



TAKING THE INTERNET BY STORM

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the morning



'HAWALA SYSTEM IS FUNDED BY DRUG MONEY'

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BOI UNIONS VS. BOI LEADERSHIP

»SEE PAGE 6



'LIKE TYING A TIME BOMB TO THE LEG OF A HOUSEWIFE'

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CEB engineers hold 'positive' meeting with PM



CEBEU President Eng. Saumaya Kumarawaddu PHOTO SAMAN ABESIRIWARDANA

- Say PM promised to resolve issue over Chairman, GM
- Prez promises meeting upon return to Sri Lanka

The Ceylon Electricity Board Engineers' Union (CEBEU), which is engaged in ongoing trade union action, said yesterday (5) that its meeting with Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa last Saturday (4) had been "very positive" and that they hope to meet with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa as soon as he returns from his visit to Abu Dhabi.

"I think overall, we can say the meeting with the Prime Minister was very positive. He understood our problems and was very attentive to our demands. While the demands regarding New Fortress Energy Inc."

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Over 700 K govt. servants to strike on Wednesday

- Demand Rs. 18,000 salary hike
- Claim all requests to Prez, PM, Basil ignored

More than 700,000 state-sector employees attached to the Sri Lanka Government Officers' Trade Union Association (SLGOTUA) are to engage in a one-day strike on 8 December, claiming that the Government has not yet responded to their request to increase the salaries of public servants as a remedy to the rising cost of living (CoL), *The Morning* learnt.

B.A.P. Basnayake said that there will also be a protest on the same day near the Parliament Roundabout with the participation of public servants representing a number of sectors. Speaking to *The Morning* yesterday, Basnayake said that the SLGOTUA has made requests to

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, and Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa on five separate occasions to increase the salaries of all public servants as a solution to the rising CoL. "Nearly a month has passed since the first request was made, but the Government has so far failed to find a solution or discuss the matter with public servants. We have therefore decided to apply for leave and not to report to work on 8 December."

To LISTEN to this story, scan this QR code on your device

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Sapugaskanda to recommence tomorrow

Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila has stated that operations of the Sapugaskanda Oil Refinery, which were temporarily suspended on 15 November, is scheduled to recommence tomorrow (7).

On 15 November, Energy Minister Gammanpila said the Sapugaskanda Oil Refinery would be temporarily closed for a period of 50 days as the country's limited foreign exchange needs to be utilised for the importation of other essential items, while the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) trade unions suggested that this move could drive up fuel-related costs instead of reducing them.

However, the Energy Minister stated on his official Facebook page yesterday (5) that operations of the oil refinery would resume on 7 December. As such, this will only be the 22nd day since the halt of operations of the Sapugaskanda Oil Refinery.

Furthermore, when inquired about the impact of this temporary closure on the by-products produced at the Sapugaskanda Oil Refinery, Ministry of Energy Secretary K.D.R. Olga stated that it has only had a significant impact on Jet A-1 fuel and kerosene.

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Plantation Ministry to discuss relief for estate workers

- UN's expert on slavery highlights workers' 'inhumane' conditions

The Ministry of Plantation is to discuss with the plantation companies the formulation of a programme to provide relief to the plantation workers who are currently facing difficulties due to the significant increase in the prices of essential commodities.

It has been reported in recent days that the plantation workers are facing many difficulties due to the increase in the prices of essential commodities, especially wheat flour.

Accordingly, when contacted by *The Morning* to inquire as to whether the Plantation Ministry has any plans to formulate a programme to provide relief to the plantation workers, the Plantation Ministry Secretary Ravendra Hewavitharana stated that although the Plantation Ministry...

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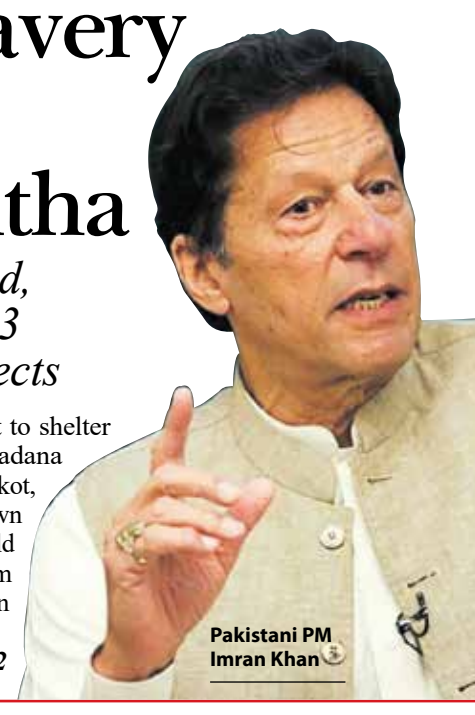
Pakistan to give bravery award to man who tried to save Priyantha

- PM Khan assures President Rajapaksa justice will be served
- 120 arrested, including 13 prime suspects

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan announced yesterday (5) that the man who tried saving the Sri Lankan national during last week's lynching incident will be awarded the Tamgha-i-Shujaat – the second-highest civil award for bravery bestowed by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Adnan who tried his utmost to shelter and save Priyantha Diyawadana from the vigilante mob in Sialkot, (including) endangering his own life by physically trying to shield the victim. We will award him Tamgha-i-Shujaat," PM Khan shared on his Twitter account.

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Pakistani PM Imran Khan

Gas companies will resume supply today, assures CAA

Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. and Laugfs Gas PLC will resume the supply of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) to the country from today (6), following a discussion with State Minister of Co-operative Services, Marketing Development, and Consumer Protection Lasantha Alagiyawanna yesterday (5), the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) announced in a press release yesterday.

The CAA's conditions are that the companies not release previously imported stocks, include a standard percentage of mercaptan to ensure that there's a smell...

The press release said the two

Contd. on page 2

Priyantha Kumara's remains to be flown back home today

- Postmortem confirms extent of fatal injuries during gruesome lynching

The remains of Diyawadana Don Nandasiri Priyantha Kumara, who was killed by a mob of supporters of a hardline Islamist political party in the Sialkot area of Pakistan last Friday (3), will be dispatched to Sri Lanka today (6) through SriLankan Airlines at state cost, the Foreign Ministry announced yesterday (5).



A tribute to Kumara in Sialkot PHOTO © AP

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Prez rejects BOI Chairman and others' resignations

The Presidential Secretariat has, through letters signed by the Secretary to the President Dr. P.B. Jayasundara, informed all Board of Investment (BOI) members who resigned last week that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has refused to accept their resignations, *The Morning* learnt.

The letters, dated 2 December 2021 and as seen by us, had been served to the BOI Chairman, Director General (DG), and three Directors who had resigned from their posts last Thursday (2) via letters sent to the Presidential Secretariat.

Read the full story on *The Morning Business*, Page 8.

US urged to find meaningful devolution in an undivided SL

The US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs has written to US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, urging the State Department to focus on a "durable political solution" which provides "meaningful devolution of power in an

undivided Sri Lanka". "We strongly urge the State Department to refocus its efforts in Sri Lanka to emphasise the importance of a substantive and durable political solution. The US has rightly championed justice and human rights in Sri Lanka."

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'Islamist extremism worse than any other type of extremism'

Gnanasara Thera speaks on Pakistan lynching

Claiming that Islamist extremism has now become more horrendous and savage than any other type of extremism in the world, Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) General Secretary and One Country...



Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera

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Gnanasara Thera responds to G.L.'s promise to Islamic countries

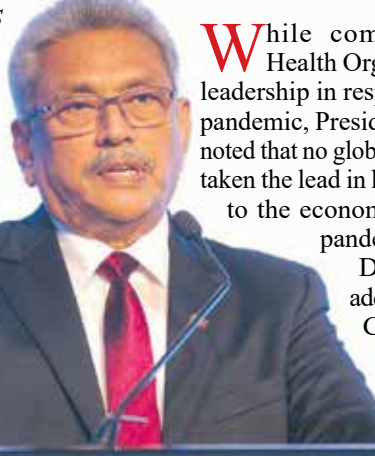
The Presidential Task Force on One Country, One Law will make recommendations on how the country's legal system should be amended in a way that suits the people, and not politicians or the Task Force members, said the One Country, One Law Presidential Task Force Chairman Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera.

It was reported this weekend that the Foreign Minister Prof. G.L. Peiris has, at a meeting...

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Prez laments lack of WHO-like body for economic recovery of developing nations

- Urges wealthy nations and multilateral organisations to forgive, restructure, or grant moratoria for poorer countries' debt repayments



President Gotabaya Rajapaksa addressing the Indian Ocean Conference

While commending the World Health Organisation (WHO) for its leadership in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa noted that no global institution had similarly taken the lead in helping countries respond to the economic ramifications of the pandemic.

Delivering the inaugural address at the Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) held under the theme "Ecology, Economy, Epidemic", in Abu Dhabi, the UAE,

last Saturday (4), President Rajapaksa had noted how the pandemic had affected economies worldwide, adding: "Developing countries in particular have been very badly impacted. The loss of revenue from tourism, the loss of foreign exchange remittances from expatriate workers, and the loss of export earnings have been especially devastating. "When combined with the high public expenditure necessary for healthcare and social welfare programmes, as well as the fiscal and monetary policies needed to support economic revival, many developing nations including Sri Lanka now find themselves..."

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COVID-19 CASES

ACTIVE CASES: 10,735

DEATHS: 14,461

RECOVERED: 542,326

TOTAL CASES: 567,522

SOURCE: HEALTH PROMOTION BUREAU UP UNTIL 5.30 P.M. ON 5 DECEMBER 2021

{ NEWS }

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CEB...

“(NFE) are more long term, he agreed that our short-term issues related to the General Manager (GM) and Chairman of the CEB can be solved quickly,” CEBEU President Eng. Saumaya Kumarawaddu told *The Morning* yesterday.

Eng. Kumarawaddu said President Rajapaksa had assured them of an audience as soon as he returns from Abu Dhabi, where he is visiting to attend the Indian Ocean Conference (IOC).

The CEBEU has been engaging in a work-to-rule protest action from 25 November, demanding that the deal with US-based energy company New Fortress Energy Inc. on the Yugadanavi Power Station in Kerawalapitiya not be proceeded with, and also to immediately stop the abrupt transfers of senior management in the backdrop of this deal.

Meanwhile, CEB GM M. Ranatunga has raised suspicions that the islandwide power blackout which occurred last Friday (3) was related to the ongoing trade union action. However, Eng. Kumarawaddu has stated that their trade union action was not connected to the blackout.

On 29 November, a number of areas around the island reported power outages. CEB Chairman M.M.C. Ferdinando has reportedly filed a police complaint regarding this and is also conducting an investigation to determine whether the outages were a result of a deliberate act of sabotage.

In a press release issued in September 2021, New Fortress Energy Inc. said that it would acquire 40% of the shares of the 310 MW Yugadanavi Power Station and that, as part of the agreement, it would also provide about 1.2 million gallons of liquified natural gas (LNG) to the Government per day through a LNG terminal which will be built off the shores of Colombo.

The New Fortress Energy deal has received much criticism over the past month, as it has allegedly been acquired outside of the proper tender procurement process and without proper cabinet approval. CEB Chairman Ferdinando said recently that the content of the agreement cannot be disclosed due to a condition in the agreement and that the agreement has not even been presented to the CEB yet.

Minister of Power Gamini Lokuge said on 10 November that the controversial agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and US-based company New Fortress Energy Inc. will be presented to Parliament in the following week. However, this promise is yet to be fulfilled.

Over...

“In addition, we have planned to hold a protest near the Parliament Roundabout with the participation of a large number of public servants,” he said.

According to Basnayake, Grama Niladharis, Development Officers, Agricultural Research Officers, and other field officers representing several state institutions will be engaged in these trade union actions while the trade unions operating within the Sri Lanka Postal Department and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority have also expressed their support.

The SLGOTUA, on 14 November warned that it would initiate a trade union action without giving notice, if the Government did not increase the salaries of public servants through the 2022 Budget. Pointing out further that the prices of essential items have increased several times during the past few months, the SLGOTUA urged the Government to bring in amendments to the Budget to increase the salaries of public servants by at least Rs. 18,000.

However, claiming that there is no possibility of raising the salaries of public servants under the present circumstances, the Finance Ministry and Treasury Secretary S.R. Attygalle recently called on the public servants who are demanding a salary increase to suggest how to obtain the necessary monies to make such a hike.

When contacted by *The Morning* to inquire whether the Finance Ministry would consider the SLGOTUA’s demand on 17 November, Attygalle said: “It is not possible to do so because there is no provision in the Budget for such a salary increase at the moment. However, the Finance Minister has asked the National Pay Commission (NPC) to fast-track the designing of a new salary structure, considering the salary anomalies, etc. That is the only proposal as of now.”

Speaking further, Attygalle added that a sum of Rs. 324 billion a year would be needed to increase the salaries of all public servants by at least Rs. 18,000, as the SLGOTUA has demanded. “There are 1.5 million public servants. It would cost Rs. 324 billion a year to increase their salaries by Rs. 18,000. At present, the Government spends only Rs. 1,000 billion to pay the total salaries.”

He also said that the only way to increase the salaries as demanded by public servants would be to increase the taxes across the board. “Tell them to propose how to get the necessary money for it too,” he mentioned.

Pakistan...

Video footage has shown a man clad in a red sweater – identified as Malik Adnan – jumping in and trying to save his colleague Priyantha as the mob thrashed him. He formed a protective shield over him with his own body and bore the

beating for a while but was unable to continue putting up resistance after a point.

After Priyantha was killed, another man, wearing a black jacket, could be seen joining his palms together and pleading to the mob to spare the body and not set it on fire. But he was tossed aside by the vicious crowd.

As pressure mounted on the Pakistani Government to bring the guilty to justice, over 800 people have been booked under terrorism charges while 13 prime suspects are among 118 arrested so far in the horrific lynching of the Sri Lankan national in Punjab Province, a top police official said last Saturday (4).

On Saturday, PM Khan announced that he had spoken to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and assured him of justice.

“Spoke to Sri Lanka President Gotabaya Rajapaksa today in the UAE to convey our nation’s anger and shame to people of Sri Lanka at the vigilante killing of Priyantha Diyawadana in Sialkot. I informed him 100-plus people were arrested and assured him they would be prosecuted with full severity of the law,” he Tweeted.

As of yesterday (5), a total of 124 suspects, among which are 19 key suspects, were arrested in connection with the incident, according to Pakistani media.

The killing occurred after angry supporters of Pakistan’s hardline Islamist party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) attacked a garment factory and lynched Diyawadana, its General Manager, before setting his body on fire.

(With inputs from PTI and other agencies)

Priyantha...

His remains will be received by the next-of-kin at Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA). The Foreign Ministry said it is co-ordinating the matter.

Meanwhile, Minister of Justice Ali Sabry PC issued a statement on the incident, which read: “Devastated and horrified to hear the shocking news of Priyantha Kumara’s death in Pakistan at the hands of a violent and senseless mob. Hate crimes are a cancer to society which will destroy the very fabric of a nation unless rooted out in its entirety.

“My thoughts and my prayers go out to the family of the victim during this difficult time. The perpetrators of this barbaric act must be brought to justice and face the full force of the law. It is positive to note that the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan has already taken steps to supervise the investigations and has firmly directed the authorities to take stern action.

“It is also a positive development that almost 100 suspects have already been arrested, including the main suspect. Extremism has no place in this world, and its existence in any form or manner is a threat to everyone in society. No one should face its sheer tyranny. Unless everyone is safe, no one is safe.”

According to the Foreign Ministry, the Sri Lankan High Commission in Islamabad has requested an investigation report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pakistan regarding Kumara’s death.

Yesterday, Pakistani media cited Kumara’s postmortem report as confirming that all bones in his body, with the exception of one foot, had been broken and his body had been nearly 99% burnt in the lynching incident, while the cause of death was listed as skull and jaw fractures. All his vital organs, as well as his liver, stomach, and one of his kidneys, were affected, while torture marks were visible all over his body and his spinal cord was broken at three different points, the report said.

A Punjab Police spokesperson had told Pakistani media that the remains were sent to Lahore following the autopsy, after which it was to be handed over to the Sri Lankan Consulate following the required legal formalities.

The Sri Lanka High Commission in Islamabad, in co-ordination with the Foreign Ministry, is also in discussions with Pakistan authorities and the employer of the deceased regarding the payment of compensation, the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry had stated.

Furthermore, Minister of Labour Nimal Siripala de Silva has instructed the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Market Diversification and the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) to prepare a future welfare programme for Kumara’s family members and other dependents, expeditiously.

Diyawadanage Don Nandasiri Priyantha Kumara, a graduate from the University of Peradeniya, is survived by his wife and two children. He left for Pakistan for employment in 2010 and has been working as the Manager of the Sialkot factory since 2012. He was working as the General Manager in the Rajco Industries (dealing in garments – sportswear) in the Sialkot District, some 100 km from Lahore.

Video footage of the brutal mob attack was widely circulated on social media and is being used to track down the perpetrators. However, Kumara’s family members have requested the general public to cease sharing said footage and remove it from the internet, out of respect for the deceased and his kin.

“Please remove the footage from media all over the globe and from our hearts forever,” they had stated.

US urged...

