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The Island

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Opposition flays Basil for going to US while country is burning

By SAMAN INDRAJITH

Opposition parties yesterday flayed Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa for going to the US amidst the country's worst-ever economic crisis.

Chief Opposition Whip and Kandy District SJB MP Lakshman Kiriella told *The Island* that it was unbelievable that the Finance Minister had decided to go to the US while the country was burning.

"He was not in Parliament during the budget debate to listen to the MPs views. He did not come to Parliament. None of his predecessors skipped parliamentary sessions while the budget debate was on. When he came to the House on the day of the vote, we asked him how he proposed to repay the loans. His response was that the government would pay the loans but did not tell the House how he was planning to do that. That is against parliamentary procedures; the MPs have a right to know how such payments are settled. Now, amidst all these problems, the Finance Minister has gone to the US."

JVP leader Anura Kumara



Basil

Dissanayake said many problems faced by the people had been caused by the Finance Ministry, which was duty-bound to solve them.

"The Finance Ministry is the most important ministry as regards the present crisis. There are no dollars for containers of essentials held up at the port to be released. It is a problem that should be sorted out by the Finance Ministry. There are many explosions caused by gas leaks countrywide. The gas companies come under the Finance Ministry. The Yugadanvi power plant has been sold. It is the Finance Ministry that signed the agreement at issue. There are many such problems that the Finance Ministry should solve as a national priority. But the Finance Minister has left the country. Some other ministers too have left the country on foreign trips."

New Cases 518 Total: 577,484	Active Cases Total: 15,791	Recovered 395 Total: 546,498	Deaths 21 Total: 14,698	Daily Death Count: 21
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Long queues were seen at the sales outlets of local milk powder producers owing to a shortage of imported milk powder. Our photographer Thushara Atapattu captured this scene at Mirihana yesterday.

Proposed 'postponement of PC polls': State Minister may have erred – EC Chief

LG polls likely to be delayed: Polls monitors alarmed

By SHAMINDRA FERDINANDO

Dr. Shafi to be paid salary arrears

Secretary to the Ministry of Health, Dr. S.H. Munasinghe has instructed the Director of Kurunegala Teaching Hospital to pay Dr. Shafi Sihabdeen, who has been sent on compulsory leave, salary arrears.

The hospital Director has also been instructed to explain why Dr. Safi was not paid his salary.

"I instruct you to pay salary arrears to Dr. Shafi who was sent on compulsory leave from 25 May 2019. You must also report why you did not pay his salary when the Establishment Code clearly states how to act when an officer is sent on compulsory leave," the Health Secretary said.

Dr. Shihabdeen, was arrested on 25 May, 2019.

Election Commission (EC) Chief Nimal G. Punchihewa yesterday (16) said Provincial Council polls couldn't be put off through the intervention of the Cabinet. He emphasised that there was no legal provision for the Cabinet to request the EC to postpone PC polls though Local Government polls could be put off.

LG bodies comprise Municipal Councils, Urban Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas. The EC Chairman said so when *The Island* sought his response to Provincial Councils and Local Government Minister Roshan Ranasinghe's recent declaration that he had submitted a Cabinet paper seeking postponement of the Provincial Council polls by one year.

A statement dated 15 Dec issued by State Minister's office quoted him as having told a workshop for Local Government members at Laya Leisure at Kukeleganga on 09 Dec. that the EC would be soon informed of the Cabinet decision. Lawyer Punchihewa said that perhaps a genuine mistake had been made by the

State Minister or the Ministry when issuing a statement as regards the event held at Kukeleganga.

The EC consists of Nimal G. Punchihewa, S.B. Divaratne, M.M. Mohamad, K.P.P. Pathirana and Mrs. P.S.M. Charles.

When the EC's response was brought to the notice of the State Minister's Office, a spokesperson said that as the Minister was overseas and he couldn't be contacted immediately but clarification would be made soon. The State Ministry didn't respond to *The Island* query at the time of going to press.

Responding to another query, Punchihewa asserted that perhaps the State Minister had referred to a government decision to put off the forthcoming



Nimal

Three more omicron cases detected in SL

Three more Sri Lankans infected with the Omicron COVID variant had been found, Dr. Chandima Jeewandara of the Allergy, Immunology and Cell Biology Unit, Department of Immunology Molecular and Molecular Medicine of the University of Sri Jayawardenepura said yesterday.

Booster shots of COVID-19 vaccines would help protect against Omicron, he said.

The South African scientists have looked at how Omicron enters human cells and how antibodies respond to Omicron, compared to the original coronavirus and found that the new variant used the same receptor to enter into our cells.

Among the people with the 2-dose Pfizer series, neutralising antibodies had a 40 fold reduction with Omicron compared to the original virus.

P 4 >>

GMOA calls for vigilance against spread of virus during festive season

By RATHINDRA KURUWITA

The threat posed by COVID-19 was not over and authorities should remain vigilant during the coming festive season, Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) General Committee Member, Dr. Prasad Kolabage said yesterday.

Dr. Kolabage said that the omicron variant was spreading across the world and that Sri Lanka too had detected several cases.

"We are also receiving information that the cases are on the rise again and that there are differences in the symptoms shown," he said.

P 4 >>



- The JVP is urging the people to rally around it to be liberated.
- I think the JVP should liberate itself first before helping others.

Inter-Parliamentary Union adopts unanimous decision on arrest of Rishad Bathiudeen

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the largest international organisation of national Parliaments, which investigated the arrest and detention of Vanni District Parliamentarian Rishad Bathiudeen issued its decision on the matter yesterday (16).

The IPU has expressed concerns that Bathiudeen was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in the



Bathiudeen

absence of prompt processing of his fundamental rights application filed at the Supreme Court with the recusal of four Judges from hearing the case. The IPU has also expressed concerns that no official information was made available to show that any concrete evidence existed to make Bathiudeen a suspect although he was granted bail by the Courts

P 4 >>

JVP urges people to rally behind it to be liberated

By SAMAN INDRAJITH

The people are left with no alternative but to rally around the JVP-led NPP to steer the country out of the multiple crises, says JVP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

Addressing the media at the party headquarters in Pelawatte yesterday, the JVP leader said recent developments on the political front had compelled people to think critically, and shown them that neither of the two main traditional political forces was able to save the crisis-ridden nation.

"We are ready to resolve the prevailing crisis and hoist the nation from the abyss it has



(L-R) Dr Harini Amarasuriya, Dr Nihal Abeyasinghe, Anura Kumara Dissanayake and Attorney-at-Law Lal Wijeynayake

fallen into. People should join us. We will launch the new campaign on Monday (20) with our representatives' convention at the Monarch Imperial Conference Hall in Sri Jayawardenepura."



P 4 >>

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Laugfs chief seeks govt. permission for importing high-quality LPG

BY SHIRAN RANASINGHE

Laugfs is ready to import high quality LPG if the government allows it to open necessary Letters of Credit (LCs), Chairman of the company, W. K. H. Wegapitiya told *The Island*.

Sri Lankans consumed about 45,000 to 50,000 metric tonnes of gas a month, he said, noting that his company had the

capacity to purchase high quality gas in quantities needed.

"If Litro can't find gas stocks of proper quality, I can help them too. I can't import gas because the banks won't open the LCs. If the government allows me to open some LCs, I can solve this crisis," he said.

Two shipments of gas, 6,900 metric tonnes in total, imported by Litro was found to be without adequate levels of ethyl mercaptan, which is commonly used as an additive to odourless gasses like butane, propane, and petroleum to warn users in case of leaks.

Minister Johnston asks whether Opposition has suggested single solution

Chief Government Whip and Highways Minister Johnston Fernando yesterday called on chairmen and top officials of the gas companies to come out of their hiding places and tell the public the truth about the prevailing crisis.

Speaking to the media during a ceremony at Werahera to lay the foundation stone for the construction of Werahera Bridge on the Colombo-Horana Road, the minister said that top officials and Chairmen of gas companies had a responsibility to find solutions for the problems related to the gas crisis. "I saw on TV that one such Chairman could not even be contacted. There is no point in hiding. They need to give answers. That is a part of their job. They have been given those positions not to go into hiding when there are problems of gas shortages or mishaps created by their products. I saw one such chairman of a gas company who was very upstart and rhetorical about corruption, but he too couldn't be found to give solutions for the problems faced by the people. They are paid not to play the hero by giving voice



Johnston

cuts to the media but to provide services to the people. Their irresponsibility puts people and the government in difficulty," the Minister said. Asked to comment on Opposition's criticism against the government for proroguing Parliament, the minister said: "I saw the Chief Opposition Whip Lakshman Kiriella telling the media that it was wrong to prorogue Parliament when there were no political crises. Parliament had been prorogued more than 50 times since 1947. This is not something new. Incumbent Opposition Leader's father, President Ranasinghe Premadasa prorogued parliament when there was an impeachment against him and rubbed a charmed oil on MPs chairs in Parliament. We haven't

done such things. Past presidents J.R. Jayewardene, Premadasa, Chandrika Kumaratunga and Mahinda Rajapaksa prorogued Parliament. Parliament was adjourned till 11 Jan., and later it was prorogued till Jan 18. The extension is only for seven days. The Opposition says that they could discuss solutions if Parliament is kept open. Have they given any viable solution for any problem during any day that the House met in the recent past? There is a crisis triggered by a dollar shortage. This problem is not for forever and we are working out solutions. If the Opposition has any alternative, I challenge it to inform the public.

The No 9/2 Werahera bridge on Colombo-Horana Road is estimated to be completed at a cost of Rs 285 million. Minister of Power Gamini Lokuge was also present at the foundation laying ceremony. The length of the bridge, which is seven metres will be increased to 43.60 metres. It would be 22 meters in width enabling a four lane route. The bridge is to be completed in 15 months and to end flood threats to Boralesgamuwa and adjacent areas. (SI)



CEA officials at a laboratory

CEA moves to tackle issue of wastewater from laboratories

BY IFHAM NIZAM

The Central Environmental Authority (CEA) yesterday launched a new programme for proper management of wastewater discharged from analytical laboratories.

CEA Chairman S. Amarasinghe said that under the new initiative steps would be taken to dispose of the effluent containing chemical contaminants from all regional laboratories, including the CEA's main laboratory, in a more systematic manner and the process is being implemented by CEA through INSEE Ecocycle (Pvt) Ltd. Prior to the launch of the scheme, laboratory wastewater discharged through the local laboratory network, including the Central Laboratory's main laboratory, was primarily treated and disposed of through the CEA's wastewater treatment plant and laboratory solid waste disposal. Amarasinghe said the objective of

the programme was to strengthen the environmental protection process by minimising the adverse effects on the environment such as soil pollution, mitigation of surface water pollution and aquatic life and especially prevention of groundwater pollution.

CEA has identified the urgency of minimising the impact of chemical effluents and volatile effluents released by analytical laboratories onto the environment including the entire human environment.

Therefore, the "Environmental Protection Division" of the Central Environmental Authority is currently in the early stages of introducing the programme to the "Analytical Laboratories" that would be operating in various fields in the future and to submit a series of relevant instructions in that regard, Amarasinghe added.

Petitions challenging Yugadanavi deal supported in court

BY CHITRA WEERARATHNE

Fundamental rights violation petitions filed in the Supreme Court against the decision of the government of Sri Lanka to hand over 40% of the shares of the Yugadanavi Power Plant to New Fortress Power Company of New York was supported in the Supreme Court yesterday.

Among the petitioners are the Ven. Elle Gunawansa Thera, Archbishop of Colombo His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, General Secretary of the Samagi Jana Balavegaya

Ranjith Madduma Bandara and Sunil Handunetti of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna.

The petitioners have complained that the aforesaid deal is a violation of the right to equality of the citizens of Sri Lanka, the present generation and the future generation as well. The deal should be scrapped by the Court.

Among the respondents cited in the petition are the Prime Minister, the Cabinet of Ministers, the Yugadanavi Power Company Pvt. Limited of

Colombo (1), which is the owning company of the power plant, and the Attorney General.

Cabinet Ministers, Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Udaya Gammanpila and Wimal Weerawansa are opposed to the Yugadanavi deal. They have retained counsel of their own.

The five-judge bench comprised Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya, Justice Buwaneka Aluwihara, Justice Priyantha Jayawardene, Justice Vijith K. Malalagoda and Justice L.T.B. Dehideniya.

Youth come forward to ensure better future of children as UNICEF marks 75 years

UNICEF marked its 75th Anniversary and the Convention on the Rights of the Child by hosting a panel discussion titled 'Reimagine a future for every child' reflecting on the progress made over the years and highlighting the pressing issues facing children and young people in Sri Lanka.

The issues that the current young generation of Sri Lanka face have been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although

the virus itself has had mild effect on young people, they are the worst affected with its consequences. The burden of unemployment leading to loss of incomes for families, disruption in education, exposure to exploitation and abuse among others, disproportionately rests on children and young people.

Some of the issues that the young people highlighted during the consultations include deep concerns and demand for urgent

action on matters such as academic pressures relating to performance at national exams, the risk of being left behind and marginalised due to lack of access to technology and digital tools for their education, COVID-19 bringing about mental distress, encountering food insufficiency due to lack of income and resources and inadequate social protection programmes as they undergo job training.



Young panellists and cover artist with the UNICEF Sri Lanka Representative during the event. From left: Tharushi Weerasinghe, Bhagya Abeyrathne, Jathujan Mahendran, Christian Skoog - UNICEF Sri Lanka Representative, Yumna Zaheed and Manethree Walpola



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Build for Life



Birth of Bangladesh

BY JAYANTHA SOMASUNDARAM

“My greatest strength is the love for my people, My greatest weakness is that I love them too much.”

- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

On December 16, 1971, Lieutenant General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, Pakistan's Eastern Commander, surrendered to India's Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora, bringing to an end the war that completed the bifurcation of Pakistan, in order to create the new state of Bangladesh. This war of independence had been a brutally bitter conflict that had lasted almost a year.

When dominion status was granted in August 1947, Pakistan was made up of two enclaves, separated by a thousand miles of Indian territory. Muslim-majority East Bengal made up East Pakistan while the other Muslim-majority areas in the west comprised West Pakistan. In 1971 East Pakistan with 73 million had a larger population than West Pakistan which had 57 million.

At the end of over a decade of military rule in Pakistan, General Yahya Khan held parliamentary elections in December 1970. The poll resulted in the Awami League securing nearly all the seats in East Pakistan. The All Pakistan Awami (People's) League was founded in 1949 by Bengali nationalists as a counter to the Muslim League which sought centralisation of political power and the imposition of Urdu as the national language. The Awami League had gone to the election on a Six Point Plan to gain Bengali control of everything except defence and foreign affairs.

However, overlooking the claims of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the Awami League, President Yahya Khan appointed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as Prime Minister, and refused to summon the newly elected parliament, the National Assembly of Pakistan.

In response, Mujibur Rahman on March 7, 1971 at a public rally in Dacca, attended by two million Bengalis, called for civil disobedience, armed resistance and Bengali independence. The result was a civil disobedience campaign which took the form of a general strike, non-payment of taxes, closure of schools and courts; and for the next three weeks East Bengal was a de facto independent state ruled by the Awami League.

Sahabzada Lieutenant General Yaqub Ali Khan was commander of the Pakistan Army's Eastern Command in Dacca and Governor of East Pakistan. He opposed the use of military force to settle the Bengali issue and when ordered to do so, he refused and resigned his position. He was replaced by Lieutenant General Tikka Khan. His use of force led to criticism even in West Pakistan and in August he was recalled.

Independence declared

On March 25 Mujibur declared Bangladesh independent. That night the West Pakistani armed forces attacked the police barracks at Rajarbagh and the East Pakistan Rifles, a 15,000 strong paramilitary force based in Dacca. Debasish Roy Chowdhury in *The Asia Times* (23/6/05) claims that, “The military now decided enough was enough. At a meeting of the military top brass, Yahya declared: Kill three million of them and the rest will eat out of our hands.” Islamabad responded with *Operation Searchlight* on 26, a lightning military move aimed at taking all major Eastern cities. It included the arrest of Sheikh Mujibur who was thereafter imprisoned in Karachi in the West.

In addition, Islamabad banned the Awami League and arrested its leaders. The Awami League described it as genocide, targeting in particular their leadership and supporters as well as Bengali intellectuals and the destruction of their economy.

The New York Times reported on March 30, “In two days and nights of shelling by the Pakistan Army perhaps seven thousand Bengalis died in Dacca alone. The Army which attacked without warning with American-supplied M24 Chaffee tanks destroyed large parts of the City.” A subsequent report published in the *Times* on April 14 said, “The Central Government forces killed East Pakistan Army officers and soldiers who were unable to break out and join the guerrillas when the Army offensive began on 25th March.”

Responding to the claim that Ceylon provided refuelling facilities for Pakistani military planes carrying

Partition of India in August 1947



troops to the East to suppress the uprising, Leslie Goonewardena, Minister of Communications stated, “in March 1971 sixteen east-bound and fifteen west-bound Pakistan Air Force planes touched down at the Bandaranaike International Airport.”

Provisional Government established

The Provisional Government of Bangladesh was established on April 17 when the 469 Bengali parliamentarians elected in December 1970, to the National and Provincial assemblies, formed the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh and drew up an interim constitution. In the absence of Mujibur, Syed Nazrul Islam was appointed Acting President. In the months that followed it is alleged that anything up to three million Bengalis were killed, including students, intellectuals, politicians and Hindus in what is referred to as the 1971 Bangladesh Genocide. The post war Hamoodur Rahman Commission appointed by Islamabad concluded that there were only 26,000 civilian deaths.

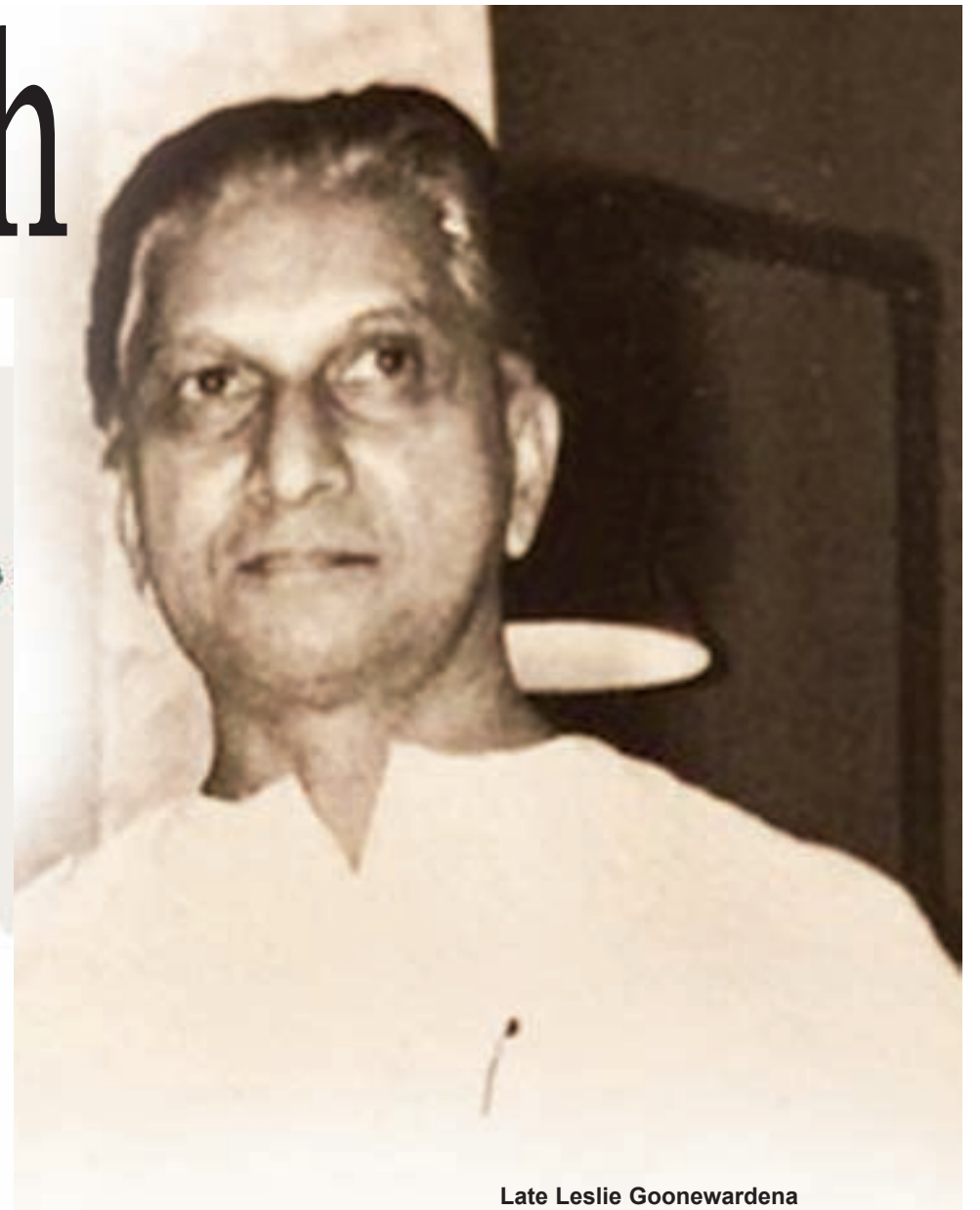
Anthony Mascarenhas was a Karachi-based reporter who was one of eight Pakistani journalists given a tour of the East by the Government. Appalled by what he learnt he fled to London with his family and broke his story in an article published in *The Sunday Times* on June 13. Under the headline ‘Genocide’ it began with: “Abdul Bari had run out of luck. Like thousands of other people in East Bengal, he had made the mistake - the fatal mistake - of running within sight of a Pakistani patrol. He was 24 years old, a slight man surrounded by soldiers. He was trembling because he was about to be shot.”

