairmanship of Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena has decided to hold parliamentary sittings for the new year on January 11, 12 and 13. [SEE PAGE 2](#)

Five injured in Badulla jail clash

At least five remand prisoners at the Badulla Prison were injured following a clash between two groups on Friday evening, a senior official said yesterday.

Four of those injured were inmates facing charges in the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks while the

other was being held on drug-related offences, Commissioner of Prisons, Administration and Rehabilitation, Chandana Ekanayake said.

The clash had broken out following a heated stand-off between the two groups and steps [SEE PAGE 2](#)

Pfizer vaccine for those with special needs

By Nadira Gunatilleke

Those who need two doses of the Pfizer vaccine for special reasons could now obtain the two doses of the Pfizer vaccine, Deputy Director of Health Services, Dr. Hemantha Herath said. He told a press briefing

at the Health Promotion Bureau in Colombo on Friday that if a country, a person is visiting needs two Pfizer doses or if there are any other special reasons, two doses of the Pfizer vaccine can be obtained after providing evidence to prove that specific need. He said that the booster [SEE PAGE 2](#)

Mega farms to transform dairy industry

By Chamikara Weerasinghe

With the changing investment climate in the post-Covid world, the Government has taken steps to increase milk production with an ambitious investment project to transform the local dairy industry into a large-scale business



enterprise. The Agriculture Ministry has to spend an additional

Rs. 1,000 million on its projects this year.

Director General, Department of Animal Production and Health, Dr. K.A.C. Hemali A. Kothalawala, said yesterday that the main parameters of the project include adjusting investment and production measures [SEE PAGE 2](#)

LPG accidents - Committee report next week

The Presidential Committee appointed to look into the recent accidents linked to Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders has concluded the recording of evidence.

The committee's report will be presented to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa next week, its chairman Prof. Shantha Walpolage said.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa recently appointed an eight-member committee to investigate the LPG-related fire accidents and explosions that [SEE PAGE 2](#)



EC ready for PC polls

The Election Commission (EC) will shortly begin preparatory work for the delayed Provincial Council (PC) elections, a media release from

Elections Commissioner General Saman Sri Ratnayake stated yesterday.

Training programs for District, Deputy and Assistant Election Commissioners and the staff of district of-

ices on the preparatory work for the PC elections will be conducted in the coming weeks.

The training programs will cover preparation [SEE PAGE 2](#)

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News

Govt confident of... From page 1

...an overwhelming majority of 93 votes in Parliament on Friday with 157 voting in favour and 64 against.

Minister Rajapaksa said the Government does not hide the fact that the country is going through a serious economic crisis, and called on all parties to extend their support to the Government to successfully manage the situation. The Minister said while the Covid-19 pandemic was the major blow to the economy, the Yahapalana Government was also a major factor in creating a serious economic crisis that the country is now suffering from. "That is why they could even face an election with their earlier political party name. Therefore, they had to rally around a different party name to make their representation in Parliament. They

were not able to compete in the election as the UNP," he said.

Commenting on the adverse effect of the pandemic on the economy, Finance Minister Rajapaksa said Sri Lanka earned US\$ 3,607 million in 2019 while last year, it dropped to US\$ 100 million. The Minister also said that the country had lost about US\$ 6,103 million from its usual foreign remittance this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "We cannot get out of this crisis immediately. Our plan is to gradually lessen the pressure we have on the economy right now. One of our main goals is to gradually relax import restrictions and increase exports. In 2017, we exported goods to the value of US\$ 941 million. In 2019, 2020 and 2021, exports exceeded US\$ 979 million, US\$ 751 mil-

lion and US\$1,232 million.

"Similarly, last year, we sent only 53,000 Sri Lankans as migrant workers. This year we sent 100,000 migrant workers. In the coming year we plan to send 300,000 workers and earn US\$ 8,000 million in foreign exchange," Minister Rajapaksa said.

He said that the country cannot attract foreign investments immediately. "Foreign investments in a way are businesses. When a businessman invests, they expect many benefits. Foreign investments will not flow into the country at the speed that we expect."

Speaking on the tourism sector, Minister Rajapaksa said that it is the easiest sector to revive even though it was hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pfizer vaccine for... From page 1

Pfizer dose will be given at institution level for employees over 18 on request and staff of factories will be given the booster dose, if needed even if they are below 20.

The Health Ministry and the private sector have facilities to store the Pfizer vaccine under the given temperature and there is no efficacy lost due to temperature

fluctuations and there is no waste of the vaccine.

After the vaccine is released from storage it will not be returned to the store, he said.

Five injured in Badulla... From page 1

...had been taken to separate the prisoners vulnerable for attack, Commissioner Ekanayake said.

He said that an official inquiry

will also be held into the incident and, if necessary, the suspects will be brought before the Prisons Tribunal.

The injured inmates are receiving treatment at the Badulla Government Hospital. - **LB**

Parliament meets from... From page 1

Parliamentary sittings are scheduled for January 11 at 10.00 a.m. 10.00 am to 11.00 am has been

allotted for the Questions for Oral Answers. The Mahapola Higher Education Scholarship Trust Fund

(Amendment) Bill (Second Reading) will be taken up for debate from 11.00 am to 4.30 pm.

EC ready for PC... From page 1

...of the voters' registers under electoral divisions, selection of polling stations, nominations and postal voting process, enforcing election laws, conducting the election, counting and the releasing of

results.

The Commission members also decided at its meeting on December 10 to publish a commemorative booklet on the work it has been doing.

The Election Commission comprises Chairman Nimal G. Punchihewa, S.B. Divaratne, M.M. Mohamed, K.P.P. Pathirana and Mrs. P.S.M. Charles.

LPG accidents - Committee report... From page 1

occurred at domestic, commercial and sales outlets in various parts of the country. The committee was

tasked with finding the possible causes of the problem to provide immediate solutions to the issue. The

committee members, along with the Police, also visited the houses where LPG-related incidents were reported.



Muthu Ahura, an art exhibition by schoolchildren was organised at the Public Library Auditorium yesterday by Muthu Ahura children's educational publication of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited. Here the Chief Guest Media Minister Dullas Alahapperuma presents a certificate to a student for his work of art.
(Pic: Ranjith Asanka)

Sadisha Rajapakse... From page 1

Rajapakse polled 42,832 votes to finish with a clear lead over second-placed Asen Bandara of St. Anthony's, Kandy who polled 31,988 votes. In third place with 25,207 votes was Duniya Wellalage of St. Joseph's, ahead of Ramith de Silva of Nalanda - 17,781.

Nimesha Tharuni, who finished the season recently with 142.00 with a top score of 137 against Wickremashila MV, Giriulla, took the most popu-

lar crown for the second successive year polling 20,186 votes. D. Chushadi Kaushalya of Dharmapala MV, Panipitiya finished second with 13,572, followed by Nethmi Poorna of Wadduwa Central who polled 10,166 votes.

The stage is set for the 43rd Observer-SLT Mobitel School Cricketer of the Year Grand Finale at the BMICH on Tuesday, December 14 at 5.15 p.m. Sri Lanka's world cup-winning

captain Arjuna Ranatunga will be the chief guest, along with his wife Samadara who are no strangers to the Observer School Cricketer of the Year competition. Ranatunga, the second cricketer to win the top award, is also the first ever to win the Observer Schoolboy Cricketer award twice, in 1980 and 1982.

See page 16 for details and page 23 for the final voting results.

Foreign vessel with 250 kg... From page 1

...Captain De Silva said.

He said yesterday's detection was the fourth since August this year and all the vessels were of a similar identity indicating that they belonged to a single large drug syndicate operating in the high seas. The vessels were described as multi-day fishing boats.

On August 30, the navy seized 290 kilograms of heroin followed by another haul of 336 kilograms on September 4 and 170 kilograms of heroin six days later.

"It appears that the drugs were not intended for local consumption but the smugglers were using Sri Lankan

waters for transshipment since this region has limited naval activity," Captain De Silva said.

The narcotics seized by the navy for this year alone have a street value of nearly Rs. 13.6 billion and this would rise with yesterday's detection, he said.

Mega farms to... From page 1

...to construct dairy mega-farms and scaling up smallholder dairy farms, and turning them into small and medium enterprises.

She said this in response to a question from the *Sunday Observer* about the implications of Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa's statement that milk powder imports will be reduced and that the public sector will focus heavily on boosting the dairy industry as the Government's green agriculture policy remains unchanged.

"Six investors have already begun setting up large-scale dairy farms around the country, and the Ministry of Agriculture is playing an important role in helping these investments. All six investors are local businessmen,"

she said. "To demonstrate the practicality of investments in the dairy cattle business," she said, "the Government has made preparations to support the import of high yielding cows from Australia." "Private investors imported around 130 highly productive cattle from Australia recently, and they are expected to import about 15,000 cows with the assistance of the Government," she said. "The process of replacing pedigree cattle with the best of the gene pool will be increased under this initiative to assure qualitative improvements in dairy cow breeding to produce highly productive herds," she said. The Department of Animal Production and Health will provide assistance to the investors and the small

dairy holders to maintain the health of their cattle. It will provide them with advice, regulatory and animal quarantine services, she said.

"Thousands of small dairy farmers will benefit from this program as they will be transformed into small and medium entrepreneurs. Of the 250,000 dairy farmers, 7,000 will become small and medium entrepreneurs in the first year, under the project," she said.

The project will enable about 3,000 farmers to produce more than 100 litres per day (per farmer), she said. "For this we will need quality pasture."

The mega dairy farms will mainly be in the Kandy and the Nuwara Eliya districts and also in the North Eastern and North Western areas.

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Lynching of Sri Lankan Engineer in Pakistan

Family awaits justice

Call to reform blasphemy laws

BY MANJULA FERNANDO

Despite Covid-19 restrictions, the grieving in their hundreds gathered on Wednesday to bid farewell to Engineer Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana who lost his life in a brutal act of religious extremism in Pakistan.

The 49-year-old who was known as a caring father, a loyal friend, a loving son and a dedicated employee was beaten and burnt alive. The truth behind his killing is yet to be revealed.

Investigations have revealed that Priyantha was unaware that there were Quranic inscriptions in the material he ordered to be removed while cleaning in the factory premises. A colleague who was seen in the CCTV footage trying to shield the Sri Lankan from the frenzied mobsters risking his own life, Malik Adnan told the media that Priyantha did not know that the pamphlets and the stickers he ordered to be removed had Quranic verses. Adnan was honoured with Tamgha-i-Shujaat, the highest state honour, a medal for bravery by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan last week.

The Sri Lankan Engineer had been working at Rajco Industries, a leading Pakistani sportswear manufacturing and exporting company since 2009, serving as the company's General Manager for seven years.

Extremist groups

Buddhist and Catholic religious leaders who were at his funeral, collectively voiced the need to eliminate heinous crimes committed by extremist groups in the name of religion.

Ven. Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera delivering a sermon at the funeral said, "None of the religions teach their followers violence. Violence is born when humanity is lost." The Ven. Thera said, "The Government must protect citizens and ensure proper livelihoods are created within the country for professionals."

His death sparked widespread condemnation by international human rights groups. His family said the brutal killing of their loved one must not be in vain. "It should be an eye opener to bring in much needed reforms in the blasphemy laws not only in Pakistan but the entire Muslim world so as to protect and preserve humanity," the family and



Muhammad Amir Rana

Wife and two sons 14 and 9 years bid farewell to Engineer Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana - Pic by Chinthaka Kumarasinghe

friends said. At the funeral, over a dozen made speeches of his wonderful character as a youth - his humbleness and devout friendship. They said that nothing could bring him back to life. "No amount of money or luxuries could substitute a father's love for his sons and a husband's love for his wife. A mountain of wealth cannot replace Priyantha Kumara for his devastated mother."

The Cabinet of Ministers approved Rs. 2.5 million for the family of the slain Engineer. Businessmen in the Sialkot district have promised to remit his monthly salary to help the victim's family.

Modest life

Priyantha had to pay too-great a price, to bring up a small company to what it is today. His professional qualifi-

cations could have easily taken him to a country with greater luxuries to afford a better life for his loved ones. But he was a loyal employee who may have, as his closest friends recalled, lived by morals and principles. The house where the funeral was held was testimony to the modest life the family led.

When Covid-19 brought everything to a standstill, the Sri Lankan Executive tried to wrap up his life in Pakistan and return home. But his bosses had pleaded for him to stay on. He was also invited to bring his family to Pakistan. The horrific incident sparked outrage across Pakistan with all sections of society condemning it and calling for the culprits to be punished.

Humanity

Religious leaders including the Chief Prelates of the Malwathu and Asgiriya Chapters called for restraint fearing people might revolt against the Muslims in Sri Lanka following the violent death. Archbishop Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith also visited his home.

"We must preserve humanity. That is what Priyantha would have wanted," Speaker Mahind Yapa Abeywardena said, urging Sri Lankans not to target anyone because of the killing.

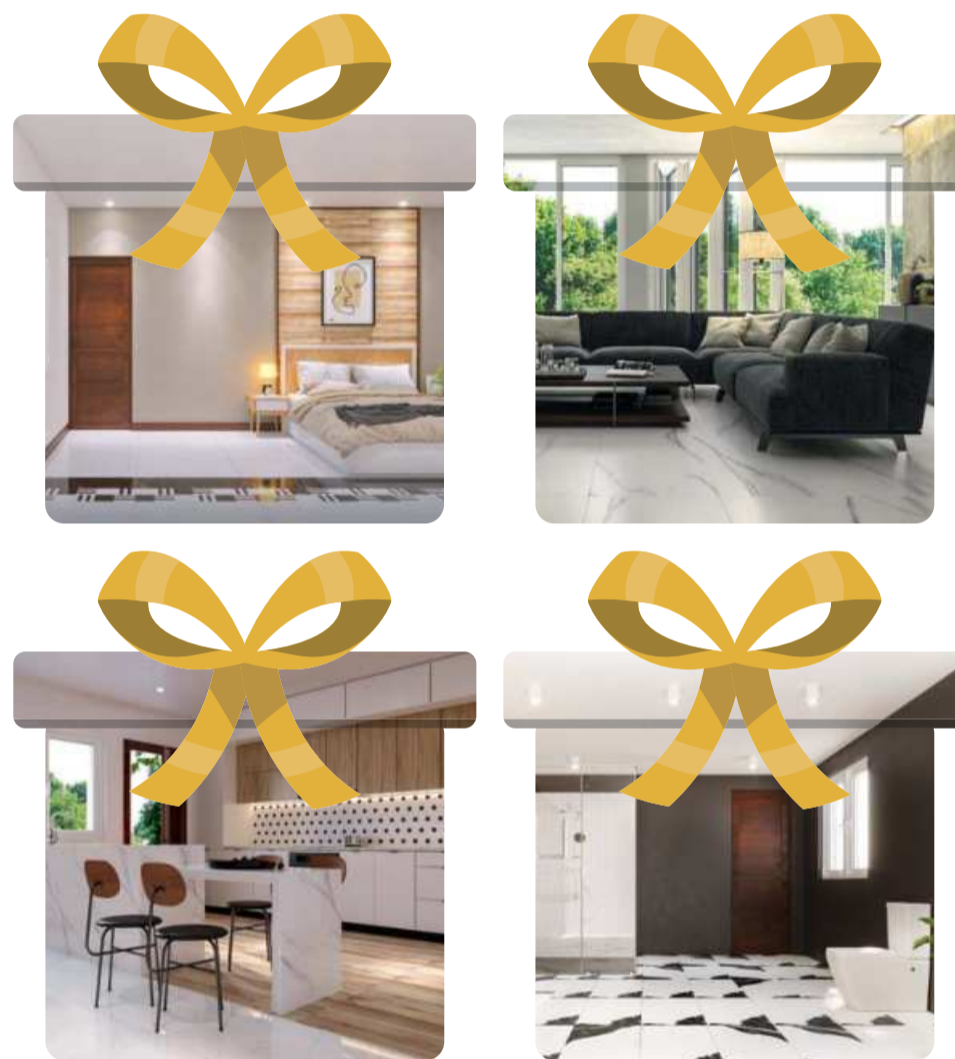
Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) Director Muhammad Amir Rana, a Senior Security Analyst in Pakistan told the *Sunday Observer* that it has been proven in the investigations that the Sri Lankan who was lynched had not committed blasphemy. He said this was a reason why the incident sparked widespread protests and condemnation in Pakistan.

Continued on page 12

Family keen to know what happened

Kamal Diyawadana, the brother of Engineer Priyantha told the *Sunday Observer* that they are yet to receive any official communication from the Pakistan High Commission about the investigations and the findings.

"The Foreign Ministry is in touch with my brother's wife, but we want to know what really happened in Sialkot and why he had to suffer such a horrendous death."



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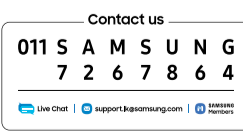
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Interview/ Feature

Security issue

Opposition's claim is hilarious

- Udaya Gammanpila

By **Uditba Kumarasinghe**



C o-Cabinet Spokesman and Minister of Energy Udaya Gammanpila said that there is no truth whatsoever in the allegation levelled on the delay to bring the masterminds of the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks to book.

The Minister in an interview with the *Sunday Observer* said the efficiency of Sri Lanka's investigations should only be assessed in comparison with other countries. He said five suspects of the September 11, 2001 USA suicide terrorist attacks were prosecuted only on February 11, 2008, while 20 suspects of the November 13, 2015 Paris attacks were prosecuted on September 8, 2021.

"In the Sri Lankan case, the suicide terrorist attacks took place on April 21, 2019, but we prosecuted the suspects on August 10, 2021, just after two years and four months. Although Sri Lanka lacks the latest technology, we have acted efficiently in comparison with the USA and France. The Minister said nobody should rush to file criminal charges because the basic principle of criminal law is that the benefit of the doubt should be given to the suspect. If there is an unnecessary rush in prosecution, the benefit of that rush would go to the suspects not to the victims," Gammanpila said.

day protest conducted by the main Opposition SJB outside Parliament demanding to ensure their security in the House?

A: It is hilarious to claim that they don't have security in the Chamber. The proceedings in the Chamber are recorded with cameras from all angles. On the other hand, they could enjoy the delicious foods at the Parliament cafeteria. If they have a security issue, they are more vulnerable at the cafeteria than in the fully screened Chamber as the cameras are not operating at the cafeteria. If you can't take a risk, you are not fit to be a public representative. During the tenure of the former Yahapalana Government, they arrested and slung mud at us. We were subjected to all sorts of harassments and torture, but we never gave up our cause. The main Opposition is displaying that they are not fit to be politicians.