“Advancing these values will require solutions to political questions that remain unanswered years after the end of the civil war, including the meaningful devolution of power in an undivided Sri Lanka,” Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Gregory W. Meeks has said in his letter to Blinken.

Whilst Meeks has emphasised that it is the Sri Lankan people who should lead the debate on the matter, supported and facilitated by the US, the outcome must meet the “needs of all Sri Lankan citizens, including Tamil and Muslim people”.

During their recent visit to the US, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Parliamentarians M.A. Sumanthiran PC and Shanakiyan Rasamanickam, along with representatives of the Global Tamil Forum (GTF), met with a number of senior US political figures, including members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

“The particular focus of the current engagement was to call for a proactive US Government role in promoting a holistic approach to reconciliation, which would include addressing the root cause of conflict and human rights violations, the denial of political rights to the Tamil people. The delegation emphasised that addressing the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people for equality, justice, peace, dignity, and meaningful power devolution is critical in guaranteeing non-recurrence of history,” the GTF said in a statement at the time.

Speaking in Parliament last Saturday (4), Sumanthiran raised concerns that the Government is promising devolution of power internationally, whilst promoting the concept of “One Country, One Law” domestically.

Sumanthiran said: “While to the world you say that you will enhance devolution and settle this matter once and for all, something else is being said domestically. A slogan titled ‘One country, One Law’ is being projected. If ‘One country, One Law’ is to become reality, then there cannot be any legislative power in the provinces. How can provinces exercise legislative powers if there is going to be ‘One country, One Law’? As it is in our Constitution, there is legislative power devolved to the provinces; on some matters exclusively to the provinces, and therefore there cannot be one law for the entire country.

“The promise to India and to the world has been that you will enhance that power of devolution. That there will be more devolution. That the 13th Amendment would be implemented in full, but it doesn’t stop there. It says ‘and building upon it, so as to achieve meaningful devolutions, conceding thereby that even the 13th Amendment to the constitution does not confer a meaningful scheme of devolution, that it must go beyond that’.”

The 13th Amendment to the Constitution, passed in 1978 and supported by the Government of India, created the provincial councils election system which led to the establishment of provincial councils in each province in the country, in an attempt at the devolution of power. However, the provincial councils have since garnered many criticisms, with some members of the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) recently calling for its repeal. Since 2017, provincial council elections have not been held as the then Government attempted to introduce legislative changes to the Provincial Councils Act to reform the process. The new system envisioned a hybrid-style system of both first past the post (FPTP) and proportional representation as opposed to the current system of proportional representation.

Foreign Minister Prof. G.L. Peiris said last month that a draft of a new Constitution, as formulated by a nine-member expert committee, will be presented in Parliament in early January 2022.

Gas...

...to determine a gas leak, and conduct sample checks on every one in 100 cylinders. The companies are required to inform the CAA Technical Committee that they have met these conditions before releasing their products to the market.

Attempts by *The Morning* to contact Litro Gas Lanka Chairman Theshara Jayasinghe, its Sales and Marketing Director Janaka Pathirathna, and Laugfs Holdings Chairman W.K.H. Wegapitiya for more details regarding the matter proved futile.

These decisions were taken following a spate of LPG-related explosions that occurred in the country over the past month, with some days averaging over 30 such incidents. An emergency meeting by the Consultative Committee on Trade was convened over the matter in Parliament last week, following severe allegations that Litro Gas had changed the usual proportion composition of gas from 70:30 (butane to propane) ratio to 50:50.

However, both Laugfs Gas and Litro Gas Lanka have stated that their gas composition falls within the 30% (propane) and 70% (butane) range, as per test results they have conducted. A parliamentary special advisory committee is due to release a report on the matter within two weeks whilst President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has also appointed an expert committee to investigate the incidents.

‘Islamist...

...One Law Presidential Task Force Chairman Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera said the brutal killing of Priyantha Kumara by a mob in Sialkot, Pakistan last Friday (3) should be used as a catalyst to eradicate the growing Islamist extremism in Sri Lanka.

Commenting on the death of Kumara to the media yesterday (5), Ven. Gnanasara Thera said that despite the existence of various other forms of extremism in the world, including religious extremism, Islamist extremism has now become the most horrendous and savage of all.

“The consequences of any type of extremism, not just religious extremism, can be devastating, but Islamist extremism is the most horrendous and savage extremism to which any other extremism in the world cannot even come closer. It is relentlessly undermining the values of all the achievements of man over the centuries, including science, technology, knowledge, culture, civilisation, art, and philosophy,” he said.

Ven. Gnanasara Thera also said that it was important to understand the true nature of Islamist extremism that is currently engulfing the world, adding that the brutal killing of Kumara should be used as a catalyst to defeat the rising Islamist extremism in Sri Lanka as well.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday stated that the remains of Kumara would be dispatched to Sri Lanka today (6) through SriLankan Airlines at state cost. According to the Foreign Ministry, the remains would be received by Kumara’s next-of-kin at Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA).

Sapugaskanda...

“This has had some effect on Jet A-1 fuel and kerosene. Considering the matter, arrangements have been made to import them as finished goods without any shortage,” she explained.

In addition, she said that by-products such as furnace oil and chemical naphtha were also manufactured at the Sapugaskanda Oil Refinery, adding that the halt in the production process, however, would not have a major impact on such products.

Prez...

“...in a very difficult situation. Countries that had taken on significant external debt to fund their development programmes are particularly badly affected, with very little reserves available to meet debt repayment obligations.

“Sadly, in contrast to the leadership provided by the WHO for the global pandemic response, no world institution has stepped forward to help countries navigate their economic recovery. Inter-governmental groups, regional blocs, multilateral organisations, and individual countries that could have assumed such a role on behalf of the global economy have not done so.”

During his address, President Rajapaksa also commended the level of international co-operation during the initial stages of the pandemic, which included sharing data and technical expertise, supporting capacity building in healthcare systems, and providing financial assistance. He also delved into Sri Lanka’s efforts to control the pandemic through public health measures and an expedited vaccination drive, which, he noted, owed its success to Sri Lanka’s Armed Forces, while also expressing gratitude for vaccine donations from India, China, the US, and Japan.

He also noted: “The measures taken worldwide to combat the pandemic, although they proved invaluable in saving countless lives, came at a steep cost. The rapid decline in economic activity these measures caused have had serious long-term consequences on global travel, trade, and economic growth.”

It was here that he focused on the negative economic consequences of the pandemic, before going on to note that the ongoing climate crisis poses another difficult challenge to humanity.

“As the recent United Nations (UN) Climate Conference has shown, achieving truly global consensus on this critical issue is difficult,” he stated. “Nevertheless, global action on limiting deforestation, curbing use of fossil fuels, preventing overexploitation of finite resources, and increasing use of renewable energy is essential.”

“As a developing island nation that is very vulnerable to climate change, Sri Lanka is deeply aware of these dangers. Adverse weather patterns caused by climate change have already affected the country on several occasions in the past decade. There is every likelihood that the impact of these phenomena will worsen in time to come. We must act now before it is too late.”

He went on to note: “Another critical area of focus for countries in the Indian Ocean region and our global partners is security. A considerable proportion of the world’s trade in commodities and manufactured goods takes place through the Indian Ocean region. Maintaining the integrity of its sea lines of communication (SLOC) is therefore of utmost importance to the global economy.

“In this context, however, it must be admitted that the Indian Ocean region is also the location of considerable criminal activity, including human smuggling, drugs smuggling, and terrorism. These are all major issues that need to be addressed.”

Noting that thwarting drug smuggling and human trafficking would require co-ordinated efforts between nations, he stated: “As Sri Lanka’s experience with the devastating Easter Sunday attacks of 2019 has shown, this problem

too is not one that can be contained to any specific locality. Extremist and terrorist ideology can spread with ease from nation to nation unless carefully monitored and suppressed.

“The only way to do this is through intelligence sharing and other forms of inter-governmental action, which I strongly advocate for. I am confident that with greater international co-operation, countries in our region will be able to better withstand all the challenges that they face in terms of ecology, economy, and epidemics.”

President Rajapaksa concluded with the assurance that Sri Lanka would fully co-operate in any regional mechanisms proposed to meaningfully accomplish this.

Plantation...

...is not in a position to intervene directly, it is possible to formulate some relief in consultation with the plantation companies.

He said: “At present the majority of plantation workers live on lands owned by plantation companies. Therefore, each company has formulated various programmes for their welfare. Especially, as the Plantation Ministry does not have the provisions to implement such a programme, but we can negotiate with the plantation companies and implement a programme such as giving plantation workers some land to grow vegetables.”

Hewavitharana also said that a programme was already underway to remove barriers to plantation workers’ activities such as dairy production and cultivation, adding that the said programme could be further expanded in the light of the current situation.

The prices of essential commodities have been hiked significantly in the recent past. Plantation workers mostly consume food made of wheat flour and recently the price of 1 kilogramme (kg) of wheat flour went up by Rs. 17.50. In addition, the prices of many other goods such as rice, vegetables, and bread have gone up.

Meanwhile, UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery Tomoya Obokata, concluding his recent visit to Sri Lanka, has said that Sri Lanka’s Malaiyaha Tamil workers are living in “inhumane and degrading” conditions.

“Contemporary forms of slavery have an ethnic dimension. In particular, Malaiyaha Tamils – who were brought from India to work in the plantation sector 200 years ago – continue to face multiple forms of discrimination based on their origin,” he said.

Roughly 1.5 lakh people from the community, with a population over 10 lakh, are engaged in direct labour in the estates, and most of them are women. Their daily wage of Rs. 1,000 – won after sustained protests in recent years – is tied to an arduous target of 18-22 kgs of plucked tea leaves every day, to be met rain or shine, while braving leeches and wasp attacks. A prominent item in Sri Lanka’s export basket – apart from garments, rubber, and spices – tea brings roughly \$1.3 billion a year into the country.

Pointing to the workers’ colonial-era line room accommodation, where up to 10 people live in a 10x12 space, poor sanitation, and the persisting denial of land rights to the community, Obokata said last Friday (3): “While I am aware that some alternative houses are built, for instance, in cooperation with the Indian government, I was appalled to see that the inhumane and degrading living conditions in the line houses persist to the present day.”

Gnanasara...

...with the envoys from Islamic countries, stated that Sri Lanka would continue to retain personal laws for different communities, which contradicts the motive behind the appointment of the Presidential Task Force on One Country, One Law.

Accordingly, when contacted by *The Morning* to inquire as to whether the said Presidential Task Force had reached any conclusions about how to deal with personal laws, Ven. Gnanasara Thera said: “We are currently in the process of preparing a series of recommendations in this regard. We need to make recommendations in a way that suits the people, not the politicians or us, the Task Force members.”

He also said that other parties are free to express their views, adding that a final decision on the law reforms would be taken in the end, taking into account the recommendations of the Presidential Task Force and views of the other parties.

“Prof. Peris will express his views, others will express theirs, and we will also make our recommendations. In the end, all of them will be taken into account and a final decision will be made on how the legal reforms should be made. Otherwise, this is not something about which we have to divide into groups and debate,” he added.

The Presidential Task Force on One Country, One Law was appointed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on 27 October for the implementation of the “One Country, One Law” concept. The Task Force is chaired by Ven. Gnanasara Thera of the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), while Senior Assistant Secretary to the President Jeevanthie Senanayake is its Secretary.

As per an Extraordinary Gazette issued in this regard, the Task Force is tasked with preparing a draft Act for the implementation of the “One Country, One Law” concept. The Task Force has been instructed to submit monthly reports to President Rajapaksa, while the final report is due to be submitted on or before 28 February 2022.

AT A GLANCE

UNDERWORLD TIES SUSPECTED IN BRUTAL KESELWATTE MURDER

The Police are investigating suspected underworld links to the brutal murder of an individual on Old Moor Street in the Keselwatta police area last Saturday (4). The victim had been hacked to death at around 11 p.m. on Old Moor Street, and was subsequently identified as 33-year-old Mohamed Kamil Mohamed Fawaz, a resident of Colombo 12.

The Police suspect that the murder was the result of a rivalry between two criminal groups, and also suspect that the hit was carried out by members of the underworld gang led by Rajapaksha Arachchilage Dinuka Madushan, alias "Keselwatta Dinuka".

A body believed to be that of "Keselwatta Dinuka" was brought down from Dubai to Sri Lanka on 18 March, which was confirmed via DNA testing.

GRANDPASS BUSINESSMAN ARRESTED WITH 'ICE' WORTH RS. 30 MILLION

A Sri Lankan businessman was arrested at the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) while attempting to smuggle crystal methamphetamine, also known as "ice", worth around Rs. 30 million into the country.

The arrested passenger, a 43-year-old resident of Grandpass, had arrived in the country yesterday from Chennai, India, aboard SriLankan Airlines flight UL126, and was searched by Sri Lanka Customs officers attached to the Arrival Terminal.

Two parcels containing ice, weighing 1.5 kg in total, were found concealed inside milk powder boxes inside his luggage. The estimated street value of the seized drugs is around Rs. 30 million.

MAN DIES TRYING TO CUT INTO MORTAR SHELL

One person was killed while another was injured yesterday (5), when they had tried cutting into a mortar shell in Kilinochchi.

The fatality, a 25-year-old man, had found the shell and taken it to his home for inspection, according to Police Media Spokesperson Senior Superintendent of Police Nihal Thalduwa, and the incident had occurred when he had tried using a grinder to cut into the ordinance.

His younger brother was injured during this incident and admitted to the Kilinochchi Hospital. A subsequent search of the victim's house had revealed several similar shells, and the Police are further investigating the matter.

Johnston denounces SJB's 'menacing' behaviour in P'ment

● *Claims Manusha Nanayakkara threatened Speaker over imposition of debate time limit*

Chief Government Whip Highways Minister Johnston Fernando said that SJB MP Manusha Nanayakkara ran to the Chair threatening the Speaker last Friday (3), after the latter imposed a time limit for the debate in the House.

Speaking in Parliament last Saturday (4), Minister Fernando said: "The CCTV video footage of the incident would provide evidence and prove the aggressive behaviour of MP Nanayakkara and how he turned violent after the Speaker ruled against additional time."

"MP Nanayakkara ran to the Chair menacingly and it is our duty to protect the Speaker. I went there to defend the Speaker. An MP has no right to threaten the Speaker or a presiding member. Some of those in the Opposition seem to think that they are the governing party in this House when they issue threats and demands to the Speaker."

He went on to say: "The incumbent Speaker is a man who upholds democratic values unlike his predecessor Karu Jayasuriya who did not even allow the Opposition MPs to raise a Point of Order. The incumbent speaker addresses UNP Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe as the former Prime Minister. During the times when Karu Jayasuriya was the speaker, Mahinda Rajapaksa was addressed as an MP. I tried to protect the Speaker and state that we would not allow anyone in the Opposition to lay their hands on the Speaker. We also demand from the Speaker to conduct an investigation against the incident of MP Nanayakkara threatening the Speaker."

Justice Minister speaks at World Law Congress 2021

Minister of Justice Ali Sabry was invited to represent Sri Lanka as a panelist at the World Law Congress (WLC) 2021 held in Barranquilla, Colombia from 2-3 December 2021, according to the Ministry of Justice.

The World Law Congress is an event organised by the World Law Foundation, while the main organisation holding its Biennial Congress within the framework is the World Jurist Association (WJA), which has special consultative status to the United Nations (UN).

Minister Sabry was invited to be a panelist on the panel "Rule of Law, the new national security geostrategy and legal certainty". The other panellists included former Prime

Minister of France Manuel Valls, Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich, former US Secretary of Defense and Central Intelligence Agency Director Leon Edward Panetta, former Minister of Defence of Spain Maria Dolores de Cospedal, and former Minister of Defence of Italy Giampaolo Di Paola.

The WJA has celebrated biennial congresses around the world since 1965, all of which have focused on the promotion of the Rule of

Law as a guarantor of freedom and development for nations. Other law-related organisations are also given a platform to share their knowledge with the wider legal community attending the World Law Congress (WLC).

During the WLC sessions, over 2,000 worldwide leaders gather to discuss current matters that the legal world should address. At the WLC, heads of state, chief justices, justices, judges, academics, notaries, registrars, lawyers, law students, and jurists in general share a single forum.

It is attended by distinguished jurists, as well as journalists, politicians, businessmen, ambassadors, and other professionals



Minister of Justice Ali Sabry PC at the World Law Congress 2021

whose career converges with law-related topics: human rights, financial litigation, education, constitutionalism, intellectual property, free journalism, democracy, among other topics, are discussed every two years during this worldwide event.

Global power rivalries will destabilise Indian Ocean region, warns Ranil

United National Party (UNP) Leader MP Ranil Wickremesinghe warned that increasing rivalries between global powers would lead to instability in the Indian Ocean region (IOR).

Speaking at a special plenary at the fifth Indian Ocean Conference in Abu Dhabi yesterday (5), the former Prime Minister had noted that the growing rivalry between the US and China, alongside the Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) military alliance, is pushing the IOR towards instability by shifting the focus from economic and social challenges faced by countries in the region.

Discussing these challenges, he had highlighted how the devastation of Covid-19 on human health and wellbeing has been compounded by the adverse effects of climate change in the IOR.



UNP Leader and former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe speaking at the fifth Indian Ocean Conference in Abu Dhabi yesterday (5)

for education in some countries are being reduced to increase allocations for health, adding that it is also disrupting the social fabric of all countries, including an increase in reports of addiction and domestic violence.