“...I have heard the screams of men bludgeoned to death in the compound of the Circuit House (civil administrative headquarters) in Comilla. I have seen truckloads of other human targets and those who had the humanity to try to help them hauled off ‘for disposal’ under the cover of darkness and curfew...I have witnessed the brutality of ‘kill and burn missions’ as the army units, after clearing out the rebels, pursued the pogrom in the towns and villages. I have seen whole villages devastated by ‘punitive action’. And in the officer’s mess at night I have listened incredulously as otherwise brave and honourable men proudly chewed over the day’s kill. ‘How many did you get?’ The answers are seared in my memory.”

Ten years ago on the anniversary of these events the BBC said: “There is little doubt that Mascarenhas’ reportage played its part in ending the war. It helped turn world opinion against Pakistan and encouraged India to play a decisive role...In the first of many notorious war crimes, soldiers attacked Dhaka University, lining up and executing students and professors...Their campaign of terror then moved into the countryside, where they battled local troops who had mutinied.”

In an article titled *Pakistan: The Ravaging of Golden Bengal* on August 2, *Time* reported that “In Dacca, where soldiers set sections of the Old City ablaze with flamethrowers and then machine-

gunned thousands as they tried to escape the cordon of fire, nearly 25 blocks have been bulldozed clear, leaving open areas set incongruously amid jam-packed slums.” It quoted a senior US official as saying, “It is the most incredible, calculated thing since the days of the Nazis in



Late Leslie Goonewardena

Poland.” Archer Blood, US Consul-General in Dacca criticised Washington for supporting Islamabad, in an official cable subsequently known as the *Blood Telegram*. “Our government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy,” the telegram said. “Our government has failed to denounce atrocities...Our government has evidenced what many will consider moral bankruptcy.”

By April 10, the West Pakistani Army had control of Dacca and *Operation Searchlight*, and the military control of all of Bangladesh by Pakistan was successfully completed in less than two months. In the civil war that ensued 300,000 Bengalis died. And by August there were seven million Bangladeshi refugees in India.

(To be continued)



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

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To Dealers:

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Thursday 17th December, 2021

Another tsunami?

Restrictions currently in place to prevent Covid-19 will not be ramped up in view of the upcoming festive season, Director General of Health Services Dr. Asela Gunawardena has said, urging the public to exercise caution. Whether Sri Lankans will do as the good doctor says is in doubt, for they are given to living dangerously. They however are not alone in doing so.

Humans pride themselves on their intelligence, but it looks as though they had proved through their pandemic response that they are the dumbest of all critters inhabiting this planet. Will any other creature with an iota of intelligence court danger and death the way humans have been doing during the past two years or so? Coronavirus has killed 5.3 million people so far across the globe. The virus cannot spread on its own, and it is humans who provide it with conveyance and help it snuff out lives. In some countries, people are staging street protests against lockdowns and other such pandemic control measures. Here, too, most people are seen performing hongis with coronavirus.

Going by the way coronavirus variants behave, it is too early to say for sure that pandemic-related restrictions will not have to be tightened towards the end of this month. Nothing is so certain as the unexpected as regards the runaway virus. A spike in the Covid-19 caseload could happen within a matter of days, sending the death toll through the roof—*absit omen!* This has happened previously here as well as overseas. Hence the need for everyone to tread cautiously, as Dr. Gunawardena has said, lest there should be a Covid-19 tsunami of sorts sweeping across the country. In 2004, so many lives were lost in the Boxing Day tsunami because Sri Lankans did not heed the warning signs of the impending killer waves. They do not seem to care two hoots about health experts' warnings of a possible explosive spread of Covid-19 early next year.

It is hoped that the decision against intensifying Covid-19 restrictions is not politically motivated. One may recall that the government blundered in April by keeping the country open for political reasons. It would have been able to mitigate the severity of the impact of the pandemic on the people and the economy if it had heeded health experts' warning ahead of the traditional New Year in April. Doctors tried their utmost to convince the government that travel restrictions had to be imposed during April as they knew the people would throw caution to the wind and enjoy themselves, creating conditions for a rapid spread of Covid-19. Their prediction came true shortly afterwards, and the government had to close the country. A stitch in April would have saved more than nine a few months later, as it were.

Christmas is a joyous occasion everybody loves and it should not be spoilt. But if health experts believe that stern pandemic control measures are necessary within the next few weeks, they must be allowed to go ahead.

It is too dangerous to leave pandemic control to politicians and their bureaucratic lackeys. It is the opinion of health experts that matters.

Many Sri Lankans will be waltzing with coronavirus come 31 December. Clubs and pubs are already crowded and they will be packed to the rafters with wild parties to ring in the New Year. There is nothing stupider than to expect revellers to mind health guidelines. Coronavirus is a gatecrasher!

Hotels have been struggling to prevent themselves from going belly up due to lockdowns and the present economic downturn. They must be planning to boost their revenue during the next two weeks, but they will have to ensure that all their guests abide by health regulations, or they will be out of the frying pan into the fire soon in case of festivities triggering a virus tsunami.

One can only hope that health authorities will not pander to the whims and fancies of the political authority.

NMSJ Proposals for a New Constitution – IV Electoral Reforms

By DR. SUJATA GAMAGE,
POLICY ANALYST

The 1978 Constitution devotes several pages to detail the process to elect a Parliament consisting of 225 members. It is fitting that we conclude our proposals for a new Constitution with proposals for electoral reforms.

The Parliament of Sri Lanka appointed a Select Committee on Electoral Reforms in April 2021. At this point, we need to take a moment to contrast this initiative with the President's action to appoint a committee of lawyers hand-picked by him to draft a constitution and note that the latter is not a legitimate process, and one that is even contrary to his manifesto.

The Parliament appointed a select committee for electoral reforms previously in 2003. Dinesh Gunawardena, who was the chairman of that committee is also the chairperson of the present Committee. As stated in the 2007 Interim Report of that committee, it aimed to find solutions to the (1) Violence, overspending, and misuse of state resources by candidates and (2) The distance between the elected representatives and the voters. The objectives of electoral reforms have not changed since then.

It is indeed widely believed that the main reason for violence and overspending is the elevated level of competitiveness among the candidates in the present preferential voting system, where candidates need to campaign across large areas of land to collect votes. The areas in square kilometres, covered by the present 22 electoral districts, range from 699 in the Colombo District to 7,179 in the Anuradhapura District. Competitiveness among candidates from the same party is particularly detrimental to the health of the political party system.

The idea of a mixed-member system, as a solution, has been on the agenda since 2003. In a typical mixed-member system 60 percent or so of the total number of members are elected in 'first-past-the-post' or FPP contests from smaller constituencies. One major concern about the mixed-member system is the fact that communities of interest, whether ethnic, religious, or ideological, have little chance of winning FPP seats. In response, there are arguments for maintaining the present PR system, but taking steps to change the behaviour of candidates, make electoral districts smaller, or devise numerous ways of assigning smaller areas of responsibility to elected members. The focus of our proposal is on the mixed-member system, but with a view of making it more effective and equitable.

NMSJ devoted several of our weekly Kathikawa series or public discussions on current topics to the topic of electoral reforms. We also held multiple roundtable discussions with key stakeholders. We summarise our findings under the following headings.

1. An independent Election Commission
2. A positive change in the political culture
3. Proportional Representation
4. Ability of the winning party to govern

Independent Election Commission

Essential elements of an electoral process – from (1) delimitation (1) setting of election dates, especially for local government and provincial council elections, on a fixed schedule (3) acceptance of nominations, to the (4) release of results, should

be governed by an independent Election Commission. All appointments to the Election Commission and other Commissions relevant to elections must be made in a manner that ensures their independence.

The current practice of an executive President single-handedly appointing the members of the Election Commission subject only to the "seeking of the observations of a Parliamentary Council" is not acceptable. The recent swap of a

Commission Membership with the governorship of a Province illustrates the arbitrariness of the powers of the President. A new Constitution as proposed by

NMSJ devoted several of our weekly Kathikawa series or public discussions on current topics to the topic of electoral reforms. We also held multiple roundtable discussions with key stakeholders. We summarize our findings under the following headings.

NMSJ would put a stop to these practices.

Positive change in political culture

There are two types of changes.

Changes that require Constitutional amendments or a new Constitution are (1) changing the electoral system to a mixed-member system with smaller polling divisions, (1) enabling by-election provisions to deter violations of election laws, and (3) introducing a women's quota to Parliament or to the election process to elect Members of Parliament.

Representation of women in Parliament is not just a women's issue but an issue of national importance. Challenges faced by Sri Lanka and the world in the near future require a major reorientation of how we organise ourselves as societies. Sri Lanka's Parliaments, since we received universal suffrage in 1931, have had less than five percent representation of women. While we cannot attribute all social ills to a male-dominated legislature, it is an imperative of the times that we bring new perspectives to our government, especially the perspectives of women who constitute 51 percent of the population.

Other changes such as (1) enforcing election spending restrictions (2) making asset and liabilities information available to the public on the internet (3) making public also biographical data of candidates including details of candidates' edu-

cation, careers, and information on criminal charges against them and (4) setting minimum criteria for the internal democracy of political parties do not require changes to the Constitution. These issues are discussed further in the section on modifications to election laws short of a new constitution.

Proportional representation

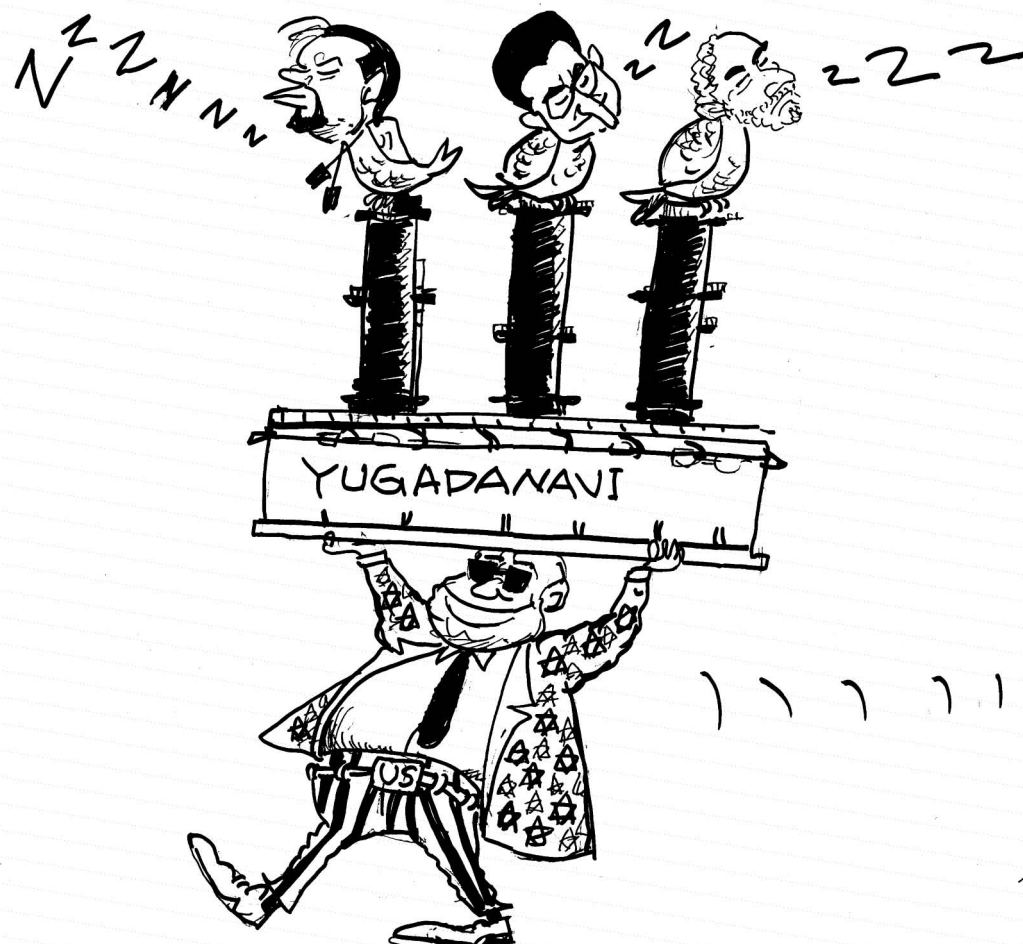
Since 1989 Sri Lanka has had proportional representation with preferential voting to elect members of Parliament, and fittingly so for a country with a diverse population. As a starting point for a discussion on changes, we propose a Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) method with the present number of members remaining at 225 with 140 of those to be elected first-past-the-post from the same number of electorates. Variants of our initial proposal are open for discussion, but we wish to emphasise that whatever variant is adopted must provide a proportional result.

The local government election of 2018 was the first time a mixed-member proportional system was tried out anywhere in Asia. Unfortunately, we do not have a good bipartisan analysis of the election. According to a report of the Local Government Electoral System Review Committee of the State Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government, the increase in the number of seats in the local government system from the previous 4,386 to 8,719, and the fact that the 'winning' party did not get a majority of seats in the councils have been identified as the main issues of the mixed-member proportional (MMP) system used in that election. The increase in the number of seats is indeed a problem. But the argument that a party that wins most seats FPP, with whatever percentage of votes, should receive a majority of the seats in a council is erroneous.

In the 2018 local government election, the Sri Lanka People's Front (SLFP) polled 44.65 percent of the votes, while the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) polled 8.94 percent and 4.44 percent respectively, island wide. The total percentage of votes received by these three parties or alliances adds up to 58.03 percent of the votes. Since these three parties previously contested elections under the single banner of the UPFA, the reason the SLFP, the party with the most votes, was not able to gain a majority of seats in the local councils, had more to do with political division than the electoral system. It is unfortunate that a committee appointed by a Ministry endorsed a common misperception among the public and even among the major stakeholders instead of educating them.

Overall, we do not endorse the Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government's proposals to change the mixed-member ratio to 70:30 or compensate for overhang seats of the winning party, by reducing share of seats of other parties to ensure a majority for the winning party, because such measures violently distort proportional representation. Overhang seats are constituency seats won in an election in a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system which are over and above a party's share of the seats due to the proportion of votes it received. The occurrence of overhang seats is a problem in the MMP systems. There are other methods to address that problem.

Continued on Page 7



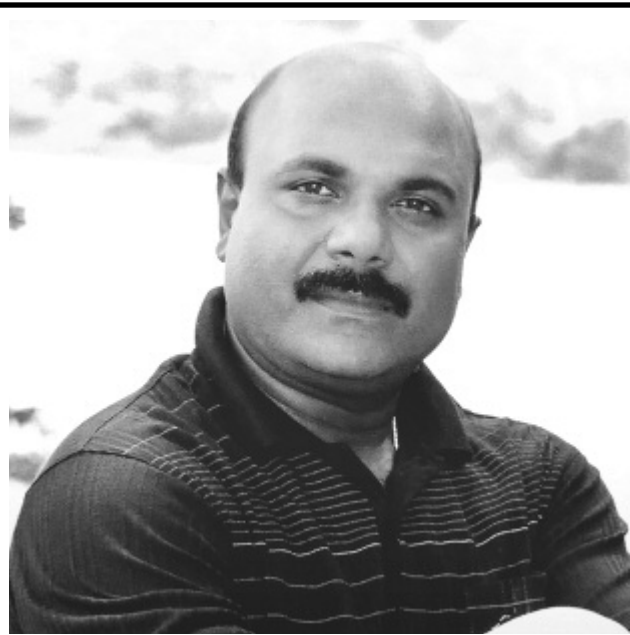
Water spillage from reservoirs: Is CEB to blame? Let's examine facts

Let me thank Chris Ratnayaka for his authoritative explanation in the above titled article in *The Island* of 16 Dec., educating those who misunderstood or were ignorant of the issue. Is CEB to blame? Let's examine the facts. To maintain and justify their action the Ministry for Power or CEB should have responded, failure had made readers believe their accusations were correct or justifiable. The Ministry for Power and CEB should thank Chris Ratnayaka, who was an engineer at the CEB and later became Senior Power Engineer at the World Bank for the explanation absolving the CEB of the blame. On a personal note, I knew Chris when he was attached to the Ministry of Power and Energy and appreciate his dedication to serving the CEB and maintaining high professional standards. He has returned to his motherland, bringing with him loads of knowledge and experience gained and is imparting that knowledge for the benefit of the country, especially the CEB as can be seen from his article. It is very seldom that the Sri Lankans who migrate to developed countries return home. I am sure Chris will help revamp the power sector.

G. A. D. Sirimal
sirimal1927@gmail.com



Victoria reservoir



Dear Giriraj Kaushalya: get well soon

Past two years had been very disastrous for entertainment business due to Covid-19. Top personalities who were involved as entertainers, singers, composers, actors were compelled to give up their usual agendas because of the government rules and regulations in order to curtail the spread of the deadly disease to protect the people. Also their self-imposed absence for their own safety prevented them from exposing themselves to the public. As a result we have seen and heard in the media about the vulnerable situations and hardships that some of them are facing. It is not only them, but also the majority of the countrymen are suffering from unexpected calamities and economic downturn.

It is with great sorrow, I mention that the country lost so many important personalities who provided our countrymen and even overseas fans the much-needed relaxation and entertainment by their superlative music, singing, dancing, and acting.

For me the long list is headed by Sunil Perera of the Gypsies, who died at the age of 68 in September this year. I met him for the first time in 1988 as the Chairman of the dance committee of the 'Forex Ball', one time, one of the most sought after 'Dances' held in the country. The good-hearted Sunil, the versatile singer and musician entertained generations of Sri Lankans and his fans all over the world with captivating songs in his inimitable style along with his own histrionics. Also, won their hearts and minds with his outspoken comments against social injustice, corruption, racism and suppression of democracy, risking his own life.

Some other popular and famous celebrities who left us during 2020 and this year were Tissa Wijesurendra (71), Jayalath Manaratne (71), Daya Tennakoon (78), Hyacinth Wijeratne (74), Miyuri Samarasinghe (81), Jayalal Rohana (56), Sarath Chandrasiri (57 years) Vishaka Siriwardana (64) (Regret if I have missed anyone)

Of the talented and active lot at present Giriraj Kaushalyais is somebody that I truly love to see in teledramas because of his extraordinary acting capabilities. However, it is unfortunate that in the recent past he has been out of our focus. In fact we are really missing him as "Gurunnanse" and "Kukula Mudalali" in the much entertaining teledramas of 'Raja Guru' and 'Nadagamkarayo'. I am pretty sure that thousands of his other fans also must be feeling his absence.