Q: As reported by the media, the SJB has lodged a complaint with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Commonwealth Parliament Union (CPU) over the alleged assault on SJB Parliamentarian Manusha Nanayakkara.

A: They never claimed that he was attacked. They said that there was an attempt. When you say an attempt, it is subjected to interpretation. If somebody has been attacked, of course, that MPs rights should be protected and there is no doubt about it. However, in the manner the Opposition behaves, we have serious doubts about the allegations levelled by them.

Q: A serious concern has been raised on the brutal killing of Sri Lankan Manager Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana by an extremist mob in

Sialkot, Pakistan. What action has been taken to mete out justice to the victim and ensure the safety of other Sri Lankans in Pakistan?

A: The Pakistan Government has shown its seriousness to the world by arresting over 120 persons within 24 hours. They have screened those down to 15. They have been remanded. The inquiry is monitored by the Pakistan Prime Minister. The majority of the nation denounces the attack. They have expressed their shame and commiserated with Sri Lankans. The Pakistan Government's prompt reaction has boosted confidence in the Sri Lankan Government as well as Sri Lankans who live in Pakistan. As the guardian of the Sri Lankan people, the Government is watchful of the events in Pakistan.

Q: Do you think the perpetrators of this barbaric act will be brought to justice?

A: They must be brought to justice. We are patiently and vigilantly looking at the action by the Government of Pakistan.

Q: President Gotabaya Rajapaksa delivering the inaugural address at the Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) in Abu Dhabi stressed the need for proper international coordination to combat religious extremism and terrorism in countries in the region. Would you like to comment?

A: It is the bitter truth that religion based violence has frequently taken place in our part of the world. In a way, it is a demonstration of the immaturity of our society. We have noticed in the recent past that there is a transboundary movement of religious extremism. Sometimes, religious extremists in one country act on the instruction and inspiration by the religious leaders in another country. Regional cooperation is a must to curb this kind of religious extremism and violence.

Q: It has been revealed that over 2,000 recommendations by the parliamentary watchdog committees, Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) and Committee on Public Accounts (COPA) to prevent corruption in public institutions have not been implemented by the state agencies and officials. Your views?

A: The Ministry Secretary as the chief accounting officer and the Minister as the person in charge of the Ministry should be accountable to Parliament as well as the public with regard to the implementation of the recommendations. If they can't implement the recommendations, they should tell the public as well as Parliament. That kind of a mechanism should be implemented. Naming and shaming is another technique used by the parliamentary committees to compel the top brass of the institutions to implement the recommendations.

Q: State Minister Lasantha Alagiyawanna said gas companies should bear the responsibility for the adverse consequences of using domestic gas reported recently. Will the investigations find those who are responsible for the incidents of explosions owing to gas leaks?

A: I predicted the lower concentration of mercaptan which gives a strong smell in gas leakages would be the



"IN THE SRI LANKAN CASE, THE SUICIDE ATTACKS TOOK PLACE ON APRIL 21, 2019, BUT WE PROSECUTED THE SUSPECTS ON AUGUST 10, 2021, JUST AFTER TWO YEARS AND FOUR MONTHS. ALTHOUGH SRI LANKA LACKS THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY, WE HAVE ACTED EFFICIENTLY IN COMPARISON WITH THE USA AND FRANCE"

main reason for the explosions. That has now been confirmed by the experts. There is also an allegation that the composition of the gas cylinders has been changed. These irresponsible acts are committed by the management of the gas companies. They should have ensured the minimum standards that should be followed before releasing gas cylinders to the market. They are responsible and must be punished for their negligence.

Q: The SLP has suggested holding the Provincial Council elections expeditiously under the former electoral system at least limited to this election alone. Would you like to comment?

A: Sri Lanka has other priorities than holding Provincial Council elections at this moment of crisis.

Q: Jathika Jana Balawegaya MP Vijitha Herath has said that a national alliance under the leadership of JVP Leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake supported by several political parties will be formed considering the current situation in the country.

A: This political force could secure only three Parliamentary seats at the last Parliamentary election one and a half years ago. However, if they can form a political alliance, we wish them good luck.

Q: Sri Lanka has confirmed its first case of the Omicron Covid-19 variant. Does Sri Lanka have ac-

curate understanding regarding the spread of the new variant?

A: Just because we are having Omicron, we don't have to take any additional precautionary measures because the precautionary practices are the same as to be taken for other Covid-19 variants. We have to get ready for work. Of course, the public has a great responsibility to look after themselves. The Government can only warn the people, but complying with the health guidelines is their responsibility.

Q: What are the remedial measures taken to overcome the huge losses incurred by the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC)?

A: As we don't have cost reflective pricing, incurring huge losses is unavoidable. Unless the Government doesn't permit the CPC to revise prices, the Treasury should compensate the loss by way of a subsidy. Unfortunately, the Treasury doesn't give any of these.

Q: Various sections including Cardinal Archbishop Malcolm Perera and Archbishop Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith have raised serious concern on the delay to bring the masterminds of the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks to book. Would you like to elaborate your views?

A: There is no truth in it whatsoever. We should admit the fact that when there is a suicide attack, the main suspects have already died. As a result, it is difficult to find out who has supported or encouraged them to commit the terrorist attacks. Because of this

reason, investigations and prosecution of a suicide terrorist attack are difficult tasks. Efficiency of the investigations in Sri Lanka should only be assessed in comparison with that of other countries. On September 11, 2001, there were four suicide terrorist attacks in the USA. Five suspects of the terrorist attack were prosecuted only on February 11, 2008. It means six years and five months after the attack. There was a suicide terrorist attack in Paris, France on November 13, 2015, but 20 suspects were prosecuted on September 8, 2021 after five years and ten months.

In the Sri Lankan case, the suicide attacks took place on April 21, 2019, but we prosecuted the suspects on August 10, 2021, just after two years and four months. Although Sri Lanka lacks the latest technology, we have acted efficiently in comparison to the USA and France. Therefore, this allegation is baseless. Nobody should rush to file criminal charges because the basic principle of criminal law is that the benefit of the doubt should be given to the suspect. If there is any technical discrepancy in charges or inconsistency in evidence, the suspects would be discharged. Therefore, if there is an unnecessary rush in prosecution, the benefit of the rush would go to the suspects, not to the victims.

Q: Is there any conflict of ideas among the coalition partners of the Government regarding the Yugandavi power plant issue?

A: There is a difference of opinion which we have openly expressed. Three Cabinet Ministers have filed an affidavit before the Supreme Court challenging its own Cabinet decision for the first time in world history. We are a coalition of 16 political parties. We reach a consensus only on "Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour" national policy framework and have differences of opinion for everything else. That is natural for a coalition. The smallest organisation in this world is the family which consists of only two members. If you can find differences of opinion in such a small organisation, how can you expect unity for every single issue in a complex and complicated mass organisation such as the governing coalition?

Q: How do you view the proposal by Chief Opposition Whip Lakshman Kiriella who requested the Government to allow Members of Parliament to enter Law College and state universities for higher studies without an examination?

A: There should not be a shortcut to the Law College through Parliament. However, educating Parliamentarians about basic laws of the country is useful.

Q: The Government recently granted permission to the private sector to import chemical fertiliser. Has the Government been able to sort out the fertiliser issue of the farmers?

A: The decision to grant permission to import chemical fertiliser was taken recently. It may take some time to make chemical fertiliser available in the market.

Excerpts

Q: How do you view the two-

FACT-FILE

Udaya Gammanpila

- ▶ **1970:** Born in Nawalapitiya. Son of a school principal. Primary education at Ginigathena and secondary education at D.S. Senanayake College, Colombo. BSc graduate of Monash University, Australia. Founder of the Sri Lanka Association of Monash University. Computer engineer and University lecturer
- ▶ **1994:** Returned to Sri Lanka. Management Trainee in Australia - Lanka Group
- ▶ **1996:** Called to the Bar as an Attorney -at-Law
- ▶ **2000:** Entered politics. Appointed Propaganda Secretary and Spokesman of Sihala Urumaya
- ▶ **2004:** Joined Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) along with members of the Sihala Urumaya. Former Provincial Minister of Agriculture, Agrarian Development, Minor Irrigation and Industries
- ▶ **2007:** Appointed Chairman of the Central Environment Authority

Minister of Energy

- ▶ **2009:** Western Provincial Council Minister
- ▶ **2015:** Played a major role for former President Mahinda Rajapaksa's Presidential election campaign
- ▶ **2015:** Elected to Parliament from the Colombo District
- ▶ **2015 to date:** Leader of the Pivithuru Hela Urumaya, affiliated to Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP)
- ▶ **2020:** Re-elected to Parliament from Colombo district contesting under the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) securing 136,331 preferential votes
- ▶ **August 2020:** Minister of Energy in the Cabinet of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Source: Internet, Graphic: Mahil Wijesinghe

Goodwill: The best tool for a leader

By **Dr. Thilash U. Herath**



"Leadership must be based on goodwill. Goodwill does not mean posturing and, least of all, pandering to the mob. It means obvious and wholehearted commitment to helping followers."

- James Stockdale

T here is no shortage of goodwill during this holiday season, the time of giving, though most of the countries are struggling with Covid-19 as they prepare to bid farewell to 2021.

In addition to the few receiving individual acts of kindness, there will be millions more around the world hoping for the goodwill of the leaders of world organisations, countries, multinational corporations, all the way down to the neighbourhood church, temple, and mosque, to overcome the atrocities they are facing due to the pandemic. Real leaders, of course, create goodwill all year round. Goodwill of the leader encourages loyalty, forgiveness, credibility, and respect within the organisation.

Conduct

Organisations don't usually have to

spend a whole lot of money to conduct workshops or human resource development programs to create a goodwill culture among the stakeholders. It could mean simply saying 'thank you' to an employee or a customer, wishing someone a happy birthday, best wishes on the birth of a child or a grandchild or offering condolences upon the death of a relative.

Though they are not expensive gifts, they do mean being aware of the people who follow that leader. Whether you are a parent or a teacher guiding your children, a religious leader, a principal of a school, a Vice Chancellor of a university, a CEO of a company, a Mayor, a Governor, a Prime Minister, or a President of a country, you always have the choice of being nice or being a grouch.

Given the choice, taking the high road and being nice will always produce a higher return on investment than being a grouch. There, of course, are times when leaders have to be strict and push the followers to accomplish their tasks and missions.

If the one being pushed feels the goodwill within the intentions of the leader, then the mission will be accomplished even beyond the expectations of the stakeholders. Billionaire businessman Mark Cuban has said that he and his team were more productive when he brought a positive environment to each meet-

ing rather than allowing his negative emotions to dictate the atmosphere of the meeting.

He has been able to stay away from any emotional responses by not allowing the perceptions created in the past to influence the present. He said: "One of the most underrated skills in business right now is being nice. Nice sells. I went through my own metamorphosis if you will.

Curse

Early on in my career, I was like bam, bam, bam...get mad and curse...and whole nine yards. Then I just got to the point where I wouldn't even have wanted to do business with me. I realised that I have to change, and I did, and it really paid off."

Leaders and followers alike should be careful not to misunderstand popularity as goodwill, though the goodwill can make one popular among people who appreciate it.

There are people who would do things or make decisions only to gain or improve their popularity, knowing very well that what they are doing is not in the best interest of the stakeholders.

For example, a teacher can become popular by not trying to discipline the students and teach them the proper behavior within the environment they are in and/or giving them passing grades in examinations even when the performances

are not up to passing level.

Most of the students will also enjoy that since it is very hard for them to see long term repercussions of getting a passing grade for examinations without learning the subject matter properly. Needless to say, that it is the modus operandi of almost all the politicians in countries like ours.

Some would want to be popular among their supporters and others just want to be popular among their party leaders irrespective of the impact of their actions on the general public.

Unfortunately, this pattern is fast spreading through other institutions too, particularly in the State sector including universities. Two primary goals of such selfish leaders are: i) to satisfy their support base to secure the position for the longest possible period and climb up to the next level at the end, ii) to prepare the ground to plant their most loyal (but less competent than them) follower at the position when they leave so that all their sins will be forgiven, while being seen as a better leader than the successor.

Stakeholders

It then would be the duty of other stakeholders to explain the danger of such selfish actions of leaders to all stakeholders and even to those leaders themselves giving both parties to make the changes in their

thinking.

Another common occurrence within educational, business, political, or even charity organisations, is that the student, employee, or the volunteer with the goodwill, who doesn't want to say no to the hierarchy out of fear or not having enough courage to do so, will be asked to attend to all the tasks while others use the time to their own personal development. Leaders who are selfish enough to check the boxes to say that they accomplished this, that and the other are not even interested in finding out the type of exploitations happening under their noses.

At the end of the day, when those people who have been working hard see the others who have been using their time to gather extra qualifications and get into the good books of the leader climb up the hierarchy only, they realise what has happened. It usually is too late to do anything about it anyway.

The leaders who exploit followers in such situations would always try to show that giving more and more responsibilities to the same person as their way of recognising the hard work and giving those opportunities out of goodwill. What such incompetent leaders really want is to get something done the easiest way possible even if the person they assign the task to is not qualified or competent to do it properly. Incompetent selfish leaders cer-

tainly will not let any follower who seems to be more competent than them participate any activity since they consider such followers as a threat to their survival.

Irony is that there are hundreds of selfish followers who are willing to be slaves to such selfish leaders since that would be the shortest and easiest path to achieving their own selfish goals.

Real leaders

Real leaders do not usually have to make an extra effort to create goodwill. It is their nature. Their conscience does not allow them to spread their goodwill only to some groups and not the others.

A good leader of a country, a business, political or charity organisation, school or a university would be a competent person with a vision for the country or the organisation and the courage to always stand on higher grounds of moral and ethical standards.

It is extremely important for the followers to know the difference between a leader with goodwill and one without, since we can only see what we know and nothing more.

The writer has served in the higher education sector as an academic for over twenty years in the USA and fourteen years in Sri Lanka and he can be contacted at thilanh@gmail.com

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Feature

Passing of Budget with overwhelming majority shows Govt's stability

The Third Reading of Budget 2022 was passed by an overwhelming majority of 93 votes in Parliament on Friday, December 10 showing the stability of the SLFP-led Government again. The Opposition called for a vote and 157 votes were cast in favour of the Budget while only 64 votes were cast against it.

Budget 2022 was presented to Parliament by Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa on November 12. It is the second Budget of the Government and the first to be presented by Finance Minister Rajapaksa after his appointment in July this year.

Delivering the reply speech at the Third Reading of the Budget, Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa said that the Government will meet all foreign debt obligations due next year, adding that the President and the Prime Minister have also assured their fullest support in this task.

He said that the Government is expected to service US\$ 500 million in foreign debt in January 2022 and US\$ 1000 million in July 2022. The Minister said the Government has a suitable plan to service these debts. He said, "We will pay every dollar that is due and we give that assurance with the greatest responsibility."

The Minister also said that the Government does not hide the fact that the country is going through a serious economic crisis, and called upon all parties to support the Government to successfully manage the situation. Finance Minister Rajapaksa said that while Covid-19 pandemic was the major blow to the economy of the country, the Yahapalana Government was also a major factor in creating a serious economic crisis the country is now suffering from.

He said, "That is why they cannot even face an election with their earlier political party name. They had to rally around a different Party name to make it to Parliament. They were not able to compete in the election as the United National Party."

Cordial discussion

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on Monday, December 6 walked up to the group of Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Parliamentarians who were staging a protest at the entrance to the Parliament Complex demanding enhanced security for their Members and had a cordial discussion with the protesting MPs.

The SJB MPs protested after having boycotted Monday's Parliamentary sittings accusing the ruling party members of harassment. The Prime Minister who recalled protests organised by him in the past as an Opposition Parliamentarian told the SJB MPs that they needed to attract a larger group of MPs than the ones present when staging such protests.

SJB Parliamentarians Patali Champika Ranawaka, Rajitha Senaratne and Imthiaz Bakeer Markar were seen having a cordial conversation with the Prime Minister. Later, SJB MPs led by the Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa staged a demonstration outside the Parliament complex.

The MPs were holding placards that displayed various slogans in protest against the Government. The Opposition Leader told the media during the protest, "The ruling party MPs had attempted to inflict verbal violence on Opposition MP Manusha Nanayakkara. The Speaker needs to take action against those who inflicted physical violence on MP Nanayakkara as well."

Scuffle

A scuffle erupted in Parliament Chamber on December 3 when SJB Parliamentarian Manusha Nanayakkara requested more time to speak. MP Nanayakkara walking towards the Speaker's Chair caused a melee between Government and Opposition MPs.

A tense situation arose again in Parliament on November 4, when an exchange of words took place between opposition MP Manusha Nanayakkara and State Minister Kanchana Wijesekera in connection with the previous day's incident.

Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena told Parliament on Monday, December 6, "Some ugly incidents had taken place in the Parliament premises on December 3 and December 4. As MPs and responsible citizens, it's important that you help uphold the dignity of the House. The Speaker said respecting standing orders and following House regula-



tions are things that need our special attention."

The Speaker on Wednesday also appointed an eleven-member committee headed by Deputy Speaker Ranjith Siyambalapatiya to look into the incidents that took place in and outside the Chamber on December 3 and 4 and recommend action to be taken regarding the incident and prevent similar incidents in the future.

However, Government lawmakers on Monday, December 6 said that the Opposition, while boycotting the Committee Stage Budget debate scheduled for the day, have had their breakfast at the Parliament canteen with no trouble.

Agriculture Minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage told the House that over 30 MPs had had their breakfast at the Parliament canteen. He said that there was no absence of Opposition MPs in the Parliament premises and there was no trouble at all.

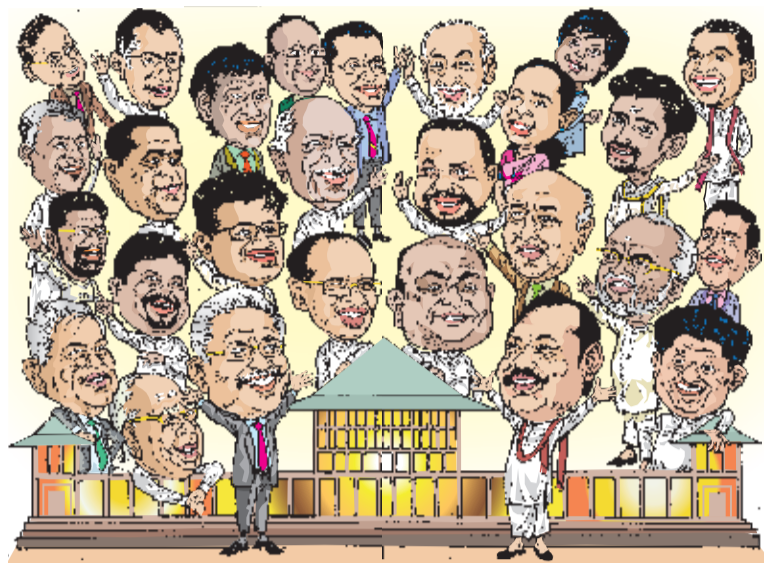
Tourism Minister Prasanna Ranatunga on the same subject said, "The Speaker is acting democratically. Today, the Opposition is trying to imply that there is no democracy in Parliament. Opposition members tried to attack State Minister Kanchana Wijesekera today. If the Opposition can come to the canteen and eat, why can't they come to the Chamber?"