"There will be an accrual of these, and further costs, given the culmination of the destructive impact of the pandemic in escalating social and political tension," Wickremesinghe cautioned.

He also said that the loss to Asian countries from climate change is five to six times greater than their western counterparts.

"The ensuing human displacement, migration, and construction of new human habitation caused by ecological changes will be an intolerable burden on the affected countries in a region, given their limited resources to combat climate change," he noted.

"Depressing as it is, we need to understand that a further downturn of our economies will reduce the resources for development already being eaten up by the increasing ecological and pandemic costs in an intersecting, downward spiral. Yet, we cannot discuss the IOR without accounting for another intersection – that of geopolitics – the simmering power rivalries between the US and China in the IOR," he went on to note.

Here, Wickremesinghe noted that this picture becomes even more complicated by the addition of the AUKUS military alliance, which also covers the Indian Ocean.

"These developments in an increasingly multipolar world order will bring about regional instability in the Indian Ocean. The entanglement of great power rivalry in the Indian Ocean risks removing the focus on the public health shortfalls, digital inequalities, education disparities, unemployment, and social fragmentation in some of our countries. The end result will be a further de-stabilisation of the IOR," he warned.

He said the intersecting economic setbacks from Covid-19 and impediments from accelerated climate change as well as the US-China rivalry have a potential to become a critical drag on this region that could prevent its potential to be the next global economic growth pole.

"In such a scenario, the growing presence of advanced economies of Europe as outside players in the region could result in a throwback to the 17th and 18th Century Indian Ocean scenario, with more powerful outside powers dominating the weakened Indian Ocean states. This is a wake-up call for our region – for effective regional co-operation," Wickremesinghe warned.

At least 14 dead after Indonesia's Mount Semeru volcano erupts

At least 14 people are dead and hundreds are displaced after Mount Semeru, a volcano in Indonesia's East Java province, erupted last Saturday (4), authorities said.

Indonesia's National Board for Disaster Management (BNPB) said in a statement Sunday the eruption had wounded 56 others, with 35 people in serious condition, after it covered villages with ash and left people to run from billowing clouds of debris.

Five of the victims have yet to be identified and nine people are still missing, the BNPB said. Some 1,300 people have been displaced by the eruption and reached evacuation centers, it added.

Hundreds of houses have been totally destroyed and 33 schools have been damaged by the eruption, according to the BNPB.

Officials say the situation at Mount Semeru remains dangerous due to the risk of pyroclastic flows – a mix of ash, rock and volcanic gases that can be much more dangerous than lava.

"We recommend everyone to increase their alert because the potential threat of pyroclastic flows

is still high. It can happen anytime without any warning," Chief of the Mount Semeru Observation Post, Liswanto, told CNN yesterday (5).

Liswanto said yesterday his team recorded two pyroclastic flow events. The first was at 5 a.m. and the second one was at 10 a.m. The deadly volcanic material was rolling down to Curah Kobokan village, which was evacuated on Saturday.

They have urged people living up to six miles away from the volcano to evacuate as pyroclastic flows "is very hot, the temperature can reach more than 1000 Celsius," Liswanto said.

Since there is no sign or method to predict when the pyroclastic flow will occur, the phenomenon can be very dangerous, Liswanto said.

One rescue volunteer in Indonesia's Lumajang district told CNN yesterday that he and his team evacuated the bodies of six miners from a river in Curah Kobokan village, where they were mining sand in the river bank.

Some of the miners were still inside their trucks, while others were discovered laying on the ground near the trucks, said 32-year-old volunteer



Ash covers houses and trees on the slopes of Mount Semeru in Lumajang

Muhammad Firman Adiguna Effasa. It is unclear if those six deaths are part of the 14 deaths that authorities announced.

He added he was worried that more miners or other victims could be still out there but won't survive because the lava flood was so intense.

Authorities have converted schools, mosques, village halls and village houses into evacuation centres, the statement said.

Java is the largest population centre in Indonesia's massive island archipelago and home to the capital

city of Jakarta. Standing at more than 12,000 feet high, Mount Semeru is the tallest mountain on Java.

Volcanic ash and the smell of sulfur was first reported around 3 p.m., according to the Mount Semeru Volcano Observation Post. The station added that hot ash clouds were falling towards an East Java village, Sapitarang, in Pronojiwo District.

Videos shared by government emergency response teams showed residents in the area running away from huge thick clouds of ash. Other

footage shared by locals showed people gathering at a local mosque in Besuk Kobokan as smoke blankets the surrounding streets.

Following the explosion rescue officials scrambled to evacuate victims from the surrounding area.

Indah Amperawati, deputy head of Lumajang District, an area close to the volcano said Saturday that most of the burn victims have been evacuated to the Penanggal Primary Health Center alongside a resident who died in the village of Curah Kobokan.

Emergency services had been unable to reach several other villages due to roads being blocked by mud and fallen trees, Indah told the press conference.

The military has been asked for people and equipment to support rescue efforts, Maj. Gen. TNI Suharyanto, the head of the BNPB, told the press conference.

Budi Santosa, head of disaster management of East Java province, said Saturday that two sub districts had been "badly affected" by the volcano's eruption.

(CNN)

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Stick before the carrot, cart before the horse

It would be safe to say that Sri Lanka is on trial with the very future of the country at stake; yet, as Sri Lanka's tailspin nose-dives into a vortex, the solution – leadership – seems increasingly yoked to political arm twisting, that is spreading across all levels of governance like a bad rash. The bottom line is that such a pervasive attitude that seems to colour virtually everything that the Government does, and which results in everything it touches turning to the very antithesis of King Midas's touch, is dangerously counterproductive, not only because of its mentality contains within its fertile soil the destructive seeds of both subservience and revolution.

But how much of this can be blamed on leadership, more precisely, a malodorous brand of leadership, best exemplified by the British jurist John Austin's command theory of law, in which law and policy are seen as commands, directives, instructions or orders from a sovereign, backed by sanctions or the threat of such, in this case, punitive sanctions. It seems that there is more than a fair share of those in the Government, including in the Executive and Legislative branches, who subscribe to this problematic school of political and legalistic thought. In equestrian parlance, not only has the Government led by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa increasingly sought to place the cart before the horse, but even in the instances where the sequence has been properly ordered, it has all but forgotten the carrot, and is wielding only the stick. The Government is stuck in a shtick that is becoming only too unrealistic, as in the case of the Central Bank's import restrictions and the proposed freezing of the bank accounts of those who distribute and receive money through unlawful money transmission methods, which affects remittance collection. It is exceedingly humourless, as in virtually every pronouncement by the Public Security Minister, and the since replaced literal bully pulpit style of diplomacy of the former Foreign Minister, and the ominous "kill a crow and hang a feather" appeal against Presidential and Governmental leniency by the Chief Government whip, and the President himself implying that officials who criticised aspects of or dissented from the 100% immediate organic agriculture policy were dishonest when he stated that he needed a team of honest officials to take his hurried policy forward and for those who could not fall in line to leave on their own volition.

President Rajapaksa has his own "my way or the highway" method of doing things, which smacks more of garden variety authoritarianism. This has been seen in its increasing rejection by multi-sectoral professionals and technocrats who do not take to having freedoms and independence curtailed beyond a certain limit. Most dangerously, this governing with the stick approach has met its match in the governing by trade unions that has proven deft in wielding the hefty gait of collective bargaining as a potent weapon of bringing the Government to its knees, as was demonstrated by the teachers' and principals' unions, a feat the over one million strong public sector has sought to emulate with an approximately Rs. 20,000 salary hike via the Budget 2022. Dealing with trade unions requires strategic compromise and pragmatism based leadership.

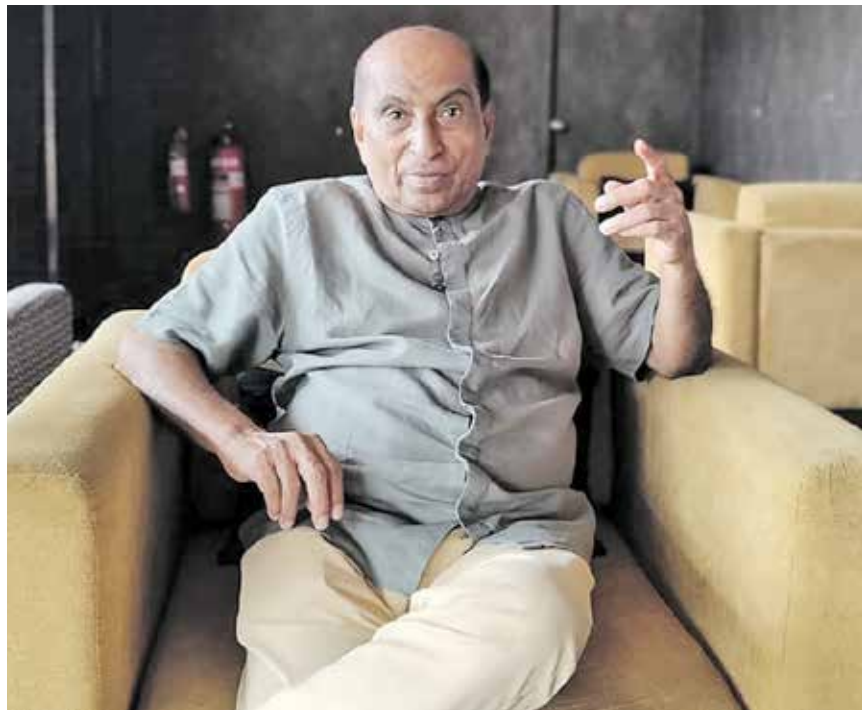
For British analytic philosopher and logician Bertrand Russell, "the fundamental cause of trouble in the modern world" was that "the stupid are cocksure while the intelligent are full of doubt". Why then are our elected leaders so unwilling to entertain criticism, at least those of the kind founded more upon the spirit of enquiry. The people who exercised their franchise neither sought nor elected a Government of enlightened men and women. They however, must have had, no matter how meagre, some lowly expectations. Where are, they may have queried, the antidotes to stupidity, the doubting Thomases? It seems that this rare open-minded breed are either relegated to the professional doldrums, or ignominiously targeted with canards such as in the case of the ex-Consumer Affairs Authority Executive Director turned whistleblower and prominent thorn in the Government's side. The Government by not understanding the tactical advantage of a bird in the hand being worth two in the bush is effectively making foes out of allies. Troubleshooting, which is a prominent part of the Governmental role, requires driven, purposeful, and mature leadership reliant upon negotiation and persuasion and give and take, rather than sophomoric blame games and dogged adherence to the doggerel of dogma.

It is therefore a pity indeed that the wise men of the Government have not sought to establish a Ministry of Human Resource Management. In its absence, perhaps a popular school's anthem's call to learn of books and learn of men and learn to play the game, with the emphasis on continued learning, could be the path to turning a new leaf in the direction of governance.

During the ill-fated bid to conquer the South Pole, Irish explorer Ernest Shackleton, leading a group of marooned men afoot on floes with paltry supplies, surrounded by mother nature's inhospitable bosom, and with no means of communicating with the rest of the world, let alone co-ordinate the organising of a rescue mission, was reduced to the most stark of circumstances, with the most insurmountable question before him – how exactly was he going to accomplish the goal of his men's survival. N. Koehn noted in her book *Forged in Crisis: The Power of Courageous Leadership in Turbulent Times* that even though the answer to the question was anything but clear, the most important part of the answer however, despite acute doubt in Shackleton's own mind on the "how" factor, was clear as crystal to Shackleton. She wrote: "What Shackleton did know was that he was committed to bringing all his men home alive, and that he was willing to do whatever it took to accomplish this. In the midst of disaster, he had made a conscious choice to lead. He was all in (and most importantly)...whether or not he acknowledged his own culpability, he was prepared from the onset of the crisis to take full responsibility for the outcome of the enterprise." Leadership is an attitude and Sri Lanka is in need of a sea change. The change is of humaneness in the exercise of authority in a nuanced manner.

'Like tying a time bomb to the leg of a housewife'

● *Oil and gas expert Nimal De Silva weighs in on Sri Lanka's explosive gas cylinder issue*



BY PAMODI WARAVITA

Liquefied Petroleum Gas, known commonly as LPG, is used in nearly every household for the preparation of food, and is by and large considered an essential commodity. However, in April 2021, when Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. – the state-owned entity in the country's LPG market – introduced a new 18 litre gas cylinder to the market, the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) raised concerns about the company changing the composition of gas to a 50:50 butane:propane ratio, from the usual 70:30. Concerns about this change were centred on the fact that this altered composition could lead to affect the internal pressure of the cylinders, and thus pose an increased risk of gas leaks. Litro later withdrew the controversial product from the market.

Unfortunately, this did not prove to be the end of the issue, as last month, an unusual number of LPG-related explosions were reported, with more than 30 such incidents reported on some days. Although both Litro and Laugfs Gas PLC have refuted claims that the incidents are linked to any issues with their cylinders or the gas composition, burning questions about the cause of the incidents remain unanswered.

Last week, the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on Trade held an emergency meeting with industry experts to discuss the matter, among whom was Nimal De Silva, who carries over 45 years of experience in offshore oil and gas exploration, oil and gas transmission pipelines, petrochemical plants, and offshore wind energy. Having worked in over 20 countries, De Silva has been highly critical of the domestic market and the safety standards it follows.

The Morning spoke to De Silva over the weekend for his views and expertise on the recent incidents in Sri Lanka.

Following are excerpts from the interview:

Does a compositional change in gas cylinders lead to a change in pressure and risk?

Yes, definitely. Litro is not very sure what the composition is – sometimes they say 80:20 (butane to propane), or

70:30. They cannot say it varies on a 20% basis. An estimate is 2%. If they are saying it varies on a 20% basis, that is a guess; that is not an estimate.

If the composition is made 50:50, there is almost a 50% increase in pressure at our temperatures. That means the valve and the washer cannot hold this pressure. All other components in the market such as the hose and the regulator are designed to withstand a composition of 30:70 (propane to butane).

Moreover, both companies – Laugfs and Litro – must adhere to the same composition. Otherwise there is no standard in the domestic market.

So you believe that the Litro cylinders, which underwent a composition change in April are still in market circulation, despite the company saying that they took them out of circulation?

They have to prove that they took those cylinders out of market circulation. We are suspecting that they are still in circulation and that is the problem.

Could there be any other reasons for the recent spate of incidents than the composition change?

There is a cylinder, valve, regulator, hose and cooker. A cylinder is like a pressure vessel. Sri Lanka also has a specification for the cylinder, but it is not at all detailed like the

specifications in say, India. Sri Lanka only specifies the amount of pressure that the cylinder can withstand.

There is no evidence that the companies clean the cylinders every five years.

Sri Lanka gets the cheapest gas, which means low quality gas with a lot of impurities. There is a small percentage of these impurities mixed in the cylinder and are present at the bottom of the cylinder. When you get a cylinder from the outlet, you pay for this little bit of impurities at the bottom as well. Thus, as the years go by, the impurities build up in the cylinder.

Thus, every five years, the companies are responsible for cleaning it. I believe that Laugfs has said that they do clean it, although we have no evidence of it. I do not think Litro has made a statement about this. Also in Sri Lanka, it is not specified that the companies must clean it. That is where the standards are lacking in this country. This cleaning process must be done, otherwise the companies are cheating the customer. Otherwise, the customers are paying for the junk as well.

A valve is not expensive, it only costs about \$ 2. There is a specification for the valve as well. The valve is the most important part. Sri Lanka does not manufacture valves – they are imported. The valve is tightened by a machine onto the cylinder. In the Sri Lankan plants, only the gas filling is done. There is a rubber washer on the outside of the valve which gets damaged as the time goes by. The companies do not seem to be checking it. When the washer inside the valve gets damaged, a leak occurs. The companies know it. That must be checked every time the cylinder goes back to the plant. They must check it for leaks.

They must change this valve every time the cylinder is sent back to the plant as a safety precaution as this is a very low cost to the companies.

So you believe that the valves are not checked properly by the companies?

If they do it, then we won't have any leaks. People are conducting soap tests at home, which show that there are leaks from the cylinders. That means the companies have not checked it. If Litro is claiming that they have checked every cylinder, then how come there are cylinders in the market with leaks? There was a video circulating which shows the water bath that Litro claims to use to check for leaks from the cylinders. But that is a very crude way of checking for leaks. How can minor leaks be detected from such a water bath?

Some officials have stated that there are minor leaks occurring from any cylinder and that that is natural? Is that so? Is that the standard case?

No, that should not be the case at

all. There should not be any leak from any cylinder. That must be the safety standard they adhere to.

So the cylinder and the valve should be checked by the companies?

Changing and checking the valve is the duty and responsibility of the companies. Nobody is taking action against this. The public could even think that the Ministers are covering this up. The cylinder and the valve are the responsibility of the supplier. If there is even a minor leak, they should not release it to the market.

The other components such as the hose, the regulator and the cooker are the responsibility of the consumer and the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA).

Last month, the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) took a number of samples to conduct tests to check the composition changes. However, these tests have come under criticism by the two LPG companies. Where exactly should the samples be taken from?

They must take the samples from the liquefied form.