Dear Giriraj, honestly, I was under the impression that you have gone out of the country. But sadly, I came to know from a close friend of mine who is involved in the sphere of drama that you are not well and will be out for a while. He told me that you have a great heart from which you are not reluctant to assist any new comers, colleagues and friends. In brief, gathering from what he told me and putting all that in a nutshell you are a 'good and a sincere man' or in other words a 'Good Samaritan'. That is exactly why I am writing this. But I want you to know that thousands of your fans including me want you to have a speedy recovery. Others who do not know about your present situation will undoubtedly join me enmasse to wish the same. The 'telepathic' best wishes also cure people.

All of us have seen thousands of your smiles, humble appearances, anecdotes, jokes, and expect to see you back at the centre stage after a speedy recovery.

Wishing you some well-deserved good days ahead to make up for all the crummy ones at present. Take extra good care of yourself to be steadier, stronger and better every day.

As a Roman Catholic I will lift you up in my prayers during your hard times. Hope you get better and better every day. Please come back soon to be up to your 'old tricks' again of providing laughter and entertainment to all of us.

Get better and get back to your amazing self soon!
God bless you and your family.
Lalith Fernando
Panadura

Unequal and immoral

BY RAFIA ZAKARIA

JUST a bit over a week ago, the World Inequality Report 2022 was released. Among its notable but not surprising findings were the fact that half of the world is indescribably poor, with about two per cent of the world's wealth to divide among itself. By contrast, the richest 10pc of the world control a whopping 76pc of the world's wealth. This isn't surprising; of late, the decadence of privately financed space flights by the likes of Amazon chief Jeff Bezos, among others, have revealed just how much the world's wealthiest people possess and how flagrantly they are willing to spend it. The reality is that in the image of the world that is produced by such theatrical displays of plenty, those who do not have at least tens of millions of dollars to spend are really not living at all.

The predictability of the data produced by such compilations year after year, empirical evidence of the poor getting ever poorer and the rich getting ever richer, makes one wonder of its utility. Even given the availability of large databanks that make such tabulations possible, must we tell the poor that they are poor and will keep getting poorer? It is a worthy question; if we consider inequality to be a sign of the general immorality of a population or country, then the report is not just a ranking of relative inequality but also a rough indicator of the place where the people are most moral and the place where they are least so.

Considered this way, the breakdown of the most and least unequal countries is perhaps also a ranking of where people believe it is important to ensure that the poor have at least a livable and subsistence-level existence and that the rich are required to give away the majority of their wealth in taxes to make this possible. According to the 2022 report, the world's least unequal place is Western Europe and the world's most unequal region is the Middle East. Rich countries are not automatically unequal; the United States, which is one of the rich-

est countries in the world, has, relatively speaking, astronomical levels of inequality. Brazil and India are middle- to low-income countries and have tremendously high levels of inequality. At the other end, China has very low levels of inequality.

Another key statistic tells us that the level of inequality in the world is roughly equal to what it was in the 19th and 20th centuries, when Western imperialism was at its zenith. It has been noted that individuals from the richest 10pc of countries make 40 times as much as those from the bottom half of countries. Even more depressing is the fact that the poorest half of the world has about 50pc of what it used to have during the colonial era to divide up among itself. In fact, the report's authors assert that this reveals that the framework of inequalities that were created in the colonial era, where raw materials from poor countries were processed then shipped to

dream for them.

At the same time, it would be incorrect to say that individual countries do not have control over inequality at all. The example of China is very instructive in this regard. By prioritising economic equality, the Chinese have managed to lift millions out of poverty despite the existence of a West-centric world trade regime and everything else associated with it. At the same time, Muslim countries like Pakistan and others in the Middle-East pay lip service to the Islamic values of equality and freedom from corruption, while unabashedly looting the coffers of their own countries and hoarding their spoils for generations upon generations of their children.

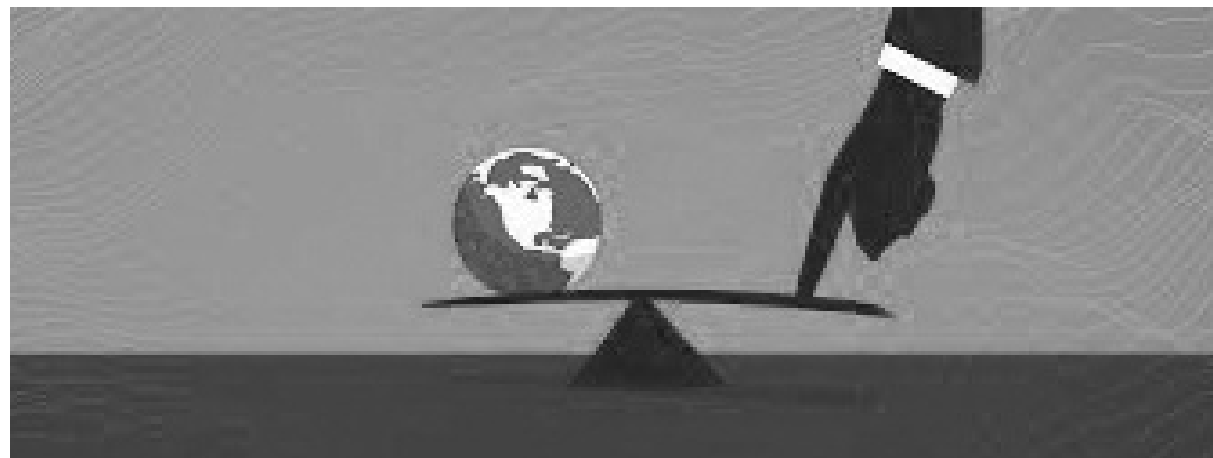
In Pakistan, December is a particularly apt month and time to closely observe society's vast inequality and the audacity with which the rich flaunt their wealth as the celebration seasons gets underway. All the moral edicts of

simplicity and equality disappear, to the extent to which they existed in the first place. If the inequality between the wealthy, swathed in gold and diamonds and outfits that cost more than most individual Pakistanis will earn in a lifetime, is immoral than Pakistan, unfortunately, is a world leader in the trend.

Those who make this money justify their dodging of taxes, their whimsical zakat contributions (one rich woman once told me that she believes that all the salaries she pays to poor people are really zakat), their refusal to pay living wages, the eagerness for shortcuts that will further abuse the poor: And the system is such that they are allowed to get away with this.

It is possible even for a poor country to be moral and to prioritise equality. We are learning many things from China these days, relying on the Chinese for everything from building ports and extending mobile phone coverage to a long and hefty list of other things. Perhaps one more item on the agenda for the next Pakistan-China summit could be how income equality can become as valued a goal for Pakistan as it has been for China.

The writer is an attorney teaching constitutional law and political philosophy.



the factories of rich colonising countries, more or less endures today.

The colonial rulers of yesteryear have simply created new organisational mechanisms to ensure that they have the upper hand in the global market.

The colonial rulers of yesteryear have simply created new organisational mechanisms, such as the World Trade Organisation and a plethora of other similar entities, to ensure that they have the upper hand in the global market. Poor countries grant access to their markets to corporations that are headquartered in the white and Western world, but do not get access to wealthy consumer markets themselves. As a consequence, the poor half of the world continues to remain dependent on wealthy countries to throw some scraps their way. Self-sufficiency remains an unrealised

NMSJ Proposals...

Ability of winning party to govern

The optimal result in any electoral system is a simple majority for the winning party so that they can get on with the business of governing, but it should not be at the expense of other parties. The best way to achieve stability in a multi-party democracy is to award a limited number of bonus seats to the winning party, as has been the practice in Sri Lanka for decades, or promote a culture of consensus pol-

itics overall. Distorting the proportional electoral system or dependence on an all-powerful President is not in accordance with the representative democracy that we aim to achieve through elections. In that regard, we propose to do away with district bonus seats at the district level and award five bonus seats to the winning party at the national level. We also propose to mandate the return of a minority candidate through those bonus seats if minorities are not represented in the

winning party.

Modifications to election laws

The 2003 Parliamentary committee for electoral reforms presented an interim report to Parliament but it was not able to propose an enactment. The sticking point presumably was the key feature of the mixed-member system: The need to redistrict the present 22 electoral districts into 140 electorates. In our detailed recommendations, we propose to make delimita-

tions more transparent and less contentious by using the existing local government and/or divisional secretariat division boundaries as the starting point for delimitations. Ensuring representation for minorities is also addressed. Ensuring representation for parties representing minorities is more difficult in an MMP system, we find.

More importantly, hidden in the 2003 committee report as an annexure are seventeen proposals to change the

From page 6

election laws which were unfortunately abandoned along with the specifics of the contentious method of election. These changes include what we propose under changes to the political culture. Learning from the experience of the 2003 committee, we propose that electoral reforms should be addressed at two levels, as Constitutional changes and regular legislation. Changes that require simple legislative changes should receive the immediate attention of civil society.

No institution should be too big to fail

By Andrew Sheng



Evergrande, China's largest property developer, recently indicated its inability to meet guarantee obligations on its US dollar debts. Since then, the Guangdong and other provincial governments, where Evergrande Group and its affiliates have housing projects, have announced that they are providing advice and guidance to the Group, indicating that a restructuring process will be handled according to the law in an orderly manner. The China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission (CBIRC) also issued a timely press release (CBIRC, <http://www.cbirc.gov.cn/en/view/pages/ItemDetail.html?docId=1021946&itemId=980>), noting that the Evergrande default will not have a negative impact on the operations of China's banking and insurance sector.

When news of Evergrande Group's difficulties in meeting its obligations surfaced earlier in the year, some analysts suggested that such a default would be China's Lehman moment. This implied that there would be a systemic contagion along the lines of the cascading failure of Lehman Brothers, which triggered the 2008 US financial crisis. Although Evergrande's debt is large at 300 billion USD, its financial debts account for around a third of its total liabilities with a diversified creditor structure. The larger amount owed outside the banking sector is due to the peculiar funding structure of the Chinese real estate model. Chinese property development typically relies heavily on pre-sale deposits from buyers and mortgage instalment payments to fund their hous-

ing development projects, so that the exposure to domestic financial institutions is relatively lower and diversified because of the regulatory restrictions within China on credit concentration.

In recent years, some Chinese property developers have relied on US dollar bonds issued mainly in Hong Kong to top up their funding needs. They pay market interest rates on bonds with credit ratings. Since many such bonds have been rated below investment grade (as junk bonds), the market transparently assesses the risk-reward balance for such credits. In the United States, junk bond yields hit 9.2 percent in March 2020, at the height of the pandemic, but are currently trading between four to five percent per annum. Chinese real estate offshore bond yields have fluctuated between six

to 10 percent between 2017 and 2019, but rose to around 15 percent per annum this year on higher credit risks (Natixis Bond Index data

[<https://research.natixis.com/Site/en/publication/T6GjN8FFBDsXnwm2TOsSbA%3D%3D?from=share>]). Consequently, the risks of default on these Chinese bonds are largely priced into the market.

There is no apparent contagion spillover, because the yields for non-real estate Chinese dollar bonds are still steady at between three to four percent per annum. This shows that the market is differentiating between real estate and non-real estate issuers, in terms of credit perceptions.

We need to look at Evergrande within the larger context of Chinese economic and financial reforms. Chinese property

developers began to reduce their borrowings when the authorities decided to slow the growth of overall domestic debt in line with macroprudential principles. Because the housing sector is important from the perspective of social and financial stability, an orderly reduction in both the leverage and growth in house prices is fundamental to overall macro-stability. This protects the market for house buyers in terms of affordability, as well as investors.

What I found encouraging and reassuring is that the authorities have taken a highly market-oriented, rule-based and responsible approach towards managing credit events such as the Evergrande default. First, allowing market forces to work, including the exit or restructuring of non-performing players, plus yields to reflect market risks, is critical to the development of efficient and transparent markets. Second, local authorities have prioritised managing risks to house buyers by ensuring that their interests are taken into consideration. Third, Chinese authorities have re-affirmed that "there will be no change for China's market-oriented financial reform and opening-up under the rule of law and in accordance with international standards," a sign of confidence in markets and reform. Fourth, by stating clearly that there would be orderly unwinding of the situation to follow market-based and legal principles, it confirmed the fundamental principle of not allowing moral hazard to weaken market discipline.

In other words, even the largest players cannot assume that they are 'too big to fail'. Allowing borrowers to fail or be restructured according to the law is good market discipline. Markets cannot work

well when private owners profit at good times and the state or the public picks up the bill at bad times.

There will be no Lehman moment for China because, from a macro-perspective, China's economic growth and net worth are not only positive, but savings remain high and the financial system well capitalised. McKinsey Global Institute's latest Global Balance Sheet report (McKinsey Global Institute (2021), The rise and rise of Global Balance Sheet <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/financial-services/our-insights/the-rise-and-rise-of-the-global-balance-sheet-how-productively-are-we-using-our-wealth>) estimated that for 2020, China's national net worth at market prices was 8.2 times GDP, nearly double that for the United States (4.3 times) and higher than the other two large surplus economies, Japan (7.2 times) and Germany (5.4 times). China's net international investment position was \$2 trillion surplus at the end of June 2021 (SAFE data <https://www.safe.gov.cn/en/2021/0930/1870.html>), compared with a US net liability of \$15.4 trillion (US Bureau of Economic Analysis, <https://www.bea.gov/data/intl-trade-investment/international-investment-position>).

In this highly volatile global environment with excess liquidity and multiple changing situations, it is a mark of confidence that Chinese authorities are embarking on a "steady as she goes" policy mix aimed at providing stability and orderly markets.

(Andrew Sheng is a Distinguished Fellow, Asia Global Institute, University of Hong Kong and a former financial regulator.)

Wrap your head around sustainable packaging this Christmas



There's no Christmas without presents, and there are no presents without wrapping. The mountain of waste paper and packaging that rises up in many living rooms after the presents have been given plays on many a guilty conscience.

But what's the alternative? However well intentioned, most would agree that old newspapers and advertising leaflets just don't make the most attractive wrapping paper.

So can you make it look good?

Yes, you can. After all, it's not just about pretty paper, but about the overall impression.

This impression is often helped by decorative touches like bows and ribbon. And these can be replaced with so many things: flowers, greenery and fruit from your own garden or balcony, for example.

Here are some more suggestions for sustainable wrapping that actually work:

Flowers and twigs instead of plastic bows

Blogger Katharina Funk decorates her gifts with fir greenery, rosehips and holly or small bouquets of dried flowers such as immortelle, lilac, thistle or scabiosa. Less is more, she says.

"I think three is a nice number and a good size," says the hobby florist. She belongs to the Slow Flowers movement, an association of florists and gardeners for more sustainable cut flower production. Funk first uses florist wire to wrap the short-stemmed flowers and hold them on the present. The wire is then covered with raffia string. Her tip: "Leave a piece of ribbon that you can use to tie a bow later."

Of course, you don't have to go without everything: The usual fabric ribbons and bows can be considered sustainable packaging because they can be recycled many times. Smooth out the creases, wrap the ribbons over boxes of empty kitchen rolls and keep them that way until the next time you need to wrap them.

For children: Wrapping paper with potato printing

When giving presents, it is best to avoid using coated decorative paper, as it cannot be recycled like waste paper. Alternative papers and also fabrics as packaging can be embellished with a little handcraft: paint them, use potato printing or – a little more elaborate – linoleum printing.

Japanese tradition: Wrapping in fabric

Another idea for wrapping comes from Japan: furoshiki. This translates as "bath towel". In the past, the cloth was folded into a bag to transport clothes.

Today, the knotting technique is often used to wrap gifts, as it is more beautiful but also more elaborate than simply knotting a cloth into a bag shape.

Instructions are available online – for example from the Japanese Environment Ministry. This idea is particularly good for when you also want to give the wrapping as a gift – for example if your present included a scarf or shawl.

Look for unusual packaging Almost all gifts are given in paper or decorative foil – but wouldn't an alternative be more interesting? What if, for example, you received a small walnut with a bow around it instead? Wouldn't that be special in itself?

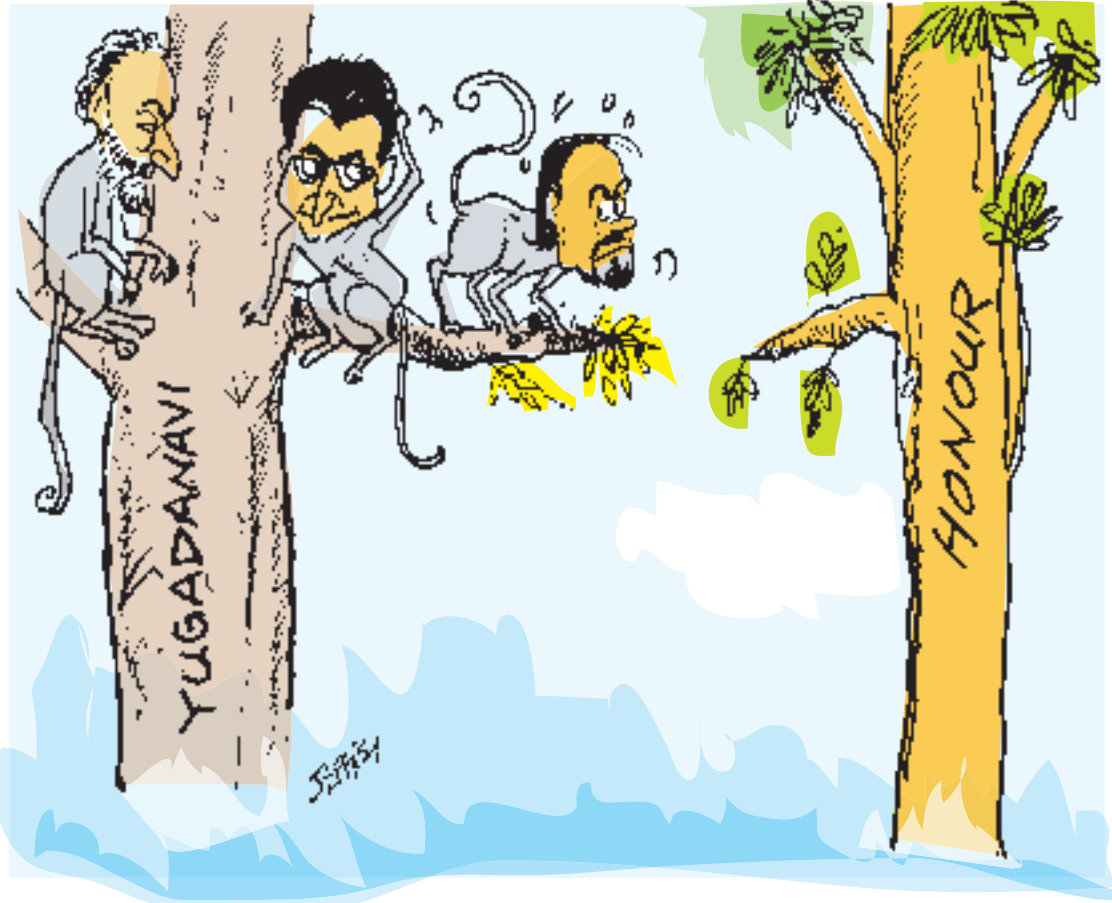
One idea from online creative portals is to put a small piece of jewellery in empty walnut shells and glue them shut.

Or look for nice vintage tins at flea markets: They can be used as packaging and the recipient gets an attractive storage container for his or her coffee as a bonus. And how about giving that dreaded Christmas present – a pair of socks – but this time using the socks as packaging for the actual gift? – *dpa*

The cool feeling of the *Dark...*

Rs. 440/-

Mint Cream Center Surrounded by Dark Chocolate



Fence sitting; frank comment; front-paged on NYT

‘SJB challenges Vasu. Udaya and Wimal to leave Cabinet’, so read page one headline of Monday’s *The Island*. Cass adds her vote to this proposition as will so many other Lankan Ordinaries. At least will they vote against the Yugadanavi deal which they are protesting about? The deal was signed and sealed and we thought the entire Cabinet of Ministers had agreed to the project, promoted by the Finance Minister. But then these Cabinet Ministers said no vote nor discussion had taken place. So, Cass’ hypothetical questions remain valid, since a vote might be taken on the deal.