Minister Aluthgamage said, "MP Anura Kumara Dissanayake tried to tell the country today that the SJB Parliamentarians were not in Parliament which proved to be a lie since the Opposition MPs had come to Parliament and had breakfast."

However, this led to a heated



NPP MP VIJITHA HERATH SAID A NATIONAL ALLIANCE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE JVP WILL BE FORMED CONSIDERING THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY



University of Politics

By Prof. Backbencher

MINISTER BASIL RAJAPAKSA SAID THE COUNTRY IS GOING THROUGH A SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRISIS AND REQUESTED ALL PARTIES TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT TO SUCCESSFULLY MANAGE THE SITUATION

exchange of words between Minister Aluthgamage and MP Dissanayake, who responded reflecting on past political and personal matters. Dissanayake said that Minister Mahindananda has become a Minister who speaks whatever comes to his mind and it should be understood that he is not the present Mahindananda of Nawalapitiya but the present Minister of Agriculture.

Minister Aluthgamage said, "Speaker, this is the problem. Do not ask me what you did with Minister Malik Samarawickrema recently. So, no one can give a point of order. We have been trying to maintain parliamentary democracy for so long. We are trying to keep this Parliament respectable. So do not muddy the waters."

Chief Government Whip, Highways Minister Johnston Fernando told the Parliament that the Opposition is trying to cover up the misconduct of its MPs by boycotting Parliament proceedings. Minister Fernando was speaking about the unruly behaviour of several MPs in and outside the Chamber on December 3 and 4 and SJB MP's reaction to the issue.

The Minister said, "The Opposition attempts to cover up the mistakes of its MPs. No one went to attack MP Manusha Nanayakkara."

Minister Fernando told the House, "There was a time in the past when MPs came here with the intention of killing. Incidents of carrying knives and chilli powder took place here. We have a democratic Speaker. I saw the way the then Speaker acted. How many injustices have fallen upon us?"

That particular MP spoke to the Speaker in a very bad manner and tried to attack him. It is our duty to protect the Speaker. Today, the debate is on the Housing Ministry. The Opposition has fled without being able to face the wrongdoings of the then Housing Minister Sajith Premadasa."

National alliance

At the JVP's *Gaman Patan Gamu* program in Hatton a couple of days ago, NPP MP Vijitha Herath said a national alliance under the leadership of JVP Leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake and supported by several political parties will be formed considering the current situation in the country.

According to him, such a new political alliance should be formed with the partnership of the SLFP, UNP and parties representing the estate areas and the Muslim community along with the JVP.

MP Herath said regardless of the race or religion-based differences, Sri Lankans are getting together to create a new country. He said when the people of the country and Parliamentarians don't have security; a situation has arisen where the Government is unable to govern the country. He also criticised the Government for its failures to fulfill the promises given to the estate people and thereby putting them in difficulty.

New front

Former President Maithripala Sirisena has hinted at extend-



THAT PARTICULAR MP SPOKE TO THE SPEAKER IN A VERY BAD MANNER AND TRIED TO ATTACK HIM
- JOHNSTON FERNANDO

ing support to a new united front, which he says must be formed to address the critical issues in the country.

Former President Sirisena said that instead of pointing fingers and blaming anyone, a new front must be formed to face the issues in the country. Speaking to the media after a ceremony at the BMICH, the former President said that the new front should be formed by politicians and others who love the country and are not corrupt.

The former President said that the time has come for such a force to be formed for the future of the country. He also said that the SLFP is



undergoing extensive reforms. Sirisena said that new party organisers have been appointed and he hopes the SLFP will be a strong political force again in six months.

Later when asked whether the SLFP will quit the Government due to the criticism of SLFP MPs, Sirisena had told the media that there was no immediate plan to quit the Government.

Speaker rejects allegation

Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena on Wednesday asked JVP Leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake to act like a mature politician. In a statement rejecting Dissanayake's allegations that he had been biased towards the Government during the Committee Stage debate on Budget 2022 under the expenditure heads of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, the Speaker said, "I request Dissanayake not to make false accusations without knowing the full details. Such conduct is not suitable for a mature politician like you."

The Speaker said, "During a press conference, Dissanayake had alleged that I was biased and violated Standing Orders on Monday, December 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."

Justice for Diyawadana

In a discussion with Acting Pakistan High Commissioner Tanvir Ahmed on Thursday, December 9, Foreign Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris called for justice and compensation for Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana, who was lynched by a mob in Sialkot, Punjab on December 3.

Prof. Peiris had appreciated the intervention of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan who has taken personal charge of this investigation and taken steps to immediately investigate the incident.

The Foreign Minister also welcomed the announcement of a donation of 100,000 US dollars by the business community in Sialkot and a promise to continue paying Diyawadana's monthly salary to his widow.

The Minister expressed confidence that the Pakistan Government would take steps so that the family of the late Diyawadana gets justice. Prof. Peiris highlighted the fact that the Government is concerned about the future of the two children of the late Priyantha Kumara and the importance of receiving the payments on time.

The Acting Pakistan High Commissioner had conveyed his heartfelt apologies over the incident and assured the Foreign Minister that a full investigation will be carried out and compensation will be provided to the family.

Request for pardon

SJB Parliamentarian Mayantha Dissanayake requested Justice Minister Ali Sabry in Parliament on Thursday to inform the President to pardon former SJB MP Ranjan Ramanayake who is serving a prison sentence. He expressed hope that the Justice Minister would pay attention to this matter and that he was collecting signatures to a letter to be handed over to the President requesting that steps be taken to release Ranjan Ramanayake. MP Dissanayake was speaking during the Committee Stage debate of the Budget 2022.

Jealous

Public Security Minister Sarath Weerasekera said SJB Parliamentarian Field Marshal Sarath Fonseka is "jealous" of him. Speaking in Parliament on Friday, December 10, Minister Weerasekera said the Opposition MP insulted him out of jealousy as he is shining like the moon.

He said, "Sarath Fonseka is jealous of me because President Gotabaya Rajapaksa gave me the Public Security portfolio which he knelt before him and begged for."

He said that a bhikkhu had once told him "When the moon is shining, the foxes and dogs howl." Minister Weerasekera said that as a military officer, MP Fon-



seka must have ethics and behave like a gentleman.

Fertiliser

Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa said what is the point of having an Agriculture Minister and a State Minister for Fertiliser maintained on public funds, if the distribution of fertiliser is entrusted with the Army Commander. At a public function on Thursday, the Opposition Leader said that it would be a 'crime' to maintain Government Ministers who have no role to play via public funds, should these affairs be undertaken at the intervention of the military.

He said the President's move of handing over the distribution of fertiliser to the Army Commander implies that the subject Ministers and officials have failed in their duties, suggesting that the Government has no confidence in public servants at all.

'Kicked the ladder'

Former Minister Tissa Karaliyadda said during the last Presidential Election, several top persons now in the Government visited State Minister Duminda Dissanayake's residence in Anuradhapura and requested in our presence to support him at the election campaign.

Duminda said that the SLFP would work at its maximum to make Gotabaya Rajapaksa victorious. At a recent SLFP meeting in the Kahatagasdigiya Pradeshiya Sabha Auditorium, Karaliyadda said those who came to power with the support of the SLFP seem to have kicked the ladder preventing others from climbing to the top.

He said, "Those who now treat us scornfully and maliciously are in top positions of the Government thanks to the SLFP, which they have forgotten. The SLFP was highly instrumental in winning the election."



AFTER GRADUATING FROM A GREAT UNIVERSITY INSTITUTION LIKE SLIIT, I BELIEVE YOU HAVE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY & A RESPONSIBILITY TO BE EXTRAORDINARY IN SOCIETY



Mr. Dilith Jayaweera on 02nd December 2021 Day 2 Session 01

Good morning, my dear friend Vice-Chancellor Professor Lalith Gamage and the rest of the academic staff and all of you, the lucky graduates of SLIIT. I consider this a proud moment for me to be here and deliver this Convocation speech, which I will keep short.

Lalith, as I call him and as he mentioned, is a college mate of mine from my alma mater, St. Aloysius' College, Galle. He is my good friend, and he has also given many of us a lot of us inspiration and direction to be successful.

It is my hope and expectation that my speech at your convocation should leave with you valuable lessons that should not be forgotten. In that belief, I would like to take some case studies.

In his generous introduction, Lalith spoke of me as a great entrepreneur. I would like to accept that compliment, humbly. We have studied in local universities — my friend is from the famous Moratuwa University, while I am from the Colombo University. We have even been entrepreneurs during our own university days. Having said that and accepting the credit he gives, I think I should take a better case study to share with you and for you to remember.

When you graduate from a great institution like SLIIT, I believe you have a great opportunity and a responsibility to be extraordinary in society; beyond just being ordinary. Many may graduate, but only some shine. I want you all to always try to be in that shining category of society. That's why it is important for you to understand why it is so great to graduate from SLIIT today. Let me explain why you have all the right to think that you can be extraordinary.

As a communications person, I observe that there are some controversies in the media about SLIIT. Although it is a little controversial, I am not hesitant to take this example and explain why it has happened.

I have known my friend, Prof Lalith Gamage for many years... maybe over three decades. He is a proud member of not just our alumni at St Aloysius' but a proud member of the Galle Club, which we have formed together with six popular schools in Galle. We are very proud of this achievement, and today I want to take Lalith as a case study, because we don't need to look for any other success stories.

I am told that SLIIT has so far produced 20,000 graduates for the country and nearly 12,000 undergraduates are going through their courses at the moment. This to me is an incredible achievement that makes this a great institute. No ordinary man can think of a concept of this nature. It is not just entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship as we know is the ability to take risks; but his effort is not just about risks; it's driven by philosophy, it's driven by commitment, it's driven by dedication. This is a fine example of visionary leadership that this country has produced.

This institution that has taught you is a creation of our times that Sri Lanka will always cherish and be proud of. Had you gone to another university, I don't know if you would have had this same pride.

Today, you are graduating from an institution which is driven by its philosophical inspiration and I believe that empowers you all to think beyond; to create things. You know those universities that we refer to as the so-called ivy-league universities? What are they? They are brands. Graduates graduating from such universities have better chances in society.

I was touched when the Vice Chancellor asked today's graduates about their work; except for 2 instances, all of them had jobs. And not just any jobs, but jobs from very reputed organisations, even before graduating.

Address by Chief Guest
Mr. Dilith Jayaweera - Chairman of
George Steuart Group of Companies
at the



CONVOCATION 2021



What does this mean? That SLIIT as a brand, has created its own niche. So, while being jealous as an alumni of Colombo university, because it does not enjoy the same position in society (because probably half of my university's graduates might be holding placards in front of President's office asking for jobs), I admire you for being privileged and qualified to receive these good jobs from reputed organisations.

You have been driven by great people at a great institute. And because of that reason, I expect you to be great graduates doing great things; not just doing ordinary work. Even while working for an organisation, you can make every moment creative. Every problem has many solutions, and that's how you can be that much more creative.

This doesn't mean every one of you must invent something, but remember that every given minute your organisation is seeking your creative input for its betterment. That's why you have been hired. It is your duty to be extraordinary and give extraordinary solutions. Maybe it is a mundane job, but you can choose to be different. I expect you to want to be extraordinary.

In closing, may I once again thank this great institute and my friend Professor Lalith Gamage, for inviting me.

I wish you all the very best.

Thank you.



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SUNDAY OBSERVER

Never again

The cold-blooded mob lynching of Sri Lankan factory manager Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana in Sialkot, Pakistan, has sent shockwaves around the world. As explained lucidly by veteran Pakistani journalist Zahid Hussain in an article published in our sister paper the *Daily News* yesterday, this horrific killing is the result of the growing threat of religious extremism that has engulfed Pakistan in recent years. Hate based on religious extremism knows no bounds and usually results in tragedy. Religious fundamentalism has grown in recent years and is not necessarily limited to those who distort the teachings and texts of the Islamic faith. There have been several incidents where Muslims have been attacked by far-right activists, including the attack on Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Sri Lanka itself experienced the terrible consequences of religious indoctrination and hate speech in April 2019 when fanatical suicide bombers inspired by the ISIS terrorist group blew themselves up at several Churches and five-star hotels in Colombo, Negombo and Batticaloa on Easter Sunday. The radicalisation of the bombers by online hate speech and several foreign preachers ultimately resulted in the deaths of over 250 innocent people, with more than 500 injured. While the investigations into this tragic incident are still ongoing, there is no doubt that religious fanaticism and fundamentalism played a part.

It is somewhat ironic that the youth, who should be shorn of the myopic views held by their forefathers on race and religion and open to a wider worldview, have embraced these ideas even more strongly. Even in the case of the Sialkot incident, most of the mob members were teenagers and youth. Experts have warned that youth belonging to all religions are vulnerable to be influenced by extremist ideals espoused by preachers, politicians and other popular figures. This is a dangerous trend that can take the world towards an even darker chapter as these youth are the leaders of tomorrow.

Recent developments on the world stage have also emboldened extremist and terrorist groups across the world. The victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan has led to the somewhat unfortunate conclusion among some groups that extremism pays rich dividends. In fact, international security and terrorism expert Prof. Rohan Gunaratne alluded to this during his speech at the recent Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) in Abu Dhabi, saying the Taliban's conquest of Afghanistan and its apparent victory over "Western powers" may have emboldened extremist groups in Pakistan and elsewhere. It could have had a bearing on the tragic events in Sialkot, he has said.

The rise of terrorism, religious extremism and ethno-religious intolerance is a dangerous development. Even more worryingly, some are trying to downplay the consequences of such intolerance. A senior Government Minister in Pakistan said words to the effect that the Sialkot youth got carried away in the heat of the moment. This callous remark attracted widespread condemnation both in Pakistan and abroad, but it shows that some in the highest echelons of power subscribe to ideas that could encourage extremists. This extends to the likes of the far-right rulers of Poland and Hungary and the White Supremacists in the US, whose dislike of "the other" is palpable.

Just as in the case of the Sialkot lynching, practically the whole world condemned the grisly killing of George Floyd, a black man, by a white Police Officer in the US. The recent deaths of migrants crossing the Mediterranean and the English Channel remind us that the world is indeed a cruel place if you have a different skin colour or if you are from a poor country. The world is full of barriers based on poverty, race, religion and skin colour. Such intolerance is based on the belief that some are superior to others.

Here in Sri Lanka too, such ideas have gained ground in recent years. Although Sri Lanka is primarily identified as being a Buddhist nation, Sri Lankans of all faiths and communities have co-existed for centuries, even during the period of Colonial rule. Political and community leaders of all faiths and communities were in the vanguard of the independence movement. It was only after independence that power-hungry politicians exploited racial and religious sensibilities to gain more votes from their respective communities. This ultimately resulted in a terrorist battle that dragged on for 30 long years, claiming thousands of precious lives.

It is, therefore, rather unfortunate that sinister attempts are still being made by certain groups to inflame ethno-religious passions here. In this context, we must all be grateful to the Maha Sangha and other religious leaders, leaders of political parties and civil society leaders for urging calm and restraint in the aftermath of the Sialkot incident and to the general public for heeding that call. Otherwise, we would also have been tainted in the same way as the Sialkot mob. The above segments must now amplify this message of tolerance and patience and ensure that Sri Lanka never again witnesses ethno-religious tensions.

The proposed new Constitution, which is now being formulated, as well as the recommendations of the Presidential Task Force on One Country One Law will hopefully create a future when such tensions will exist no more, where all Sri Lankans will be able to live peacefully sans ethnic, religious, caste and other differences. Even politics should not be a barrier to such peaceful co-existence. It is time for all of us to think of ourselves as Sri Lankans first and foremost, whilst still preserving and following our religious, linguistic and cultural traditions. That is the kind of future that our future generations should inherit in the decades to come.

Lankan political culture of stoicism



by Rajpal Abeynayake

Can Sri Lankan people step out of their comfort-zones? There have been various Governments in the past that prescribed they can and they should. The last regime — the Yahapalanaytes — imposed enormous taxes. They taxed the piggy banks of children literally by charging a levy on the *Tikiri* accounts maintained by little children in State banks.

It cannot be forgotten that some of their ideologues wanted people to eat crotons, *Jak leaves* or *kos kola* was also part of the prescribed diet. The Yahapalana ideologues also actively discouraged agriculture, and let paddy lands go fallow from 2016.

That was their idea of making sacrifices for the nation. However, there is a pattern behind this mentality of making nation-building sacrifices.

Reality is, Sri Lankan citizens, whether any ruler likes it or not, is beyond that stage of making sacrifices of that very basic sort on behalf of the country. This is interpreted by some as a lack of collective will or the absence of a necessary spirit of selflessness.

So, they refer us back to the days the South Koreans, when the people of that country emerged from tenement blocs to make enormous sacrifices to build a powerful economy, or to the days when the Japanese rose back from the ashes after the atom bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the utter deprecation that followed with the surrender of their forces.

They say Sri Lankans should make similar selfless sacrifices if they are to succeed as a nation and achieve a standard of living on par with developed nations for our people. However, such appeals are mostly self-serving as in the Yahapalana appeal for more taxes, and croton and jak fruit based sustenance.

Functional

People see right through these self-righteous appeals. These is a reason for that. The Sri Lankan people have already been through these phases of sacrifice — not once, not twice, but several times.

They tightened their belts so many times during the battle against terrorism when tighten the belt was the perennial slogan. They made sacrifices during the Sirimavo Bandaranaike era but never seemed to benefit from that brutal national nightmare. Sacrifices were made during the *kolambata kiri*, *apata kekiri* era of the JVP uprising, dur-



ing the Premadasa and Jayewardene regimes. It was through the dint of such serial sacrifices that Sri Lankans were able to achieve middle-income status and so on, and surpass the South Asian neighbours in terms of per capita income. Those who work abroad make tremendous sacrifices. Lee Kwan Yew said if they don't pay public service CEOs top salaries and keep the system in trim, 'our people would have to work as maids and do menial jobs in other countries.'