The LPG companies have mentioned that they do not trust Sapugaskanda's lab facilities. Can the test results from Sapugaskanda be trusted?

Yes, definitely. Why not? Sapugaskanda has been there for a long time.

The CPC is said to have sent their results to the University of Moratuwa, which will compile a report. Have you seen the report by the University of Moratuwa? Was this discussed at the Consultative Committee meeting which occurred in Parliament last week?

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

What should be the immediate next steps?

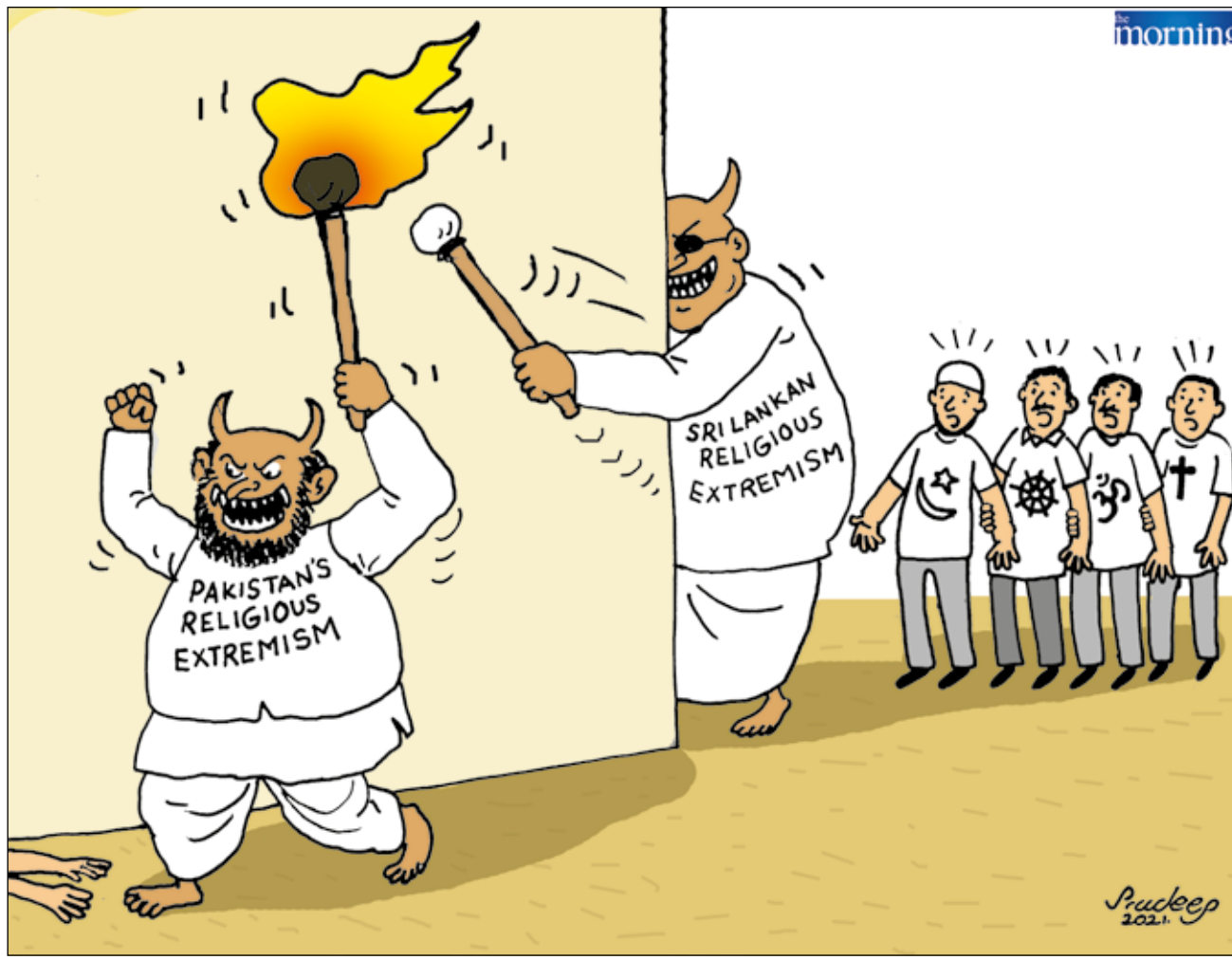
The Government should take immediate action for safety. They must ensure that the valves are checked and maintained properly by the companies and that the cylinders are cleaned every five years. The gas cylinder I use at home – the last inspection was done in May 2016 – as indicated by the date on the cylinder. That means it has been in circulation for more than five years. As I mentioned to you, the cylinder valve should be replaced every five years. Probably most of the explosions may have occurred because the gas companies have not changed the valve on time. That is quite dangerous.

This issue actually disproportionately affects women. This is like tying a time bomb to the leg of a housewife. In our culture, a kitchen is a woman's domain. The first thing she does is make tea in the morning in the kitchen for her husband. She spends the most amount of time in the kitchen. I am surprised why female MPs are not more concerned about this or more vocal about this. Because it is women, they are not considering this issue seriously.

In the longer run, there should be better transparency with companies consistently updating the Parliament about their adherence to safety standards. The company websites only display the price and where you can buy the products from. There is nothing about the standards or safety standards and it is only in English. How can customers access it and understand them? These things must also be fixed.

Any message to the consumers?

Some precautions must be taken at home. Before turning on the gas cylinder in the morning, open all windows and doors so there is sufficient ventilation in the room. Do not use a mobile phone or any other battery-operated device in the kitchen as this could cause a spark. Even the battery-operated gas leak detectors which are in market circulation should not be used in the vicinity of the cylinder as they could cause sparks and subsequent explosions.



SAFEGUARDS in cyberspace

● How will the new Data Protection Bill protect Sri Lankans?



We live in a digital age, and while there is a greater emphasis on people's privacy or personal data, it is also something we have very little of due to the ways our personal information can be shared and processed

BY SUMUDU CHAMARA

Having to provide a name, date of birth, mobile number, or email address, when installing apps/software, or having to permit the collection of internet-related data by websites when using the internet, are extremely common experiences nowadays, and sometimes, we have to grant access to what is stored on our devices. Unfortunately, we have very little freedom to choose what information we share, and the information we give is often used for various purposes such as advertising.

We live in a digital age, and while there is a greater emphasis on people's privacy or personal data, it is also something we have very little of due to the ways our personal information can be shared and processed. In this context, various countries have looked into introducing laws to protect people's personal data, and restricting the ways and reasons entities can use, store, or process such data.

Sri Lanka too identified the need for such a legal framework some time ago, and the drafting of a law to protect personal data was underway. After a lengthy process, the Cabinet of Ministers recently approved the draft data protection bill, and on 25 November, the Government issued a Personal Data Protection Bill.

Personal Data Protection Bill

The Bill provided for the regulation of processing of personal data, and to identify and strengthen the rights of data subjects (a person to whom personal data relates or belongs) in relation to the protection of personal data. In addition, the Bill also provides for designation of the Data Protection Authority (DPA).

Information and Communication Technology Association of Sri Lanka (ICTA) General Counsel and Bill Drafting Committee Chairman Jayantha Fernando, last week, stated that this Bill primarily intends to balance the interests of enterprises that rely on personal data, and the interests of individuals whose personal data is being processed.

The Bill states that every (data) controller (an entity that determines the purposes for which and the methods through which personal data is processed) is bound to ensure that personal data is processed for a specified, explicit, and legitimate reason, and that purposes and such personal data should not be further processed in a manner which is incompatible with such purposes.

The provisions of the Bill, however, do not apply to any personal data processed purely for private, domestic, or household purposes by an individual, and also any data other than personal data.

Further processing of personal data by a controller for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific research, historical research, or statistical purposes will not be considered incompatible with the initial purposes (referred to in the Bill). However, controllers are required to ensure integrity and confidentiality of personal data that is being processed.

Describing the applicability and implementation of the provisions of the Bill (once it is passed in Parliament), during a webinar held by the ICTA and the Sri Lanka Institute of Directors (SLID), Fernando further said that it also aims to ensure transparency and accountability in data processing activities. Fernando added: "The way in which personal data should be processed and managed by entities that collect people's data, also known as controllers or processors, are statutorily governed through the Personal Data Protection Bill."

Bill ensures corporate liability with regard to proper management of personal data

"A set of statutory rights have been given to individuals (through the Bill)," he said, stressing that the citizens' rights is what is primarily guaranteed through the Bill and the rights of data subjects are specifically covered through the Bill.

Those who collect and process personal data, according to Fernando, will be tasked to ensure security and confidentiality of personal data they process, by employing appropriate security and technical and organisational measures, and they will be further required to meet minimum transparency obligations. He pointed out that not only companies, corporates, and government entities in Sri Lanka, but also foreign platform providers and foreign entities that offer goods or services to data subjects would be subjected to the provisions of this Bill.

One of the specialities of this Bill,

according to Fernando, is that it ensures corporate liability with regard to the proper management of people's personal data. He added: "A penalty can be imposed under Part 6 of this statute once it is enacted, and if it was imposed on a body of persons or a corporate entity; every person who, at the time of the non-compliance under this law, was a director or other officer responsible for management or control of that entity, would be liable."

Data protection authority

Speaking of the proposed establishment of a data protection authority, he said that for the proposed law to be successful in order to attract digital investments, Sri Lanka also needs to have an effective, strong, and independent data protection authority.

Objectives of the authority, as mentioned in Part 5 of the Bill, include regulating the processing of personal data in accordance with the provisions of the Act, safeguarding the privacy of the data subjects from any adverse impact arising from the digitalisation of the procedures and services in the public and private sector, providing for mechanisms to ensure the protection of personal data of data subjects engaged in digital transactions and communications, and ensuring the regulatory compliance with the provisions of the Act to facilitate for the growth and innovation in digital economy.

Data privacy and the right to information

Moreover, Fernando discussed the concerns pertaining to data privacy and right to information, which some parties such as Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL), have pointed out. TISL, in its legislative brief on the Bill, recommended that a specific exception be included in the Bill in order to ensure that the Right to Information (RTI) Act is not overridden in case of an inconsistency.

TISL explained: "In terms of Section 35 (1) (e) of the Personal Data Protection Bill 2021, exemptions, restrictions, or derogations to the provisions of the Bill are allowed for the protection of right to information. This provision attempts to guarantee the balance between the two rights. However, Section 3 of the Bill states that in the event of any inconsistency between the provisions of the Bill and the provisions of any written law, the provisions of the Bill prevail. Section 3 of the Bill can, therefore, repress the application of the RTI Act in case of a conflict between the two laws. It can affect the procedures set out by the RTI Act to access information, ultimately

restricting citizens' fundamental right to access information."

TISL said that practically, it can also lead to a self-censoring at the information officer level due to the lack of absolute clarity on whether the provisions of the RTI Act can be applied without fear of impinging on data protection rights, and that this situation can also lead to an increase in refusals and in turn, appeals, which would increase the burden on the State and detract from the principle of maximum disclosure upon with the right of access to information is founded. TISL recommended that the Bill should recognise application of the provisions of the RTI Act as a proviso to Section 3 of this Bill.

With regard to the alleged clash between data privacy and right to information, noting the right to privacy guaranteed under Article 14 A of the Constitution, Fernando said that even though the Bill may be construed as a restriction, he would consider this data protection framework as a facilitator tool. He added that the provisions of the Bill allow sharing of data based on a written legal obligation stemming from the RTI Act, among other purposes or requirements.

Laws to protect personal data

During the discussion, International Association of Privacy Professionals member and Certified Information Privacy Manager (CIPM) and Certified Information Privacy Professional/Europe (CIPP/E) Sanduni Wickramasinghe described the context in which Sri Lanka drafted the laws pertaining to the protection of people's personal data.

She said: "When we started the process of drafting the Bill in early 2019, the privacy and data protection landscape in Sri Lanka and globally was very different from what we are experiencing today, and obviously, the pandemic has forced many of us to be more technology savvy and has forced entities to go in the path of digital transformation. Owing to that, so many issues of privacy and data protection have arisen, and people have become more careful about their privacy and protection than they were two years ago.

"Also, since this is an ever-changing landscape, since General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Europe's data privacy and security law) came into effect in May of 2018, it has had a global ripple effect even in companies that are located in Sri Lanka. So, similarly, as the law progresses, we would see how the data protection law in Sri Lanka will also have such an effect across the country, and across controllers who are private and public entities."

Speaking of the benefits of adopting laws to protect people's personal data, she added that while the proposed law would assist controllers to be more compliant with the laws pertaining to personal data, it will also be beneficial from a business and an operational perspective.

"This law imposes certain principles which require controllers to comply with, and these include having a lawful ground to process (personal data), consent, vital interest (in this case, when the processing of personal data is vital to an individual's life/survival), legitimate interest (in this case, when processing of data is done in a manner people would reasonably expect and would have a minimal impact on privacy), and public interest (in this case, when processing of data is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the interest of the public)."

Adding that the proposed law requires companies that collect personal data to collect or process that information only for a specific purpose and to ensure that the entire processing activity is limited to that specific purpose/s, Wickramasinghe said: "So, it will prevent companies from using personal information for purposes that are not disclosed to the data subject. Also it limits the retention period (how long personal data is stored or achieved) to ensure there are technical and organisational measures implemented to ensure security of information, and to ensure the processing activity is transparent and accountable."

She also elaborated on consent-related aspects of personal data, noting: "Certain rights have also been recognised; among them are, the right to withdraw, right to have access to a person's information, right to delete information in certain circumstances, and the right to rectification. All of this combined will create a huge change in technical and organisational measures in terms of how personal data is processed."

Meanwhile, ICTA Chief Digital Economy Officer Anura de alwis,

speaking of the relevance of having laws to protect personal data, noted the importance of data protection-related risk management needs, in a context where the world has switched from physical documentation to digital devices and platforms and then to cloud services (to store and process data), which increase the likelihood of people's data from being exposed to external parties. He also pointed out the importance of organisations, the public sector, and also the general public being aware of the provisions of the Bill.

With regard to digital literacy and data protection, de Alwis said: "We look at digital literacy in the country, but when we go for a better digital economy, our measurement, or key performance indicators (KPIs) or indexes, should be digital citizenship, because it encompasses digital law literacy as well. Digital literacy only talks about whether a person can make use of smart technologies or electronic technologies on a day-to-day basis. But, when you focus on the digital citizenship aspect, it has more to do with whether you are using it responsibly."

Expressing his opinions during the discussion, Aventure Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Thurupathan Vijayakumar said that even though the proposed personal data protection law is rather new to Sri Lanka, most organisations (that collect or process personal data) have adopted basic practices that protect certain aspects of people's personal data, and that the process of embracing new laws, however, would be an ongoing process. Nevertheless, he added that the proposed law has to be tested because in certain emerging technologies, there will be certain areas where they would have to debate with the law, especially when it comes to the matter of data retention and ways certain technologies operate.

He opined that bigger enterprises are very serious about implementing data protection laws, and that a lot of companies that store and process data are working towards appointing a dedicated officer to handle personal data protection-related matters. He noted that the Bill also requires the appointment of a data protection officer (DPO).

Following enactment, discourses and raising awareness essential

Speaking of Sri Lanka's situation concerning personal data, he opined that certain technological aspects (relating to personal data) of some businesses have gone a little too far in terms of innovation.

He explained: "There are two categories of personal data, i.e. standard personal data and special personal data. The first category relates to data such as name, email address, and phone number, while data pertaining to genetics, race, or religion could be considered special data. If we take an e-commerce business, for example, they record the customer's name and phone number. But in the Sri Lankan context, just by looking at a name, we can derive the customer's race and religion. They (companies) do that for seasonal promotions. Now, the user/customer has consented to give the name, but has not consented for more personal data to be derived from the name."

He stressed that with the new law about to be enacted, these companies will have to discuss with data protection authorities and inform the users/customers of the new developments in that regard.

Personal data protection/privacy laws are not a new concept to the world, and in a context where there is a growing concern about how business entities use and process people's personal data, a number of countries have adopted laws to regulate that process permitting businesses to use, store, and process data for essential purposes.

While the law Sri Lanka has proposed is yet to be passed, this is a progressive development in a context where Sri Lanka does not adequately discuss how people's personal information is being used for various purposes with or without their consent or knowledge. However, as those who spoke about it noted, Sri Lanka needs to identify the need for raising awareness among not only the general public, but also among the entities that use and process personal data.

BOI unions vs. BOI leadership



Sanjaya Mohottala assuming duties on 9 December 2020 as the 21st Chairman of the Board of Investment

The Board of Investment of Sri Lanka (BOI), the country's chief investment promotion agency, was thrown into turmoil last week, with a mass resignation of its leadership team, including Chairman Sanjaya Mohottala, and several Board members. This comes in the backdrop of several complaints made by employees' unions against the leadership.

Published below in full is the statement from the collective unions of the BOI, as well as the response provided by the BOI management.

BOI unions' complaints against the leadership

BOI Chairman Sanjaya Mohottala has been with the BOI since March 2020. He was Director General (DG) for nine months before taking over the role of Chairman. No other Chairman in the organisation's history had this opportunity to learn about the administration of the organisation through first hand experience. He also had the opportunity to learn from an experienced business leader Susantha Ratnayake, former Chairman of John Keels, who was the Chairman when he came in as DG. He had another advantage in learning about the organisation from the experience of the former DG, who was retained as an advisor to him for a one year period. With all this support, we have not seen the Chairman deliver results in his capacity during the last 1.5 year period.