What Cass gathers from this headline and preceding incident is that while the inhabitants of this Isle are lazy lotus eaters, they are also fence sitters with an eye for dinun paththa so they can fall thataways with a cry of hoiya. The three critics who are vociferous now will meekly nod agreement or cast an ‘aye’ vote if the project is discussed again and put to the vote. Consequently, to Cass’ jaundiced eye, the three Ministers are branch hangers, like monkeys, who want to jump on to another branch but stay put as they are instinctively aware the other branch may not be safe. The monkey considers his safety; the politician considers his skin, power and perks and ignores the tempting branch he wanted to jump on to. If he jumps, he may lose all material goods but gain in popularity and be considered honourable. He may well ask himself ‘honour kantada?’

Tuesday, December 14 *The Island* has this headline: “Yugadanavi mess: Group led by Ministers stepping up campaign, won’t heed SLPP warnings.” So, it looks like Cassandra was wrong, jumped the gun in her remarks above. The three are not monkeys clinging onto one branch, wanting to jump on to another, but afraid to sever safe hold on the former branch. They seem to be poised to take the plunge, come what may. OK, let’s wait and see.

Justice Minister speaks truth, so help him God!

Ali Sabry has said he is fed up with the Parliament; he has had enough of the Parliament and will not re-enter it after serving the current term. We applaud him for speaking the truth and not being scared to do so. Most MPs and Ministers, especially on the government side, keep their lips clamped about internal matters, more particularly dissatisfaction with the status quo, which translates to dissatisfaction with how government is carried on. It is a judgement on the leaders. We admire Sabry for his arguments in the House, his apparent decency and honesty, standing out as a genuine man among such a motley of government MPs. He is definitely not a fence sitter. He says he will serve the time he was elected to serve and then leave.

Wide exposure

Ooh la la! We’ve made it to one of the world’s most prestigious newspapers. On December 7, 2021 Sri Lanka was featured on page one of *New York Times* with a long article carrying three pictures. The sure-to-

have-been glaring headline was “*Sri Lanka’s Plunge into Organic Farming Brings Disaster*: the economically troubled country banned chemical fertilisers without preparing farmers; prompting a surge in food prices and worries about shortages,” reported by Aanya Vipulasena and Mujib Mashal. A vegetable seller from Colombo, a

Ratnapura farmer and an ice cream vendor were pictured and interviewed. Cass will not summarise the article or comment on it, but it was objectively written with no blame laying, not at all. It is so sad, since we should have been applauded for being the first country to ban inorganic stuff but that would and should have been at least twenty years in the future. Now, instead of applauding us and holding our little island as an example and a first-to-do-it, we are touted pathetically and our troubles made internationally known. Bad advice; very bad decision. A single tree was seen by the powers-that-be ignoring the vast wood of consequent disaster. The worst is that we are yet to experience the full impact of the unwise and too hasty decision. Oh well! Tighten your belts. But how to, when we are already at can’t-breathe point.

Bombs in guise of gas cylinders

The deplorable, shocking, disgraceful, wanton killing of people through faulty mixture of gases in household cylinders still continues. Cass told you two weeks ago she was near starving, without a replacement gas cylinder. She cooked just a curry or two for both daily meals. Now she has to be more niggardly and has no money to spare for food packets. The scenario is worse in more disadvantaged homes. At least she transferred recently to a better gas dealer; one who seems to care about his customers. She phoned the gentleman (noun used deliberately) and he said all his stocks was returned and he expected new stocks in four days. Consequently, Cass has to lose weight for a further four or five days. Pity the helpless!

And to think that a couple of days ago a mother of four lost her life when a cylinder exploded in her face. The editor commented on the issue in *The Island* of Tuesday, December 14, lauding the husband of the tragically killed woman, who has decided to take legal action against Litro Gas and the government. He says all should help him, especially with legal aid paid for. We wondered why no court cases were brought forth earlier. Cass surmised it was a case of feeling that that course of action was hopeless, a dead end. No real punishment nor deterrent would result as most cases are just dismissed now.

So, Parliament was prorogued like the thunderbolt that shattered us in Kollupitiya on Monday afternoon at around 3.00 pm with a red light (not actually a ball of fire) shooting past Cassandra’s flat balcony. Her ear drums were nearly shattered. She surmised sadly, the gods too are angry with us. The President has gone (nearly used the rude-in-this-case term ‘fed’) on a private visit to Singapore. We are glad for his sake, as times are very bad here in this Paradise Island Like No Other. We wish him well.

The bugs are fighting back against the drugs (and they are winning)

By TAN SHIOW CHIN

Like non-communicable diseases (NCDs), many describe antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as a silent epidemic.

However, World Health Organization (WHO) Department of Global Coordination and Partnership on AMR director Dr Haileysus Getahun feels that it is more like an active volcano that is constantly erupting.

Although there are no comprehensive statistics on the overall impact of AMR in the world, there is sufficient data to already paint a worrying picture.

Among the dangerous microorganisms that are displaying an increasing resistance to current drug treatment are those that cause common infections like:

Urinary tract infections

Sepsis (a life-threatening condition where the body overreacts to an infection)

Sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) – in particular, gonorrhoea and AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome)

Pneumonia
Tuberculosis
Malaria, and
Candidiasis.

A significant number of these microorganisms are resistant to two or more drugs that are presently being used to kill them.

Adding on to that is the fact that there is a significant dearth in the pharmaceutical pipeline for new antibiotics.

“The private pharmaceutical industry has, one after the other, been exiting from the research and development of the antibiotics pipeline in the last decade in particular,” notes Dr Getahun.

The director of the Tripartite Joint Secretariat on AMR – comprising the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), WHO, and more recently, the United Nations Environment Programme (Unep) – adds that this is due to the fact that antibiotics are not profitable for these companies.

The situation is so concerning that the WHO declared AMR to be among the top 10 global health threats in 2019.

It’s not you, it’s your bugs

During the virtual media briefing where Dr Getahun spoke, a Zimbabwean journalist shared that they had discovered they were resistant to amoxicillin, penicillin and co-trimoxazole – all commonly-used antibiotics – during testing prior to starting anti-retroviral therapy, even though they had never previously misused antibiotics.

This anecdote serves to illustrate two important factors in AMR.

One, that it is not actually the person who is resistant to drugs, but the microorganisms inside them.

There exists an entire community of microorganisms that live on and inside us humans.

Known as the human microbiome, it consists of bacteria, fungi and viruses, among others, that can be helpful, or at least harmless, to their human host under normal circumstances.

Like a gun that does not discriminate against the innocent or guilty, when we humans take antimicrobials, both the harmful and helpful (or neutral) microorganisms are wiped out.

If we do not complete the entire course of antibiotics as prescribed, or were not given the correct dosage and/or prescription, some of these microorganisms might survive and mutate to develop resistance against the drug we took.

As Dr Getahun notes: “AMR is a natural phenomenon, as microbes, be they bacteria, viruses, fungi or parasites, always try to thrive and change over time, so that they will stop responding to treatment.

“And this in turn can cause spread of infections, diseases, as well as deaths.

“And we know, ever since Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin – the first antibiotic – resistance development has been an inherent part of the action of these drugs.”

However, he adds that there are drivers that can accelerate the spread of AMR, like the misuse and abuse of antimicrobials.

As we have learned from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is very easy to “share” our bugs – all it takes is a couple of touches to the right places from one person to another (sometimes via other surfaces), or maybe even just a casual, close conversation where minute droplets bearing microorganisms can land on one another.

In such a manner, drug-resistant microorganisms can easily hop from person to person, conferring upon them their Trojan horse gift of AMR, even if – like the Zimbabwean jour-

“Antibiotics in many countries are also being used to promote growth in animals, so in many countries, more antibiotics are being fed to healthy animals than to sick humans and sick animals,” she adds.

Another increasingly prominent problem is the use of antimicrobials in the agriculture sector.

Dr Tayler points out that the antibiotics streptomycin and tetracycline are being sprayed on orange trees in California, United States, as well as rice crops.

Meanwhile, antifungals are being used on flowers, which has already been linked to drug-resistant aspergillus in humans.

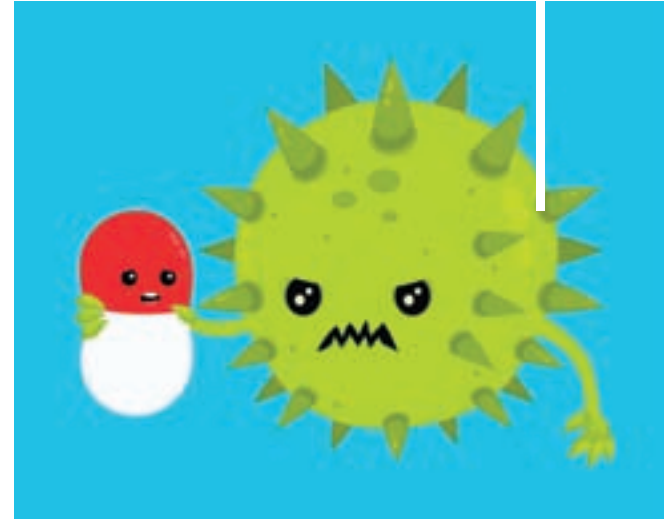
“One of the problems is that this then leaches into the environment, into the rivers.

“We have antibiotic residue as a waste product of food production, washing off fields,

washing off from animal production and from hospitals, and all ending up in the water supply where people are bathing, where they are getting their drinking water.

“Very often there are high levels of bacteria in these waters as well if there’s inadequate sanitation.

“So that’s a pretty toxic soup in which resistance in bacteria will develop, thrive and be transmitted,” she explains.



AMR action plans

The WHO has had a Global Action Plan on AMR formulated since 2015.

That year saw countries worldwide commit to the framework laid out in the Plan, as well as to develop and implement their own national action plans to tackle AMR, during the World Health Assembly (including Malaysia).

WHO AMR Division National Action Plan and Monitoring Unit technical officer (AMR) Dr Sarah Paulin notes that as there are so many drivers in AMR – as mentioned above – the action at country level has to be multisectoral.

“It has to be coordinated across sectors and within the various departments.”

There are five strategic objectives contained in the Global Action Plan that are meant to serve as a blueprint for each country’s own plan. They are:

- To improve awareness and understanding of AMR through effective communication, education and training.
- To strengthen the knowledge and evidence base through surveillance and research.
- To reduce the incidence of infection through effective sanitation, hygiene and infection prevention measures.
- To optimise the use of antimicrobial medicines in human and animal health.
- To develop the economic case for sustainable investment that takes account of the needs of all countries and to increase investment in new medicines, diagnostic tools, vaccines and other interventions.

Notes Dr Paulin: “The five strategic objectives are comprehensive in nature, given that the actions at country level are complex and cut across different thematic areas, and also different sectors.”

However, one barrier to the implementation of such action plans is sustainable funding.

“When we look at national action plans, political leadership is one important aspect.

“The second important aspect is actually being able to implement it because you have the resources and the financing to do so.

“But up until now, only 20% of our national action plans are fully costed and funded.

“And so there’s a major gap that we still need to fill in terms of being able to accelerate comprehensive implementation,” she says. (The Star/ANN)

Tan Shioh Chin is a 2021 APCAT Media Fellow.

Sudoku No. 4951

	4		9					5
	7			3		1		8
6		1						
2					1	8	7	4
1	9	5			4			2
			7			2		
8				5		9		

Solution to No. 4950

8	7	3	9	1	2	5	6	4
5	4	1	7	6	3	8	2	9
9	2	6	4	5	8	3	7	1
4	3	8	5	9	7	6	1	2
1	6	5	8	2	4	9	3	7
7	9	2	6	3	1	4	5	8
6	5	7	1	8	9	2	4	3
3	8	4	2	7	6	1	9	5
2	1	9	3	4	5	7	8	6

No knowledge of arithmetic is required to enjoy this. All you need is a logical mind, a pencil and an eraser. Try it. Suffer its torture. Discover its ecstasy. It's a mind game you will solve with reasoning and logic. The rules are very simple. Fill in the grid with numbers so that every row, every column and every small 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9. Each number has its allotted place if you look hard enough. No number should be repeated in any row, column or 3x3 box. Here's an easy one to try - See tomorrow's Island for solution.

KAKURO 4188

			13	13			20	4		
		16				6				7
	5				11		14			11
3				17					7	12
			10							
13						16			17	12
			13					15		
	10	16						11		
11					11					
16								17		

Solution 4187

			4	11				9	30	
	3	1	2	12	16		10	1	6	4
	21	3	9	2	7	10	18	2	8	7
		3	29	7	9	8	4	7	12	9
	12	2	7	3	14	2	3	1	8	
	6	1	5	12		3	1	2	16	10
		16	9	7				21	4	9
		13	8	5				9	7	2

How to play: Fill in the blank squares, using 1 to 9, without repeating any number in any line. The lines must be filled in with numbers that add up to the total in the shaded box at the top or beginning of each line. A number in the bottom half of the shaded box is the downward total; in the top half, it's the horizontal total.

Padmini Kolhapure reveals she slapped Rishi Kapoor 8 times in 'Prem Rog' because Raj Kapoor didn't want a 'soft slap'

Padmini Kolhapure recently recalled a scene from her movie, 'Prem Rog' which also starred the late Rishi Kapoor in lead role. In the scene, the actress was made to slap the actor about eight times as director Raj Kapoor was not happy with her 'soft slap'.

Spilling some more beans on the same, Padmini told Times Now Digital in an interview, "Slapping scene wow, I know. I had to slap Chintu (Rishi Kapoor) and of course what normally happens in an action na, and they synchronise the slap with the action. But Raj (Kapoor) uncle didn't want that, he wanted me to slap him, and

then he told 'Nahi nahi tum thappad maro (no, you slap), I want that realistic kind of shot'. Then Chintu told me, 'You go ahead and slap me.'"

Elaborating further, she added, "The first take, my hand would just start with that swing and slow down near that cheek. But then Raj uncle would say, 'No, I don't want such a soft slap.' And that shot we had to take some 7-8 re-takes. Something kept going wrong, either it was a camera issue, light issue, technical issue and I had to slap him 7-8 times. Now coming to think of it, I don't know what would've happened if I had to get so many slaps."



Andy Capp

By Reg Henry Scargelli



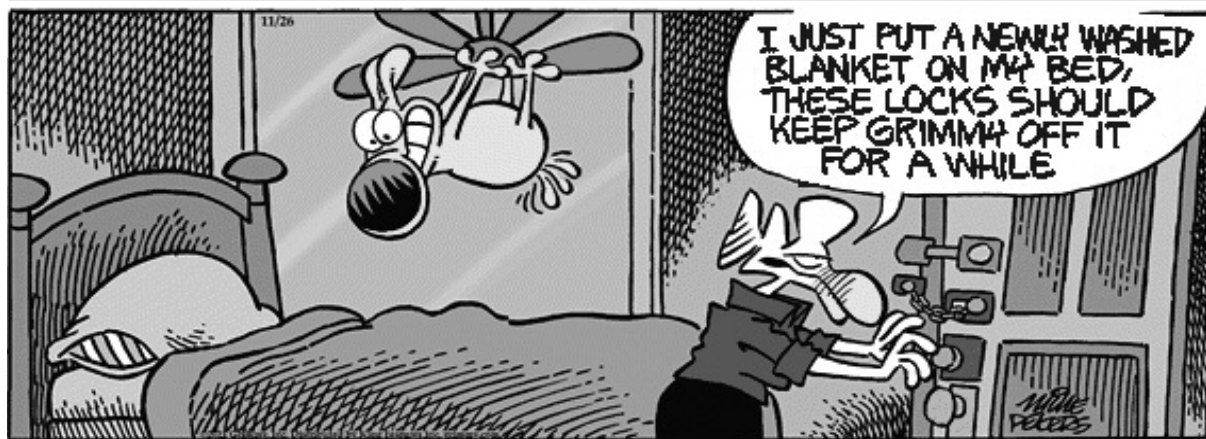
Wizard of Id

By Parker and Hart



Mother Goose & Grimm

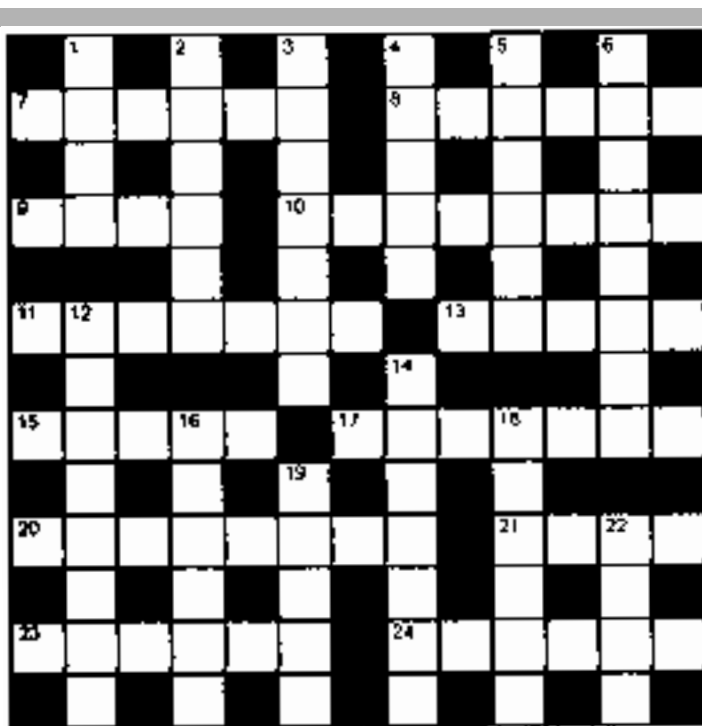
By Mike



Mutt & Jeff



Pickles



Daily Island Crossword No. 3855

- Across
- 07 Straight sword with a narrow blade and two edges (6)
 - 08 The introductory section of a story (4-2)
 - 09 Make up (4)
 - 10 Branch of botany that studies fungi and fungus-caused diseases (8)
 - 11 Cultivate (7)
 - 13 Subsist on a meagre allowance (5)
 - 15 Apart (5)
 - 17 Brutal (7)
 - 20 Characteristic of a father (8)
 - 21 Harbour (4)
 - 23 Large shrimp sauteed in oil or butter and garlic (6)
 - 24 In a keen and discriminating manner (6)
- Down
- 01 Hindu prince or king in India (4)
 - 02 Biographical movie (6)
 - 03 Christian recluse (7)
 - 04 Foxy (5)

- 05 Pill (6)
- 06 Virtuous (8)
- 12 Length (8)
- 14 Resembling an eel (3-4)
- 16 Dreamy in mood or nature (6)
- 18 Social gathering (6)
- 19 Very happily (2,3)
- 22 Dominate (4)

Crossword No. 3854



Date: 17-12-2021

Aries: It is a day of good and bad results. You will have parties. You will participate in entertainment. It is a good day for beginning new creations.

Taurus: It is a day of good and bad results. The improvements in your businesses will dwindle. You will come under enemy assault. It is advisable that you act with foresight.

Gemini: It is an auspicious day. While you should work hard, you will reap benefits according to your hard work. You will be successful at competitive examinations. You will be in difficulties in matters where you trust others.

Cancer: It is a day of good and bad results. You will participate in distant and overseas trips. There will be differences of opinion at places of work. Since others will criticize you, you should go about the day's work with patience.

Leo: It is a day of good and bad results. It is a busy day for you. Due to restlessness some oversights will occur. You will feel some depression. Circumstances that make you encounter clashes due to sudden and speedy action.

Virgo: It is an auspicious day. Your views will win. You will have a lot of travelling to do. You will be victorious at your work place meetings. You will work in unison with your relatives and friends.

Libra: It is an auspicious day. You will be able to amicably settle differences of opinions at your place of work. Your worth will be well recognised in society. It is an auspicious day for buying or constructing new houses as well as for launching new creations.

Scorpio: It is a day of good and bad results. You will spend your time on the requirements of others. There will be obstacles for your businesses as well as you will encounter economic pressure.

Sagittarius: It is an auspicious day. While there will be an increase of your duties, it is a tiring day for you. Your mind will be restless. It is not good to act according to your views. There will be differences of opinion with your associates.