Falling prey

There was no previous regime that was so thoughtful as to prevent Sri Lankans from to the same fate. Our young men and women went abroad as wage-slaves and the functional Sri Lankan economy was built on the backs of these stoic men and women who made untold sacrifices. Some were raped, some returned in coffins — and it still happens sporadically.

Today's functional economy with great banking facilities, with seamless telecommunications and a comparably great road network by South Asian standards, was all a result of the sacrifices Sri Lankans made, particularly in inhospitable climes abroad.

It's as a result of this level of sacrifice that we reached that coveted middle-income stage, so are we to tell the people that whatever they sacrificed prior to this doesn't count, and that they have to start from scratch once more if they are to think of the good life?

The people would rebuff such a call, because they will know it's disingenuous. Politicians of whatever stripe, Yahapalana or any other, cannot ask the people to return to stage of making the 'original sacrifice' i.e go back to the absolute basics of frugality, because that would plainly be a case of trying to foist their own failings on the people.

The people can't be asked to reinvent the wheel, or live without the light bulb — figuratively speaking of course. They have already been there, done that. So it's right that despite the vagaries of the pandemic, this Government has not obscenely raised taxes or asked people to eat crotons. Instead, there is a move to grant incentives for entrepreneurship. That's a start.

However, though the comfort-zone

In Thailand the young have to be ordained for a year or so as bhikkus, by tradition, not by law. It's doubted that any of this could work in this country, but while some means could be devised to teach the young the spirit of sacrifice, no regime can go back to the Yahapalana design of taxing the piggy banks of little ones.

that the average citizen is privy to must be considered an inviolate space, the comfort-zones that certain sectors of the population got used to as a result of handouts, is an entirely different matter. It may be correct to say that the average citizen made sacrifices for a very long time on behalf of Public servants. Whether those contributions made by ordinary tax paying citizens on behalf of the Government sector staff paid off, is questionable.

It's the dependency on handouts that must be dealt with, in place of a general call for people to forego their meagre creature comforts.

"How to be lazy and incompetent at work and get away with it." Someone in another country wrote this quote and it captures the lifestyle of the public servant. This country has been full of welfare abusers.

Those who game the system are not on the fringes. Those who demand Government jobs are welfare abusers, and they are organised, and consider themselves legitimate. The taxpayer has been making sacrifices on behalf of these people for too long. While this dependency syndrome prevails, some Governments called upon citizens in general to make sacrifices.

This is where the 'croton sticks in the craw.' There may be some truth in the fact that the younger generations never sacrificed anything, and that they could be considered relatively mollycoddled.

But their parents sacrificed on their behalf and it's not a crime their offspring have got used to relatively com-

fortable lifestyles.

They can't be asked to go back to the era of their parents who bit the bullet because Sirimavo Bandaranaike or some other leader asked them to do so. The young are generally also prone to be critical of past leaders — even the heroic ones.

Entitled

Many young people in South Korea are contemptuous of great leaders of the past such as Park Chung Hee and so on who made the Korean miracle possible. They consider them to be illegitimate military rulers, while enjoying the legacy they left behind of laying a solid foundation upon which the modern functioning nation state was built.

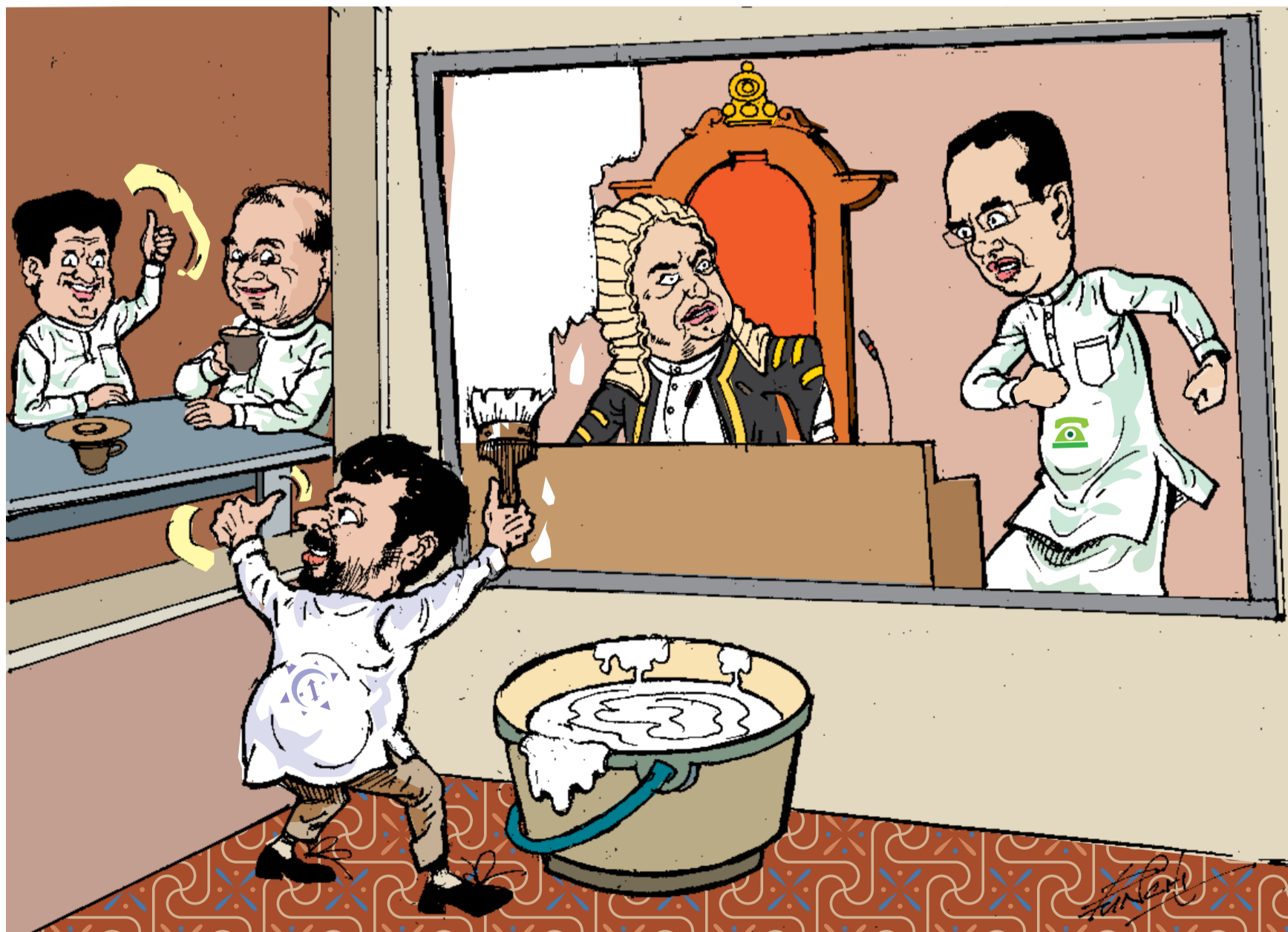
But that's how it is — and the youngsters can be taught a better history lesson at best. Or they could be temporarily inducted into military service as they do in some countries. In Thailand the young have to be ordained for a year or so as bhikkus, by tradition, not by law.

It's doubted that any of this could work in this country, but while some means could be devised to teach the young the spirit of sacrifice, no regime can go back to the Yahapalana design of taxing the piggy banks of little ones.

In some industrialised nations the young cannot purchase houses, and that's unreasonable because their parents generation had no such problems. The twenty-something or thirty-something professionals who ask for decent housing for themselves cannot be branded as entitled.

The young anywhere are often branded as entitled, even pampered. They may indeed be in certain ways, relative to previous generations. But having easy access to online portals to pay the bills doesn't make them useless layabouts — especially if they have less money left from their salaries to pay those bills, than their parents did in their time.

Apart from a few temporary sacrifices that citizens, old or young, may be asked to make — due to a war or even a pandemic — the people can't be asked to go back to brass tacks just because the rulers are going back to the drawing board. Administrations that went down this path learnt that lesson, to their chagrin.



Legacy of Gangaramaya Podi Hamuduruwo

Gangaramaya Temple's Chief Incumbent Ven. Galboda Gnanissara Thera marks his 78th birthday on December 14.

Born in the village of Galboda in Matara, Ven. Galboda Sri Gnanissara Nayaka Thera began his spiritual journey entering the Sasana as a Samanera at Hunupitiya Gangaramaya at the tender age of 10. During a short span, the Thera became Chief Incumbent and was fondly referred to as Podi Hamuduruwo by all. He is best known for his leadership qualities, confidence, fearlessness and philanthropy, especially for the support he provided to the youth of the country.

A prophecy

Ven. Aparekke Devananda Nayaka Thera of Galboda Sri Sunandarama Vihara, brought this young boy to Colombo and handed him to Ven. Devundara Sri Vachissara Nayaka Thera with a little prophecy.

This was in 1954, at the time of the gas lamp, immediately after the British left the country. Ven. Devananda Nayaka Thera brought with him the school principal and astrologer from the village. When they came to the temple, the gas lamps in front had only been half lit. Upon entry to the temple, they noted that the gas lamps suddenly illuminating and prophesied that this young boy who was about to enter the Buddha Sasana would one day illuminate the place.

The Nayaka Thera wrote about this incident once back in the village temple and the truth in this is evident when looking back at the life of Podi Hamuduruwo. Although Gangaramaya belonged to the Hikkaduwa Sri Sumangala Sangha generation, the place became a vibrant place of learning and philanthropy after Podi Hamuduruwo took over.

Ten years after arriving in Colombo, on June 21, 1964, he received his higher ordination at the Malwatta Vihara in Kandy at the historic PoyeGe.

Podi Hamuduruwo continued his studies while at the temple and entered Vidyodaya to pursue his de-

gree. There he provided leadership to student organisations. A person who worked with the Thera during that time, said that Podi Hamuduruwo obtained a record number of votes during student elections and this number had not been matched thus far.

Young leader

Due to the Nayaka Thera's vision impairment and Ven. Devundara Rathanajothi Nayaka Thera's paralysis, Podi Hamuduruwo had to take up the administrative work of the temple at the tender age of 16.

Taking up such a big responsibility at such a young age usually leads to disastrous consequences. However, Podi Hamuduruwo went on the correct path. He once said that he would sit in the Pirivena classroom and learn from the teacher he interviewed and recruited earlier that day. His story is that of struggle and courage. There were times when he had to walk to Vidyodaya, unable to find 10 cents for the travel. These were the inspiring stories he related to students when he supported them financially to go abroad for studies.

Podi Hamuduruwo never abused his powers as the administrator of Gangaramaya. Whatever he did, was in the name of Hikkaduwa Nayaka Thera, Ven. Devundara Sri Jinarithana Thera and Ven. Devundara Wachissara Thera. For example, the school for bhikkhus, Sri Jinarithana Vocational Technical Training Center, and Jinalankara Printing Press were named after the late Theras. The contributory work of Hikkaduwa Nayaka Thera towards Buddhist literature was made available to the public through the Jinalankara Printing Press.

Disregarded differences

Podi Hamuduruwo is regarded as a person with great determination and courage, straightforward and unafraid, and respected by all communities and ethnicities for the interventions and contribution the Thera made for communal harmo-



ny.

The Thera worked together with all regardless of differences for the betterment of society. Those belonging to other religions are also in social service societies set up by the temple Dayaka Sabha and carrying out a yeoman service.

With the establishment of the Sri Gnanissara Pirivena, Podi Hamuduruwo carried out the administrative work efficiently and worked towards increasing the number of students. He mentored talented assistants such as Ven. Dr. Kirinde Assaji and Ven. Dr. Ratanasara Theras who helped him administer the vast array of programs he had initiated under the aegis of the Gangaramaya Temple. The Pirivena is considered to be a revered and historic establishment of the standard of Kelaniya Vihara, Tissamaharama, Sithulpawwa, and so on, drawing student bhikkhus even from the Asgiri and Malwathu Chapters.

About 90 percent of the bhikkhus living abroad for Dhamma missions are those who learnt the Tripitaka and the English language from this Pirivena. Sending bhikkhus abroad for such deeds is a significant achievement. Those of the calibre of Weragoda Sarada Thera in Singapore left from here. Podi Hamuduruwo collaborated closely with Ven. Dr. Kirinde Sri Dammananda Thera who was one of the first to go abroad

have been impossible for any other person considering the scale of the work. Therefore, Podi Hamuduruwo was revered by all for treating everyone equally, regardless of ethnicity, religion or political affiliation.

Saved lives

The Thera had worked with politicians from all parties, from Governor-General William Gopallawa, gaining their trust and admiration for the work carried out by Podi Hamuduruwo towards the betterment of society.

During the tumultuous period of 1989, the Thera rescued many youths and led them on the correct path towards a better life.

In 1989, youth studying courses at the vocational training centre increased to over 4,600 from 2,500. Their lives were saved because they had an identity card from this institute which said they are attached to it.

Pilgrims' rest

Podi Hamuduruwo also supported to build the Kataragama pilgrims rest, organising to bring construction material from the Matara and Kirinda areas. The Thera conducted programs to train the masons, carpenters and other workers when knowledge of construction and technology was limited at the time in those areas.

At the time, only the Ramakrishna Hall provided free lodging. After it stopped functioning, the Kataragama pilgrims' rest was the only one available for pilgrims. Even today, about 2,000 - 2,500 pilgrims take lodging there on a weekend, free of charge. Of course, they can make a payment in their capacities for maintenance.

Support to villages

Podi Hamuduruwo supported villagers to build their lives by organising to provide them with livestock and other necessities, from bicycles to mosquito nets, to uplift their lives and livelihoods.

Secretarial courses were made available to young villagers in rural Matara by setting up classes there. Many young people, frustrated with the existing systems were redirected to better their lives due to the many programs conducted by the Gangarama Vihara. Youth were guided from their early years until they could establish themselves well in society, with proper income sources and family life.

The Kotte Madiwela Suhada Orphanage was also established under the Podi Hamuduruwo's social work programs. Projects such as building orphanages and elders' homes were not carried out under the patronage of temples earlier. But Podi Hamuduruwo changed all that. The Thera established about 60 or 70 child learning centres throughout the island, providing desks and chairs with the sponsorship of the country's leading businesses.

Taking the initiative

It is significant that such social work was carried out with the support of whatever political party that came to power. For example, Janasaviya initiated by former President Ranatunga Premadasa was an idea of Podi Hamuduruwo.

Of course, this was not termed Janasaviya initially. Collection lists for these projects are still available at the vihara. Legal and accounts books, expensive in Sri Lanka, were made tax-free under former President J.R. Jayewardene due to Podi Hamuduruwo's suggestions.

Prachina Rajakeeya Panditha degree was made equivalent to a BA (Hons) degree due to the guidance given to former Minister Lalith Athulthumudali by Podi Hamuduruwo.

Such were Podi Hamuduruwo's philanthropic ventures that reached the young and old alike regardless of ethnicity or political affiliations. Significantly, they were long lasting policy level changes as well as those that went to the grassroots, benefiting thousands even today.

Translated by **Kathya de Silva Senarath**

Sirisena Cooray – the quiet achiever

By
H. L. D. Mahindapala



A leader is one who can mobilise a following to achieve selected goals. In this sense Sirisena Cooray was an exceptional leader. His leader, President R. Premadasa, was a charismatic leader who could mobilise a following to follow his vision, breaking through barriers, into new frontiers. Premadasa defined and set the goals. Cooray was there always to help him achieve them.

That was the difference between the two leaders, Premadasa led, Cooray backed him all the way. He was, by far, the best No.2 man in Sri Lankan politics. Successful Number Ones need loyal and competent No. Twos. Cooray was the ideal No.2. They worked as an inseparable combination. It was vastly different from the Dudley (No. 1) - JR (No. 2) relationship. JR was always the No.2 eyeing the seat of No.1. Number Twos are generally ambitious conspirators impatient to grab the seat of No.1. Cooray was just the opposite. He was never out to grab power for himself.

Shadow

He was happy to be in the shadow of his leader. He had no political agenda of his own. He understood well that his role was to help his leader achieve the goals of the "Premadasism" - a totally new brand of UNP policies and programs, moving away from elitist politics.

Sirisena Cooray was the political twin of Premadasa. Writing about Cooray, the political man, leads you to ineluctably delineate their political relationship. There was no Cooray without Premadasa. They operated in an ideal working relationship - somewhat like Gotabaya Rajapaksa working with his brother Mahinda Rajapaksa in fighting the terrorist battle. The trust they had in each other carried them through to the end. Of course, there could have been Premadasa without Cooray but not with the same degree of efficiency and success. Cooray was his alter ego, his adjutant. All the heavy assignments - from running elections to building Mirisawetiya and massive housing projects - were handed over to Cooray. Together they led the best team in politics.

Together they faced the critical challeng-

es of the time, not only two battles, one in the South and the other in the North but also the Western and the Indian fronts, along with the formidable Oxbridge deviants within the Party. No leader had to face this multiple array of challenges that threatened his political survival.

Loyal

The biggest challenge, undoubtedly, came from the UNPers who moved the impeachment motion in Parliament, accusing him of even madness. Premadasa needed a loyal No.2 and he could not have found a better politically savvy minder than Cooray. And he stood by his leader unwaveringly.

Premadasa shifted politics from Kurunduwatte to Kehelwatte - a dramatic u-turn that disoriented even the traditional UNPer. The traditional UNPer was a trousered, leather-shoed, English-speaking cricketer. Premadasa's mates were from the sarong-clad, barefooted, Sinhala-speaking, footballers. That made all the difference to the UNP. Sirisena Cooray, like his leader Premadasa, was at home in Kehelwatte than at Kurunduwatte. This new political centre produced new political perspectives. Freed from bureaucratized politics, neatly tied in red-tape, Premadasa took the UNP towards a new radicalism.

It was Right-wing radicalism which mobilised the masses without Left-wing militancy or ideological rigidities. He was closer to radicalism of A. E. Goonesinghe - the first magnetic, people-oriented democratic socialist who took on nascent capitalism, entrenched imperialism and the young ideologues of Marxism returning home from Western universities in the thirties. "Premadasism" too was for pragmatic, down-to-earth "people-ising" without getting stuck in doctrinaire ideological punditry. His blend of capitalism, socialism and nationalism made him one of a kind.

Premadasa's genius was in taking the Government to the people. Gam Uduawa was an innovative administrative stroke which took the arm-chair bureaucrats down to the people instead of people trekking all the way to the bureaucrats in Colombo. UNP gave free education and free health but no one - not even the Marxists - thought of giving money to the people. He did that in the Janasaviya program.