In fact, Mohottala is from a consulting background. He has said on many occasions that he has brought foreign investments into India and Bangladesh through his earlier workplace, Boston Consulting Group. He has also said that he has the dream to build this same investment into Sri Lanka, but he has not yet introduced a single new project to BOI or Sri Lanka. He is still talking about projects that were introduced during the previous regime such as HCL, or projects that have been brought in by others such as Hambantota International Port Group (HIPG) or the Colombo Port City project. His other tactic is to talk only about the investment pipeline, and avoid talking about the actual foreign investment injected into the economy. This is his way of managing numbers and figures to show a good picture, when he has actually failed to bring in foreign investment. This is actually misleading the public and the authorities and he is not giving due recognition to existing BOI investors who have been reinvesting in the Sri Lankan economy even during the pandemic. These existing BOI investors are responsible for 85% of national industrial exports and have been leading the export fightback for the Sri Lankan economy. This re-investment is possible because of the support and facilitation provided by existing BOI officers, and the Chairman has not given recognition to this fact.

Mohottala has also recently told the public that he is working without a salary and with a big personal expense. But he has not mentioned that during the time he was DG he was paid a monthly salary of Rs. 1 million and the actual reason he is not getting paid is because he has asked for a pay review for the Chairman post which is entitled to only Rs. 100,000 as according to the President's instructions. So he is once again misleading the public when he says he is working without pay/honorary basis, because he is asking for a high salary.

Mohottala as the BOI DG made a great public show of introducing a new strategy to BOI. But this information was shared with the public before he shared this information with the internal officers at BOI, including top management. In fact, BOI Department Heads were informed about this strategy many weeks after he had shared it in newspapers. This created a lot of unrest among the existing staff, who were unable to get any responses from the Department Heads when questions came up about the future of the BOI and the new strategy. This new Chairman has been doing most of his work without a clear plan communicated to the BOI staff.

The Chairman created a situation of unrest again, when the BOI staff got to know, again through the newspapers, that BOI is recruiting new staff, at very high salary scales, outside of the existing standards of recruitment. This was the second time that BOI Department Heads had to deal with staff unrest because they were concerned that they were losing career opportunities. Finally the Department Heads had to request the BOI Board to get involved, to get information about the new team being created in the BOI.

At this meeting the Chairman and DG both gave assurances that the new recruitments will not affect the BOI in a negative manner, and that it will have no cost to the BOI because the recruitment of new staff took place due to a request from the Cabinet of Ministers, and that the payment for those recruited will be from the Treasury – however, so far this payment is being made by the BOI. Later, at the Committee On Public Enterprises (COPE) hearing, it was shown that these recruitments were the result of a Cabinet paper presented by BOI Chairman and DG, which has misleading information about the internal capability of the BOI and its officers. Before the COPE hearing, both the Chairman and DG claimed that these new recruitments

are the request of the Treasury and the Cabinet of Ministers, and that they are only following instructions. At this point, when the BOI is directly under the purview of the President, we have to ask the question "who is giving these instructions?" and "what is the purpose behind creating this unrest among the existing staff members?"

To date, the plan or the department structure of the new recruitments has not been shared with the BOI Department Heads. It is almost six months since two new Deputy DGs (DDG) have been appointed at a very high cost of almost Rs. 1 million each (monthly), which is a total of over Rs. 10 million so far. However, the clear plan that they are working on and the organisation structure has still not been shared. This has a continuous negative effect on existing staff who are disappointed that their contributions are being devalued and unrecognised when new recruits with less experience are paid much higher salaries.

It is also unfair that while being paid very high salaries, these new recruits are depending entirely on existing staff for output and making a minimal contribution to the BOI. When this was questioned, the Chairman and DG have said that new people take time to learn. But the Chairman and DG have also said that there is no time to be teaching existing staff new skills, and that is the reason to bring in new staff. This is a total contradiction.

From the start, the Chairman's selection for recruitment has been unsatisfactory. The Chairman has no public sector experience and has made a lot of administrative mistakes even during the time when he was the DG. When he became the Chairman, he hired a DG who also had no public sector experience. In fact, both the Chairman and DG don't have sufficient recent experience of working in Sri Lanka, as both claim they were working outside Sri Lanka for a number of years before taking up their appointments. This lack of knowledge and administrative experience is shown by the DG who after almost one year in his role has cost the BOI over Rs. 10 million, but has done nothing other than to rely on existing staff to run the departments under him, which are facing a lot of hardship due to unclear direction and poor leadership.

The Chairman next recruited a DDG who is a retired senior military officer. This DDG is in charge of BOI Zones and the Investor Services department which handles the customs function on behalf of the BOI enterprises. These are two critical departments that serve BOI enterprises which are all from the private sector. This particular DDG has no private sector experience, which is the main requirement that the Chairman has kept saying many times when talking of the need for new blood at the BOI. This is another contradiction which was even highlighted at the COPE hearing:

"How can you justify recruiting retired military personnel as private sector recruits?"

The DDG Marketing, Talent Management, and Research was recruited as a multi-talented individual. So far the only thing he has been doing since joining BOI is to issue press releases promoting the Chairman and his personal profile, without proper focus on the work done by the BOI and its officers. He has been given the management of many departments with very experienced staff, but is unable to provide proper guidance or to successfully lead these departments other than for unsettling the established protocols. He is now trying to show performance by outsourcing most of the work expected from him to different agencies and has called for request for proposals (RFPs) for a public relations agency, a creative agency, a digital media agency and a web development agency. This has caused the BOI staff to question why he is being paid such a high salary if all he is going to do is outsource work.

Both DDGs have now been at the BOI for almost six months, at a cost of over Rs. 5 million each, and a combined cost of over Rs. 10 million. But they have both not delivered in terms of new solutions or ideas and are just trying to manage the ongoing activities of the departments under them, by utilising the knowledge and experience of the existing BOI staff.

In conclusion, compared to staff of other government organisations, BOI employees have a greater exposure

to the private sector, and have a good understanding of the service expected from the BOI. So when the Chairman claims that BOI needs private sector exposure to transform the organisation, we expect truly capable officers to be recruited, who will contribute to the BOI's progress above the contribution of existing staff – this expectation has been let down badly.

In the past, the BOI Chairman has been a highly respected position and local business leaders with sound knowledge and experience and maturity (which is very important) have been appointed to this position. These are individuals who have contributed to the country from outside the BOI and through the BOI too. They did not use the position of the Chairman to boost their personal image, but contributed to the country using the powers of the position.

A mature chairman should be able to identify the talent and the administrative capacity within the BOI. And such a chairman can get the BOI to join hands with a national economic development plan which must include the strengthening of the BOI Act, which has lost its authority as a result of past revisions. Then only can we align BOI to national policy and map out a practical investment attraction plan.

Response from the BOI leadership

The Chairman, Members of the Board, and Director General were appointed by the President, as he has highest confidence in these distinguished officers' capabilities to contribute effectively to promote foreign investments to the best interests of the country, which they have done so, without the sale of national assets. This has further been re-emphasised by the President's refusal to accept their respective letters of resignation (Refer page 1 and page 8).

The allegations presented are targeted personal attacks which have been levelled by individuals who have put their self-interest over the public, unlike the Chairman and Board of Directors who have not drawn a salary since assuming duties in their current roles.

In line with the President's vision of doubling the gross domestic product (GDP) over a decade, the BOI Chairman and the Board of Directors presented a visionary agenda through a strategic framework to generate a compelling investment climate for Sri Lanka. This strategy was outlined to compete against over 1,000 international promotion agencies active globally. There was no further room to continue to simply marginally add to the \$ 18 billion worth of foreign direct investments (FDI) the BOI has drawn in since its inception in 1978, while countries such as Vietnam rakes in close to double that total value in a single year (\$ 38.2 billion in 2019 according to *Vietnam Briefing*).

This strategy was developed to orchestrate national policy holistically and required the collaborative efforts of a public-private partnership model that involved the participation of multiple agencies, which culminated in a presentation to the President for formal ratification. It was then shared with all key personnel of the BOI in a top-down manner for department-wise strategic action planning to take place. The BOI further recognised that the task at hand required the proactive participation of both existing staff, especially Departments Heads and their teams, and the infusion of specialist skills for selected positions, to attract and create new investment portfolios to stimulate the country's trajectory towards a knowledge driven economy.

This unit comprising of specialist skills received the approval of the Cabinet and the budgetary allocation for this recruitment was approved by way of a grant by the Treasury. They were professionals who were recruited based on their requisite business knowledge and proven track record of identified private sector-based industry and domain specific. They require no guidance to discharge duties based on their areas of specialisation and are well aware of the strategic agenda they need to fulfil. However, as with any new recruit who joins any organisation newly, they require a reasonable period of time to acclimatise with the internal processes and protocols that drive the operations of that said entity.

Well planned strategy in execution to reach 10-year CAGR of 6% - 7% GDP growth through key investments

2020 Highlights	2021 Highlights	Work in Progress	Multiprong approach adopted for investor outreach
US\$ 2.3Bn Investment Approvals (New US\$1.5Bn & Expansion US\$ 800Mn) US\$ 1.4Bn Capital Formation (US\$ 687Mn FDI + US\$ 716Mn LI) US\$ 7Bn Exports (65% NE & 85% NIE) 2 EPZs Pharma & Textiles Zones Initiated	US\$ -2.0 Bn Investment Approvals (New US\$ 1.4Bn+ & Expansion US\$ 516Mn) US\$ 760mn Capital Formation (H1) (US\$ 390Mn FDI + US\$ 370Mn LI) US\$ 7.2 Bn Exports (65% NE & 85% NIE) ~US\$1.5Bn large scale investments under negotiations	100+ Companies identified, being profiled, & outreach initiated 12 Industry bodies engaged in key countries ~100 Webinars across 17 countries on 6 sectors with strong interest 10+ core Missions - Other key missions connected	Sector Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manufacturing ICT Tourism Agro/Food Processing Infrastructure Other Services (regional HQ)
			Strong collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry Captains: ICC, HCCSL, etc. Global Partners: JICA, JETRO, kotra, ANIK, UNIDO, MUFG, etc.

FDI-Foreign Direct Investment, LI-Local Investment, NE-National Exports, NIE-National Industrial Exports, EPZ -Export Processing Zones

*Provisional

Approved Projects (As at 2021/12/03)

	YTY (01st Jan to 31st Dec)			YTD (01st Jan to 03rd Dec)					
	2019	2020	2019 Vs 2020	2019	2020	2021	2019 Vs 2020	2019 Vs 2021	2020 Vs 2021
No. of Projects	113	128	13%	106	123	117	17%	11%	-5%
Total Est. Investment (US\$ Mn)	1,123	2,261	101%	1,109	1,232	1,992	13%	83%	62%
Foreign (US\$ Mn)	433	1,653	282%	426	651	980	53%	130%	50%
Local (US\$ Mn)	690	608	-12%	684	581	1,013	-12%	53%	74%

Note: Excluding the Est. Investment worth of \$ 24 bn of HAMBANTOTA OIL REFINERY (PVT) LTD Project, approved in 2019

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SJB and Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa

OPPOSITION LEADER makes proposals to revive ailing tourism industry

With Parliament scheduled to hold a debate today (6) on the issues faced by the tourism industry, Opposition and Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Leader Sajith Premadasa issued a statement regarding the position the industry currently is in and what should be done to revive it, considering that tourism is one of the country's highest generators of foreign exchange income.

His statement is reproduced in full below.

Leading up to 2019, Sri Lanka was recognised as one of the most exciting travel destinations in the world by numerous prestigious publications, including Lonely Planet, The New York Times, and Condé Nast. Improvements to the transportation system, the development of infrastructure, world-class hotels and facilities, and Sri Lanka's natural beauty and hospitality were all contributing factors.

The tourism industry, a critical component of Sri Lanka's economy and a key foreign exchange generator, was left devastated by the 2019 Easter attacks as well as the ongoing global pandemic. The resulting lockdowns have impacted every facet of life and every industry, especially tourism. Research shows that 36% of low-skilled workers and a further 36% of semi-skilled workers have been laid off, while 28% of junior and middle management segments have also been retrenched. Approximately 70% of tourism and hospitality specialists estimate that between 41% and 60% of the total industry workforce would be terminated.

Moreover, tourist arrivals have dwindled, with only 507,704 between January and December 2020 and zero arrivals recorded between April and end-December due to the closure of the airport and suspension of flights since 18 March 2020. This represents a decline of 73.5% over the previous corresponding period, when arrivals exceeded 1.9 million.

There are numerous service providers directly dependent on tourism – over 500 travel agents, 250 recreational outlets, 300 tourist shops, and 5,000 guides, as well as the airlines, with employment opportunities within these service sectors severely restricted. Over 90% of formal sector outlets and 75% of informal sector outlets remain temporarily closed. Over 75% of the informal sector outlets

have closed down operations. Dependent industries have suffered due to sectoral linkages, leading to a multiplier effect, with millions of livelihoods left devastated.

Given the importance of tourism to the economy, the Government of Sri Lanka must prioritise this industry.

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

Based on the above-mentioned critical issues, we submit the following proposals:

a) To restructure the debts obtained by the tourism sector from licensed commercial banks (LCBs) for a period of 10 years with a grace period of two years

b) To waive off the total interest portion of the term loans from April 2019 until 30 June 2022 during the moratorium period

c) To implement the debt restructuring plan recommended by the Monetary Board of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL)

We further recommend abolishing the Local Government Levy up to 1% of the turnover and replacing it with a trade license fee similar to all other industries. In fact, this proposal was presented at the last Budget by the Hon. Finance Minister but has not been implemented to date.

Hotels are also subject to higher electricity tariffs. Tariffs applicable to hotels (i.e. H-1, H-2, and H-3) should be matched with industrial tariffs (i.e. I-1, I-2, and I-3, which are currently lower rates than those for "hotel purposes"). The restructuring of the tourism industry's total debt portfolio of Rs. 350 billion, as per the recommendations of the Monetary Board of CBSL, and the full implementation of concessions granted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 10 June 2020 are of vital urgency. As a measure of immediate relief, the industry has requested authorities to intervene by mandating restructuring and

rescheduling of loan facilities. The CBSL must provide clear guidelines to all LCBs and finance companies regarding the enforcement of contracts and recovery of facilities. Effective mediation is necessary, unlike the previous ad hoc approach. Facilities need to be extended to new, approved projects in the tourism pipeline.

The main objective was to ensure worker retention, even on reduced salary terms. Yet, these have not been met, with a continued spike in terminations across all sectors. Many previously employed in the tourism sector also lack formal social security and are thus vulnerable to bankruptcy and destitution. Revenue from tourism was Sri Lanka's second highest net foreign exchange generator in 2018/19, with earnings amounting to \$ 4.3 billion. As per the last budget speech presented by the former Finance Minister and present Prime Minister, the valuation of the hotel industry has exceeded \$ 10 billion. Apart from the above, according to official data, several government institutions have benefited from the inflow of Rs. 12.6 billion in 2018/19.

It is estimated that the public sector will lose approx Rs. 12 billion in revenue from the tourism sector in 2020, with similar losses expected by the end of 2021. The loss of public sector revenue through tourism in 2020, based on 2019 earnings, is estimated to be around Rs. 12,000 million. Even 2021 will see similar losses. Overall, the economy has lost around \$ 3.5 billion during 2020, and this trend will continue in 2021.

At a time when Sri Lanka has depleted foreign exchange reserves, protecting established and proven avenues for the generation of foreign exchange has to be a primary concern of the Government. Please also note that 90% of all tourism sector investments have been implemented by local entrepreneurs, of which 90% belong to the small and medium category. It is notable that the 2009/10 registered hotel room capacity of 14,461 increased some 71% to 24,757 by 2018/19, a remarkable growth rate that has supported Sri Lanka's investment portfolio.

Based on industry recommendations to the Government, assurances have been given that steps to renegotiate and restructure the facilities extended through commercial banks will be favourably considered. However, in reality, this policy has not been equitably implemented and would

not, on its own, be sufficient to support the industry at this crucial juncture.

The following factors need urgent consideration to support the industry:

- Repayment of accumulated interest on current borrowings, once the moratorium that has been granted comes to an end by mid-2022
- Repayment of any outstanding capital on borrowings by end-December 2021
- Repayment of outstanding statutory payments
- Assistance to support a minimum of six months' working capital
- Assistance towards maintenance and product upgrading to ensure conformity with required quality and standards in keeping with classification requirements
- Assistance for new, approved development projects that are on hold as a result of increases in development costs, mainly due to depreciation of the rupee and the increase in construction costs
- Financial assistance to industry stakeholders to be provided through local commercial banks
- Upon obtaining cabinet approval, set up a separate unit to plan, structure, evaluate, control, and monitor the entire exercise. It could fall under the purview of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Implementation, Ministry of Tourism, or the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) which falls directly under the Ministry of Tourism
- Provide required guarantees to the fund through local banks; a mechanism of the individual entities pledging shares to the value of borrowings or similar can be considered
- Despite offshore funding made available will be in US dollars, lending to industry stakeholders needs to be in Sri Lanka rupees (this will also assist the Government to strengthen its depleted foreign reserves to some extent)
- After careful evaluation of applications against an established criterion, assistance in the form of soft loans needs to be offered, with a minimum two-year grace period on repayment of capital and interest, preferential interest rates below 4% per annum, and a payback period of seven years (in total, covering a period of 10 years)
- Special financial package purely meant for promotions for all local

inbound tour operators as local inbound tour operator business volumes equal to 65% of the total arrivals to Sri Lanka during the pre-pandemic period

We are aware of the forthcoming tourism policy document which has been submitted for public observations. It needs to articulate an action plan for all sectors, namely development, promotion, and regulations, with clear timelines to prevent these policy documents from gathering dust.