Capricorn: It is an auspicious day. You will go about your work with enthusiasm and virility. Your aspirations will be fulfilled. There will be a decline in your businesses.

Aquarius: It is a day of good and bad results. You will experience restlessness in your mind. Problems that cause disappointment at place of work will occur.

Pisces: It is a day of good and bad results. Your duties will become more systematic. It is a troublesome day. You will spend your time on behalf of others. You will increase your obstacles by acting according to your opinion.

Arsenal beat 10 man West Ham 2-0

Arsenal overtook opponents West Ham and moved into fourth place in the Premier League by winning an eventful match at Emirates Stadium.

Gabriel Martinelli scored the opener early in the second half before substitute Emile Smith Rowe confirmed victory for the Gunners late on.

Arsenal captain Alexandre Lacazette also had a penalty saved by goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski in the second half.

West Ham's Vladimir Coufal was sent off for a second booking in conceding the penalty as he was judged to have fouled Lacazette in the box.

Coufal had been booked in the first half when his flailing arm caught defender Kieran Tierney in the face, inciting protest from the Arsenal play-

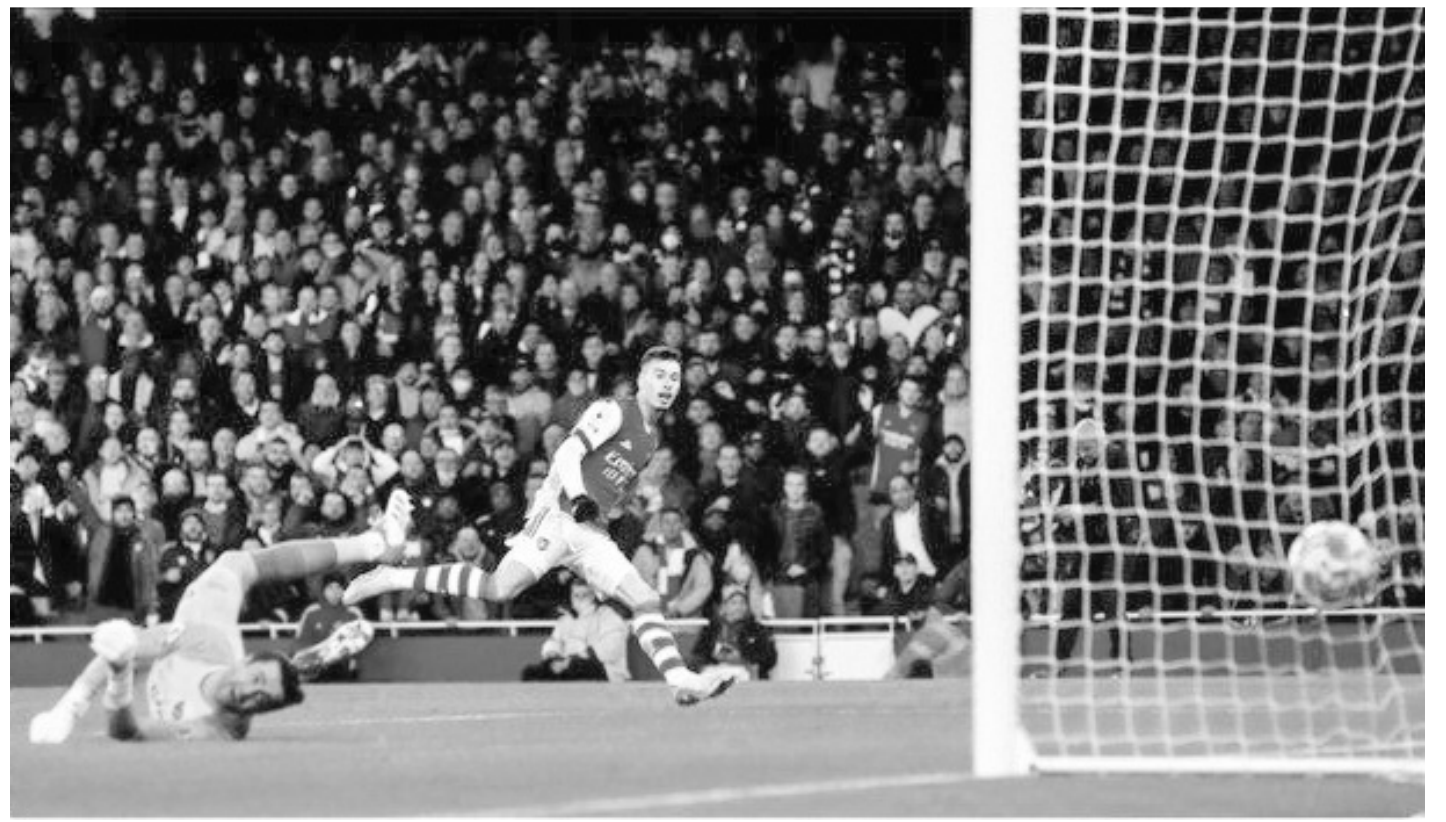
ers. Tierney later hit the crossbar, while there were further chances for Martinelli, Bukayo Saka and Gabriel as Arsenal were the better side throughout.

The significance of this result on the league standings was felt in an intense and feisty encounter.

Coufal's unintentional foul on Tierney in the first half incited protest from Arsenal's players, before referee Anthony Taylor quickly defused the situation with a yellow card.

A few heavy tackles followed before Taylor had to speak with Arsenal's coaching staff near the touchline.

The hosts began to dominate on the field though - as well as Tierney's strike clipping the crossbar, West Ham centre-



Gabriel Martinelli came close in the first half before eventually scoring in the 48th minute

back Craig Dawson was forced to make numerous blocks.

Saka was Arsenal's biggest threat down the right and he was involved in the build-up to Tierney's effort, before he teed up Lacazette's shot which was parried into the path of Martinelli and poked inches wide.

In the second half, Saka himself came close too, while West Ham's best chances fell to Pablo Fornals and Jarrod

Bowen - neither really troubling goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale.

The sending off of Coufal - which West Ham understandably felt was unjust - did not make too much difference and despite a late surge from the visitors, Arsenal were able to see it off through Smith Rowe's late goal.

Arteta named an unchanged side following Arsenal's win over Southampton

and his celebrations at full-time suggested he was happy once again with this performance, where a number of young players impressed.

Despite a strong start to the season, West Ham have won just one of their last six games in the Premier League and are now just three points clear of Tottenham in seventh.

(BBC Sports)

Pakistan-West Indies ODI series postponed to June 2022



West Indies have reported nine Covid-19 cases in their camp so far

Following five more COVID-19 positive cases in the West Indies camp in Karachi on Thursday, the three-match ODI series, which was due to follow the ongoing T20Is, has been pushed forward to June next year, the PCB and WICB said in a joint statement.

As a part of PCB COVID-19 protocols, Rapid Antigen Tests were conducted on Thursday (December 16) on the remaining 15 West Indies players and six player support personnel. All 21 tests came back negative, allowing for the third T20I to go ahead in the evening as scheduled. But shortage of resources in the West Indies camp has led to the postponement of the ODI series, due to begin on Saturday.

"However, taking into considera-

tion both the teams' welfare as well as limited resources in the West Indies side for the ODIs, it has been agreed that the series, which forms part of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League, will be postponed and rescheduled for early June 2022," the release read.

The West Indies team members who returned negative results following Wednesday's PCR and today's Rapid Antigen tests, will depart from Pakistan after the ongoing third T20I in Karachi. However, those who have tested positive will complete their isolation in Karachi before their travel arrangements are finalised.

Meanwhile, all members of the Pakistan contingent have also returned negative tests. (Cricbuzz)

Abu Dhabi Grand Prix 'tarnishing image' of F1, says sport's governing body

Formula 1's governing body says the controversial Abu Dhabi Grand Prix is "tarnishing the image" of the sport.

The FIA will conduct a "detailed analysis and clarification exercise" into the running of Sunday's race, with all the teams and drivers, "to draw any lessons from the situation".

It is an effective admission of mistakes in the running of the race that decided the world championship.

Race director Michael Masi's actions are at the centre of the controversy.

The Australian appeared not to follow the rules and standard protocol on restarting the race after a late-race safety-car period, but he is not mentioned in the FIA statement.

Masi's decisions left Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton, who had led for the vast majority of the race and was on course for the world title, as a sitting duck on old tyres, with Max Verstappen's Red Bull behind him on fresh rubber.

The race was restarted for one final lap and the Dutchman passed Hamilton to win and take the drivers' title.

The FIA's statement looks to be extending an olive branch to Mercedes, who have announced they intend to appeal against Sunday night's decision to reject their initial protest against the race result.

Mercedes have been in talks with the FIA since the race as they seek redress for what happened at Yas Marina.

Mercedes have until about 19:00



Max Verstappen won his first world title in controversial circumstances.

BST on Thursday to decide whether to press on with that appeal.

The FIA made its announcement after a meeting of its World Council, F1's legislative body, on Wednesday.

It said that the circumstances surrounding the safety car and communications between teams and Masi had "generated significant misunderstanding and reactions from Formula 1 teams, drivers and fans".

It referred to the controversy over why Masi let only some lapped cars unlap themselves and did not comply with rules about the timing of the restart of the race, describing it as "an argument" that was "tarnishing the image of the championship and the due celebration" of both Max Verstappen's drivers' title and Mercedes' eighth constructors' crown.

And it pledged that "clarity would be provided to the participants, media, and fans about the current regulations to preserve the competitive nature of our sport while ensuring the safety of the drivers and officials".

This would be done in time for "any identified meaningful feedback and conclusions to be made before the beginning of the 2022 season".

At a news conference on Wednesday at Red Bull's UK F1 headquarters, Verstappen and Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said Masi needed more support to be able to do his job effectively.

Verstappen said: "Michael is a nice guy and he tries his very best and it's very unfair to now start hating on him because it is a very tough job."

Horner added: "Michael has been under massive pressure from all sides."

After the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, the penultimate race of the season, Horner said that F1 was missing the late Charlie Whiting, who was race director as one of his responsibilities in his role as FIA F1 director.

Horner said: "You have to remember Charlie had Herbie Blash, the former deputy race director sitting next to him. They were a double act."

"And I think that it's a little unfair that, you know, Masi's up there on his own. He doesn't have any form of support."

"And I think the level at which teams are now operating, all the data and information that they have available to them is immense and I think that the takeaway from this season - not just from Abu Dhabi - is: How can we do a better job? How can the FIA do a better job?"

The FIA also provided more clarity on the plans for the new engine formula to be introduced in 2026.

In addition to plans to use 100% sustainable fuel and lower costs, it said that the energy from the hybrid part of the engine would go up to 350kW - more than double the current 160kW.

In addition, it confirmed that the MGU-H - the part of the hybrid system that recovers energy from the exhaust - would be removed.

A cap on engine costs will also be introduced.

The overall aims of the new engine formula, it said, would be to ensure a "powerful and high-revving power unit, car performance, sound, drivers' ability to race, avoiding excessive differentiation".

(BBC Sports)

Lamichhane named Nepal captain amidst dispute between CAN and senior players

The Cricket Association of Nepal has appointed 21-year-old leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane as the national captain, after removing current skipper Gyanendra Malla from his post, as well as relieving Dipendra Singh Airee of the vice-captaincy.

Malla and Airee, together with senior seamer Sompal Kami and young quick Kamal Singh Airee, are also understood to have had their central contracts suspended for six months after speaking out regarding a protracted dispute over player contracts and conditions.

The dispute between the players and CAN has been ongoing since early October, with several senior players reportedly object-

ing to the manner in which the graded central contracts had been awarded, as well as changes to provisions for match fees and distribution of prize money.

The board, for their part, had publicly criticized players for lacking "discipline." CAN President Chatur Bahadur Chand raised eyebrows last week when he warned youngsters at the under-19 national championships prize-giving of the perils of indiscipline, and criticized current national players for speaking critically of the board.

Lamichhane's first outing as national captain will be at the 2022 T20 World Cup Global Qualifier (Group A) which is set to kick off in Oman in February.

(Cricbuzz)



Lamichhane is currently playing his trade for Hobart Hurricanes in BBL

Sri Lanka Athletics launches centenary year celebrations



Ajith Naragala, VP, SLA, Namal Rajapaksa, Sports Minister and Palitha Fernando, President, SLA commencing the ceremony.

Sri Lanka Athletics, the governing body for track and field sports will celebrate its 100 year anniversary in January 2022. The anniversary celebrations of the centenary year commenced on

Wednesday with the launch of the anniversary logo at a function held at Thalawathugoda. Here are some pictures from the logo launch.

(Pix by Kamal Wanniarachchi)



Members of the Executive Committee of Sri Lanka Athletics posing with the Sports Minister. (From left) Upali Amaratunga, President Sri Lanka Schools Athletics Association, G.L.S. Perera, Vice President, Jagath Gnanasiri VP, Saman Kumara Gunawardena, Statistician SLA, Lal Chandrakumara, VP, Palitha Jayathilaka Asst. Secretary, Palitha Fernando, President, Sports Minister Namal Rajapaksa, Ajith Naragala, VP, Prasanna Indika, VP, Chandana Ekanayake, VP, Damayanthi Dharsha, VP and H.A. Upali, Asst. Treasurer.



Sri Lanka Athletics centenary year logo designed by Bimsara Gunawardena.



Palitha Fernando, President Sri Lanka Athletics.



Sports Minister launching the logo.



The '100 years' official flag.

Junior Open Golf Championship 2021

Kaya leads Gold/Silver divisions



A junior golfer in action at RCGC.

Kaya Daluwatta will commence the final day with a comfortable lead in the girls' combined Gold/Silver Divisions as she led day two with a score of 72 at the Sunrise Junior Open Golf Championship 2021 at the Royal Colombo Golf Club yesterday.

Kaya was leading by 14 shots. Sherin Balasuriya followed up her opening round of 78, with 82 taking her to a total score of 160.

Dhevinka Kanag- Iswaran was lying third with two rounds of 90 and Dinumi Sanjana Rajapakshe of Anuradhapura was closely behind in the fourth position.

Yannik Kumara maintained his form with 69 shots on the second day. That took him to a four-shot lead from K. Dhanushan also playing same form with 71 gross on day two. Nirekh Tejwani last year's junior national title holder remains in the game with two shots behind the leader group. Levon Niyarepola and Haroon Aslam are in

fourth and fifth positions respectively.

In the silver division of the boys (12 - 14+) Age Group Category, Reshan Algama, Musar Shariff, Varun Fernando, Jacob Norton, Kvahn Tejwani and Shanal Binushka will fight for top honours in the final round.

Thejas Rathiskanth and Kaiyan Johnpillai were setting up an interesting finish in the last round in the bronze division (Age Group Category 10 -11 yrs) played over three rounds of 18 holes from red tees.

In the most junior category, copper division playing nine holes, Revaan Amarasinghe showed consistency with another good score of 48, followed by Saqeeb Zuhar (53) and Danik Daluwatte (63) on day two. Anuja Methsara from Anuradhapura was in contention for the fourth place.

Today is the final day of the Prima Sunrise Junior Open Golf Championship 2021 organized by the Sri Lanka Golf Union.

Tennis National Championships 2021

Yasitha, Luka, Chathurya, Thehan reach semis

Defending champion Yasitha de Silva, top seed Luka Knese and Colombo Championships finalists Chathurya Nilaweera and Thehan Wijemanne reached the men's singles semi-finals of the Tennis National Championships 2021 at the Sri Lanka Tennis Association courts on Thursday.

De Silva advanced to the semis when third seed Vibuda Wijebandara retired after the second set which was tied 6-6. The defending champion won the first set 6-3. Now he is set to meet top seed Luka Knese in the semi-final. Knese overcame a first set defeat to beat Kiran Vairavanathan 1-6, 6-1, 6-2 in his quarter-final.

Wijemanne and Nilaweera who shared the champion and runner up titles in the open singles of the



Thehan Wijemanne (Pix by Kamal Wanniarachchi)

recently held Colombo Championships are set to meet in the other semi-final. The Stafford International

Schools player Nilaweera beat Ashen Silva 6-4, 6-0, while second seed Wijemanne edged out Zaidh Zihar 6-2, 6-4.

Anjelika, Janali, Neyara, Hasali advance to semis

In the women's singles, 2019 champion Anjelika Kurera, second seed Janali Manamperi, Neyara Weerawansa and Hasali Gajaba reached the semi finals yesterday.

British School player Weerawansa beat Nesangi Hemakumara 6-2, 6-3 in her quarter-final and she will now meet favourite Kurera in the semi-final. Kurera, who won the open singles title at the Colombo Championships, overcame Savini Jayasuriya 6-4, 6-3 in her quarter-final match.

Manamperi, who beat Sajida Razick 6-2, 6-3 will encounter Hasali Gajaba in the other semi-final

Gajaba registered a convincing 6-0, 6-0 win in the quarter-final to secure the semi-final berth.

PUBLIC AUCTION SALE BY COMMERCIAL BANK OF CEYLON PLC (KOTTAWA BRANCH)

By Virtue of Authority granted to me by the Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC (Registered No. PQ. 116) under Section 4 of the Recovery of Loans by Banks (Special Provisions) Act No. 4 of 1990.

THE FIRST SCHEDULE

- Particulars of Land**
 - (a) District : Colombo
 - (b) Divisional Secretary's Division : Homagama
 - (c) Grama Niladhari Division : 591 B Siddamulla South
 - (d) Village or Town : Siddamulla
 - (e) Street :
 - (f) Assessment No. :
 - (g) Cadastral Map No. : 520020
 - (h) Block No. : 10
 - (i) Parcel No. : 25
 - (j) Extent : 0.0345 Hectares
 - (k) No of Unit, If Condominium Property :

2. Prior Registration Reference

- (a) Place of Registration : Homagama Land Registry
- (b) Title Certificate No. : 0028335
- (c) Class of Title : First

THE SECOND SCHEDULE

- Particulars of Land**
 - (a) District : Colombo
 - (b) Divisional Secretary's Division : Homagama
 - (c) Grama Niladhari Division : 591 B Siddamulla South
 - (d) Village or Town : Siddamulla
 - (e) Street :
 - (f) Assessment No. :
 - (g) Cadastral Map No. : 520020
 - (h) Block No. : 10
 - (i) Parcel No. : 79
 - (j) Extent : 0.0357 Hectares
 - (k) No of Unit, If Condominium Property :

2. Prior Registration Reference

- (a) Place of Registration : Homagama Land Registry
- (b) Title Certificate No. : 0028532
- (c) Class of Title : First

The property, First Schedule that is Mortgaged to the Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC by SHANI IMPORT AND EXPORT (PVT) LTD a Company duly incorporated in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka under the Companies Act (bearing Registration No. PV 98564) and having its Registered Office at No. 110/A1, Siddamulla, Piliyandala, as Obligor, and SIYABALAPE KANKANAMLAGE SHRASHANTHI WICKRAMASINGHE of No. 110/A1, Siddamulla, Piliyandala, as Mortgagor. The property, Second Schedule that is Mortgaged to the Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC by SHANI IMPORT AND EXPORT (PVT) LTD a Company duly incorporated in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka under the Companies Act (bearing Registration No. PV 98564) and having its Registered Office at No.110/A1, Siddamulla, Piliyandala, as Obligor, and MATHARAGE DON CHANDANA KUMARA KARUNARATHNE of No. 110/A1, Siddamulla, Piliyandala, as Mortgagor.

I SHALL SELL BY PUBLIC AUCTION THE Properties described above at the spot

THE FIRST SCHEDULE

ON 26TH DAY OF JANUARY 2022 AT 10.00 A.M.

THE SECOND SCHEDULE

ON 26TH DAY OF JANUARY 2022 AT 10.30 A.M.

Please see the Government Gazette dated 29/10/2021 and Divaina, Daily News and Veerakesari Newspapers dated 02/11/2021 regarding the publication of the Resolution.

ACCESS TO THE PROPERTIES

Travel from Kottawa Town, along Horana Road, for a distance of about 900 meters upto Pinhena Junction and take the turn to the right onto Piliyandala Road. Travel along this road for a distance of about 2.2 Km to reach the property to be valued situated abutting the said latter road on the left-hand side.

MODE OF PAYMENT

The successful purchaser should pay the following amounts in cash to the Auctioneer at the fall of the hammer.