He was a conservative revolutionary (an oxymoron) who could take a new idea and run with it to its successful end. He was dynamic. He used his power and energy to

build an affinity with the people at the grassroots level. He did so not with catchy slogans, rash rhetoric or rabble-rousing jingoism but with meaningful pro-people programs that touched their lives. In all this, Cooray was the active force behind him. He translated the Premadasa ideology into reality.

"Siri", as he was to me, was a quiet achiever. He was the perfect counter to Premadasa - the strict and demanding disciplinarian. Both were faced the monumental task of moving the apathetic, inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy. Our politicians come a cropper mainly because they fail to move the bureaucracy to serve the people.

Bureaucracy

They pay for the sins of the bureaucrats. In all states the bureaucracy forms a power bloc which stands in the way of progressive politics aimed at serving the people. It is the undeclared administrative mafia organised to run the deep state. They form a state within a state. It is the established and immovable rock on which all ships of state crash. By and large, the UNP and the higher echelons of the bureaucracy belonged to the same club.

The political and the bureaucratic elite shared common conservative values and they got along like a house on fire. Premadasa and Cooray, though they were UNPers, came from the outer circle of the Party and did not have the cosy links with the bureaucracy.

The chasm between the "outer" and the "inner" circles of the UNP haunted the Premadasas and the Coorays whose postal code was not in Colombo 7. They did not represent the traditional class interests of the UNP. Their values were different. "Siri" whenever he talked of power he used to say that Premadasa was after power. "But", he added, "he wanted power to serve the people. From his 'Sucharitha' days he used to tell me, 'Sirisena, to work for the people you need power.' No politician, that I knew, dedicated his time in power to work for the people as Premadasa and Cooray. Others did not have the time to attend to the details of individual constituents. The UNP Ministers in general dealt with politics at the macro level at the top.

Power

They did not come down to the micro level at grassroots. Levelling the party down to serve the man in the street was the aim of Premadasa-Cooray politics.

They had the power and the resources but delivering the goods and services to the common man was a whole new political game. As stated earlier between the political leadership and the people was the bureaucracy. Last *Sunday Island* revealed the shocking state of affairs. According to the report (1) over 2,000 recommendations made by the parliamentary watchdog committees, COPE (Committee on Public Enterprises) and COPA (Committee on Public Accounts) with the objective of preventing corruption in public institutions have not been implemented by the relevant state agencies and officials, (2) corrupt practices continued despite repeated warnings and recommendations by the two committees which uncover frauds after expending much effort and time, (3) those institutions ignoring the implementation of recommendations were the Department of Inland Revenue, Customs Department, Excise Department, Education Ministry, Department of Wildlife Conservation and some local Government bodies (4) some officials who had charges against them have deliberately kept away from committee sessions (5) officials responsible for many instances of financial misappropriation find excuses such as leaving the country when they are summoned before the COPE or COPA, and so on.

This reveals the power of the bureaucratic mafia. They have the power to override even the Parliament. So, what chances have the ordinary citizen in dealing with the bureaucracy? The greatest successes of Premadasa and Cooray were scored in making the bureaucracy work. Both had different approaches.

Premadasa would get up 4-5 a.m. and start chasing the bureaucrats. He would ring around mid-day to follow-up. And check again in the evening to make sure that the job has been done. Cooray had a softer approach. He would gather his engineers and planners and apply his characteristic sarcasm: *Mokadda, I say, thamuse-lata may podi wadak wath karanada baha nay!* ("What, I say, you can't do even a small job of work!").

Assassinated

But most of all, he developed personal relationship with his key officers to win their loyalty and commitment. One of his predilections was to travel. That helped him to do field work and chit-chat with the workers mixing sand with cement. He was there in person to supervise progress.



The most decisive moment in his political career came when his leader was assassinated at Armour Street on May 1, 1994. The shock of the death left us wondering. What next? The nation was thrown into a political vacuum. All eyes turned towards Cooray to fill in the gap. President D. B. Wijetunga called on Cooray to take on the Premiership.

It was at this moment that he did the most unexpected. He was in a unique position, unlike the others the entire responsibility of running the Party and the State fell upon his shoulders.

He was acclaimed as the "strong man" who would take over the reins of power. But he declined. The last Gam Uduwa in Mihintale was still in progress. He was overseeing the last details. K.N. Choksy, Sunil Rodrigo, Chairman of Lake House and one of his closest friends, and yours truly rushed to Mihintale.

He was distraught. He was weighed down by the oppressive tonnage sitting on his shoulders. It looked as if he had lost his nerve after he lost his leader. Our mission was to persuade him take on the leadership by taking the Premiership. He was adamantly against it.

All our arguments failed to persuade him. His choice was Ranil Wickremesinghe. As the evening turned into night he was angry that we were pushing him hard.

We realised that there was no way of making him change his mind. It was a fateful decision. He was hoping to stay in the background and play his usual role in the Party.

But the man whom he made Prime Minister undercut him and marginalised him. The UNP rolled along for some time, losing daily the steam generated by the Premadasa-Cooray team. Ranil added to it by taking the Party back to the days of Sir John Kotelawela - the West-leaning *Bandung Booruwa* who lost touch with the people.

UNP never found a replacement for Cooray. The Party paid for it with interest in 2019. There is no one to take it to the grassroots like Premadasa and Cooray.

Features

Marvels and concerns in modern eye care



By
Kathya de Silva
Scourath

Technological interventions of a multidisciplinary nature have improved eye care methods for more refined, accurate and precise results.

Dr. Champa Banagala, Consultant Eye Surgeon spoke at length of the novel era of eye care including its marvels and concerns, at the 30th Susan George Pulimood oration organised by the Visakha Vidyalaya Old Girls Association, recently. The oration is held annually to honour the much-loved past principal of Visakha Vidyalaya, Susan George Pulimood.

Technology

On modern eye care, Dr. Banagala said the technological integration and medical breakthroughs in the past few decades have enriched ophthalmology and helped immensely to serve the people with different kinds of visual problems. Stem cell therapy, gene therapy and microchip and signal processing (artificial eyes) have shown rewarding results, especially for patients with low vision related problems.

Dr. Banagala said small incision surgery with shorter operative time and short hospital stay has benefited many patients worldwide. Most of these technological interventions were mainly through innovative applications in lasers, biomaterials, and ultrasound technology.

"The era of digital health and artificial intelligence (AI) in ophthalmology has already dawned. The digital era has provided new tools that improve the efficiency and availability of eye care services through digital health and telemedicine. In telemedicine, electronic transmission of health care data is forwarded to the ophthalmologist for an efficient service. Such action will particularly help those living in rural and remote areas of many countries," Dr. Banagala said.

Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence-based systems can identify the difference between normal and abnormal images after eye screen within seconds, enabling ophthalmologists to act early and efficiently.

On lasers and eye care, Dr. Banagala said this has revolutionised modern-day ophthalmic surgery, be it corneal, cataract, retinal or any other related condition.

"The beauty of Fem to second la-

ser is that it can be used for accurate cuts, without damaging surrounding tissue since energy is focused on a particular point," she said.

Biomaterial, a substance engineered to interact with biological systems for a medical purpose - either therapeutic or diagnostic, is used therapeutically to treat, augment, repair or replace a tissue function of the body. Biomaterials are used in the manufacture of different intra ocular lenses and contact lenses, she said.

Corneal diseases

With regard to corneal diseases, Dr. Banagala said it is a leading cause of visual impairment, ranking as the fourth commonest cause of global blindness: after cataract, glaucoma (often associated with excess pressure in the eye) and age-related eye condition, and macular degeneration.

She said it is now possible to replace only damaged layers of the cornea with a donor graft, while leaving the healthy part of the cornea intact.

Amniotic membrane, taken from the placenta is considered an important medical device with many applications in regenerative medicine. When there is a severe damage to outer surface of the cornea, Amniotic membrane graft helps to clear the cornea. Amniotic membrane are now available commercially. In Sri Lanka, it is available at the Sri Lanka Eye Donation Society, she said.

Limbal stem cell transplantation has been developed for the treatment of many corneal diseases such as corneal scarring, chronic inflammation and so on to restore the damaged corneal surface. Dr. Banagala said one of the recent surgical techniques to reshape the cornea is known as Laser-assisted in situ keratomileus or in short LASIK. This is to correct the refractive error of the cornea to avoid wearing glasses.

In a condition known as *Keratoconus*, the cornea grows thin, becomes weak and protrude. One of the treatments is to insert crescent shape clear polymer rings known as "INTACS" to reshape the cornea. "INTACS" will make the cornea flattened and closer to its original dome shape, she added.

Corneal transplantation is another important surgical treatment for many common corneal diseases.

Cataract

Cataract surgery is commonly performed in Sri Lanka. Dr. Banagala said, in other parts of the world, the laser surgery is adopted. It is done more precisely with focused light where less energy is required to break up the cataract. However, laser-assisted surgery is not currently carried out in Sri Lanka.



Dr. Champa Banagala

Over the past decade, a variety of intraocular lenses with special designs have been produced: improved both in terms of corrective power and the quality of the vision provided.

Glaucoma

"Glaucoma can cause damage to the optic nerve reducing the field of vision. It is known as the silence killer of vision because the disease is progressed over the years with no symptoms till the late stages. By the time the patient notices visual field changes, the disease has progressed. The end stage is tunnel vision. Patients experience it as if he/she is looking through a tunnel. The danger of Glaucoma is that it is irreversible.

Therefore, it is important that all family members of a person getting treatment for eye pressure get their eyes screened regularly, Dr. Banagala said. The earliest glaucoma changes are seen in the blood supply to the optic disc in Optical

THE RULE IS TO RELAX EYES BY LOOKING BEYOND 20 FEET, FOR 20 SECONDS AFTER USING FOR 20 MINUTES. THE CORRECT POSTURE WILL ALSO HELP TO REDUCE THE EYE STRAIN SINCE IT WILL LEAD TO CORRECT FOCUSING. THE DESKTOP SHOULD BE 45CM TO 75 CM AWAY AND YOUR EYES HAVE TO LOOK DOWN TO THE CENTRE WITH ABOUT A 20 DEGREE ANGLE.

Coherence Angiography or OCTA, a test done for imaging blood vessels.

When changes in the nerve fibers occur, it can be diagnosed early with Optical Coherence Tomography, she said. Glaucoma is usually treated with eyedrops: laser or surgery are the other options.

"Micro-implants are the recent advances in Glaucoma surgery. These are made of biomaterials and are known as stents. They will drain the fluid in the eyes to reduce eye-pressure.

Diabetes

Diabetic retinopathy is a complication of diabetes that affects eyes. It's caused by damage to the blood vessels in retina.

"Diabetic patients should look out for retinopathy changes every year. If not, it will progress to hemorrhages and exudates in the retina. This may reduce vision if it occurs at the centre of the eye. When new vessels form in the retina and optic disc, it will lead to bleeding in the eye. At this stage, the patient will experience black particles moving in front of the eye. For this, laser therapy or injecting drugs called Anti-Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor therapy (anti-VEGF) to regress vessels is needed," she said.

The end stage, known as Retinitis Proliferans, requires surgery

which takes long hours and prognosis is poor.

Global myopia is expected to increase and it is estimated that over 50 percent of the world population will be myopic by 2050, especially children.

For many years, myopia was corrected with either spectacles or contact lenses. Currently, many new different treatments are available depending on the person's condition and the age, Dr. Banagala said.

Laser surgery can be performed only when myopia becomes stable. Until then, new methods are used to prevent the progression of myopia. "There are two types of therapeutic contact lenses that control myopia progression: orthokeratology night-time lenses and multifocal day-time soft lenses. The other option is multifocal eyeglasses-myopiex lenses or executive bifocal glasses.

Recent research has revealed that diluted Atropine eye drops can be used to prevent progression of myopia in school-aged children. Currently, these drops are used in other countries. Recent research has shown that children should be exposed to sunlight to prevent myopia progression. They should be encouraged to play outdoors daily and limit using tabs, computers and mobile phones," Dr. Banagala said.

With Presbiopia (inability to see

near), several options are available such as the use of spectacles and contact lenses. Other options are Lasik, called Presby Lasik or Corneal Inlays placed inside the cornea to change the refractive power of the cornea.

Gene therapy

Gene therapy and genetic engineering are two closely related technologies that involve altering the genetic material. This is applied in an incurable genetic disease that causes blindness in men (known as Choroideremia) and transmitted by females. The disease is caused by a defect in the X chromosome. The treatment involves injecting a harmless virus carrying the Choroideremiogene directly into the retina's light sensitive cells.

Dr. Banagala also warned of the dire consequences that the digital revolution would have on the eyes.

"The unprecedented use of the digital screen by people over the last two years, (due to the pandemic situation) has worsened this situation," she said.

Blue light exposure-Digital Eye Strain, visual fatigue, or computer vision syndrome occurs when a person stares at a screen for a long time, whether it is a computer, TV, phone or tablet.

Blue light scatters more making it harder to focus which will reduce your visual contrast. This is why you feel eye strain, Dr. Banagala said.

Digital revolution

Although there is no evidence that blue light from computers will directly lead to an eye disease, there is concern that it might lead to problems with sleep.

The symptoms of Computer Vision Syndrome involve eye fatigue, itchy eyes, dryness, blurred vision, double vision and headaches.

She said one of the simplest remedial actions for this is to follow the 20 - 20 - 20 rule.

The rule is to relax eyes by looking beyond 20 feet, for 20 seconds after using for 20 minutes.

"In addition, the correct posture will also help to reduce the eye strain since it will lead to correct focusing. The desktop should be 45cm. to 75 cm. away and your eyes have to look down to the center with about 20 degree angle," she said.

Dr. Banagala added that the global need for eye care is projected to increase dramatically and that scientific and technological advances have opened a wide range of clinical and research opportunities that have the potential to accelerate future eye care. "We hope that Sri Lankans too can reap fruits of such revolutionary developments without delay," she added.

The need for basic legal education for children as a school discipline



by
Hemantha
Kulatunga

The Latin doctrine 'ignorantia legis neminem excusat' or "ignorance of the law excuses no one" is an extremely valuable legal principle accepted in almost all civilised countries, including Sri Lanka. Any person who is unaware of the law in a country cannot escape liability for violating that law by being ignorant or oblivious of its contents.

The foundation of the principle is that a person charged by law with an offense, criminal or civil, cannot claim innocence by merely arguing the fact that he or she was unaware of the pertinent law. Even such persons are genuinely and truthfully uninformed of the law in question, they cannot avoid liability.

Law is a discipline that can be mastered only by studying in a formal law school. Nevertheless, every citizen of a country must be aware of basic principles of law prevailing in that country. Perhaps from a young age, legal education relevant to the day-today-life of everyone must be taught to the entire citizenry of a country. The best and the easiest way to achieve this are to include the subject of fundamental law in the school curriculum.

In Sri Lanka, when children turn eighteen years of age, they legally become adults. This means that they are responsible for their lives and the decisions made by them in life. Hence it is important to educate children on time to prepare them to han-

dle the situations they will likely face in life later on.

Improving legal literacy among young people can have a great effect on the prevention of crimes. Due to multiple reasons, including easy access to violent information, rapid escalation of criminal acts, particularly drug abuse, among the youth of the country seems to be a gruesome burden to society. When a person reaches the point of deliberately disobeying the law, knowingly or unknowingly, it indicates a system failure.

Most often, people know when they defy the law. However, what they are usually unaware of is the punishment for such defiance. Hence, the best way to prevent criminal acts is to educate the citizenry on crimes, laws against crimes, and more emphatically, the related punishments when convicted.

Criminal acts

The criminal acts are related to social settings and experiences, the ability to distinguish right from wrong, and unawareness or ignorance of the laws of the country. In order to mitigate this situation, the most effective task is to carry out a legal education process from childhood. Although the overall planning is done to promote legal education, as typically happens in Sri Lanka, the implementation has not taken place as yet.

It is the general opinion of society that students should learn about the legal process of the country in basic terms. Also, it is important to learn the skills of legal reasoning that can help them immensely in adult life later.

School education is meant to pro-

SRI LANKAN SOCIETY WILL HAVE AN UNDIVIDED AGREEMENT ON THE MATTER. UNDERSTANDING OF LEGAL ASPECTS OF CRIMES, CIVIL OFFENSES, AND RELEVANT PUNISHMENTS WILL CONTROL POSSIBLE NEFARIOUS ACTIVITIES OF STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY ADOLESCENTS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

vide children with the necessary tools to become productive adults. They gain academic knowledge by learning varied subjects during school education. However, regrettably, in the Sri Lankan education system, the law has never been a subject despite it being the exceedingly important ingredient to become law-abiding citizens in their adult lives.

Teaching law to young children can provide them with reasoning skills that will be not only important throughout their lives but also in their advanced studies. The legal thinking practised from a young age drives them to act more rationally and confront challenges effectively and competently. Further, legal education can provide the tools to organise facts to arrive at reasonable decisions as adults.

Just as in many other complex disciplines, legal reasoning is not always black or white. Hence, the teaching must be done extremely carefully to apply general rules to a situation in everyday life. Particularly, to prevent possible criminal acts in adult lives, an idea on the severity of the sentences in general terms must be taught to children.

Legal reasoning is practised as students consider the perspectives of others, learn to appreciate those views, and accept that there are always two

sides to a situation is learnt by learning legal principles. By being exposed to the other's viewpoints, students get used to a sense of intellectual honesty.

Legal fraternity

However, the question is whether the principles of basic laws can be taught to young children? The answer of experts in both the education sector and the legal fraternity is emphatic affirmation and that it can be done relatively easily if the curriculum is properly planned.

In today's complex social environment, if someone closely scrutinises, one can find that children confront many law-related experiences. Therefore, a credible and simplified version of the law is required at least from the secondary level education.

Although legal education is not yet a part of the school curriculum in the Sri Lankan education system, most of the time teachers informally make attempts to make the students aware of very basic principles, particularly personal discipline and behaviour. However, such an informal approach to juvenile legal education is not adequate to meet the challenges faced by society anymore.

Carrying out legal education on basic principles of prevailing law in

the country is an important national requirement to prevent crimes. Juvenile legal education in the early lives of people may produce a rational, decent, and law-abiding populace.

Simple legal literacy improves the knowledge about society and also helps build just societies. As mentioned, by making children aware of the punishments related to offenses, the fear of committing crimes can be established in mind to reduce the rise of crimes. Similar to the other subjects in the school curriculum, the law needs to be a discipline taught in primary, middle, and high school for the students to become more productive adults in a more democratic society.