We do not believe that this is the appropriate time to enact a rushed Tourism Act replacing the current Tourism Act No. 38 of 2005. The current Act certainly does require changes, but this must include adequate private sector participation in decision-making. It is also an instrument that determines how the tourism fund has to be managed and disbursed.

We note with consternation that the proposed Tourism Act leaves governance aspects to representatives of state bodies, with the private sector invited merely as "observers". It is also transparent that this proposed Act has been orchestrated to suit the needs of certain individuals – this is not acceptable.

The Hon. Minister of Finance indicated the other day that the tourism fund is likely to be revoked and collections will go directly into the consolidated fund. This was the system that we did away with 15 years ago, bringing the current Act to enhance effective industry participation towards the development of tourism. We should not forget that the payoff was 2.3 million arrivals, with tourism receipts hitting over \$ 4 billion. Sri Lanka is one destination out of over 250 competing destinations, hence it is vital that our country is positioned in source markets.

We need to reach out to our primary, secondary, and emerging markets aggressively to prevent ourselves from falling behind other destinations. We are aware of the massive shortage of foreign exchange in the country, and tourism is one effective and sustainable remedy.

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

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BOI unions...

Meanwhile, the skills of existing staff have not been forgotten and have been developed simultaneously. A case in point being a series of digitally-based workshops offered by Acuity Knowledge Partners, on industry specific training from an investment analyst perspective on a weekly basis across investor promotions, investment appraisal, and research departments. Through training and upskilling of this nature, it was hoped that the reliance on the Chairman and DG for their intervention on several operational requirements would reduce significantly over time.

Significantly though, it must also be stated that in 2020 alone, the BOI approved \$ 2.3 billion worth of projects. In addition, \$ 1.4 billion was invested in Sri Lanka. Of this, almost \$ 700 million were FDIs. This is against a backdrop where the global FDI pool has shrunk by over 40% in 2020. In the same year, exports by BOI enterprises totalled \$ 7 billion (which is 85% of the country's total industrial exports and 65% of the country's total exports).

As of November 2021, the BOI has raked in \$ 2 billion worth of investment approvals. Furthermore, as of the first half of the year, \$ 760 million has been invested in Sri

Lanka. \$ 400 million of this is from FDI. In terms of exports, the value generated by BOI companies so far is almost on par with 2019 year-to-date export figures.

The strategy of the BOI

This embodied a seven-pillar approach, hinged on the two main thrusts of country attractiveness and revamping the BOI. Its focus was to attract targeted investments, provide potential investors with end-to-end investor support, foster and nurture partnerships with key public and private stakeholders, process monitoring, embrace technology, and most importantly, develop the organisation and its people.

The framework was conceptualised to provide Sri Lanka with a platform to compete effectively with other international promotion agencies (IPA), cater to the needs of international investors, and strategically attract much needed FDI to the country.

As this transformative shift would also support the doubling of GDP in this decade in line with the President's vision, the BOI was intent on strengthening its foundation to lead the orchestration of attracting market transforming FDIs and make a significant contribution to the Government's transformative economic agenda.

While the BOI strives to provide a diligent service to investors, it recognises

that significant shifts in strategies and work practices need to be adopted if it is to drive the country towards this compelling vision, which involves competing internationally for a globally contracting FDI pool. As it now stands, over 1,000 IPA like Invest Vietnam and Invest India, have understood this and have evolved in structure and form. Having done so, they have succeeded in triggering and being a catalyst in the economic resurgence of their respective countries. They continuously outperform regional peers and are able to draw in global investors with compelling propositions and service offerings, thereby strongly positioning their countries as preferred investment destinations in the regions in direct competition with Sri Lanka.

Set against this backdrop then, the BOI has recognised that the only way it can spur the country towards achieving these ambitious targets and goals, and develop key thrust sectors, is to develop new muscle.

This will enable it to compete shoulder-to-shoulder with regional IPAs on a scale of international competition, since it understands that it cannot continue to operate as it has done so historically. A course correction is therefore mandatory. This required change is likely to be difficult and uncomfortable for some. However, a transformation is necessary, especially from within, if the BOI is to remain relevant to global investors as a preferred destination to attract desired FDI targets.

It is with this intention in mind that the BOI Board of Directors recognised that it cannot work in isolation. The need to work cohesively through a global ecosystem that draws in expertise of multiple stakeholders through a public-private partnership, which includes Embassies and High Commissions, trade chambers and industry bodies, financial institutions, and the specialised services of image building agencies such as international PR, digital marketing, creative and web technologies, and consultancy services is now crucial for survival. This collaborative approach will enable Sri Lanka to compete at the international-scale required and accelerate lost momentum and regain lost opportunities owing to not being activated much earlier. It must be mentioned here that it is also pertinent to study what others have achieved so far by way of similar methods of orchestration, like Invest India.

To further strengthen its ambition, the BOI also sought to source an infusion of specialist skills that were not readily available from within the organisation. The BOI required professionals who would need to possess requisite business knowledge, and a proven track record of identified private sector-based industry and domain specific skills to fulfil this agenda. Therefore, the number of years of experience and mere academic qualifications alone were deemed insufficient to effectively carry out the

dynamic job roles of attracting and understanding global investment patterns and investor mindsets, as well as investor conversions.

This does not mean that BOI does not recognise the skills and capabilities of its current employees. While it appreciates the efforts they make to discharge their duties, it needs to consider the requirements at hand, especially to achieve its broader strategic agenda. A Committee therefore headed by the Secretary to the Treasury was appointed by the Cabinet to review and recommend proposals to meet the objectives of entities such as BOI and the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA). Based on those proposals, a recruitment process which included a print-based mass media vacancy advertisement for interested applicants, where even employees within the BOI were eligible to apply, was followed. Candidates who met the minimum qualification on the first round of application assessment were then required to prepare, present, and defend a case study based on a topic nominated by the Board that would directly relate to the respective job roles. Candidates faced two rounds of interviews where the final round included Board members. At each round, candidates were scored on a marking scheme on par with private sector standards of recruitment and selection.

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the morning business

ASPI	S&P SL20	Market
10,948.32	3,887.10	Market Closed
-263.98	-25.78	Share Volume
-2.33%	-0.66%	305,792,439
		Turnover
		7,082,189,526.05

'Hawala system is funded by drug money'



- **Cabraal advises workers to 'stay away from illegal channels'**
- **Defends official exchange rate; plans to maintain below Rs. 203**
- **3-pronged strategy to develop worker remittances**

BY SHENAL FERNANDO

Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) Governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal, speaking at a recent press conference organised by the CBSL, claimed that, considering the sheer scale of the sum that is being distributed through unofficial foreign worker remittance channels, there exists suspicion that a significant portion

of such sum is "drug money" that is being laundered and advised foreign workers to stay away from such channels in order to avoid being indirectly complicit in such an offence.

"Foreign worker remittance inflows have decreased by over \$ 300 million last month. While the decrease in outflow of foreign

workers may also be a reason, the primary reason for the current state of affairs is the fact that informal channels available for money exchange are, to our knowledge, paying an exchange rate of Rs. 240 when the official rate is only Rs. 200. When \$ 300 million is brought to the country through unofficial channels, the resulting Rs. 72 billion

distributed in the economy raises questions such as where this money has originated from, who possesses this money which is being deposited in the accounts of other persons, etc." he stated.

Explaining further, Cabraal claimed that under the money laundering law of the country, when a person credits money to

the account of another without a legitimate reason, the CBSL shall, through the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), take measures to freeze such accounts. According to him, the CBSL will consider such transactions as illegal transactions and will monitor such transactions strictly.

Contd. on page 9

President rejects BOI Chairman and others' resignations

- **Sends individuals letters to all who resigned**
- **Resignees include Chairman, DG, Directors**
- **Expresses 'highest' confidence in Chairman's capabilities**

BY SHENAL FERNANDO

The Presidential Secretariat has, through letters signed by the Secretary to the President Dr. P.B. Jayasundara, informed all Board of Investment (BOI) members who resigned last week that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has refused to accept their resignations, *The Morning Business* learns.

The letters, dated 2 December 2021 and as seen by us, had been served to the BOI Chairman, Director General (DG), and three



Sanjaya Mohottala



Dr. Harsha Cabral PC



Dr. Harsha Subasinghe

Directors who had resigned from their posts last Thursday (2) via letters sent to the Presidential Secretariat.

These letters sent to each of the resigned BOI members had informed them that the President had refused to accept their resignation letters and wished for them

to continue their services as Board Members of the BOI. It further stated that the President had the highest confidence in their ability to effectively contribute in promoting foreign investments in the best interests of the country and to help with post-Covid recovery.

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The letter from the Presidential Secretariat



ASPI falls below 11,000

The All Share Price Index (ASPI) of the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) experienced a significant fall last Friday (3).

Accordingly, the ASPI contracted by 293.98 points, which is a 2.35% decrease compared to the previous day's close, and at the end of the day stood at 10,998.32. The total turnover during the day was Rs. 7.08 billion.

This represents the first day the ASPI has fallen below 11,000 points after passing that milestone on 25 November 2021.

Similarly, the S&P SL20 Index also fell by 25.78 points (0.66%) from its previous close and ended the day at 3,887.10.

The fall of the ASPI last Friday was largely due to constriction of the share price of a few companies.

The main contributor to the ASPI last Friday was Commercial Leasing and Finance (CLC), which was responsible for a 152.91-point decrease. Compared to the previous day's close, CLC had fallen by Rs. 10.7, which represents a 21.02% decrease, and the stock closed the day at Rs. 40.20.

Other contributors to the ASPI's fall last Friday include LOLC Finance, LOLC Development Finance, Expolanka Holdings, and LOLC Holdings.



Countries reach 'landmark deal' to cut trade costs

Members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have agreed to a landmark deal which could cut trade costs by £ 113 billion a year.

Some 67 members agreed to cut red tape around licensing and qualifications.

The signatories, which include the UK, the US, the EU, and China, are a minority of the WTO's 164 members, but represent 90% of all services trade.

Banking, information technology, telecoms, architecture, and engineering are among the service sectors which could benefit most from the deal.

UK International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said the UK stands to gain as it is the world's second largest services exporter.

She said the deal showed "exactly the kind of co-operation

we want to see at the WTO and demonstrates it can deliver trade rules fit for the 21st Century".

International policy forum the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has estimated that implementing looser regulations in G20 countries – the world's 20 top economies – could reduce trade costs by up to 6%.

The Department for International Trade said the new rules would make it easier for businesses, in particular small and medium-sized firms, to "navigate foreign markets and obtain authorisation to export overseas".

"British businesses consistently cite complex administrative procedures as barriers to accessing international markets," the Government said.

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Access Engineering-led JV to construct ECT

Access Engineering PLC (AEL), a construction enterprise in joint venture (JV) with its technical partner China Harbour Engineering, a world-renowned marine contractor, has been awarded the contract to construct the East Container Terminal (ECT) of the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA).

The project was advertised for competitive bidding where a local company was required to be the majority shareholder of a proposed JV with the requirement of major marine construction experience being contributed by the respective international partners. In this instance, AEL holds 51% of the JV and is set to gain technical knowhow and experience of building large-scale marine construction projects.



AEL Managing Director (MD) Rohana Fernando said: "We will strive to complete the project ahead of the scheduled 36-month contract period." He further stated that this may be the single biggest contract awarded to a Sri Lankan-led JV and commended how SLPA has promoted and given the

opportunity for Sri Lankan companies to take part in such large infrastructure projects. Upon successful completion of the ECT project, AEL would obtain the required experience to compete for similar projects outside Sri Lanka.

The ECT was originally planned to be commercially operational in 2016 and

would be eight years behind schedule when operations are earmarked to begin in 2023. The SLPA has fast-tracked the bidding process and has set aside SLPA reserve funds which allow them to own and operate the terminal.

ECT is the second deep-water terminal to be developed since the Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT) started commercial operations in 2013. The CICT for the first time will surpass 3M 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs) by the end of 2021, which will stagnate further deep-water birthing capacity until the ECT begins commercial operations with the development of its first 600 m of birthing capacity scheduled to be completed by...

Contd. on page 9

hSenid IPO oversubscribed

hSenid Business Solutions (Pvt.) Ltd.'s initial public offering (IPO), which opened last Friday (3), was oversubscribed on the initial day itself, receiving applications over the IPO value of Rs. 691 million.

With its recent IPO, hSenid became Sri Lanka's first-ever software enterprise company to go for an IPO.

Speaking at a press

conference on their recently concluded investor forum and upcoming IPO, hSenid Chairman and Director Dinesh Saparamadu stated that the company expects to raise Rs. 692 million from their IPO, out of which Rs. 202 million would be utilised for the company's product development, while Rs. 400 million would be utilised towards developing partner networks.

"We are planning to expand our business to the commonwealth region, especially Africa, as their systems are still very much manual," Saparamadu noted.

According to him, 25% of their businesses come from the Asia Pacific region, 24% from the African region, and most of the remainder is from locals. He added that hSenid has already acquired about

10 projects in Bangladesh, despite them entering into the country a mere 18 months ago.

Furthermore, Saparamadu noted that approximately 90% of their income is dollar linked, as they invoice even the local projects in dollars due to them hosting services relying mostly on Amazon, where they have to pay Amazon in dollars.

hSenid is a global human resources (HR) software solutions provider that recently announced its plans to go public. Under the guidance of NDB Investment Bank (lead managers to the issue) and CT CLSA Capital (co-managers to the issue), hSenid will offer 55,339,076 ordinary voting shares to the public at a price of Rs. 12.50 per share, seeking to raise a total of Rs. 692 million.

Sunshine Holdings to support CCC's efforts in resetting SL economy



Sunshine Holdings Group Managing Director Vish Govindasamy

For the seventh consecutive year, Sri Lanka's diversified conglomerate Sunshine Holdings (CSE: SUN) will support the country's economic forum, the Economic Summit 2021. Hosted annually by Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC), the foremost economic event of the country will be held from 6-7 December, as a hybrid summit catering to participants who would join online as well as participate in-person, at Shangri-La Colombo.

The theme for this year's summit – "Springboard for revival: Opportunity to reset" – is based on creating an environment that will be a launchpad for recovery while leveraging the opportunity to utilise this period to transform. SLES 2021 will bring together key policymakers, business leaders, top international thought leaders and experts in discussing this environment. The theme has been suitably chosen as Sri Lanka looks to recover from the pandemic-related impacts while navigating external debt concerns as it rebuilds back better. The summit recognises the need to balance growth priorities,

manage the debt dynamics while facilitating more export inflows.

As the gold sponsor, Sunshine Holdings will play a key role by promoting deliberation and discussion on shaping a turnaround for the Sri Lankan economy whilst delving deep into key areas such as trade, investment and services that will help drive the cause.

Sunshine Holdings Group Managing Director Vish Govindasamy speaking of the sponsorship, said: "Sunshine Holdings takes pride in supporting an event of the calibre of the Sri Lanka Economic Summit, a premier thought leadership forum in the

country which generates much needed dialogue on issues which are critical to springboard the Sri Lankan economy amidst numerous macro challenges. As a responsible entrepreneur, who has shaped Sri Lanka's economic drive over the last five decades, we extend our fullest support to the Sri Lanka Economic Summit and we look forward to this year's event with great anticipation."

In addition to supporting the summit through the gold sponsorship, Sunshine Holdings will also contribute towards intellectual discourse at the event with its Group Managing Director Vish Govindasamy participating as the Chairman of the CCC at the first session of the event titled "Setting the Macro Foundation for Growth" – a high-level panel discussion highlighting Sri Lanka's key economic challenges such as managing the external debt repayments in the next five years, while focusing on growth.

Unregulated crypto fueling ransomware attacks globally: Sophos

Fueled by cryptocurrencies, ransomware was involved in 79% of global cybersecurity incidents in the last 18 months of the pandemic, led by Conti and REvil ransomware attacks, a new report by Sophos stated.



Sophos Principal Research Scientist Chester Wisniewski

Cryptocurrency will continue to fuel cybercrimes such as ransomware and malicious cryptomining, and the trend will continue until global cryptocurrencies are better regulated, according to Sophos researchers.

Over the coming year, the ransomware landscape will become both more modular and uniform, with attack "specialists" offering different elements of an "attack as a service" and providing playbooks with tools and techniques that enable different adversary groups to implement very similar attacks.

Some of the most high-profile ransomware attacks of the year involved Ransomware as a Service (RaaS), including an attack against Colonial Pipeline in the US by a "DarkSide" affiliate.

An affiliate of Conti ransomware leaked the implementation guide provided by the operators, revealing the step-by-step tools

and techniques that attackers could use to deploy the ransomware.