- Ten percent (10%) of the purchased price.
- One percent (01%) as Local Authority Tax.
- Two Decimal five percent (2.5%) as the Auctioneer's Commission.
- Notary attestation fees Rs. 2000/-
- Clerk's & Crier's wages Rs.500/-
- Total costs of Advertising incurred on the sale.
- Liable to pay Value Added Tax (VAT)
- The balance Ninety Percent (90%) of the purchased price should be deposited with the Commercial Bank of Ceylon P.L.C. Head Office or at the Kottawa Branch within 30 days from the date of sale.

This Auction will be conducted in accordance with the strict guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health, adhering to COVID 19 protocol. Further, particulars regarding Title Deeds and other connected documents could be obtained from the following officers.

Manager

Commercial Bank of Ceylon P.L.C.

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The Island SPORT

Friday 17th December, 2021

Mahanama's new book expected to be a sensation

BY REX CLEMENTINE

Roshan Mahanama's first book 'Retired Hurt' was launched two decades ago and it created quite a stir and was popular among cricket fans. Cricket lovers were able to get to know many behind the scene happenings and the one that upset the Australians most was the claim that Glenn McGrath had sledged Sanath Jayasuriya calling the former Sri Lankan captain, 'a black monkey'. The Australian Cricket Board at that time wanted to get an injunction against the book, but they were fighting a losing battle. Mahanama's new book, 'My Innings' co authored by former S. Thomas' cricketer Ashan Peiris is sure to become a hit as well. It was launched yesterday in Colombo. The Sinhala translation has been done by Asoka Goonetilleke, the former Sports Editor of our sister newspaper Divaina.

"People can find out about the challenges I faced as a player and as a Match Referee through this book," Mahanama said.

"For me to work in the capacity of Match Referee was no easy task. I worked hard to prove my critics wrong. I left the ICC on my own terms. Lot of people will not leave the ICC for prestige and money. I feel that in life you need to stand up for what is right and your principles. There is a segment in the book where I am trying to send a message to young people in this country," Mahanama said.

"I firmly believe that we can not compromise on integrity, honesty, values, friendship and loyalty. I am not perfect. I have had my faults as well. Imran Khan once said that people who have been successful in life are those who have failed, but they have corrected, analyzed and come back stronger," he went on to explain.



Roshan Mahanama's new book 'My Innings' was launched in Colombo yesterday. Pic by Nishan S. Priyantha.

All proceeds from the book will go to charities that Mahanama supports, especially the ones that helps cancer patients.

Mahanama briefly spoke on the challenges he faced after his first book was released. "When I first wrote the book, it was not for commercial purposes. This is not a commercial exercise either. What I mentioned in the first book was a sequence of events that made us stronger as a team. At that time Cricket Australia said they were going to get an injunction against the release of the book. CEO of Cricket Australia was Malcolm Speed at that time. When I joined the ICC, he was the CEO there. Had I fabricated a story, he wouldn't have considered my name to be a Match

Referee."

Mahanama is one of the highly respected individuals in cricket and his name has been floated around to take up a coaching role with the national cricket team.

Responding to a query from *The Island*, the former captain said he is ready to accept a challenge. "There was an invitation for me to try and coach the team. I wanted time to reflect and see. I had some obligations towards my daughters. I had to settle them first. If you are asked to do something for your country you should think positively. That's not something that I want to do. but if they want me to do it I will seriously consider," Mahanama said.

Labuschagne, Warner underline unrewarding day of toil for England

In what proved to be a challenging day for Australia in multiple ways, they rose to the task by grinding their way to 221/2 by the end of the first day of the D/N Test in Adelaide. Marnus Labuschagne's unbeaten 95 and David Warner's 95 were the catalysts in Australia's defiance for a large part of the day.

The duo shared a partnership worth 172 before Warner fell to England's short-ball play, missing a ton by a whisker for the second time in as many Tests. However, Labuschagne lived to survive another day, despite a few close calls, and continued to keep England at bay, adding a further 45 with stand-in skipper Steve Smith by the end of the day.

Smith, leading Australia for the first time since the Sandpaper fiasco, had to step in on the morning of the match after regular skipper Pat Cummins was deemed a close contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19. And while he had no hesitation in opting to bat, England's all-pace attack made life difficult for the batters.

The tone was set by the experienced duo of James Anderson and Stuart Broad, who probed away in a testing opening spell that yielded only 11 runs in 9 overs. Through that, Broad, operating from the now-famous around the wicket angle, had Marcus Harris in trouble multiple times. He had him adjudged LBW once before it was overturned on review, but soon had him edging behind a pull to be sensationally caught by Jos Buttler.



The duo shared a partnership worth 172 before Warner fell for 95

Warner, who managed to get off the mark only off the 20th delivery he faced and after Harris' dismissal, remained patient right through the knock. England lost two reviews while trying to trap Warner LBW and resorted to different ploys including an extended short-ball strategy through Ben Stokes, primarily.

The short-ball play also gave Marnus Labuschagne a couple of nervous moments when he guided one perilously close to slip and then copped a couple of blows on the body, and was eventually dropped on 21 by Buttler off an edged pull.

But as the day wore on, Warner began to take a few more chances in the second session. Joe Root was driven and lofted while Stokes was slapped over cover and pulled as he got to a second consecutive fifty, off 106 balls.

Labuschagne too followed up with his 12th fifty in Tests, taking as much as 156 balls.

The duo extended their dominance even into the final session despite a few nervous moments. But just as Warner began to open up more, pulling Stokes for a boundary, he fell to England's trap. The short ball from Stokes was slapped straight to the lone man at cover, to be dismissed on 95, which follows his 94 in the first Test.

But both Labuschagne and Steve Smith, who was welcomed with a leg trap managed to see through England's fast-medium spells with relative ease, and while Root's offspin threatened to induce some luck, it never came close to resulting in a wicket. England's final throw of the dice on the day came with the second new ball.

And it very nearly paid off, as Anderson continued to be on the money. His probing spell under the lights posed a few tough questions to Labuschagne. There were multiple plays and misses before he eventually edged one trying to punch off the backfoot. However, the straightforward chance was put down by Buttler with Labuschagne on 95, ending an unrewarding day of toil for England.

Brief Scores:

Australia 221/2 (David Warner 95, Marnus Labuschagne 95*) **vs England** (Cricbuzz)

Jaffna Kings top table with a game to spare



Jaffna Kings topped the points table with a game to spare with a big win over Colombo Stars at RPS yesterday. Leg-spinner Vijayakanth Vijayakanth picked up three wickets. Image courtesy: SLG.

Jaffna Kings' excellent run in the LPL continued as they topped the table with a game to spare following their 102 run win over Colombo Stars at RPS yesterday. Despite the result of Jaffna Kings last group game, they will retain the top slot in the points table.

Jaffna Kings made 193 for five batting first as Upul Tharanga and Kohler Cadmore shared an 110 run stand for the first wicket. Cadmore made 92 off 55 deliveries with five fours and eight sixes.

Colombo collapsed as they were bowled out for 91 runs inside 16 overs

as West Indies quick Jayden Seales finished with four wickets.

Jaffna Kings made some experiments as well as they were sure of a play-offs place and young leg-spinner Vijayakanth Vijayakanth finished with three wickets.

Brief Scores:

Jaffna Kings 193/5 (20 overs) (Kohler-Cadmore 92, Upul Tharanga 37, Naveen-ul-Haq 3 for 27)
Colombo Stars 91 all out (15.5 overs) (Tom Banton 30, Jayden Seales 4 for 13, Vijayakanth Vijayakanth 3 for 32)

Dialog Schools Rugby 7s to Kick-off this month



Amali Nanayakkara, Group Chief Marketing Officer of Dialog Axiata PLC handing over the sponsorship to B.A. Abeyratne - President, Sri Lanka Schools Rugby Football Association, in the presence of Hon. Namal Rajapaksa MP, Minister of Youth and Sports. Also pictured (L-R) Dr. K.A.P. Kirielia - Acting Director General of the Sports Medicine Institute of the Sports Ministry, Harsha Samaranyake - Senior General Manager, Brand & Media, Dialog Axiata PLC, Asanga Seneviratne, Head Rugby Advisory Committee, Nirodha Wijerama - Secretary, Sri Lanka Schools Rugby Football Association and Daya Bandara, Director of Sports and Physical Education, Ministry of Education.

Rugby, arguably one of the most followed Schools sports in Sri Lanka, will see a resumption after almost two seasons of no play due to the COVID-19 pandemic, kicking-off with a schools 7s tournament from the 18th to the 31st of December 2021, which will see the best teams from the top rugby playing regions battling it out for supremacy.

Committed to developing talent and investing in our Future, Today, the Dialog Schools Rugby 7s will give students, who missed out on their final year of schools Rugby, the chance to play and progress to the Club and National level.

Western, Central, North-Western and Southern provinces will be playing the tourney in a group format, with the top finishers from the groups challenging one another in the knockout stage, while the Sabaragamuwa teams will be playing each other in a league structure to decide the provincial champion.

As the principal sponsor, Dialog Axiata PLC has made arrangements to broadcast the tournament LIVE on DTV Channel 140, Dialog ViU, Thepapare.com and also on the Asia Rugby FB page in the interest of all present and old boys, parents, supporters, well-wishers and the Sri Lanka's rugby-loving community as the tournament will be played behind closed doors.

Well-wishers will also get the opportunity to vote for the most popular team from each province on their respective match days by visiting dlg.lk/mostpopular, the winning team will be announced before the Cup Final in each province and will be rewarded with Rs. 50,000 gift voucher to purchase sports equipment.

The Dialog Schools 7s tourney will be played in accordance with the safety guidelines administered by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Sports and also the Ministry of Education. The players will be in a bio secure environment, overseen by their respective schools, with rapid antigen tests to be conducted at regular intervals.

Schools that have confirmed their participation for the Western Province tournament are, Royal College, Isipathana College, St. Peter's College,

St. Joseph's College, Wesley College, Thurstan College, Science College, Zahira College, Ananda College, Nalanda College, D.S. Senanayake College, Mahanama College, Prince of Wales College, S. Thomas' College, Piliyandala Central College, Carey College, Moratu Vidyalaya, St. John's College, CWW Kannangara College, Sumangala College, St. Benedict's College, and Piyarathana College. The Western Province tournament will be conducted on the 18th and 19th of December and will be played at the Royal College Sports Complex, Colombo 07.

Schools in the Central Province tournament include, Trinity College, Kingswood College, Dharmaraja College, St. Anthony's College, Vidyartha College, Sri Sumangala College, St. Sylvester's College and Sri Rahula College. The matches will be played on 27th December 2021 at Pallekele Rugby Grounds.

Schools battling it out for supremacy in the Sabaragamuwa Province include, Ehaliyagoda Central College, Thalduwa College, Mawanella Zahira College, Kegala Vidyalaya and Dehiowita Central College with their matches to be played on 28th December 2021 at the Ruwanwella Public Grounds, while the Schools representing the North Western Province will be Maliyadeva College, St. Anne's College, Ibbagamuwa Central College, Welagedera College, Lakdas De Mel College, Kuliyapitiya Central College and Sir John Kotelawala College; the tourney will be on the 30th of December 2021 at the Maliyadeva College Grounds, Kurunegala.

Top honours in the Southern Province will be keenly contested amongst St. Aloysius College, Richmond College, Mahinda College, Dewapathiraja College, Vidyaloka College, Debaraweva Central College and Rahula College. The tourney will be played on the 31st of December 2021 at the Koggala Free Trade Zone Ground.

The 2018 season was the last time a full schools tourney was held, while the following year the tournament was stopped in the first round after the outbreak of COVID-19.



Major transactions in Hayleys related stocks; CSE winning streak ends

By HIRAN H. SENEWIRATNE

The CSE yesterday saw an end to its four-day-strong winning streak, influenced by price declines in heavyweights Expolanka and LOLC Holdings, with active investors booking profit and others abstaining, market analysts said.

However, heavy rallies on Hayleys stocks were noted during the day. Major transactions took place yesterday when Finco Group, being one of the largest shareholders of Hayleys, divested/shed 22 million shares, which is equal to a three per cent stake of Hayleys, to several high net worth individuals and institutional buyers to the tune of Rs 2.9 billion, by way of a crossing, stock market analysts said.

The Hayleys share price in the last few days was a bit active and its shares appreciated by Rs 4.50 or three per cent yesterday. Its share price shot up to Rs 128.75 from Rs 124.25.

Sri Lanka's gross domestic product, meanwhile, is estimated to have contracted 1.5 per cent in the third quarter of 2021 amid a Coronoavirus curfew and import restrictions, data from the state statistics office showed.

Growth slowed from a 12.3 per cent recovery in the second quarter and 1.3 per cent growth in the third quarter of 2020. Agriculture grew 1.7 per cent, industries contracted 2.1 per cent and services also contracted 1.6 per cent. A Covid curfew was imposed from August 20 and continued until mid-October.



Amid those developments both indices were down. The All-Share Price Index down by 75.03 points and S and P SL20 declined by 10.03 points. Turnover stood at Rs 8.3 billion with four crossings. Those crossings were reported in Hayleys PLC, which crossed 23 million shares to the tune of Rs 2.9 billion and its shares traded at Rs 125, JKH, 1.1 million shares crossed for Rs 163 million, its shares traded at Rs 143, Sampath Bank 900,000 shares crossed for Rs 47.7 million,

its shares fetched Rs 53 and Amana Bank 10 million shares crossed for Rs 45 million, its shares traded at Rs 4.50.

In the retail market, seven companies that mainly contributed to the turnover were; Expolanka Rs one billion (2.9 million shares traded), Hayleys Rs one billion (8.2 million shares traded), Browns Investments Rs 281 million (20 million shares traded), Commercial Bank Rs 202 million (2.5 million shares traded), ACL Cables Rs 151 million (1.4 million shares traded), RIL Property Rs 133 million (8.9 million shares traded) and Royal Ceramic Rs 105 million (1.4 million shares traded).

It is said high net worth and institutional investor participation was noted in Expolanka Holdings, Hayleys and

Commercial Bank. Mixed interest was observed in ACL Cables, Brown & Company and Guardian Capital Partners, while retail interest was noted in SMB Leasing, Browns Investments and Capital Alliance.

It is said the bourse slipped back to the red zone, snapping the previous four-day rally on the back of profit-taking in selected counters.

Yesterday, the US dollar was quoted at Rs 200.67, which was the controlled price of the Central Bank to maintain price stability in imported essential items. This artificial price control would be inimical to the economy. The excessive money-printing by the government is also adding insult to injury, market analysts said.

WP's contribution to GDP shrinks by 1 per cent in 2020

Amidst outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Western province continued to be the nerve center of the economy whilst its share declined, contributing to an overall contraction.

Western province secured the largest share (38.0 per cent) of the country's nominal GDP. However, due to slow down in economic activities due to the pandemic situation, the share declined by 1.0 per cent from 2019. Central (11.3 per cent) and North Western (11.0 per cent) provinces were ranked at second and third positions, respectively.

PGDP shares increased in North Western, Southern, Sabaragamuwa, and North Central provinces while in Western and Northern provinces, share decreases could be observed year-on-year.

Activity-wise Performance
Provincial Contribution to Economic Activities

All the provinces have contributed fairly in terms of the Agricultural activities ranging from 7.7 per cent to 17.6 per cent whereas North Western, Southern and Central provinces were the top contributors to the Agricultural activities of the country.

Western province has pioneered in

Table 1
Nominal GDP (at current market prices) by Province

Province	2019 ^a		2020 ^b	
	Value (Rs.bn)	Share (%)	Value (Rs.bn)	Share (%)
WP	5,857.8	39.0	5,694.3	38.0
CP	1,694.6	11.3	1,692.1	11.3
NW	1,639.6	10.9	1,653.1	11.0
SP	1,491.4	9.9	1,518.0	10.1
SG	1,131.1	7.5	1,188.2	7.9
NC	823.3	5.5	876.3	5.9
EP	854.1	5.7	849.4	5.7
UP	803.5	5.4	812.1	5.4
NP	717.6	4.8	689.4	4.6
SL	15,013.0	100.0	14,973.0	100.0

a.Revised b.Provisional

the Industry activities with a contribution of 44.6 per cent while Central and North Western provinces became second and third largest contributors.

In terms of Services activities, Western province recorded the highest contribution of 39.3 per cent while Central and Southern provinces had the second and third highest contributions.

Compared to the previous year, only Sabaragamuwa province has increased its shares across the three activities. On contrary, Western province shares in all

the activities have declined from the previous year while other provinces have shown a mixed performance.

Economic Activities within Provinces

Services activities have dominated in all the provinces with over 50 per cent contribution to the GDP. Industry activities in all provinces are positioned next to the Services activities, ranging from 15.1 per cent to 30.8 per cent, while Agricultural activities range from 1.8 per cent to 17.0 per cent across the provinces.



People's Bank joins hands with the ETF to award scholarships to members' children

For the 11th consecutive year, People's Bank joined hands with the Employees' Trust Fund (ETF) to reward 9,000 children of ETF members who had excelled in the Grade 5 scholarship examination. Under Phase 1 of this initiative, ETF Chairman Sriyan de Silva Wijeyeratne presented the cheque for this purpose to His Excellency the Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and People's Bank Chairman Sujeewa Rajapakse at an official event held at Temple Trees recently.

Foreign Minister G.L Peiris, ETF

General Manager D.P.G. Fernando, People's Bank Chief Executive Officer/General Manager Ranjith Kodituwakku and Deputy General Manager (Retail Banking, Process Management and Quality Assurance) Renuka Jayasinghe, together with ETF Deputy General Manager (Social Services) W.G.K. Ratnayake, Assistant General Manager H.G.D.N. Prasanna, Scholarships Officer W.L.D. Krishanthi, and S.A.D.R.T. Dissanayake of the Scholarships Division took part in the event.

Another batch of BEng Degree holders and HND Diplomates graduate from SLT Training Centre with admirable results

SLT-MOBITEL, the National ICT Solutions Provider's education arm, the SLT Training Centre (SLTTC) hosted the Graduation Ceremony for 2021 recently at the Main Conference Hall of the BMICH, celebrating the successful completion of another batch of students obtaining the University of Hertfordshire's BEng (Hons) Engineering Degree and the Pearson BTEC HND in Electrical and Electronic Engineering.

The ceremony was graced by Dr.(Eng.) Lalith Liyanage, Chairmen, IET Sri Lanka Network as the Guest of Honour as well as Rohan Fernando, Group Chairman SLT-MOBITEL, Lalith Seneviratna, Group CEO SLT-MOBITEL, Priyantha Fernandez, COO SLT and senior personnel. Also present were Academic Staff of the Centre, parents and well-wishers.

At the Graduation Ceremony, 38 students were awarded the University of Hertfordshire's BEng (Hons) Engineering Degree. Two students received the Best Student Award; R.L.H. Fernando for the BEng Honours Electrical and Electronic Engineering degree and Gihan Madusanka Hewage for the BEng Honours Electronics and Communication Engineering degree. 12 students also received 1st class Honours demonstrating their mastery of the subject



as well as field of knowledge.

Addressing the graduates and audience, Rohan Fernando, Group Chairman of SLT stated, "Today, I see before me a group of young men and women who have understood the value of learning and are ready to embark on their dream careers. We at SLT have set forth the springboard. There are no barriers to learning and I encourage you to continue to learn, explore, invent and ascend to the top. SLT will be involved in two very powerful techno parks among those to be developed in Sri Lanka in the future. With

these initiatives we are also looking at generating employment opportunities not only in Sri Lanka but also in Asia and the global market for our young graduates and engineers. As you receive your degree and diplomas, you will have the world at your feet. I wish you the very best; pursue your best self because if you think you can - you most certainly will."

The ISO 9001:2015 certified training institute is the sole franchiser for the University of Hertfordshire's BEng (Hons) Engineering Degree programmes in South Asia.

Microsoft and Trainocate pave the way for a technologically brighter tomorrow through digital skills training for students

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka: Microsoft and Trainocate, a learning and development service provider, will work alongside each other to bridge the digital skills divide in Sri Lanka and route students to diverse and equitable hiring and employment opportunities.