In an extremely optimistic, constructive, and encouraging move, the Ministry of Justice combined with the Ministry of Education and the Child Protection Authority has established a paper to include legal education in the Sri Lankan school education system.

According to Justice Ministry sources, essentially useful subjects were included in the proposals that seemingly assist children to understand and appreciate the importance of law, from the tender ages.

According to relevant sources, the disciplines introduced will be on step by step basis. Commencing at grade six, the subjects will comprise life and law at grade six, children's rights in grade seven, environment and law in grade eight, social security in grade nine, and other important areas from grade ten. According to the same sources, all textbooks also have been already prepared.

This move, when implemented, unquestionably will come into ex-

treme praise of the entire nation. No doubt that Sri Lankan society will have an undivided agreement on the matter. Understanding of legal aspects of crimes, civil offences, and relevant punishments will control possible nefarious activities of students, especially adolescents at the high school level.

Illegal drug mafia

For example, as in many other countries, the illegal drug mafia makes constant attempts to target the student population from a young age to draw into abuse. They usually deploy creative methods to drag youth into the use of banned substances. A young child considers only instant pleasure by using these drugs at the time of consuming them. They are oblivious to the severe punishments awaiting them if they get trapped. However, if such a child is aware of the possible punishments, the chance of evading drug abuse can be very high.

Similarly, there are many more offenses such as sex abuse, theft, gambling, and other despicable acts manipulated by interested parties that can be effectively and successfully controlled if the legal viewpoint such crimes is inculcated in students.

Therefore, the introduction of basic law is not a concept any more, but a dire need. The rapidity of societal changes, mainly due to technological advancements such as the internet, requires more direction to keep the escalating crimes in check. Introducing fundamental legal education in the school curriculum is one of the most needed requirements for Sri Lanka today.

German epidemic preparedness team in Lanka

BY NADIRA GUNATILLEKE

A team from the German Epidemic Preparedness Team (SEEG), funded by the German Federal Government, with experts from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) arrived in Sri Lanka to train laboratory staff.

The mission focuses on increasing diagnostic capacity and expanding the detection of virus variants enabling an efficient pandemic surveillance and control strategy in Sri Lanka.

"The pandemic can only be overcome if it is brought under control all over the world. Germany thus opted early on to focus on finding joint responses in a spirit of solidarity to the pandemic that continues to rage worldwide. With contributions totalling 2.2 billion euro to date, Germany is currently the second-largest donor.

While some is being used for diagnostic tools and medication to treat Covid-19, most of this support is going to the international vaccine platform COVAX. Germany will provide at least 175 million doses in total. However, Germany is helping with more than just vaccines.

Germany has also made available euro 450 million for humanitarian assistance in the context of Covid-19 to help people in humanitarian emergencies. The engagement of the German Epidemic Preparedness Team is another significant contribution to the fight against Covid-19 in Sri Lanka.

German and Sri Lankan partners will develop local capacities in corona diagnostics," the Ambassador of



the Federal Republic of Germany to Sri Lanka, Holger Seubert, said.

Speaking at the official ceremony at the Medical Research Institute (MRI) recently, Dr Sunil De Alwis, Additional Secretary (Medical Services) of the Ministry of Health thanked the German Government for continuing its support to uplift the health sector in Sri Lanka. "I am looking forward to many more fruitful collaborations and regular exchanges with Germany that goes beyond the technological and medical fields such as HR development," Dr De Alwis said.

This SEEG effort complements RKI activities in Sri Lanka to leverage synergies and promote sustainability. Funded by the BMG's Global Health Protection Program (GHPP), RKI had already established a sequencing platform in the University in Colombo and is working closely with the national reference laboratory (Medical Research Institute, MRI). This time, nine German experts are on-site to facilitate various parallel activities in both institutions.

The mission also helps enhancing the cooperation between the Ministry of Health and the University of Colombo for an effective use of resources. The mission is supported and coordinated by GIZ Sri Lanka.



Senior Professor Chandrika Wijeyaratne, Vice Chancellor, University of Colombo said, "The University of Colombo is delighted that the long term research based partnership between the Department of Zoology and Environment Sciences of the Faculty of Science and RKI has materialised into a pragmatic and purposeful forward planning in the field of diagnostics and highly skilled capacity building of laboratory personnel in the Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka.

"I am certain that our university's academic and research base, so ably supplemented by RKI, can venture further forward to make Sri Lanka capable in dealing with novel pathogens in the future. We thank our counterparts at RKI and the people of Germany for their support and cooperation."

SEEG was initiated in 2015 by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry of Health in response to the Ebola fever outbreak in West Africa. Since then SEEG conducted more than

40 missions in more than 20 countries, including missions during the Lassa and Ebola outbreaks.

Since 2021, the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture has joined the collaboration to promote the OneHealth approach of SEEG missions. SEEG cooperation partners are Bernhard-Nocht-Institute for Tropical Medicine, Friedrich-Löffler-Institute, Robert Koch Institute, Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin, and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit.

During the current pandemic, SEEG experts are supporting countries to contain the spread of Covid-19 and strengthen health systems to deal with the pandemic. SEEG is also responding to the current needs of the ongoing pandemic, including supporting the establishment of SARS-CoV-2 genome sequencing in partner countries.

This method enables more efficient monitoring of the spread of virus variants and the detection of potentially new variants.

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Foreign Minister reassures commitment to BIMSTEC

Secretary General of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Tenzin Lekphell paid a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris on his first official visit to Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is the Chair of BIMSTEC (since 2018), and the Minister assured Sri Lanka's commitment to furthering the goals of the regional organisation.

The Secretary General said that Sri Lanka has achieved much during its tenure which includes the finalisation of the BIMSTEC Charter and the allocation of defined areas of cooperation among member States, which form the base of the organisation.

Sri Lanka will host the fifth BIMSTEC Summit early next year where the Chair-

manship will be handed over to Thailand.

As Sri Lanka is the lead country for Science and Technology and Innovation with sub-sectors of Health and Human Resource Development, the Secretary General briefed the Foreign Minister on the discussions with focal sectors which included meetings with Minister of Health Dr. Keheliya Rambukwella, State Minister of Indigenous Medicine Promotion, Rural and Ayurvedic Hospitals Development and Community Health Sisira Jayakody, State Minister of Regional Cooperation Tharaka Balasuriya, State Minister of Skills Development, Vocational Education, Research and Innovation Dr. Seetha Arambepola, and Acting Foreign Secretary A. M. J. Sadiq and Ministry officials.

The Secretary General also paid courtesy calls on President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. He also emphasised the need to revive economies in the region and added that BIMSTEC has an important role to play in this area.

President Rajapaksa emphasised the need for all member states to formulate action plans under given sectors that would reach the people of the region.

The Secretary General also paid homage to the temple of the Tooth in Kandy during his visit. Additional Secretary Sabarullah Khan, Acting Director General Anzul Banu Jhan and Executive Assistant of the Economic Affairs Division Kalani Dharmasena were also associated with the visit.



Secretary General of BIMSTEC, Tenzin Lekphell with Foreign Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris

Sri Lanka Navy, the First Line of Defence of the island nation celebrated its 71st anniversary on December 9, 2021. A range of events were conducted in each Naval Command, giving pride and place to naval customs and religious rituals. As part of these celebrations, capital ships of the Sri Lanka Navy lay at anchor off the Galle Face Green on December 9 and 10 for the general public to catch a glimpse of naval power of Sri Lanka. (Pix by Sudath Malaweeera)

Blood donation campaign



A blood donation campaign organised by the family members of the late sports photojournalist Mohan Moses for his third month remembrance will be held at the National Blood Transfusion

Centre, Narahenpita on December 17 from 8.00 am to 4.00 pm. The organisers kindly request those who wish to participate in the blood donation campaign to contact them on 0778776375.

Three Presidential Export Awards tell the Story of Dilmah



Dilmah was honoured with three major accolades at the 24th Presidential Export Awards. Each one highlights a key aspect of a pure Sri Lankan success story.

Contributor to Sustainable Development in the Export Industry for 2019/20

Dilmah has pioneered conservation initiatives for decades, including sustainable agriculture, ecosystem restoration, and the establishment of a Climate Change Research & Adaptation Centre. Founder Merrill J. Fernando's vision is of a business built to serve humanity. Dilmah assigns a minimum of 15% of pretax earnings to such efforts. Over Rs.290 million was invested in the year under review, and more than Rs.6 billion over the last 10 years.

Market Diversified Exporter of the Year 2019/20

The first brand to offer tea grown, picked, perfected and packed at source, Dilmah quality is reaching ever more tea drinkers in ever more places. Each year, new markets and territories are won over by the global standard-bearer for Sri Lanka's prized two leaves and bud.

Most Globally Outreached Sri Lankan Brand 2019/20

Founder Merrill J. Fernando set out to disrupt the exploitative, colonial tea industry model with an ethical new brand that would benefit Sri Lankan producers and overseas customers alike. Today, his Dilmah Tea is available in over 100 countries. It is served inflight on many of the world's leading airlines. It is the preferred cuppa in over 5000 hotels around the globe.

'I wanted to serve humanity through my business, so I devoted my life to making the finest tea. My sons and I share the success of Dilmah Tea with less fortunate people, and with our natural environment through the work of the MJF Charitable Foundation and Dilmah Conservation.' Merrill J. Fernando, Founder, Dilmah Tea



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News/Obituaries

Death Anniversary
29th Years **25th Years**




Mrs. Mercy Fernando **Mr. Lionel Fernando**

Fondly remembered by your loving sons, daughter, in-laws and grand children.

May you both attain Nibbana

No. 10, Collingwood Place, Wellawatte

Family awaits...

From page 3

He said powerful radical and religious extremist groups in Pakistan yield support from the people and the state. But since Priyantha Kumara is not linked to an act of blasphemy, there is hope the perpetrators will be brought to justice.

The Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), supporters of which group, the media reported, were behind the torture and the killing of the Engineer, also condemned the killing in Sialkot. According to Pakistani media, "The TLP demanded the Government to hold an impartial inquiry into the incident as such acts can't be tolerated in the name of blasphemy." Blasphemy is defined as speaking insultingly about a religion or God. In Pakistan, it can carry a potential death sentence or life imprisonment for anyone who insults Islam which includes intentionally destroying or defiling a place or an object of worship. It says the laws date back to British colonial times.

In 1982 and 1986, separate clauses were inserted to the law prescribing life imprisonment for "Wilful" desecration of the Koran and to recognise blasphemy against Prophet Mohammed.

Human rights groups allege that Pakistan's blasphemy laws are often used to settle personal disputes. However, according to the BBC, no one convicted of blasphemy has ever been legally executed in Pakistan. But at least 70 people have reportedly been killed since 1990 in attacks by lynch mobs or vigilantes. The perpetrators of such vigilante attacks are treated as heroes. This might explain why mobsters posed for selfies near Priyantha Kumara's charred body and the men not taking precautions to cover their faces.

The Pakistani police arrested 50 people accused of lynching the Sri Lankan within 24 hours and over 300 including 34 main suspects had been arrested by Friday.

Soon after the incident, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan condemned the attack, calling it a day of shame for Pakistan. He told President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on the phone, that he had promised maximum punishment for those involved. The family said they expect the Pakistani authorities to arrest all those who were involved in the incident and punish those who killed their son/brother/husband in cold blood for no fault of his.

Obituary Notice



Amarasekera, Pushpananda

It is with profound sadness that we announce that Pushpananda Amarasekera, (Retired former Managing Director, Delmege Forsyth Shipping Ltd.), passed away peacefully on the 7th of December. Son of late Mr & Mrs K.P.S. Amarasekera of Asgiriya, Kandy. Loving husband of Sarojini, beloved father of Chandani, Dinusha and Gihani, father-in-law of Namal Hettiarachchi, Suneth Jayasena and Kuma Hettiarachchi. Precious grandfather of Shehani, Sahan, Shemali, Dinuri, Mithara, Kehan and Akain.

A private service will be held on Monday, December 13th in Vancouver, BC, Canada # 377-8333, Jones Road, Richmond BC, V6Y 3W9, Canada.

Telephone (778-882-2306)

Obituaries

REV. SR. ESTHER TISSERA called to eternal rest. Funeral Mass will be on Sunday, 12th December at 3.00 p.m. **Burial at Roman Catholic Cemetery, Wennappuwa.** 081095

DEP. ROBOLGE SOMALATHA RATNAVALI (formerly Government English Trained Teacher at Gothami Balika Maha Vidyalaya, Colombo and later General Secretary Letchworth Dhamma Nikethanaya Buddhist Cultural Centre), eldest daughter of late Henry and Leelawathy Lenora, loving sister of Pathman, Iranganie, late Victor and Malini, beloved wife of Andrew (Retired UK Civil Servant, formerly SLAF Commissioned Officer), devoted mother of Khushlani and Khushil, dearest aunt of Piyumalee, fondest Archchi of Constance and Leonardo, passed away peacefully on 16th July 2021, in England. Funeral service according to Buddhist Rites was conducted by Venerable Bhikkhus led by Ven. Akurala Samitha. Our Ratnavali's blessed Ashes were laid to Rest in Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire. May she attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbana. Relatives and friends kindly accept this information. Address where Mrs. Ratnavali lived: **31, Ridge Avenue, Letchworth, Herts, U.K.** E-mail: pamankade6572@yahoo.co.uk Tel: 00441462615638. 080507

DE SILVA - ELMO IVAN - Former Deputy Director General of Sri Lanka Customs, dearly beloved husband of Late Naomi De Silva (nee Senevirathna), loving father of Suleka and Sonali, much loved father-in-law of Dr. Parakrama Herath, and Dr. Suresh Jayasundara (Australia), loving grandfather of Aroshana, Archana and Praveena (Australia), loving brother of late Mervyn, late Sheila and of Esther and Vera (Bay), loving brother-in-law Clera, late Earlred and of Eshton and Condrad was called to rest on 10th December 2021. Remains lie at **A. F. Raymond's Funeral Parlour**. Cortege leaves the Parlour at 4.30 pm on Sunday 12th December. Cremation at the General Cemetery (Old Crematorium) Borella at 5.00 p.m. 081089

DEATH ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



Mrs. INDIRA ASIRWADEM (nee AARON)

It is with deep sadness the family members announce the demise of Mrs. Indira Asirwadem (nee Aaron). Beloved wife of Mr. Ivor Asirwadem.

We thank all relatives and friends specially the Managing Director and staff of O.L.M. Macan Market for their support at this critical time. We regret for not being able to thank each of you individually.

Bereaved by her husband - Ivor Asirwadem, nieces, nephews and all family members.

VIJAYA M.B. RATNAYAKE



23.07.1953 03.11.2021

"The Loss is immeasurable, but so is the love left behind..."

We wish to thank members of the Orthopaedic Association of Sri Lanka, The Principal and community of Bishop's College, The Warden and staff of S. Thomas' College Mount Lavinia, the STC class of 1960, the STC OBA and the staff of Zodiac Medicals, for your prayers, presence, floral tributes and various gestures of kindness.

To each and every one who stood by us, and upheld us during our time of grief - your thoughtfulness and concern is deeply appreciated and will never be forgotten.

Madhu, Dunithma, Senithma Ratnayake and family.

OBITUARY NOTICE

Born		Passed Away
27		28
02		11
1929		2021

Ms Sivadevi Velumylym

Ms.Sivadevi Velumylym, born in Jaffna Udupiddi, residing in Colombo and previously at G Block, Bambalapitiya Flats, Colombo 04, passed away peacefully in Colombo. She was a retired teacher of Tellippalai Union College. She was the daughter of the Late Mr. and Mrs. Velumylym, Sister of the Late Mr.Harichandra, the Late Mrs. Mahadevi Gnanasegaram, Late Mrs Aikkiadevi Chinniah, the Late Mr. Sivakumaravelu, and the Late Mr. Thiruchelvarajah; Sister in Law of Mrs. Sivakumaravelu, the Late Mr. Gnanasegaram, the late Mr. Chinniah and the late Mrs. Thiruchelvarajah; Loving aunt of Dr. Malathi Sahathevan (Mala), Mr. Vasantharajah (Bubby), Mrs. Ravini Vigneswaran, Mr. Kumaresan, and Mrs. Nanthini Mayuran all based in the UK, Mr. Dilhan Manoj Kumar, Ms. Dilhani Thiruchelvarajah, the late Mr. Narendran all based in Sri Lanka. Affectionate grand aunt of Araniga, Sharanigayinia, Anusha, Priyadharshini, Ahalya, Hariharan, Amala, Jananni, Myurun, Kuloj, Linodh, Chinmyee and Karthigan.Proud great-grand aunt of Hareesh, Rakshan, Saumyaa, Akshera, Laxmitha, Anoushka, Reya and Laila.Loving friend and relative of Sahathevan, Vigneswaran, Puvana, Jegagowri, Umendra, Priyanka, Samadara and Dr. Dushyenthi. This Notice is provided for all family and friends. Funeral took place at the Mt. Lavinia Cemetery in Colombo on 28th November 2021.

FERDINANDS: MAURICE RAYMOND

- Safe in the Arms of Jesus. Retired Regional Accountant JEDB Avissawella Colombo. Beloved husband of Rita, retired Supervisor Central Telephone Exchange Colombo. Darling father of Radley/Gillian, Tyrone/Krishanthi, Melanie/Christopher Perera, Sandra/Kevin Perera Australia, grandfather of Melissa/Denver De Livera, Revon/Shiandra, Joel, Jerome, Rayan, Arianna, Danelle, Keiara, Kaelen Australia, great-grandfather of Zoe, Chloe, Jayden, Liana, Caleb, Katelyn, brother of late Elmo, Sheila, Gordon, Barbara, Lucky, Zisca, Cheryl, Royd, Leroy, at rest on 10th December 2021. Remains lie at **AF. Raymond Funeral Parlour** on Saturday 11th from 9.00 a.m. Cortege leaves at 4.00 p.m. on Sunday for burial RC Section. **136/1D, Nisala Mawatha, Thaladena, Malabe.** 0112789746. 081090

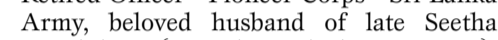
FERNANDOPULLE - PHILOMENA (PHILA)

- Daughter of the late Gabriel & Clara Vethanayagam, beloved wife of late Camillus (Retired Commercial Bank), loving mother & mother-in-law of Patrick & Kumari, Carmen & Daya Mendis (Canada), Sarojini & Patrick Dias (Canada), Kitto & Nilanthi, Sharma & Ajith Puvimanasinghe, affectionate Amma of Nadika, Nalinda, Niroshini & Trevor, Shenal & Saaraa, Nishika & Alex, Nadine, Niles & Neminda, great-grandmother of Matthew, Charlotte, Ethan, Mina and Olivia, sister of the late Therese, Lourdes, Nicholas, Rita & Francis and of Rosemary Pulle, expired on 1st December 2021 and her remains were interred at the General Cemetery Borella, on 2nd December 2021. 079576

PUNCHIHETTI - S.S. (Retired Assistant Commissioner of Labour / Ex-Personnel Manager - Wijeya Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd / Retired Officer - Pioneer Corps - Sri Lanka Army, beloved husband of late Seetha Punchihetti (Sri Palee Vidyalaya, Horana), loving father of late Ruwan (Sri Lanka Air Force), Sujeevanie (Ex - Officer - Sri Lanka Air Force), Madhupani (Sri Lankan Air Lines) and Subhashinie (Visiting Lecturer - Sri Jayawardenapura University / Buddhist & Pali University), loving father-in-law of Mahesh Chandrasekera and loving grandfather of Kaveesha, passed away at the age of 92 years on 11.12.2021. Remains lie at residence **No. 01, Welikala, Pokunuwita, Horana.** Cortege leaves residence after religious rites at 04.30 p.m. on 13.12.2021. 081088

In Remembrance of Mr. P. D. M. Ariyananda (Mano)

02.03.1967- 13.12.2020



MANONEETHA (MANO) was a kind, generous and a wonderful human being. All those who knew him described him as a warm-hearted person who was always willing to lend a helping hand.