"Ransomware thrives because of its ability to adapt and innovate," said Sophos Principal Research Scientist Chester Wisniewski in a statement. "In 2021, RaaS developers are investing their time and energy in creating sophisticated code and determining how best to extract the largest payments from victims, insurance companies, and negotiators."

During 2021, Sophos researchers uncovered cryptominers such as Lemon Duck and the less common MrbMiner taking advantage of the access provided by newly reported vulnerabilities and targets already breached by ransomware operators to install cryptominers on computers and servers.

The use of multiple forms of extortion by ransomware attackers to pressure victims into paying the ransom is expected to continue and increase in range and intensity, the report noted.

"It is no longer enough for organisations to assume they're safe by simply monitoring security tools and ensuring they are detecting malicious code," added Wisniewski.

Contd. from page 7

BOI unions...

While the infusion of new skills was intended to add significant value to the BOI, which includes the mentoring and upskilling of current staff, it does not threaten the livelihood or the status quo of any member of the BOI's permanent cadre. As the budgetary allocation for this recruitment was agreed by way of a grant by the Treasury, it also does not adversely impact the profit and loss statement (P&L). Further, unlike current BOI staff who are part of the permanent cadre, these candidates who are being hired under contract will be assessed bi-annually for performance against targets set and their contracts may be terminated for performance shortfalls.

As a socially responsible employer, the BOI provides all employees with a

productive work environment to operate out of. To accommodate these new recruits therefore, part of the 27th floor of the west wing of the World Trade Centre was identified, as it was a space that was sparsely occupied. This floor was however in a state of dilapidation, worn out and requiring a much-needed facelift. In line with the stipulated government tender process, initial department estimates were prepared, and bids were called for bidders to submit their proposals according to the requirement.

As a result of the recommendations made at the COPE hearing on the possibility of housing the new recruits outside of the BOI, both physically as well as institutionally, the need for the refurbishment of the 27th floor would be assessed further.

Similarly, the 24th floor of the west wing was also in need of a facelift,

and this need was originally identified as far back as 2019 by the previous management, as it is one of the floors that was most frequented by investors and company employees, for services. Even at that time, plans drawn up to refurbish the 24th floor were met with similar resistance, which disregarded the multiple challenges employees and visitors alike faced, such as space constraints, file accumulation on workstations and floors, and the utilisation of infrastructure and furniture that had long surpassed useful life. As a part of this refurbishment process, an initial departmental estimate was prepared. The normal process is, once received, the estimate would be subject to a thorough rationalisation process before RFPs are called and related subsequent necessary approvals are obtained.

Additionally, collectively, between all unions, HR, and the management, a proper rostering system was introduced to provide extended hours of service to ensure the productive use and allocation

of overtime payments, so that investors and customers alike could continue to enjoy services rendered by the BOI unhindered.

All staff, including zone-based officers received an annual bonus in April this year despite the continuation of the pandemic, and no financial or non-financial benefits have been curtailed.

To support all its enterprises, the BOI also launched a massive drive to successfully administer both doses of vaccinations against the Covid-19 pandemic, to employees of all 14 export processing zones (EPZ) across the country. This drive coincided with the deployment of vaccinations across its manufacturing entities that fell outside of the zones as well.

The establishment of two dedicated zones – one for pharmaceuticals in Hambantota and the other for textile manufacturing in Eravur are cases in point where the BOI made progressive strides to enhance the economic landscape of the country.

The zone in Eravur has already secured investment projects approximating \$ 60 million, with additional investors already reserving land. It is expected to draw in a significant quantum of fabric-related imports which approximate \$ 2 billion and also generate 5,000-plus employment opportunities for a region that otherwise ranks high on youth unemployment relative to the rest of the country.

The Sri Lanka Investment Forum (SLIF) 2021 was yet another strategic intervention that took place in collaboration with the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC) and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Considered a marque public-private partnership project, SLIF was initiated to support transformational change in investment for Sri Lanka, further outlining additional policy changes and orchestrations that are needed and ongoing, to create and secure a compelling investment climate to attract sustainable FDI to the country.

Contd. from page 8

Countries...

"Once the new rules are in force, businesses can expect licensing applications to be processed in a timely manner, acceptance of electronic copies of qualifications by competent authorities, and an end to unreasonable and hidden fees."

The most significant thing about this agreement may be that it has actually happened.

It's the first negotiated agreement on services at the WTO in a quarter of a century. Therefore, it's of great symbolic importance.

Business groups have warmly welcomed moves to harmonise regulations and make it easier to sell services around the world. But we'll have to wait and see how much easier it actually becomes.

The OECD estimates that implementing looser regulations in G20 countries could cut \$ 150 billion (£ 117 billion) every year from the cost of services trade. But the theory has to be put into practice.

"WTO agreements may not always make it into the headlines; they may not sound sexy," admitted the organisation's Director General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

But, she argued, this one shows they can make a real difference.

The WTO has struggled to make an impact in recent years when operating by consensus, which means that all member countries have to agree.

This agreement – involving 67 countries representing 90% of global services trade – provides a model for "coalitions of the willing" to make progress on other issues, such as e-commerce and environmental concerns, in the future.

(BBC)

Access...

...May 2023, whilst the full terminal development up to 1,320 m is scheduled to be completed by end of 2024, allowing

a 3M TEU throughput capacity when fully operational.

With the West Container Terminal (WCT) concession already signed with Adani Ports, India and John Keells Holdings, a further 3M TEU capacity by the end of 2024 is expected. Therefore, with a total of additional 6M TEU capacity available from 2025, the Colombo Port is ready to become a premier transshipment hub, giving much-needed impetus to the Sri Lankan economy.

President...

This mass resignation comes as a result of BOI staff protests against a recent decision to hire private sector professionals for a new unit as well as the recent parliamentary Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) summoning which inquired into the BOI recruiting a number of officials at very high salary levels and misleading the Cabinet.

The resignation of BOI Chairman Sanjaya Mohottala and Board Members Dr. Harsha Subasinghe, Dr. Harsha Cabral, and Sanjay Kulatunga were reported first, followed by reports of the resignation of BOI DG Pasan Wanigasekara.

Issuing a statement about the resignations, the BOI blamed both internal and external factions that opposed necessary transformations happening within the BOI. The statement mentioned that these factions either failed or refused to comprehend the competitive realities of the international promotion landscape, in which Sri Lanka needs to compete if it is to attract foreign direct investments (FDIs) at the scale the country needs.

"Unfortunately, the efforts of the leadership to achieve this urgently required transformation were strongly and continuously resisted by isolated factions both within and outside the organisation who have put their self-interest over the public. The Chairman, Members of the Board of Directors, and Director General assumed office with the singular intent of supporting the President's vision to double Sri Lanka's GDP in this decade. In line with this, the BOI's role in transforming the country into

a preferred investment destination by creating a compelling investment climate arose through the conceptualisation and execution of strategic and proactive investment promotions," the BOI stated.

However, despite the unfortunate developments, the BOI stated that its leadership remains confident about the significant potential their reform programme can provide to support Sri Lanka's economic progress in the future, if it is continued to its natural culmination.

In response to this mass resignation, COPE Chairman Prof. Charitha Herath stated that the committee never asked anybody to resign, and instead only did their oversight summons for the BOI. He explained that during the summons, COPE members inquired about all the points made in the Auditor General's report, which was regarding both the previous and current Governments' periods.

The COPE Chairman further stated that regardless of whose time it was, the incumbent officers have to answer and that there were no issues with their summons.

"From the COPE's point of view, we didn't ask anybody to resign or even recommend any resignations. What we did was recommend the BOI to fulfill some of the official requirements for our recommendations. Our members gave varying recommendations based on the Auditor General's report," Prof. Herath explained.

'Hawala...

He also called on financial institutions to report suspicious transactions and claimed that the FIU is obligated to investigate all suspicious transaction reports (STRs).

As such, he called upon all foreign workers to remit money through official channels facilitated by the banking system instead of utilising unofficial channels which shall cause problems within the country.

According to the CBSL Governor, foreign workers who continue to utilise such unofficial channels may face problems, despite their ignorance, over the supervening illegality of the transaction, if the transaction is flagged by the CBSL.

"We kindly request all hard-working foreign workers to remit their money through official channels, which has been incentivised by the numerous benefits provided by the CBSL, which includes the additional Rs. 10 granted

per US dollar. Moreover, they will face grave consequences if they were to continue to rely on unofficial channels," stated Cabraal.

Despite initially granting a Rs. 2 incentive in December 2020, under the "Incentive Scheme on Inward Workers' Remittances" programme, the CBSL so far has proved unsuccessful in attracting worker remittances as such inflows have fallen 13.2% Year-on-Year (YoY) during 2021 to \$ 4.5 billion, compared to \$ 5.7 billion remitted during the corresponding period in 2021.

Therefore, this raises the question as to how effective this recent Rs. 10 per US dollar incentive is, along with other forms of incentives for remittance, in attracting worker remittance. Further commenting on this issue, Cabraal claimed that the CBSL will utilise a carrot and stick strategy which shall involve not only the granting of incentives, but also a crackdown on illegal unofficial remittance channels used to launder drug money.

"We want to ensure that those who are indulging in these practices will find it difficult because we will be looking at the sources to identify them. There are many ways in which this can be identified; all the banks are co-operating and I believe, before long, we will have persons who are indulging in these practices brought before the law, and that will be an important part of this whole exercise," he noted.

According to him, the CBSL has observed certain suspicious transactions and several accounts have already been frozen, and such action will be implemented whenever such a suspicious transaction is identified.

He further claimed that people who have received money through these unofficial channels shall also indirectly be complicit in an offence of this nature, and thus called on ordinary people to stay away from such practices.

Cabraal further defended the current official exchange rate, which currently involves a buying rate of Rs. 198.5 and a selling rate of Rs. 202.9, claiming that different people may have various opinions regarding the value of the Sri Lanka rupee, but the CBSL has the responsibility to maintain the exchange rate.

"Our view is that the rupee has depreciated and we don't want it to depreciate further. We also don't want to enter into an auction sale with these Hawala people," stated Cabraal.

He further dismissed all allegations that local licenced commercial banks (LCBs) are not following the official exchange rate.

According to Cabraal, foreign worker remittances, which traditionally amounts to \$ 7 billion per annum, is essential in providing a substantial cushion for external sector resilience of the country. As such, he stated that specific attention must be paid to this form of inflows in order to develop it further.

Accordingly, he set out a three-pronged strategy to further develop worker remittance inflows. This included firstly to assist foreign workers in migrating overseas.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, 230,000 foreign workers would migrate from Sri Lanka per year. However, this figure has significantly decreased over the past two years and in 2021, only 96,00 workers had migrated abroad. However, it appeared that worker migration has started improving as of last month, as was reflected in the much-publicised queues observed in front of the Department of Emigration and Immigration and over 20,000 workers migrating just within the last month. Cabraal estimated this improvement to continue and said that 20,000-25,000 workers will migrate in the month of December.

Therefore, in order to assist workers in migrating abroad, the Government will speak with the Department of Emigration and Immigration to streamline the emigration process. Assistance will also be granted to establish bank accounts when going abroad as well as in the subsequent remittance of funds to Sri Lanka. For this purpose, Cabraal claimed that they will look to establish branches of local banks at the Department of Emigration and Immigration.

The second strategy, as per Cabraal, involved streamlining the remittance process as many workers have complained of the cumbersome red tape and other issues faced by them in remitting money to Sri Lanka.

The third strategy involved rewarding workers for remitting through official channels. Recently, the CBSL announced that it would be granting foreign workers who remit their earnings through official channels an incentive of Rs. 8 per US dollar in addition to the existing incentive of Rs. 2, during the month of December. According to the CBSL Governor, the CBSL will provide foreign workers remitting through official channels further incentives such as loan facilities to dependents of foreign workers in Sri Lanka, retirement schemes, insurance schemes, and increased duty-free allowances.

SECURITIES/CORPORATE

CSE Corporate Debt Securities

The Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) facilitates the secondary trading of Corporate Debt Securities (Debentures). Debentures are unsecured, medium or long term, interest-bearing bonds issued by private sector companies.

The holders of debentures are considered creditors and are entitled to payment before shareholders in the event of the liquidation of the issuing company. An investor in a debenture is essentially providing a loan to the company, and is entitled to receive interest on that loan. In market terminology, the loan interest is referred to as coupons and there are different types of debentures available in the market depending on the basis of the coupon paid.

- In most debentures the coupon rate would be fixed and will be paid based at promised intervals (monthly, quarterly, semiannually or annually) mentioned at the point of issue
• Some debentures carry floating rate

coupons where the coupon rate changes with market interest rates. If interest rates in the market are going up, investors would receive higher cash flows from these types of debentures and vice versa

- In zero coupon debentures a coupon is not paid until it matures. The investment will accrue interest during the tenure of the debenture, however, will not be paid to the investor till maturity

Trading debentures in the secondary market will pave the way for investors to possibly make capital gains on their investment in addition to interest payments mentioned above.

The following list shows the latest trade details of Corporate Debt Securities that are currently listed on CSE. CDS account holders have the ability to trade in the corporate debt market. Contact your stock broker for more information on opportunities on trading Corporate Debt Securities in the secondary market.

Table with 7 columns: Company Name, Security Code, Coupon Rate, Coupon Frequency, Issued Date, Maturity Date, Next interest due date, Par Value. Lists various companies like ABANS PLC, ACCESS ENGINEERING PLC, etc.

SLT-Mobitel recognised in 'Most Admired Companies of Sri Lanka 2021'

SLT-Mobitel recently emerged as the sole telecommunications company in the Top Five Honourable Mentions of the 'Most Admired Companies of Sri Lanka 2021' rankings.



SLT-Mobitel Chief People's Officer Aruna Jayasekara and General Manager - HR and IR Harshana Ranmuthugala receiving the award

The Most Admired Companies of Sri Lanka is an annual list compiled by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and the International Chamber of Commerce Sri Lanka (ICCSL). The adjudication of the prestigious rankings was presented by a distinguished panel of judges after a stringent evaluation process based on globally accepted criteria.

Entities on the list were recognised for their financial performance as well as ability to create value for all stakeholders including employees, customers, shareholders, and communities.

Achieving a place in the Top Five

Honourable Mentions of the Most Admired Companies of Sri Lanka 2021 is among the latest in a string of accolades SLT-Mobitel has received this year, including the recent honour as the 'Best Telecom Service Provider' award at the Global Economics Awards.

INSEE Cement's efforts to ease cement shortage in Sri Lanka

Operating at maximum production capacity with optimised distribution channels for a number of weeks, INSEE Cement has successfully helped to mitigate the cement shortage that was prevailing in the local market. INSEE Cement's concentrated and immediate contingency measures across its entire operation at the onset of the shortage ensured an uninterrupted market supply of cement, while also logging a record-high 700,000 metric tonnes (MT) of production output during the third quarter of 2021 for the company.



The vessel 'Kota Padang'

"As Sri Lanka's leading cement manufacturer, INSEE Cement took on the responsibility to ensure the local construction industry's post-Covid-19 revival remained on its trajectory," stated INSEE Cement Sri Lanka Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Gustavo Navarro. "We continued to fully support government regulations and industrial policies to first stabilise the market, and were able to deploy our islandwide distribution and

dealership network to ensure an uninterrupted supply across the island. The loyalty and patience of our customers gave us that extra encouragement we needed to overcome the challenge."

INSEE Cement operates at a 3.6 million MT maximum capacity, with a 1.5 million MT production at the Galle plant, a 1.3 million MT output from the Puttalam facility, and a 0.8 million MT import capacity at the Colombo Cement Terminal. To mitigate the shortage, the company introduced two more additional import vessels to its logistics operation to accelerate production and distribution cycles.

SDB bank opens its newly refurbished Gampaha branch

SDB bank's Gampaha branch has been extensively refurbished and re-opened at the same location on 2 December 2021 with the objective of providing more convenient and efficient service to its customers with more sophisticated facilities.

The Gampaha branch has been serving the area nearly for 10 years and Nishantha Wijesinghe is the

Manager of the branch. The refurbished Gampaha branch was ceremonially opened with the participation of SDB bank Chief Executive Officer Thilak Piyadigama, Gampaha Municipal Council Mayor Eranga Senanayake, corporate management members of SDB bank, SDB bank Regional Manager Nimal Chandra Abeykoon, and other prestigious invitees.



The relocated SDB bank's Gampaha branch was ceremonially opened by SDB bank Chief Executive Officer Thilak Piyadigama and Gampaha Municipal Council Mayor Eranga Senanayake

Daraz commits to boosting e-commerce innovation and growth in Sri Lanka

Daraz Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Bjarke Mikkelsen visited Sri Lanka on 25 and 26 November 2021. During his visit, he met with key government leaders and officials, including Minister of Youth and Sports and State Minister of Digital Technology and Enterprise Development Namal Rajapaksa.



Daraz Group CEO Bjarke Mikkelsen met key government officials during his visit to Sri Lanka, including Minister of Youth and Sports and State Minister of Digital Technology and Enterprise Development Namal Rajapaksa

(TRCSL) Director General Oshada Senanayake. During these meetings, Mikkelsen expressed Daraz's commitment to boosting e-commerce innovation and growth in Sri Lanka, and discussed key initiatives that Daraz will take forward with the Government of Sri Lanka and relevant agencies

to increase e-commerce-related jobs in Sri Lanka and raise the standards of education related to online marketplaces and buying and selling online.