With this partnership Microsoft is aiming to reach more than 600 undergraduate and graduate students in Sri Lanka to address the needs of students who require digital skills to stay competitive and empower them to seize the employment opportunities of the future.

Trainocate was recognized as the 2021 Microsoft Learning Partner of the Year. The company was honored among a global field of top Microsoft partners for demonstrating excellence in innovation and implementation of customer solutions based on Microsoft technology.

"Trainocate is thrilled to be collaborating with Microsoft. Now more than ever, we must work to uplift and train the youth to ensure they are meeting the needs of the current labor market," said Zafarullah Hashim, Chief Executive Officer of Trainocate SEA New Markets



and UAE. "We hope that our partnership with Microsoft becomes a model for digital workforce training. We are committed to this effort and appreciate the investments that Microsoft is making in our community."

Microsoft is committed to building an ecosystem that provides upskilling, re-skilling and cross-skilling for in-demand jobs and a path to employment that supports long-term careers. The company will award free vouchers to 500 participants to help them sit for their Microsoft Azure Certification Exam. The top 10 students will receive a scholarship to study accredited instructor-led role-based Microsoft certification courses. The students that complete these courses will be offered internship positions at leading global ICT-BPO companies operating in Sri Lanka.

Capital Alliance lists on the Colombo Stock Exchange

The shares of Capital Alliance Limited (CODE: CALT-N-0000) commenced trading on the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE). The shares have been listed on the Diri Savi Board of the CSE under the "Investment Banking & Brokerage" sector. The occasion was marked with a special Bell Ringing Ceremony

Chairman and Non- Executive

Director of Capital Alliance Limited Dinesh De Zoysa, Chief Executive Officer of CAL Group and Executive Director of Capital Alliance Limited Ajith Fernando, Non- Executive Director of Capital Alliance Holdings Limited Ms. Shiromal Cooray, Non- Executive Non- Independent Director Sanjeeva Anthony, Non- Executive Independent Director

Ms. Aruni Siriwardene, Chief Risk and Compliance Officer of CAL Group Ms. Sharmali Perera and Managing Director of Capital Alliance Limited Somadasa Palihawadana joined the event.

The CSE was represented by Chairman Dumith Fernando, Chief Regulatory Officer Renuke Wijayawardhane and Head of Listings Ms. Vinduni Dullewe at

the event.

Chairman of the CSE, Dumith Fernando, speaking at the ceremony, welcomed the company to the CSE. "The core function of our capital market is always to match savings with those who need capital. And with today's capital raising, we have the 9th equity IPO for the year. We have about five more rushing

after the end of this year to list and I'm happy to say we have crossed the 100 billion-rupee mark in terms of capital raising, both in debt and equity this year.

"It is a delight and an honour for us to welcome a firm of the repute and track record of Capital Alliance onto the listed company platform. We are looking forward to a couple more

IPOs related to capital markets. But, we hope that you will be a trendsetter here. And I think, proven to us by the eight and a half times subscription of the IPO. But most notably the three and a half times retail over subscription, that there is great interest in this sector in the quality of companies like Capital Alliance."

SECURITY	VOLUME	YTD VOLUME	PREVIOUS CLOSE	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	YTD VOLUME	TODAY'S CLOSE	CHANGE (%)
MAIN BOARD									
ASPEN HOT HOLD	11,210	36	37.00	38.30	37.00	37.70	4.7	1.7	
ABANS	3,511	155.25	155.00	160.50	153.50	155.00	1.1	-2.5	
ACCESS ENGL	3,159,666	31.5	31.50	32.20	31.00	32.50	3.1	1.1	
ACL	1,445,640	108.5	109.50	109.75	103.75	104.50	-3.6	-4.4	
ACL PLASTICS	3,638	641.25	640.00	642.00	620.00	623.25	-2.8	-1.8	
AGALAWATTE	381,896	48.1	47.80	48.00	46.00	47.00	-2.2	-1.1	
AHOT PROPERTIES	1,070	44.5	44.50	44.50	42.50	42.90	-3.6	-1.6	
AITKEN SPENCE	175,851	80	80.00	81.90	79.90	80.00	0.0	0.0	
ALLIANCE	120,891	88.3	90.00	92.50	88.10	90.50	2.4	2.2	
AMANA BANK	20,106,586	4.4	4.40	5.10	4.30	4.80	9.0	4.4	
ASIA ASSET	7,950	8.1	8.30	8.30	8.00	8.00	-1.2	-1.1	
ASIA CAPITAL	667,715	7	7.00	7.60	7.00	7.40	5.7	4.4	
ASIRI	1,352	33	33.00	33.00	32.10	32.30	-2.1	-7.7	
ASIRI SURG	18,240	17.6	17.50	17.60	17.40	17.50	-5.2	-1.1	
AUTODROME	307	100	104.00	117.00	100.00	105.25	5.2	5.25	
BAIRAHA FARMS	80,664	306.5	310.00	310.00	286.00	295.25	-3.8	-11.25	
BALANGODA	3,225	20.6	20.50	20.90	20.30	20.30	-1.4	-3.3	
BUKIT DARAH	4,555	378.25	377.00	382.00	372.00	378.50	0.25	0.25	
C M HOLDINGS	30,792	157.5	157.50	157.50	140.50	142.00	-9.8	-15.5	
C HOLDINGS XD	4,148	166	167.00	167.00	167.00	167.00	6.1	6.1	
CARGILLS XD	1,144	207	210.00	210.00	206.50	207.00	0.0	0.0	
CARGO BOAT	16,332	67.5	66.20	67.90	65.00	65.10	-3.5	-2.4	
CARSONS	104	282.5	299.75	299.75	298.00	298.50	5.6	16.16	
CDB	1,066	165	160.00	160.00	156.25	156.25	-5.3	-8.75	
CDB [CDB X0000]	10,296	90.4	91.00	91.00	89.00	89.00	-1.5	-1.4	
CENTRAL FINANCE XD	173,552	99.1	100.00	101.00	95.00	95.00	-3.8	-3.8	
CENTRAL IND	25,005	230	230.00	231.00	221.25	227.00	-1.3	-3.3	
CEYLINCO INS	625	2,091.75	2,096.75	2,100.00	2,096.75	2,099.50	3.0	7.75	
CEYLINCO INS [CINS.X0000]	7	1,058.25	1,032.25	1,035.25	1,030.00	1,058.25	0.0	0.0	
CEYLON GUARDIAN	8,050	116.75	113.00	113.50	109.00	109.25	-6.4	-7.5	
CEYLON INV	7,154	56	55.50	55.50	52.90	54.00	-3.5	-2.2	
CEYLON TOBACCO	5,010	889.25	890.00	890.00	883.00	885.00	-4.0	-4.25	
CHEMANEX	1,190	80.9	76.70	78.00	76.70	77.30	-4.4	-3.6	
CHEVON	79,736	110	109.00	110.75	108.50	110.25	2.25	2.25	
CIC	356,243	64.1	65.00	65.00	63.60	64.90	1.2	8.8	
CIC [CIC.X0000]	1,664,015	48.4	48.40	51.50	47.60	51.30	5.9	2.9	
CITRUS LEISURE	120,577	8.5	8.60	8.60	8.30	8.30	-2.3	-2.2	
COLD STORES	1,107	524.25	521.25	521.25	520.25	521.25	-5.0	-3.3	
COLOMBO CITY	12	889.5	905.00	905.00	889.50	889.50	0.0	0.0	
COLOMBO LAND	5,893	34.8	34.80	35.00	33.00	33.10	-4.8	-1.7	
COMMERCIAL BANK	2,539,290	80	80.50	80.50	79.50	79.60	-5.4	-4.4	
COMMERCIAL BANK [COMB.X0000]	3,899	73.4	74.00	74.00	72.70	73.40	0.0	0.0	
CONVENIENCE FOOD	725	1,299.25	1,270.00	1,290.00	1,220.00	1,248.75	-3.8	-50.5	
DANKOTUWA PORCEL	193,591	15.2	15.70	15.70	14.00	15.10	-0.6	-1.1	
DFCC BANK PLC	69,687	60.4	60.40	61.00	59.50	60.50	-1.1	-1.1	
DIALOG	63,534	11	11.00	11.10	11.00	11.00	0.0	0.0	
DIMO	308	601.5	610.00	612.50	605.00	611.00	1.5	9.5	
DIPPED PRODUCTS	1,327,175	51.9	52.70	53.40	52.50	52.70	-1.5	-8.8	
DOCKYARD	13,561	82.5	83.00	83.00	80.60	80.60	-2.3	-1.9	
DOLPHIN HOTELS	10,725	34	34.00	34.40	31.00	34.00	0.0	0.0	
DURDANS	5,100	145	144.75	145.00	144.75	145.00	0.0	0.0	
E B CREAMY	213,694	31.6	31.60	31.60	29.40	29.90	-5.3	-1.7	
EAST WEST	22,335	10.6	10.50	10.50	10.40	10.40	-1.8	-2.2	
EASTERN MERCHANT	30,438	8.9	8.90	9.00	8.50	8.80	-1.1	-3.3	
EX-PACK XD	930,012	22.4	22.30	22.40	21.90	22.10	-1.1	-1.3	
EXPOLANKA	2,972,861	375.75	376.00	377.25	365.00	371.50	-1.1	-4.25	
FORT LAND	202,002	27	27.00	27.00	25.90	26.00	-3.7	-1.1	
GRAIN ELEVATORS	279,302	133.25	135.00	135.00	130.00	130.00	-2.4	-3.25	
HAYCARB	485,556	78.6	80.00	83.40	80.00	81.40	-3.5	2.8	
HAYLEYS	31,668,896	124.25	128.00	132.00	126.00	128.75	-3.6	4.5	
HAYLEYS FABRIC	1,135,881	42.7	44.00	44.40	41.40	41.80	-2.1	-9.9	
HAYLEYS FIBRE	26,607	71.4	72.00	72.00	70.60	71.80	5.4	4.4	
HAYLEYS LEISURE	19,022	21	21.40	21.60	20.90	21.40	1.9	4.4	
HDFC	1,133	31.2	32.40	32.50	31.20	32.30	3.5	1.1	
HEMB HOLDINGS	144,190	69	69.10	69.90	68.40	68.60	-5.4	-4.4	
HNB	62,972	141.25	143.75	143.75	140.50	141.25	0.0	0.0	
HNB ASSURANCE	19,197	44.9	45.10	45.10	44.00	44.80	-2.1	-1.1	
HNB [HNB.X0000]	123,940	130.25	130.25	131.25	129.75	130.00	-1.1	-2.5	
HORANA	8,132	26	27.60	27.70	26.20	27.40	5.3	1.4	
HOTEL SIGIRIYA	2,676	80	78.80	80.00	77.00	78.00	-2.5	-2.2	
HOTELS CORP	1,652	16	16.00	16.00	15.50	15.70	-1.8	-3.3	
HUNTERS	2,102	650.5	649.25	650.00	649.25	650.00	0.0	-5.5	
INDUSTRIAL ASPH	10,936,295	5	5.00	6.00	4.00	5.00	0.0	0.0	
JAT HOLDINGS XD	619,637	22	22.40	22.40	21.80	22.00	0.0	0.0	
JKH	1,332,438	142.25	143.00	143.50	142.00	142.25	0.0	0.0	
KANDY HOTELS	1	8	7.90	7.90	7.90	8.00	0.0	0.0	
KEGALLE	11,581	136.25	136.00	136.00	133.25	133.75	-1.8	-2.5	
KELANI CABLES	20,089	537.75	540.00	540.00	518.00	522.25	-2.8	-15.5	
KELANI TYRES	40,394	84.3	84.00	85.30	84.00	84.20	-1.1	-1.1	
KELANI VALLEY	158,098	74.4	75.10	75.10	72.90	73.10	-1.7	-1.3	
KINGSBURY	185,987	8.5	8.60	8.60	8.40	8.60	1.1	1.1	
KOTAGALA	1,211,749	7.9	7.90	7.90	7.60	7.70	-2.5	-2.2	
L O L HOLDINGS	76,497	1,130.5	1,129.00	1,140.00	1,105.00	1,115.50	-1.3	-15.15	
LAKE HOUSE PRIN	2	143	151.75	151.75	151.75	143.00	0.0	0.0	
LANKA ALUMINIUM	438,899	29.5	29.30	29.30	28.00	28.10	-4.7	-1.4	
LANKA ASHOK	62	709	683.00	683.00	683.00	709.00	0.0	0.0	
LANKA HOSPITALS	9,107	53.2	53.80	53.80	53.10	53.10	-1.1	-1.1	
LANKA IOC XD	1,719,161	43.1	43.10	44.00	40.00	41.00	-4.8	-2.1	
LANKA REALTY	902,780	26.1	26.10	27.00	25.90	26.00	-3.3	-3.1	
LANKA TILES	150,382	112.75	113.50	113.50	109.75	110.00	-2.4	-2.75	
LANKA VENTURES	50	52.4	52.10	52.10	52.10	52.40	0.0	0.0	
LANKA WALLTILE	83,827	129.5	129.50	129.50	126.25	126.75	-2.1	-2.75	
LANKEM DEV	733,839	5.7	6.00	6.00	5.60	5.70	0.0	0.0	
LAUGFS GAS	50,274	23.6	24.00	24.10	24.00	24.00	1.6	4.4	
LAUGFS GAS [LGL.X0000]	13,100	16.5	17.00	17.10	16.60	16.60	-0.6	-1.1	
LAXAPANA	33,280	16.7	16.90	16.90	16.00	16.10	-3.5	-6.6	
LE FINANCE	207,330	66	67.00	67.90	65.00	66.30	4.3	3.3	
LEE HEDGES	4,108	91.3	90.00	90.00	86.00	86.00	-5.8	-5.3	
LION BREWERY	5	550	544.75	544.75	533.75	550.00	0.0	0.0	

SECURITY	VOLUME	YTD VOLUME	PREVIOUS CLOSE	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	YTD VOLUME	TODAY'S CLOSE	CHANGE (%)
16th, December, 2021									
LMF	28,219	260.75	262.00	264.00	254.00	256.00	-1.8	-4.75	
LVL ENERGY	284,900	10.6	10.70	10.70	10.30	10.50	-9.9	-1.1	
MALWATTE	1,873	24.8	24.00	25.00	23.80	23.80	-4.0	-1.1	
MALWATTE [MAL.X0000]	100	16.2	16.20	16.20	16.20	16.20	0.0	0.0	
MELSTACORP	667,127	55.8	56.80	56.80	55.40	55.50	-5.3	-3.3	
MERC SHIPPING	916	110.75	107.00	113.00	107.00	112.00	1.1	1.25	
MERCHANT BANK	462,511	5.9	6.00	6.00	5.90	5.90	0.0	0.0	
MULLERS	454,747	1.7	1.70	1.80	1.60	1.60	-5.8	-1.1	
NAMUNUKULA	4,306	351.75	353.00	353.00	340.00	340.25	-3.2	-11.5	
NAT DEV BANK	90,165	70.7	70.90	70.90	70.00	70.20	-7.7	-5.5	
NATIONS TRUST	4,137	53.3	53.80	54.50	53.80	54.30	1.8	1.1	
NAWALOKA	433,079	9.6	9.60	9.80	9.50	9.50	-1.0	-1.1	

The Sri Lanka Virtual MICE Expo 2021 breaks new ground

Pioneering new initiatives, Sri Lanka's inaugural Virtual MICE Expo received an overwhelming response from stakeholders as the value-added event provided a much-needed impetus for MICE tourism. The Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) organized the event from 1st - 3rd December 2021 in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition and Event Organizers (SLAPCEO).

The virtual exhibition showcased over 70 stalls; four business forums for the Meetings/Conference, Exhibitions, Wedding & Incentive organizers; Meet in Sri Lanka video collection; launch of green events initiatives at Water's Edge; Dilmah virtual tea experience conducted by Dilmah CEO, Dilhan C Fernando; Chef & Restaurateur;

Peter Kuruvita; and Dutch Mixologist, Robert Schinkel, and also the Sri Lanka culinary experience by Deshabandu Dr. Pabilis Silva of Mount Lavina Hotel; Virtual Wellness experience by Spa Ceylon and a Master MICE challenge quiz competition. BMICH was the Principal Sponsor of the event along with Waters Edge as Co-Sponsor.

Commenting on the event, Sri Lanka Tourism Chairperson, Kimarli Fernando said: "This is the first time that a MICE related virtual Expo was held with many value-added activities such as business forums, green initiatives, tea experiences, education partnerships, wellness experiences, culinary experiences etc."

Adding further, Sri Lanka Convention Bureau General Manager, Krishantha Fernando said: "We expected around 200



buyers/visitors for the event and ended up with almost 500 registrations and similarly we expected 50 virtual booths and concluded with over 70, including sponsors, which reflected the positive response to the event."

Capitalizing on the opportunity to network, some key partnerships were inked during the Expo.



An educational partnership agreement related to events was signed between Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition and Event Organizers (SLAPCEO) and Uva Wellassa University.

The SLAPCEO President, Imran Hassan said, "This event

showcased how best the three main pillars of tourism; policy-makers, professionals and academics can work together for the betterment of the industry."

Speaking at the event, Kimarli Fernando urged SLCB & SLAPCEO to continue this event as a physical event in 2022 with

the objective of making 'Sri Lanka a Gateway to South Asian Meetings & Events Industry'.

Fernando went on to add, "I look forward to collaborating on a solid action plan and MICE strategy for the future. With the onset of the pandemic, we have seen huge shifts in the way people travel for business. MICE tourism has seen changes - with businesses having to learn to operate remotely which has led to many MICE events either being cancelled or postponed. Virtual MICE Expo 2021 provides a much-needed platform for international MICE buyers to meet more than 50+ local exhibitors. The four business forums provided the expertise and knowledge for the industry following in our strategy to position Sri Lanka as a top MICE destination in Asia."



L-R Tom Hoyem Member of the City Council of Karlsruhe & Former Cabinet Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark, Darma Vivekachandran, Honorary Consul of Sri Lanka in Radolfzell, Germany, Arshad Rab, CEO - European Organization for Sustainable Development, Germany.

DFCC Bank recognized at the Karlsruhe Sustainable Finance Awards in Germany

DFCC Bank, one of Sri Lanka's fully-fledged commercial banks was recently recognized at the Karlsruhe Sustainable Finance Awards 2021 in Karlsruhe, Germany for the 9th consecutive year with 2 awards.

They were namely; Sustainability Leader of the Year Certificate of Merit to the CEO of DFCC Bank, Lakshman Silva to recognize his exceptional leadership in driving the business performance of DFCC Bank PLC, through creating social, economic and environmental values and the Certificate of Merit for Outstanding Business Sustainability Achievement to recognize success in incorporating sustainability in its corporate strategy and its business processes. Due to travel restrictions as a result of the pandemic, DFCC Bank was represented at the awards ceremony by Darma Vivekachandran, Honorary Consul of Sri Lanka in Radolfzell, Germany.

In a congratulatory message sent to Lakshman Silva, CEO of DFCC Bank,

Arshad Rab, CEO of the European Organization for Sustainable Development (EOSD), the main organizer for this event, has stated, "We warmly congratulate you on being honoured with the Certificate of Merit, Sustainability Leader of the Year 2021. Our heartfelt congratulations to you also for DFCC being recognized, under your leadership, by receiving the Certificate of Merit for Outstanding Business Sustainability Achievement. The recognitions were conferred for demonstrating exceptional leadership in driving sustainability at the DFCC Bank and for your institution's success in incorporating sustainability in its corporate strategy and its business processes."

We have no doubt that these recognitions will not only inspire you and your institution to stay on course for making sustainability an integral part of your institution's DNA, but in fact they will strengthen your resolve to intensify the sustainability journey."

Pan Asia Bank supports Lady Ridgeway Hospital enhance medical services

Pan Asia Bank, the Truly Sri Lankan Bank, recently marked 'Day of Charity' - yet another corporate social responsibility initiative undertaken by Team HR where Pan Asians volunteer to make the life of other human beings better. As part of this initiative, Pan Asians recently volunteered to donate medical equipment to Lady Ridgeway hospital with the desire to build a healthier future generation. Such events inculcate a sense of pride amongst employees in working for a Truly Sri Lankan Bank that cares for its people. Pan Asia Bank has become a talent magnet in the nation's banking industry, attracting both experienced professionals and young executives and graduates on account of its brand identity as an agile, nimble, fast-growing and forward-thinking organization.