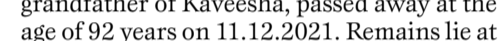
It has been a year since you left us. Not a day passes that we don't think of you. We miss you deeply and terribly. You are forever in our hearts and memories. May you attain the supreme bliss of Nirvana

Deeply and fondly remembered by Wife Yoshitha, Daughter Dhanuri, Son Devin, Brother Lahiru, Aunt Chithra and Aunt Jayalatha.

Bana is on the 12th December (Sunday) and Daane (Alms giving) is on the 13th December (Monday).

100th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Called Home 25th Feb. 2020



NOELLA EUTERPEE VITLEEN PEIRIS

Safe in the Arms of Jesus

Wife of late Roland Peiris sadly missed and fondly remembered by Srikanthi and Rohan and their families.

13, Mount Road, Moratuwa.

Tel. 2646164 / 0775972901



SRI NIKKETHA RATNAM
Born : 15.08.1984 - Death : 06.12.2021

Passed away in London on 06.12.2021, beloved wife of Mr. Rajeshkumar Ratnam, mother of Varesh Ratnam, daughter of Mr & Mrs. Ramachandran (Managing Director) D.S.S. Polesack (Pvt) Ltd., Wattala, loving sister of Mr. Deshraam Ramachandran, loving father in law late Mr. Ratnam and Mother-in-law of Mrs. Thilagarani Ratnam and Niece of Mr & Mrs. Barthiban Director of D S S Polesack (Pvt) Ltd.

Funeral details
 Wednesday, 15th December 2021 3.20 p.m.
 Location : SOUTH WEST MIDDLESEX CREMATORIUM, HOUNSLOW RD, HANWORTH, MIDDLESEX, TW13 5JH
 For information: Mr Deshraam Ramachandran (brother)
 Contact : 0773679775



OBITUARY

Professor (Mrs) Preethika Angunawela



It is with profound sadness that we extend our Deepest Condolences to the Members of the family of Prof. (Mrs) Preethika Angunawela, upon her sudden demise.

Prof. (Mrs) Angunawela, who was a Senior Director of the Board of our Company since its inception, will be missed by our Staff who acknowledged her expertise and kindness at all times.

She was always considered as the epitome of professionalism and finesse.

May her journey through this Samsāric Cycle be short and swift.

Chairman, the Board of Directors and the Staff

Emerchemie NB (Ceylon) Limited
 60, Maligawatte Road, Colombo 10.

The 21st of April 2019 is a traumatizing reawakening of the decades-long civil war that Sri Lanka experienced. One may even regard the recent experience as more daunting, as the horror of it still lingers. Almost three years and six volumes of a commission report later, one is left to wonder - have the victim-survivors got justice?

Memorialisation - What do women want?

A Reverend Sister attached to a Convent in Bolawalana, Negombo who is well known and respected for her service to the community illustrates the need to heal from such incidents: "When we talk about recovery, we need to look at this the same way as a physical wound. In a physical wound, if we do not clean and put the medicine, it can get infected and later can even turn into cancer."

"Memorialisation" appears to be jargon, only understood by those who are either interested or invested in the field. However, a conversation with the grassroots will prove the opposite. While this may not be the term used by them, it is what they yearn for; to remember their lost loved ones, to commemorate them and to ensure a lesson is learnt and the same is not repeated. "They [victim-survivors] seem to have gotten motivated to make sure that the lives of their loved ones were not taken in vain. They want people to know what happened, they want society to remember the incident, they want to stop anything like this from happening in the future and to that end they want anyone and everyone in positions of power to address the root causes.", says a leader of a civil society organisation dedicated to serve the victim survivors of the Easter Sunday Attacks.

When asked about the expectations of women from memorialisation, a Counsellor responds, "In all the houses there are photographs of those who died. It is more important for the entire society to have a reminder that a terrible event like this should not happen again", voicing the victim-survivors' hopes of healing and reconciling through memorialisation.

While discussing the importance of memorialisation to prevent the recurrence of such violence, a Psychiatrist mentions, "Memorialisation is part of prevention of violence. If we forget what happened, then the possibility of recurrence is much higher. People will not remember the individual trauma and the collective trauma that people had to endure."

Memorialisation at an individual level

A psychosocial practitioner who works with female victim survivors of the Easter Attacks believes, "Memorialisation is a way of remembering the person you have lost, it is a way of capturing not just the memories, but also capturing the meaning of that person's life." Explaining what 'meaningful' memorialisation is, she states that, "It is not just wanting to remember in photographs and memories or incidents, but to capture, in some way, what this person contributed to the community and remember what the person could have contributed as well." She goes on to describe a woman who had turned her life around to dedicate it to find purpose for her lost family. She recalls, "She started to say, 'I must give voice to what my children and husband did in this world.'" She said, "I can't just let my family die without a purpose, I

Their Right to Remember: The Easter Attacks and Women Victim Survivors



must let the world know about who they were and what they did. They cannot just be a picture on the wall. These are real people and people must know the kind of husband he was, and the kind of daughter and son they were to me."

Another psychosocial practitioner who works with those who survived the attack describes the experiences of a female victim-survivor who lost her entire family. She further explains how the victim-survivor needed to remember her loved ones in a manner that brings value to their existence in the community - "For instance, they [victim-survivors] want to share that these people were of 'such capacities', 'with such good qualities', 'they lived life like this' and for families to continue remembering how academically successful the children were. Moreover, they wanted to share how well brought up the children were and to ensure the children's identities were not lost."



All interviewees, who have first-hand experience of working with these victim-survivors reiterate one point; the way in which The Church as an institution and the victim-survivors, reacted to the incident. A civil society organisation representative mentions, "They did not point fingers at anyone or blame anyone for what happened, they handled the situation very peacefully. This is not to say that they were not angry, but they knew how to handle their feelings in public," contributing to initiate the recovery process and reinstate stability in the community post-incident. In laying this foundation, memorialisation is pivotal for victim survivors to first grieve and heal spiritually at an individual level, and then to move on to create a space for community level healing. This leads to unity and togetherness within and among the communities,

"Memorialisation appears to be jargon, only understood by those who are either interested or invested in the field. However, a conversation with the grassroots will prove the opposite. While this may not be the term used by them, it is what they yearn for; to remember their lost loved ones, to commemorate them and to ensure a lesson is learnt and the same is not repeated..."

because according to an interviewee who is a psychosocial practitioner, "Healing has so many different layers and aspects to it."

Memorialisation at a community level

"The community has to offer [the] opportunity for them [victim-survivors] to make a public acknowledgement of the lost loved ones as this was a public tragedy", says a psychosocial practitioner. While emphasising the importance of public acknowledgement of the loss as a means of memorialisation, two interviewees recollect an event organised by the leadership of a Reverend Sister attached to a Convent in Bolawalana, Negombo: "They unveiled a sculpture with the photographs of all the children who lost their lives and organised scholarships for the children who lost their parents from the attack."

It was organised so that a parent who lost a child was accompanied by a child who lost a parent. The scholarships that were handed out were in the name of the children who lost their lives. This is important because these parents are never going to see their children's graduation or wedding. So, this was the event that would stay in their memory in a very positive way. Although they were grieving, it was organised in such a way that it also celebrated the strengths of the children who lost their lives. This event is a positive memory that the parents and the closest friends of the child victims can keep coming back to in the future."

A doctor, in his experience, believes that, "[When] trauma has taken place in a large group of people, having group memorialisation allows them to share their grief and loss. This sharing of grief creates a bond due to the similarity in experience, and this creates unity." They mentioned how they came across certain affected women who would "... not leave the house unless it was for the weekly

group therapy session," proving how effective and helpful group memorialisation is for these victim survivors. A Reverend Sister conveys the wishes of women they had worked with, stating, "So, from all this I can emphasise on the importance of developing support groups as a form of memorialisation. This will not only help those who survived the attack overcome their pain but also create inter-ethnic conversation that will enable understanding of these different communities," connecting it to the bigger picture.

Reparations - means of livelihood support to move forward

As the subsequent step to meaningful memorialisation, rebuilding their lives and regaining the ability to lead "an ordinary" life, begins with reparations.

A psychosocial practitioner believes, "After the immediate stages of grief subside, people's lives change and then there should be support for that, both legal and economic."

In this attempt, according to the interviewees, the most common issue encountered by women who had lost the breadwinner of the family is the lack of physical proof of qualifications to get re-employed. Explaining the situation of one woman she has interacted with, a psychosocial practitioner says, "Initially [she] was struggling to find employment partly because she does not have any paper qualifications. This was the case for many women as they did not have their skills on paper."

An alarming aspect of women receiving compensation as reparations was also highlighted by the same psychosocial practitioner. She says, "Another reverend Sister who was working with a larger group of female survivors in Katuwapitiya said that sometimes this money can be an issue because there are men getting close to these women and trying to marry them for the money. If you lost three or four family members, the women survivors received approximately 40 lakhs."

This amount of money attracted other men who are not genuinely interested in these women." This is in addition to the inconvenience they have to face from their in-laws, as pointed out by the interviewee.

In instances where all family members were tragically lost and women had to legally share family property, there have been numerous situations where their vulnerability was exploited by the in-laws over previous disputes between them. Up to this extent, continuous psychological and psycho-social support were also highlighted by the interviewees as an essential form of reparation required and expected by these victim survivors. On the other hand, a Reverend Sister attached to a non-governmental organisation says, "What the survivors continually say is that they need legal justice." of knowing who is responsible, who were the perpetrators and why they were targeted, reverting to the initial position of this article, the requirements to heal and move forward. All interviewees agreed upon one fact based on their interactions with the victim survivors. This was further articulated by a leader of a civil society organization which was dedicated to supporting the lives of victim-survivors - "If you ask the survivors which organisation should help them, they would say "the Government". And if you ask which organisation has been helping them, they will say "only the church".

Written by Kamini Rathnayake, Intern, Centre for Equality and Justice.

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SPORTS

Lanka Lions win Dubai Sevens, put Sri Lanka squabblers to shame

Lanka Lions, the oldest Sri Lanka rugby club in the UAE, once again kept the country's flag flying high at the Dubai Rugby Sevens when they regained the Gulf Men's Open title by grounding their bigger and stronger-looking opponents.

Having last won the coveted trophy in 2015, the Lanka Lions, quite in contrast to what their fellow players in Sri Lanka are subjected to by way of political interference, ended the six-year wait in style by trouncing all other teams with international opposition with ease.

They beat Dubai Sharks in the

quarter-finals 53-5, Jebel Ali Dragons in the semi-finals 41-0 and Barrelhouse House 44-0 in the final. The scores were a clear indication of the team work and unity of the Lanka Lions to work hard and win back the Cup making all Sri Lankans domiciled in the UAE proud.

The rugby they displayed was of a high standard and many were surprised to see the talents the team possessed undiluted by politics that runs Sri Lanka Rugby in the island today.

Indeed the Lanka Lions have produced many international class players in the likes of former Isipa-

thana and Police scrum half Roger Rodrigo who represented Sri Lanka and the Arabian Gulf. Former Peterite captain and centre Kirk Williams was another who played for the Lanka Lions in the past.

The Lions were captained by a fourth year player Adil Deen who plays his 15s rugby with the Dubai Exiles from childhood. He represents his community club in Sevens and is the son of ex-Trinity and CH and FC three-quarter Azarath Deen.

The team was strengthened with some star-studded national players like Imad Reyah who was

the play-maker of Lanka Lions. His dazzling fly half was another national player Abzal Mohamed who was also a treat to watch.

They were well supported by 2019 Lanka Lions captain Dilshan Kelaniyagoda, a former Trinity College centre, former Trinity fly half Anojan Balasundaram, former Kingswood player who made some crash tackles Tharindu Oshada along with newcomer Shazard Deen who represented Dubai English Speaking College.

The team was well supported by some Fijians which put the icing on the cake.



The Lanka Lions players Adil Deen (captain), Imad Reyah, Dilshan Kelaniyagoda, Tharindu Oshada, Abzal Mohamed, Anojan Balasundaram, Shazard Deen, Keponi Paul, Suli Voli, Jone Marawa, Malo Vuata and Sefa Naia celebrate their prize

Justice denied: Another sportsman falls under a rotten system

Weightlifting officials lie to Saman Abeywickrema depriving the army athlete of a medal-winning chance at the Commonwealth Championship

BY ALLAAM OUSMAN

Athletes who have a burning desire and potential to succeed in the international arena are treated like heroes and their talents nurtured with utmost care as they are the pride of the nation. In fact, the very existence of many a high-riding sports official depends on the performance of these athletes.

Any national sports federation would welcome with open arms when they see a dedicated athlete with proven ability and a hunger for success. Although there have been many instances of deserving players failing to make the cut in team sports, it is very rare to see individuals being discriminated against in a sport like weightlifting where performances are crystal clear when the bar is raised.

Disgustingly and discouragingly the Sri Lanka Weightlifting Federation (SLWF) has clearly been on a witch hunt against Sri Lanka record holder in the 102kg weight category Saman Abeywickrema for the past few years.

Bronze medallist at the 2016 South Asian Games (SAG) in India, the Army athlete was denied participation in the 2019 SAG despite being the reigning national champion in his weight class.

It came to a head when he was overlooked to compete in the ongoing Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships being held concurrently in Tashkent, Uzbekistan along with the World Weightlifting Championships where Sri Lanka is represented by a 20-member contingent. This despite the fact that Abeywickrema won a special selection trial in the 109kg weight category in August and his passport was collected by SLWF officials for visa purposes two months ago.

The only athlete from the 13-member Elite pool missing from a competition which serves as quali-



Saman Abeywickrema

fication for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, more significantly Sri Lanka has been deprived of a medal-winning opportunity in the Championship by Abeywickrema's non-participation. The chronology of events leading up to his surprise omission is like a page from Ripley's Believe or Not!

It all began with the selection trials held in February in Polonnaruwa where he was placed second in the 102kg weight class. His rival Chanaka Peters also qualified from the 96kg weight category while Abeywickrema won the second trial in the higher weight class.

However, SLWF arbitrarily changed the qualifying criteria after the trial and gave the reason to withdraw Abeywickrema from the December meet on the grounds that the Commonwealth Championship is not part of the IWF (International Weightlifting Federation) meet.

However, emails from the secretary of the Commonwealth Weightlifting Federation addressed to member countries confirming the entry list proved they were aware of this. There is evidence to prove that top officials of the SLWF deliberately lied to Abeywickrema by denying that the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championship would be held this month.

The SLWF claimed that the main reason for Abeywickrema's exclusion was because their main focus was qualification for the 2022 Commonwealth Games and not just winning medals at the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championship. The other reason was that among the 10 weight categories in the ongoing competition, two of them would not be an event at next year's Games. They are the 89kg and 102kg weight classes for men and 45kg and 81kg for women.

However, Srimali Samarakoon won a gold medal taking part in the women's 45kg weight category.

"We can send only 10 athletes for the Championship. Selections were based on percentage of their performance at the trials. For example YDI Kumara (55kg) had the best percentage of 100.4. Abeywickrema who lifted totals of 293kg and 295kg in the last two trials had a percentage of 83.33 putting him in 11th place," said SLWF secretary G Nishanthan.

Abeywickrema's last hope of qualifying for the Birmingham Games would be the Asian qualification event in Singapore in February.

His coach Nalaka Atukorale has urged sports authorities to rectify the injustice caused to Abeywickrema who represented Sri Lanka at the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games before falling out of favour with the SLWF or else end up with another case of justice denied.

Sri Lankans win bronze medals at Commonwealth weightlifting

BY DHAMMIKA RATNAWEERA

Indika Dissanayake, Manoj Wijesinghe and Thilanka Palagasinghe won bronze medals at the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championship in Tashkent, Uzbekistan yesterday, days after Srimali Samarakoon won a gold medal.

Dissanayake lifted 286 kgs to secure the bronze medal with 130 kgs from the Snatch and 156 kgs from the Clean and Jerk.

Wijesinghe won the bronze medal lifting a total of 264 kgs while Palagasinghe secured his bronze lifting 145 kgs in the Clean and Jerk and 116 kgs in the snatch for a total of 261 kgs.

Earlier on the second day of



Manoj Wijesinghe

Thilanka Palagasinghe

Srimali Samarakoon

Indika Dissanayake

the championship, Srimali Samarakoon won a gold medal in the women's 45 kgs category by lifting 136 kgs to qualify for the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

Twenty athletes from Sri Lanka that includes 10 women are contesting the championships from

December 7 to 17.

The Commonwealth Championships, the most important qualifying event for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, was earlier scheduled to be held in Singapore in October but was moved to Uzbekistan due to covid-19 issues.

Galle Gladiators concede 21 wides defending 127

Last year's finalist at the LPL, Galle Gladiators bowled in a record 21 wides for runs as they unsuccessfully defended a low total of 127 against the Kandy Warriors in their match at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

The wide-ball runs took off the pressure and made it easy for the Warriors who went into the match at the bottom of the table and struggled to get the required runs while losing five wickets.

It was left to former England all-rounder Ravi Bopara (34 not out) and Tom Moores (28) to steer the Kandy Warriors to the target with a 50-run stand for the fifth wicket after Charith Asalanka (21), Tillekaratne Sampath (0), Angelo Perera (12) and Kamindu Mendis (7) were back in the pavilion.

Bopara however kept his cool and showed how to win a low scor-



Ravi Bopara

ing game as he made his unbeaten 34 in 39 balls hitting just three fours.

Galle Gladiators deciding to bat first after winning the toss could not get off to a desired start when explosive opener Dhanushka Gu-

nathilaka was dismissed bowled by Shiraz Ahamed for 5 followed by the exits of Sadeera Samarawickrema (0), Ben Dunk (12) and Bhanuka Rajapakse (3).

It left opener Kusal Mendis to hang in a make a top score of 44 in 34 balls with three fours and a six.

But with Mendis' dismissal the Gladiators slumped to 75 for 5 in 12.3 overs leaving them with no other choice other than bat out the remaining overs for a total of 127 for 7.

SCORES:

Galle Gladiators 127 for 7 in 20 overs (Kusal Mendis 44, Samith Patel 36 not out, Kamindu Mendis 3 for 35)

Kandy Warriors 131 for 5 in 18.4 overs (Charith Asalanka 21, Ravi Bopara 34 not out, Tom Moores 28, Samit Patel 2 for 20)

England crash to nine-wicket Ashes defeat

England crashed to a humiliating nine-wicket defeat at the hands of Australia on the fourth day of the first Ashes cricket Test in Brisbane on Saturday to go one up in the five-match series.

The win would have been unexpected for Australia on the fourth day as England had recovered in the second innings from 61 for 2 to 223 before they lost their third wicket that opened the flood gates.

Off-spinner Nathan Lyon caused the downfall of England at that stage when he broke the 162-run stand for the third wicket by claiming the scalp of Dawid Malan who made 82 in 195 balls that exposed his partner and captain Joe Root who was out 15 balls later for a contribution of 89.

It was just a matter of time before

England were all out for 297 in the second innings losing eight wickets for 74 runs in the process with Lyon finishing with best figures of 4 for 91.

Australia had to score just 20 runs to win which they did in 5.1 overs.

Middle order batter Travis Head was adjudged man of the match for his 152 made in Australia's first inning total of 425.

SCORES:

England 147 (Pat Cummins 5 for 38) and 297 (Dawid Malan 82, Joe Root 89, Nathan Lyon 4 for 91)

Australia 425 (David Warner 94, Marcus Labuschagne 74, Travis Head 152, Ollie Robinson 3 for 58, Mark Wood 3 for 85) and 20 for 1



Australia's cricketers leave the field after ripping out England for a second time

Warner, Hazlewood doubtful for second Ashes Test

Fast bowler Josh Hazlewood and opener David Warner are injury concerns for Australia after their nine-wicket win over England in the first Ashes Test.

Hazlewood has a mild rib issue but, having been absent for much of day three, did bowl as England collapsed from 223-2 to 297 all out on day four.

Warner, who also has a rib injury, did not field on the third day and did not bat when his side chased 20 to win.

Captain Pat Cummins said he expects Warner to be fit for the second Test.

But he was more coy on the prospects of 30-year-old Hazlewood - third in the International Cricket Council's Test bowling rankings - playing in the day-night match in Adelaide, which begins on Thursday.

"He was a little sore (on day three) so we tried to get him through," Cummins said. "(It is) nothing too serious but we didn't want it to turn into a huge injury. (BBC Sport)

Landscape design methodology

Giving a breath of life to mother earth

The 'Landscape Planning System' was started in 1965, as a solution to minimize the damage to the environment and forests due to various factors, including development and population growth. Gradually developed, it is a successful technique used in over a hundred countries today. Among them are developed countries such as the USA, Netherland, China, Japan, and Korea, as well as developing countries. This methodology is successfully being utilized in several countries in Asia and Africa also. At a conference on forests held in Colombo in 2017, all thirty-six participating countries agreed to adopt this landscape planning strategy in the management of their forests.

In general, the objectives of environmental protection and economic development are sometimes competitive and conflicting. But this particular landscape design process is now widely accepted as a strategic and scientific approach that serves conflicting purposes.

A landscape comprises of the whole area of land

scientific methodology. This process involves identifying areas that are suitable for the different needs of the area. For example, areas to be conserved, restored, ecologically sensitive areas and areas that can be used for other purposes are identified. It also ascertains opportunities and barriers to the conservation of existing reserve areas and makes necessary plans to manage them. This makes it easier to implement conservation objectives. Areas that need to be rehabilitated for the survival of the environment will also be identified and appropriate restoration programmes will be implemented accordingly. These include development of forests, soil erosion control, flood control and watershed conservation.

Conservation measures centered on one area sometimes fail because of certain activities being conducted in the vicinity which may be harmful to the environment. However, such external actions can be controlled in a broad-based approach based on an overall landscape area.

planning process which is already underway. In preparing this landscape plan, committees are appointed, consisting of officials nominated by the major stakeholders in the various sectors. Preliminary plans prepared with the contributions of these committees at the national, district/zonal and regional levels are shared with all parties and forwarded for government approval. Once approved, they can be carried out on a long-term basis.

Two particular areas have been chosen for the pilot project, one of which is in the dry zone while the other is in the wet zone. These areas are the Hurulu-Kawudulla-Kantale landscape and the Sinharaja landscape. A number of factors were considered when choosing these areas.

The area covered by the pilot project in the dry zone – the Hurulu-Kawudulla-Kantale landscape is about 528,826.85 hectares. Of this around 272,557.03 hectares are protected areas while the other area of 256,269.82 hectares consists of villages, agricultural lands, and private lands.

Several Dry Zone forests are covered in this landscape area. This includes forest reservations such as Hurulu, Konwewa, Rathmale, Moragaswewa, Kantale, Kalegama, Padaviya, Andiyaga- hahinna, Kumbukwewahinna, Chundankadu, Thanaparichchan, Pamburugashinna, Borawewa, Ralapanawa and the Anvilundawa proposed forest reservation.

Apart from these, National Forest Reserves such as Kawudulla, Somawathian and Minneriya, the Trincomalee Navy Headquarters Nature Preserve and the Great Sober Landscape Nature Reserve and several mangrove areas also belong to this landscape. Six major rivers flow through this area while nine watersheds and five large tanks are also located in this landscape. This area contains a large number of houses, agricultural lands and several areas of archaeological importance. The relevant landscape plan for this landscape comprising 14 Divisional Secretarial Divisions in Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Trincomalee Districts has now been completed.

The other landscape area for which landscape management plans are being made is the Sinharaja Forest Reserve complex which consists of 242,695.17 hectares. Of this, 150,473.07 hectares are forests including protected areas while the balance 92,222.10 hectares are being used for other purposes. The Sinharaja World Heritage Site as well as forest reserves such as Morapitiya-Rana Kanda, Dambuluwana, Muwagankanda, Magurugoda, Iriyagahena, Warthalgoda, Kithuluthara, Nahiti Mookalana, Handawal Kanda, Mudali Kanda, Yakkanda, Nawkanda, Kabaragala, Walankanda, Kalugala, Sooriyakanda, Kalubowitiyana and Diyadawa come under this landscape.

This landscape plan comprises sixteen Divisional Secretarial Divisions of Ratnapura, Galle, Matara and Kaluthara Districts and is currently under preparation. It is hoped that this landscape-based management plan will introduce a suitable system for the conservation of the natural resources of the area, as well as for sustainable use.

These tasks are being carried out tirelessly and at great expense to ensure the upliftment of Sri Lanka's forests and the next generation's right to breathe freely. What is of paramount importance is that every citizen of this country considers it his duty and responsibility to support these tasks and ensure that they are not interrupted or disrupted by the abuse of power.

- Inoka Perera Bandara

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where living things and their interactions take place. It includes living things and inanimate factors as well as natural resources. Its boundaries can be demarcated as a catchment area, a mountainous area, a river boundary or an area marked by administrative boundaries such as Provinces, Districts etc. A combination of all these criteria can also be used to demarcate a landscape area. Since the basis of this planning system is the landscape, the area demarcated may exceed existing administrative boundaries.

Two basic features of this landscape design process can be identified. The first is that it covers the entire area of the selected landscape. The plan includes all types of land use areas within the landscape, such as forests, forest lanes, agricultural lands, plantations, river basins, tank reserves, villages, urban areas as well as coastal areas. Accordingly, a plan is prepared with both conservation and development objectives covering the entire demarcated landscape. Secondly, it is an integrated plan prepared with the participation of all stakeholders in the conservation and development activities in the area.

It is clear that a more qualitative and successful outcome can be achieved by implementing such a plan. Also, through this joint implementation process, the relevant programme can be easily and successfully implemented without any delay since it is based on a

In this planning process, villages with human activities, home gardens, cities, agricultural lands, as well as other government lands are identified and methods are introduced to use these areas sustainably. It also identifies which land areas can be used for different land uses and what resources are needed. Areas that can be used for urban development, settlement as well as agriculture are classified separately, so that they can be utilized methodically.

On the other hand, it is important to identify groups of people with low-income who depend on nature reserves for their livelihood and develop alternative employment and sources of income for them. Introducing a system that protects the environment and natural resources and uses them in a sustainable manner such as eco-tourism, eco-friendly product development etc., is vital.

In a nutshell, this landscape-based planning methodology focuses on natural resources and human activities and manages multiple land use patterns under a combined plan. To this end, pilot programmes are currently being implemented in various parts of Sri Lanka.

Accordingly, one of the components of the Ecosystem Conservation and Management Project currently being implemented in Sri Lanka with the assistance of the World Bank, is the pilot landscape management



Ministry of Wildlife and Forest Conservation



Department of Wildlife Conservation



Forest Department



Ecosystem Conservation & Management Project

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DECEMBER 12, 2021

SINCE 1978
43rd

**OBSERVER SLT-MOBITEL
SCHOOL CRICKETER**

OF THE YEAR 2021

Recognizing talent, inspiring greatness.



Stage set for school cricketers' most cherished moments

SUPER ENTERTAINMENT FOR MEGA SHOW

The 43rd Observer SLT Mobitel School Cricketers of the Year Mega Night is packed with some eye-catching entertainment provided by leading vocalists Falan Andrea, K. Sujeewa and veteran Saman de Silva backed by leading band Centigradz. There will be many super dance acts by Chandana Wickremasinghe Dance Troupe in the 150-minute action-packed show handled by Funtime of Imran Saibo.



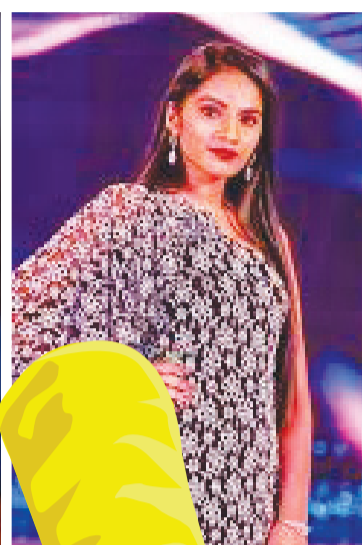
Saman de Silva



K. Sujeewa



Funtime with Imran Saibo



Falan Andrea



Chandana Wickremasinghe Dance Troupe

By **Dinesh Weerawansa**



The super powers of SLT Mobitel and the Sunday Observer have been able to build up a super stage once more to reward the country's outstanding school cricketers this week.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic threatening to disrupt all events worldwide for almost two years, the Sunday Observer and its principal sponsor SLT Mobitel were extremely lucky to beat all overwhelming odds to host both the 2020 event and now the 2021 extravaganza.

Thus, the stage is set for the 43rd Observer SLT Mobitel Schools Cricketer of the Year grand finale which will be held at the BMICH in Colombo on Tuesday (14) commencing from 5.30 p.m.

Gracing the gala awards ceremony as distinguished chief guest is none other than the person who guided Sri Lanka to its most cherished moment in cricket, Arjuna Ranatunga. It was under his leadership that Sri Lanka beat Australia by seven wickets in the 1996 World Cup final played in Lahore, Pakistan on March, 17, 1996.

Ranatunga is only the second winner of the Observer Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year - in 1980 after Ranjan Madugalle and the first ever schoolboy to win the grand title twice.

Interestingly, the 1996 World Cup-winning Sri Lanka team was filled with Observer Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year title winners - Ranatunga (1980 and 1982), Roshan Mahanama (1983 and 1984), Asanka Gurusinha (1985), Kumar Dharmasena (1989), Marvan Atapattu (1990) and Muttiah Muralitharan (1991) while Sanath Jayasuriya, the man of the series at the 1996 World Cup tournament, had won the Observer Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year Outstanding title in 1988.

As a tribute to Ranatunga and his world beating team, the highlights of the 1996 World Cup final will be shown on a super giant screen to an audience of nearly 450 at the BMICH on Tuesday where the Mega Show will be conducted in accordance with strict health guidelines of only 25% of the capacity.

For the first time in the 43-year-old Mega Show history, the Observer Schoolboy Cricketer will be held twice during the same year. It was in April this year that we had the 42nd Observer School Cricketers of the Year awards ceremony that was postponed from 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We were extremely lucky to hold it in accordance with all health guidelines.

Although the 2020-21 season inter-school cricket activities were confined to the three divisions of 1, 11 and 111 tournaments plus a few traditional two-day matches and the Royal-Thomian three-day encounter, we thought it is not fair to desert the school cricketers when they needed the motivation the most.

Hence, the SLT Mobitel gave its financial backing for this year too and continues the Observer SLT Mobitel School Cricketers of the Year uninterrupted.

It is a commendable gesture by the SLT Mobitel and full credit must go to its parent company Sri Lanka Telecom headed by its Group Chairman Rohan Fernando, former Vice President of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka (NOC) and ex-President of the Rowing Association of Sri Lanka. An

SCHOOLBOY CRICKETER PAST WINNERS 43rd

1979 Ranjan Madugalle (Royal)	1980 & 1981 Arjuna Ranatunga (Ananda)	1981 Rohan Bultjans (St. Peter's)	1983 & 1984 Roshan Mahanama (Nalanda)	1985 Asanka Gurusinha (Nalanda)	1986 Roshan Jurangpathy (Royal)	1987 Rohan Weerakkody (St. Joseph's)
1988 Sanjeeva Ranatunga (Ananda)	1989 Kumar Dharmasena (Nalanda)	1990 Marvan Atapattu (Ananda)	1991 Muttiah Muralitharan (St. Anthony's, Kandy)	1992 Sajith Fernando (St. Anthony's, Kandy)	1993 Naveed Nawaz (D.S. Senanayake)	1994 & 1995 Thilan Samaraweera (Ananda)
1997 Chinthaka Jayasinghe (Dharmapala)	1998 Pradeep Hewage (St. Benedict's)	1999 M. Pushpakumara (Ananda)	2000 Kaushalya Weeraratne (Trinity)	2001 Kaushal Lokuarachchi (St. Peter's)	2002 Sahan Wijerathne (Prince of Wales)	2003 Faveez Maharroof (Wesley)
2004 & 2005 Lahiru Peiris (St. Peter's)	2006 Gihan Rupasinghe (Nalanda)	2007 Malith Gunatillake (Ananda)	2008 Umesh Karunaratne (Thurstan)	2009 Dinesh Chandimal (Ananda)	2010 & 2011 Bhanuka Rajapakse (Royal)	2012 Niroshan Dickwella (Trinity)
2013 Kusal Mendis (Prince of Wales)	2014 S. Samarawickrama (Saint Joseph)	2015 & 2016 Charith Asalanka (Richmond)	2017 Nipun Ransika (P de S Kularatne Vidyalaya)	2018 Hasitha Boyagoda (Trinity)		
2019 Kamil Mishara (Royal)	2020 Navod Paranawithana (Mahinda)					

ace rower during his days at S. Thomas', Fernando has given all the backing for the Mega Show, along with the CEO of Sri Lanka Telecom Group, Lalith Seneviratne and CEO of SLT Mobitel Chandika Vitharana.

The Sri Lanka Schools Cricket Association (SLSCA) and the Sri Lanka Cricket Umpires and Scorers Association have joined hands with the Sunday Observer and SLT

Arjuna Ranatunga
PERSONAL INFORMATION
Nickname: Captain Cool
Height: 173 m (5 ft 8 in)
Batting: Left-hand
Bowling: Right-arm medium
Role: Batsman

INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION
Sri Lanka (1982-2000)
Test debut: 7-21 February 1982 v England
Last Test: 6-11 August 2000 v South Africa
ODI debut: 14 February 1982 v England
Last ODI: 30 May 1999 v Kenya

BATTING									
TEST									
Span	Mat	Inns	NO	Runs	HS	Avg	100s	50s	
1982-2000	93	155	12	5105	135*	35.69	4	38	
ODI									
Span	Mat	Inns	NO	Runs	HS	Avg	100s	50s	
1982-1999	269	255	47	7456	131*	35.84	4	49	
BOWLING									
TEST									
Span	Mat	Overs	Runs	Wkts	BBI	Avg	Econ	SR	
1982-2000	93	3953	1040	16	217	65.00	2.62	148.3	
ODI									
Span	Mat	Overs	Runs	Wkts	BBI	Avg	Econ	SR	
1982-1999	269	7850	3757	79	4/14	47.55	4.78	156.6	

1996 WORLD CUP
Arjuna Ranatunga is one of Sri Lanka's greatest captains. He led the national team to victory in the 1996 World Cup. While Ranatunga scored 241 runs during Sri Lanka's 1996 World Cup winning campaign, he finished with the highest average in the tournament.

Mobitel to ensure nothing is left out.

In fact, the Sunday Observer found the necessity of recognizing the raw talents of schoolboy cricketers way back in the 1970s when the school cricket national body had not even thought of a schools tournament.

When the success story of the Observer Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year is spoken about, one cannot forget the lavish contribution made by SLT Mobitel since 2008, especially its role to keep the Mega Show uninterrupted dur-

inaugural Test in 1982, had been scored by former Observer Schoolboy Cricketers - Madugalle (65) and Ranatunga (54).

Ranatunga has come a long way since his early days as a junior schoolboy cricketer to go places to end his sporting career as a legend in world cricket. Playing in 269 ODI matches for Sri Lanka, Ranatunga has aggregated 7,456 runs with four centuries and 49 fifties. Although the Observer Schoolboy Cricketer was officially begun in 1979, there were records that the Sunday Observer awards show had originally commenced in 1975. Nalanda cricketer Anura Ranasinghe, the controversial 12th man in Sri Lanka's inaugural Test squad, has been the Observer Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year in 1975 as well as in the following year 1976.

Although the show was not held in 1977, Ranjan Madugalle was adjudged the Observer Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year when the awards show resumed in 1978. Madugalle won the title once more in 1979, the first formal year of the competition.



Centigradz