Team HR at Pan Asia Bank hold successful blood donation camp. The nation's Truly Sri Lankan Bank, Pan Asia Bank, is always exploring ways to serve the country - and towards this end, the Bank organizes many

corporate social responsibility events with the enthusiastic participation of staff. Recently, Team HR initiated a blood donation camp during the pandemic period adhering to strict guidelines that reflected the selfless commitment of Pan Asians to serve fellow human beings to support current shortage of Blood on the blood Bank. Organized in collaboration with Blood Bank of Apeksha Hospital, all staff and even customers came forward to be part of the noble where over 50 pints of blood were donated to the Blood Bank.

Over the years, the Bank has developed a unique culture of being ambitious, results-oriented, respectful and caring - a true testament of the brand's positioning, the Truly Sri Lankan Bank. With a foundation of 25 years, Pan Asia Bank is one of the strongest banks in Sri Lanka, positioned as 'The Truly Sri Lankan Bank' that understands the aspirations of Sri Lankans and strives to fulfill their needs by providing a dynamic portfolio of products and services.



Price-gouging, a double whammy to consumers

By CLAUDE GUNASEKERA

The prevalent Price Gouging of almost all the goods in the country has created a double whammy to the citizens of Sri Lanka despite their hardship with Covid-19 pandemic. Price gouging is illegal during a state of emergency in the laws of consumer protection. Some countries even without laws, issue executive orders to prohibit the action during times of emergency or during a pandemic.

Consumer prices hiked at a faster pace than ever before. Except for very few locally produced food & household items and some pharmaceutical, all the other prices have increased. Despite the import restrictions, all items that are permitted to import are in unaffordable prices, including products that are locally manufactured with imported raw material. Even the 100% local produce have increased their prices due to the price increase of Petroleum, Gas and other production overheads add on to it keeping additional margins on the increased cost of living.

"30 percent of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) in a retail store is complete direct imported products and 35 percent of local products dependent on imported raw material and the rest of 35 percent only considered complete local produce. The Price Crisis is mainly with the first and second categories consisting most demanding essential goods, which is 65 percent of regular day to day consumer needs. Meanwhile prices are increased for at least another 20 percent of local produce in the complete local produce category. It is estimated that around 85 percent of consumer goods are increased in price" said Charitha Subasinghe, President-Retail at John Keells Holdings PLC, Head of Keells Super Retail Chain. He said Inflation is a biggest challenge globally and Sri Lanka has its own foreign exchange issues and import restrictions thus creating a spike of price and product shortages.

Glenfrey De Mel, Chairman Star Media Network, a graduate of the Colombo Law Faculty who is engaged in Human Rights claimed that "It is a democratic right of the masses to have a purchasing power over essential commodities while human life and the price of essentials are closely related. When prices of essentials become incompatible with the financial well-being of the people, there is no end to the agony of the poor and under privileged families".

"The present government failed to take right decisions, at right time, to control the existing price gouging. The government failed to implement appropriate policies to balance the economy and control the cost of living of the masses. A few Big Traders dominate the entire imports of essential commodities and control the whole national market with unethical influence of the government. The government supports them for political gains with-



Charitha Subasinghe



AB Wijesinghe



Sampath Liyanage

out even considering the majority of their voters who elected them. Therefore, the government is solely accountable for this stern blunder" said Dinusha Sampath Liyanage, Chairman / Managing Director of Sampath Group of Companies, the holding entity of 'Sampath Food City' Supermarket Chain. He told 'The Island' that people's elected government is responsible to provide necessary needs of the citizen especially the essential foods and services at an affordable price and create a balance between income and purchasing power while maintaining an acceptable inflation rate.

Liyanage further told 'The Island' that instead making allegations to the government or to the big trader, as an entrepreneur engaged in the retailing business, he could offer maximum possible discounts at all 20 outlets of the 'Sampath Food City' Supermarket chain at this crucial juncture as a concession to all walk in customers. He said profits are required for survival of a business, but profitability is not the prime aim at this moment since he realizes the anguish of the innocent consumer. Sampath Supermarket chain is the leading retail network in the Kalutara District with a large customer base over 250,000 patronizing their outlets. He said certain fruits and vegetables that are sold in his supermarkets are direct from his own farms and since there is no intermediary trade margins involved they could pass on that price benefit to the customer under the theme 'Direct from Farm to the Consumer Hands'. "We are unique compared to other retail chains, since we offer discounts to all the products available in house. We offer 25% discount on fruits & vegetables and many other special discounts time to time on main essential goods such as rice, wheat flour, sugar, dhal, onion, potato, milk powder, biscuits etc.

A. B. Wijesinghe, Chairman 'Lion Super' retail chain, functioning 7 supermarkets in the outskirts of Kandy told 'The Island' "We pitch a different customer segment than the national supermarkets does. Our primary concern is the low and middle income ordinary consumer in the neighborhood simply the 'villagers' with a focused brotherhood relationship approach with a personalized service. He said they are catering to them with much understanding of their purchas-

ing power and offer the best possible prices even less than the neighboring retail store. He also said the lowest price theory began not during this crisis period, but the core objective of setting up the original 'Singhe' retail chain was to offer the lowest price in the market. He continues to move on the same mission under the new brand of Lion Supermarkets.

"We operate 7 supermarkets in the outskirts of Kandy and launched a 'Double Discount' offer at all our outlets as a special concession to deprived customers during this hard time, offering extra discounts for many products through the support of our supply chain. We were able to negotiate additional discounts from most of the suppliers and offered the whole chunk direct to our customers. We are able to make our customers much satisfied and appreciated with this massive price decrease concept" said Indika Sampath, Head of Operations 'Lions Super'.

In addition it was found all the modern trade retailers such as Lanka Sathosa, Cargills Food City, Keells Super, Laugfs Supermarkets, Arpico Super Centers, Glomark, Spar, Salinda Supermarkets, Hewage Supermarkets and many others are offering attractive discounts to their customers. Some may look at it as they do a business promotion but yet ultimately customers will benefit by their offers resulting in some what a concession at this crucial time.

"We service number of retail outlets in the country with a range of local consumer food products. We don't produce or distribute a single imported product, but the sales turnover is dropped by 40 percent during the month of November. Products that were supplied in the previous months were still lying at retail shelves as never before. This clearly shows the inability of consumers to spend. We see the people are buying only the most important items to survive the day. Most people have reduced their usual consumption due the high cost of living. We are even struggling to operate our factories and it's a question how we could continue to run the business and remunerate our factory workers and it's time to retrench staff and cut down our overheads" said Jayantha Perera Chairman 'Jayz Kitchen' a leading manufacturing venture of spice food.

The Hirdaramani Group partners with Parley for the Oceans on eco-innovation and ocean conservation efforts

Pioneering global apparel manufacturer, the Hirdaramani Group has partnered with Parley for the Oceans, an environmental organization, global collaboration network and leading player in the field of upcycling and repurposing plastic waste in apparel and footwear manufacturing industries.

Hirdaramani will be collaborating with Parley in a two-pronged partnership. In their business partnership, Hirdaramani will work to incorporate Parley Ocean Plastic® to its product range. In addition, the companies will work together on ocean conservation, eco-innovation, and beach clean-up initiatives. The collaboration is



expected to open new opportunities within the Group's existing customer base while exploring possibilities with new customers keen to use Parley Ocean

Plastic® fabrics and accessories. "Our vision is to create innovative products for leading global brands and our partnership with Parley for the Oceans

offers us new and exciting ways to achieve this vision. The fight against marine plastic pollution is a cause the Hirdaramani Group has championed for many years.

Today, this cause has greater urgency as Sri Lanka is facing one of the worst marine ecological disasters in its history following the MV X-Press Pearl catastrophe. Its impact will be felt for many decades. We are at a crucial crossroad and are approaching a point of no return. It is vital that all stakeholders collaborate to counter the effects and act now," commented Thusitha Cooray, CEO- Hirdaramani Discovery Lab, Hirdaramani Group.

Business News

Local art to get a global clientele with Kathbitha.Com

www.kathbitha.com, an online portal dedicated to showcase authentic work of Sri Lankan artists globally was launched recently. The e-commerce platform will market and promote the local art industry globally, securing better opportunities for artists of all ages in the global market. It will target all art enthusiasts and collectors living overseas and in Sri Lanka.

"There are many talented painters, sculptors and artists in Sri Lanka who has an opportunity to feature their work in the global art market. We at kathbitha.com will give them that opening to make a mark in the global art world, whilst being able to create a

demand for their masterpieces" said Razmal Assen, a Founder Director of kathbitha.com.

Kathbitha.com would feature many pieces of art, ranging from contemporary art to paintings, photographs, and sculptures. Already several renowned artists have signed up to share their work on the Kathbitha website. Among them are artists Jayantha Silva, Mahen Chanmugan, Shanaka Kulatunga, Anura Srinath, Wasantha Ranjan, Pulasthi Ediriweera and Shantha Thapavila.

"We are confident that there will be a good demand for the collections and our overseas marketing campaigns would be

developed to appeal to the taste of every art lover," said Chandana Gunasekara, another Founder Director of this initiative.

One of the key features is that the portal also carries information on the art, the artist, techniques, styles, and the story behind each painting providing visibility to the collectors who are informed of Sri Lanka's unique art history. The vision of the shareholders and members of the board is to create a space for local artists to be introduced to visitors who are keen to know about the creation as well as the creator as a means of sharing insights into the local creative industry.



Celebrating the launch of www.kathbitha.com, Artist Dr. Shanaka Kulatunge (center left) handing over one of his premium painting to Kathbitha.com Founder Director Chandana Gunasekara while Kathbitha.com Founder Directors Vasana Wickremasena, Sampath Jayasundara and Razmal Assen look on.

Sri Lanka's apparel sector well-positioned to reach \$8 Bn. export earnings target by 2025

Industry attempting to attract FDI to Eravur from leading players in fabric - Aroon Hirdaramani

Sri Lanka's apparel industry expressed confidence in reaching its target of \$8 billion in export earnings by 2025, by implementing the concerted initiatives put in place by the sector, in collaboration with the authorities.

These views were expressed at the 'Sri Lanka Economic Summit 2021', the flagship event of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, held this year on 6th and 7th December 2021, under the theme 'Springboard for revival: Opportunity to reset'.

Strengthening backward vertical integration and further improving sustainability credentials are vital in achieving the sector's vision, while enhanced access to key export markets - including within the Asian region - will provide a significant boost in realizing these aspirations, noted the industry.

"At present Sri Lanka accounts for around 1% of the global market share of apparel exports. We are confident that we can reach the industry's target of \$8 billion in export earnings by 2025, by executing the correct strategies," Sri Lanka Apparel Exporters' Association (SLAEA) Chairman and Hirdaramani Group Director, Aroon Hirdaramani said. He made these comments as a panellist at the 'Resetting the Export Portfolio' session of the summit.

Hirdaramani noted that the efforts to strengthen backward vertical integration of Sri Lanka's apparel value chain, through initiatives such as the Eravur Fabric Processing Park are critical, particularly in the current context. This would pave the way for the

industry to reduce lead times and significantly increase its domestic value addition - which currently stands at around 55%. The latter would also enable Sri Lanka to make greater use of preferential tariff concessions - such as the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) Plus tariff concessions to the European Union (EU) - a critical market for Sri Lanka in general, and apparel in specific.

"We are working very hard to attract key players in the fabric segment to invest in the new zone, as well as more broadly in fabric mills in Sri Lanka," Hirdaramani revealed, noting that the zone is expected to be positioned strongly in terms of environmental sustainability.

However, in order to attract such Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows, Sri Lanka needs to strengthen especially its fiscal position and policy, other panellists indicated. This was particularly stressed by the Director of the Growth Lab of the Harvard's Centre for International Development, Prof Ricardo Hausmann, who made the initial presentation at the session.

"We can gain market share through trade shifts arising from the US - China fallout," Hirdaramani said further. "The pandemic has also strongly increased the preference for near-shoring among buyers, given how



Aroon Hirdaramani

COVID-19 caused vast disruptions to global supply chains. Sri Lanka can position as a hub to serve Asia, but this requires preferential and free trade agreements (FTAs) with more countries in the region."

The need for greater trade connectivity was also noted by the other panellists. Dilmah Tea - CEO, Dilhan Fernando highlighted the need for FTAs and a more favourable impression of the country internationally, in order for Sri Lanka to expand and diversify its exports. Spa Ceylon - Co-Founder, Shalin Balasuriya too expressed the need for trade linkages, while also drawing attention

to the need for trade facilitation - including reducing red-tape associated with the export process.

While securing new FTAs, the panellists - both representatives from the private sector and Sri Lanka's foreign missions - also voiced the need to retain the existing trade concessions - particularly the GSP+ to the EU.

The panellists, particularly Export Development Board (EDB) - Chairman, Suresh De Mel also emphasised the importance of supporting SMEs in order to increase and diversify exports. In the apparel sector, under the leadership of the Joint Apparel Association Forum (JAAF), initiatives are underway to boost SMEs in the industry.

MSI revolutionizes content creation and gaming with 3 new laptop releases



The Bravo 15 Gaming Laptop

Micro-Star International (MSI), a leading manufacturer of business, design and gaming technology, recently launched 3 new laptops in Sri Lanka. The All-AMD powered Bravo 15 from the gaming series, the Delta 15, which is also a gaming laptop and finally the Creator Z16 Laptop which is perfect for content creation and graphic design.

The Bravo 15 gaming laptop, which is designed for the entry level gamer is powered by the advanced AMD Ryzen™ 5000 H-Series Mobile Processors and AMD Radeon™ RX Graphics. It is geared with Radeon Image Sharpening and Radeon Anti-Lag features. This leads to an enhanced and rich image with a high level of detail and also shrinks the input lag, which leads to a seamless overall gaming experience. The Delta 15 Gaming laptop which is designed for the hardcore gamer is equipped up to AMD Ryzen™ 5900 HX series mobile processors and the up to latest AMD Radeon™ RX 6700M series mobile graphics. These two leads to a more seamless gaming experience and enhanced visual elements. The combination of The Radeon RX 6000 series GPU+Ryzen 5000 H series CPU together are known as AMD Advantage. It is also much thinner and lighter than similar products, weighing in at 1.9 KG and with a thickness of just 19 mm, which leads to a more visually appealing design which is also easy to carry around. It also features a battery life of 12 hours, which is unprecedented for a laptop with features such as this.

The best part about the Delta 15 and Bravo 15 is the fact that all of this has been integrated into a compact and portable design which allows high-level gaming and

mobility at a level not seen prior. But these laptops are not just limited to gaming, the aforementioned aspects also make these laptops highly capable in other areas as well.

The Creator Z16 Laptop is powered by the latest Intel® 11th Generation H series processors and NVIDIA® GeForce RTX™ 3060 Laptop GPU. The Creator Z16 boasts a 16:10 golden ratio display with thin bezels for better viewing angles and increased productivity. A slim CNC-milled aluminum chassis in Lunar Grey adds understated style, while the True Pixel display up to QHD+ resolution with 100% DCI-P3 color gamut supports the needs of designers and creators alike. It is not just a laptop which performs well, but blends in aesthetic elements as well, leading to a truly memorable experience for users. This laptop also speeds up the exportation, rendering and multitasking elements of content creation. Color accuracy for video and photography creation and editing is also very high, thanks to the aforementioned MSI True Pixel Technology.

Speaking about the launch of these new devices, Green Lin, MSI Regional Marketing Manager stated; "MSI constantly strives to offer a better experience for its users, which is why we have come up with these new and improved devices. We are confident that our loyal fanbase in Sri Lanka will greatly benefit from the new and improved devices for both their gaming and content creation needs."

Buy the Creator Z16 now at: <https://winsoft.lk/computer-systems/laptops-notebooks/msi/msi-creator-z16-11uet-16-qhd-120hz-finger-touch-core-i7-rtx-3060-professional-laptop.html>

HNB treats credit and debit card customers to a bonanza of festive seasonal offers

From indulgences such as electronic devices to everyday purchases like groceries, HNB is treating its Credit and Debit Cardholders to a bonanza of offers on a variety of products this festive season, with attractive discounts of up to 70%.

These discounts are applicable on purchases at leading brands, online and fashion retail outlets, restaurants, supermarkets hotels and more, during specific days or within a given period in November and December 2021. Besides discounts, the aptly themed 'A Season Wrapped In Happiness' promotion also offers HNB Credit Cardholders zero-interest instalment plans of up to 48 months across a range of merchants.

Customers can avail themselves of attractive discounts and convenient instalment schemes with no added handling fees on purchases of electronic and electrical items, accessories and other lifestyle items, jewellery

and vehicle parts. Significant discounts are offered on supermarkets, hotel stays, dining, stationery and purchases from pharmacies etc. In addition, zero-interest instalment plans up to 24 months are offered on insurance, educational and hospital payments, as well as any other transaction, except for fuel payments and cash advances, during the month of December.

"Christmas has always been an exciting season for us all at HNB. Each year we celebrate the season with our loyal customers, by offering a wide portfolio of deals from our extensive network of merchant partners. Given the challenging economic conditions brought on by the pandemic this year, we worked towards ensuring our cardholders not only have the options to indulge themselves while also supporting them with day-to-day transactions," HNB, Head of Cards Gauthami Niranjana said.

In terms of electronics, electrical devices, fashion and lifestyle items, HNB has tied up with a wide range of online and retail stores, enabling customers to shop safely from the comfort of their residences.

Many reputed online partners are also part of seasonal offers for this year as well. Any items purchased from selected websites will enjoy discounts of up to 20% within the promotion period, during the days on which offers are valid. Domestic fitness equipment and accessories purchased from Quantum.lk are offered discounts of up to 15%. HNB Credit Cardholders can pay for purchases from many of these online stores via zero-interest instalment schemes.

A large number of popular retail and lifestyle outlets are also part of the promotion. Depending on the merchant, these outlets offer discounts of up to 50% on selected items, together with zero-interest instalment schemes up to 48 months.



Eco Spindles ramps up efforts in driving forward Sri Lanka's sustainability agenda; aims to increase plastic recycling by 10%

Eco Spindles, Sri Lanka's largest plastics recycler equipped with one of only two plants in the world capable of creating polyester yarn directly from recycled PET plastic flakes, has significantly bolstered Sri Lanka's recycling capabilities by creating an ecosys-

tem for recycling within the country.

This year, the company has seen the culmination of its significant investments and efforts in setting up an efficient mechanism for the collection of plastics, creating a network of corporate part-

nerships and increasing consumer awareness.

These efforts collectively seek to raise Sri Lanka's recycling rate of Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) plastics from around 15% at present to 20% to 25% by the end of 2022.

"Recycling requires collaboration between diverse stakeholders, ranging from households to collectors to the private sector and beyond. Hence, Eco Spindles identified that creating a cohesive ecosystem for recycling is critical in laying a foundation for a culture of recycling in Sri Lanka. We have managed to bring the necessary stakeholders and build such a foundation to strengthen and expand recycling in the country,"

explained Manoj Udawatte, CEO - Eco Spindles Recycling.

The company's investments in recycling infrastructure enable Eco Spindles to collect approximately 6 million PET bottles monthly in Sri Lanka. This is expected to increase to more than 9 million PET bottles once the tourism industry recovers.

These PET plastics are collected through corporate and other partners, collectors and drop-off bins for consumers/households. Drop-off bins can be located using the 'Waste 2 Value' mobile app available on the Google Play Store and (Apple) App Store. Currently, there are more than 400 drop-off bins in the Western Province and 50 in other areas in Sri Lanka. By the



end of 2022, Eco Spindles intends to more than double this network by having 700 drop-off bins in the Western Province and 300 in other areas of the country - bringing the total within the island to 1,000.

The company has also mobilized a network of collectors to obtain used PET bottles. Currently,

more than 500 collectors are registered with the company. In addition to strengthening recycling, this provides an essential source of additional income to low-income groups - such as coastal communities - particularly since the company pays the highest rate in the market for PET bottles.