"Daraz has seen tremendous growth in Sri Lanka over the last couple of years but e-commerce is still only a fraction of the retail market. Seller and consumer

education are going to be a key focus of our work and we are happy to work closely together with the Government on a number of initiatives. With a strong public-private partnership, we are confident that e-commerce will become a vital industry that not only creates jobs but provides many other opportunities for communities across the island," stated Mikkelsen.

Daraz Sri Lanka aims to have at least 100,000 active and educated small and medium enterprises (SMEs) selling on its platform, which in turn could lead to at least 300,000-400,000 new jobs in Sri Lanka.

DIMO shines at the Great Place to Work® Awards 2021

DIMO was recognised as a Great Place to Work® for the ninth consecutive year, at the Great Place to Work® Awards ceremony 2021 held recently. In addition to clinching the Asia's Best Workplace title for the second time, DIMO also bagged two category awards which were given for the company's best-in-class people practices; Excellence in People Initiatives - Talent Attraction and Onboarding and Excellence in People Initiatives - Inclusive Culture.



DIMO team with the awards

DIMO has proven yet again that it truly delivers on its employee value proposition of "Making Work Enjoyable and Rewarding", across its diverse workforce and has sustained the tribe's acceptance as an astounding employer.

DIMO employs the talents of over 1,800 employees, firmly understanding the unique capabilities of every team member by consistently leveraging their personal and professional growth, irrespective of their area of specialisation. Apart from the prospects of good talent screening, the tribe is also attested with leadership skills along with their ability to respond to change. Diversity holds a paramount significance for the company to endure creativity within every branch of the organisational structure. These prolonged measures of unbiased talent nurturing led DIMO to be recognised in the Excellence

in People Initiatives - Talent Attraction and Onboarding category this year.

"Diversity and Inclusion" is one of the significant sustainable goals of the company and DIMO is committed to advance gender equality in the organisation. As a part of its sustainability agenda, DIMO has set an ambitious target of increasing women in the decision-making roles from 10% to 40% by 2025. DIMO has a constant drive to advance every spectrum of diversity which includes supporting parental responsibilities of employees, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and non-discrimination towards marginalised communities and more. The company bases all of its diversity and inclusion initiatives on creating an environment where people respect, value and support one another irrespective of individual differences. These historic practices had guaranteed the award in the Excellence in People Initiatives - Inclusive Culture category at the recently held awards ceremony.

"Given how successfully we have navigated

the challenges of this pandemic and how we have also managed to adapt to new ways of work, it is reassuring to me that DIMO constitutes of highly competent and engaged individuals. This is a reflection of our deep-rooted trust, meticulously built best practices in talent attraction, and a testament to our persistence in advancing equal opportunity, meritocracy, and mutual respect which ensures no one is left behind in our growth process. I am proud of this journey as one team and I am certain our people-first approach will take DIMO towards an abundance of success and prosperity," stated DIMO Chairman and Managing Director Ranjith Pandithage.

Operating amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, DIMO is fuelled by its resilient workforce, overcoming the demands of the community in spite of this new normalcy. The organisation is able to further nourish its unique work culture as a hybrid workforce with continuous training and development, consistent transparent communication, while assuring the stability of mental and physical wellbeing in the working environment. The collective contribution of the DIMO tribe and the leadership of the company further assisted in upholding their high-performance teams marching towards the end goals. Prioritising diversity and inclusivity with no one left behind, DIMO steps ahead with its innovative competence among the large-scale companies in Asia.

the morning brunch

Spotify removes popular comedians' content over royalties dispute

Spotify has pulled the works of some of the most popular comedians, including Kevin Hart, Tiffany Haddish, John Mulaney, and Jim Gaffigan, due to a royalties dispute. First reported by *The Wall Street Journal*, a number of high-profile entertainers are pursuing royalty payments for their jokes when they're played on the radio, as well as on services like Spotify, Pandora, YouTube, and SiriusXM. The comedians' efforts are backed by global rights administration company Spoken Giants, which works to ensure that entertainers are properly compensated for spoken-word content.

(The Verge)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone."
- RONALD REAGAN



Taking the internet by STORM

Viduli Kotai (විදුලි කොටයි) dance video by Anushki and Kanushki



BY DIMITHRI WIJESINGHE

The Viduli Kotai (විදුලි කොටයි) dance video by Anushki Premachandra and Kanushki Premachandra has reached one million views on YouTube and we simply had to reach out to the twins to talk about the inspiration behind the dance cover.

Viduli Kotai as we all know is the theme song for the popular television show *Mal Pipena Kale* on TV Derana where the sisters star as the protagonists and the song is an original for



for it and so they got together and choreographed a routine by themselves.

She shared that as students of dance and under the guidance of their teacher Pradeepa Ariyawansa, to whom she expressed her utmost gratitude, she said that she and her sister are simply always so immersed in dance and it is a natural part of their lives and so it only felt like the eventual next step to start doing dance covers online.

"Our audience have actually been requesting these dance covers and we also felt that it would be good idea, mostly because the two of us are twins and we are very attuned with our dance styles and skills so we are able to choreograph a routine that suits us both and put on a performance," said Anushki.

| Contd. on page 12

- Anu & Kanu
- Anushki & kanushki
- @aktwins
- @aktwins_anukanu



their show, performed by Poorna Sachintha. The video is an Idea Hell production and is featured on *Dance Floor* by IdeaHell.

Speaking to Anushki Premachandra about the video and it's choreography, she shared that she and her twin of course love the song and they thought they wanted to do something fun and fresh



City of Colombo: What a sight to see

CCC partners with Ebert Silva Holidays to launch 'Social Bus' tour



BY VENESSA ANTHONY

Colombo City Centre (CCC), along with Ebert Silva Holidays (Pvt.) Ltd., recently launched the CCC Social Bus – a much-needed travel experience where CCC shoppers can discover all that Colombo has to offer with a bus tour covering some of the most iconic buildings and monuments in the city of Colombo. The best part is that this entire tour is provided absolutely free of charge exclusively for all CCC shoppers!

The CCC Social Bus tour has the added advantage of being endlessly convenient, as all you just have to do is park, dine in, and simply hop on the bus. The tour starts and ends at CCC, as it will do in the future as well, and all we had to do was hop on the CCC Social Bus and

present our invoice to the concierge desk in order to obtain a free travel pass.

This bus will take a great route through the city, with some of the main monuments that will be seen being the War Memorial, Colombo Public Library, Mayor's Residence, Nelum Pokuna Mahinda Rajapaksa Theatre, Viharamahadevi Park, Town Hall, Dewatagaha Mosque, Eye Hospital Building, Colombo Cricket Club, National Library of Sri Lanka, Sports Ministry Grounds, Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), Replica of Aukana Buddha Statue, Sri Lanka Cricket, Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) Grounds, Nondescript Cricket Club (NCC) Grounds, Colombo Racecourse, Royal College, Methodist

College, Temple Trees, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), St. Andrews Scots Kirk Church, hotels, embassies enroute, Automobile Association of Ceylon, Victoria Masonic Temple, Galle Face Urban Park, Beira Lake Estuary, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo Lighthouse, Sambodhi Chaithya, Ministry of Finance buildings, Old Dutch Hospital, Bank of Ceylon Head Office, Prison Cell of last King of Kandy, Kingsbury Colombo, Navy Headquarters, Chatham Street Light House and Clock Tower, President's House, Cargills Building, Grand Oriental Hotel, Colombo Port, Gaffoor Building, Khan Clock Tower, Air Force Grounds and Headquarters, Defence Services College, Siva Subramaniya Hindu Temple, Nippon Hotel, and the Prime Minister's Office.

We were told that this route has been carefully planned and mapped out in order to showcase as much of the city as possible.

The tour

The Morning Brunch had an opportunity to experience the tour, and we were able to rediscover the magic of Colombo and learn more about our history. Throughout the tour, a live commentary was presented by a professional Tourist Board-certified guide who was part of this special tour.

| Contd. on page 12

12 Days of Christmas with The Design Collective



BY NAVEED ROZAIS

With Christmas around the corner, brands and businesses everywhere are striving to make this an inspiring and exciting festive season.

The Design Collective (TDC), one of Colombo's leading fashion and lifestyle retail brands, is putting a special emphasis on promoting a sense of community this year through their new campaign, "12 Days of Christmas".

The Morning Brunch spoke with TDC Co-Founder Binu Wickremasinghe to learn more about 12 Days of Christmas and what TDC hopes to do this Christmas season.

Starting on 12 December, Wickremasinghe explained that TDC will host a series of Christmas-centric events in the lead up to Christmas Day, with events ranging from Christmas cookie decoration, making your own Christmas decorations, approaching Christmas decorations from a sustainable perspective, hair and makeup tutorials, and many other small events and activities.

| Contd. on page 12

BY VENESSA ANTHONY

Featuring over 20 vendors from a variety of local brands and entrepreneurs, Harpo's Bazaar took place on 4 December at Bayleaf Garden, Colombo 7.

We stopped by at the premises to check out the marketplace and found it buzzing with conversation and excitement. A range of vendors, from clothing to dips and spices to arts and crafts were present – each animatedly explaining their products to potential customers.

There was quite an impressive turnout and we found ourselves lost in the Christmas cheer and got some of our Christmas shopping done earlier than expected; they truly did have something for everyone.

We had a small chat with Harpo's Hotels, Cafes, and Restaurants Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Harpo Gooneratne on his thoughts about the marketplace. He shared that it was a very successful bazaar and all the selected vendors were very happy with the outcome. "It is a very unique marketplace and we hope to have another next year as well," he added.

Let's take a look at what some of the vendors have to offer.

Candle Isle

This stall was absolutely impossible to resist because of the tantalising aromas that wafted around the table. As the same says, Candle Isle sells a variety of handmade candles, and the products featured at the stall were mostly Christmas themed. They had options of spiced cinnamon and vanilla, gingerbread cookie, Christmas cabin, and roasted pine cone as their Christmas range, as well as maple wood coffee house, cedar musk, and lavender as a few anytime options.

Harpo's Bazaar

A simply local festive market

They had the viral Venus candle, which is essentially a candle sculpted in the shape of a woman, as well as the bubble candle, and both were available in all the fragrances listed. Upon sniffing the unlit candle itself, we were able to grasp what it would be like when lit. These candles would make the perfect gift for your loved ones or even yourself – a great way to get into the Christmas spirit, with your home smelling like the epitome of Christmas.

They even told us that they are to receive another range of candles this week, so keep an eye on their Instagram for more details.

@candleisle_lk



Oh. My. Gourmet



Yet another irresistible stall – Oh. My. Gourmet specialises in platters and charcuterie boards. They were selling a range of their dips at the bazaar and had a small platter of crackers, cheese, and dips for anyone walking by to sample, and take our work for it, it's absolutely impossible to resist purchasing one after you've had a bite.

They had a feta dip, caramelised onion hummus, smoked salmon dip, and our personal favourite – the bacon jam. We had a sample of the smoked salmon on a cracker, and it's super creamy and an absolute flavour bomb in your mouth.

The bacon jam, which we had with cheese and crackers, was a hit. As a customer next to us, making his purchase, put it: "Who doesn't love bacon!"

The jam is a crumbly mix of mini bacon pieces, mixed with a jam that has a hint of sweetness. Obviously, we had to impulse-purchase this jam, and we've had it with a variety of food...and it never disappointed us.

@oh.my.gourmet | Contd. on page 12

{ PLACES/EVENTS }

COLOMBO CLUB re-threads 150 years of journey mileposts



The Heritage Building, original premises of the Colombo Club

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

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

The roll call of chairmen of the Colombo Club reads like a veritable who's who

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

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

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

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

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

"Today, the club's esteemed membership comprises the upper echelons of Sri Lanka's corporate

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

With exclusive excerpts from life members — Deshamanya Sohli Captain and Deshamanya Deva Rodrigo from joining

the club as youngsters to seeing it grow to the establishment it is today, the coffee table book is an illustrious and insightful outlook on the indefatigable spirit that sustains the club.

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



Colombo Club Founding President Sir Hercules Robinson



Colombo Club Chairman Kumar Jayasuriya

Contd. from page 11

Taking...

Speaking about the *Viduli Kotai* dance video, she shared that the style they utilised was somewhat of a fusion, featuring a bit of freestyle and Bharatanatyam. They wanted to do something a little out of the ordinary for the song.

She shared that they first started performing dance covers just only about two months ago, when they released their very first one to Falan Andreas's *Patalee* song. Anushki said that Falan is actually a dear friend and she felt it was a great song to try their hand at a hip hop-style dance choreo.

"We like to try our hand at several different styles, mostly because we are quite well versed in most dance styles; we are constantly learning and we love to incorporate many different styles to showcase new and interesting performances," she said.

The twins started their dance careers at a very young age when they were featured on Season Four of *Little Stars* when they were both in Grade Six. With Anushki getting into the top 12 and Kanushki at the top 20 mark they showed great promise even at a very young age.

Since then Anushki shared that they truly embraced dance and went on to learn it professionally, and having chosen the dance stream for their Advanced Levels (A/Ls) in school, the two went on to enter the University of the Visual and Performing Arts.

The dance video for *Viduli Kotai* (විදුලි කොටයි) has been incredibly well received since it was featured on the *Dance Floor* by IdeaHell YouTube channel, and we have to say, if you haven't yet then you absolutely must check it out.

12 Days...

Sharing what inspired 12 Days of Christmas, Wickremasinghe said: "The main inspiration comes from the fact that this entire year, we have not been able to really celebrate anything because of lockdowns, restrictions, and things like that. 12 Days of Christmas looks to celebrate this season in such a way that those who want to can connect with us either online or at the store. Almost every event will also go live on Instagram, and for events and workshops like cookie decoration, people who want to be a part of the event can virtually purchase cookie packs from TDC ahead of the event, so they can take part from home."

12 Days of Christmas sees TDC's portfolio of brands coming together to be part of the season's festivities, as well as brands outside TDC's ecosystem. "12 Days of Christmas is not necessarily about any specific products; TDC will have its Christmas table like it does every year, but 12 Days of Christmas is more about brands coming together," Wickremasinghe explained, adding that TDC is more than happy to collaborate with brands that are not part of TDC for events and pop-ups.

TDC's 12 Days of Christmas sees an event taking place each day, with Kiribath Publishers doing a kids reading on 12 December, Candle House doing a candle decorating workshop on 13 December, Swahili Gomes-McCoy presenting a seasonal style guide on 14 December, NAD holding a festive flower arranging workshop on 15 December, Beauty by Rosh hosting a festive makeup workshop on 16 December, Sustainablee hosting an upcycled Christmas decor workshop on 17 December, cookie decorating with Ashanthi on 18 December, puppy adoption with Embark on 19 December, a workshop on sustainable Christmas practice with Lonali on 20 December, a workshop on gift packaging with the TDC on 21 December, extended opening hours on 22 December (until midnight), and Christmas Carols on 23 December.

Speaking on the importance of this Christmas season for small designer and retail brands, Wickremasinghe shared that the pandemic has seen small start-up designers forced to take a back seat when it comes to growing and nurturing their brands, and TDC has been working to help their brands with this through their New Designer Residency platform since 2019.

"The last two years have been very difficult for smaller brands," Wickremasinghe said, noting that from manufacturing systems to being able to go out and about to get things done to being able to buy fabric in small quantities, small start-up brands have had to face many challenges.

Wickremasinghe added: "We've been trying to encourage these brands and give them a space to grow, and even taken on some small costs for relaunching brands and collections to help these designers kickstart their brands. The New Residency has, over the last few months, been guiding and helping our small start-up brands and putting a community together.

"We've been sharing contacts, connecting some of our more established designers with our younger ones to help each other, and even if brands weren't able to create a collection specifically for Christmas, we've encouraged them to do something even for the end of the Christmas season or for January to kick-start their brands."

With 2021 almost behind us, we asked Wickremasinghe what her hopes were for 2022. Noting that the last two-and-a-half years have been a very tough time for all Sri Lankans, Wickremasinghe shared that she and TDC were

looking towards 2022 with a sense of optimism.

"Next year, we're steaming forward and seeing what we can do in terms of new ventures, collaborations, and events. The future is what we make of it, and through all this, we need to find balance with the new normal as well as try to find balance with e-commerce and in-store retail, with established designers and new start-up designers, between fashion and jewellery, and everything basically. Our hope for next year is to stay positive and focused and see what we can do together with other people as a collaborative platform," Wickremasinghe shared.

City of...

The bus itself was not reminiscent of a typical Sri Lankan bus, as it slowly and gently made its way across Colombo, giving its passengers enough time to take in the scenery and the rich heritage that surrounds it.

The CCC Social Bus in itself is unique and beautifully designed in order to capture the eyes of Colombo and make the tour itself a marvel of the city. While we were traversing along Colombo, we did have quite a number of adults and children alike excitedly point our way and exchange friendly waves. No doubt, promising a good start for the tour and its future endeavours.

As we boarded the double decker bus, we were handed a map with all the destinations and our route, along with a bottle of water, which was welcome, taking into consideration the overhead heat.

En route, we were told the significance of each site and witnessed Colombo through a new lens as the ride allows you to catch a glimpse of our rich culture and heritage through the preserved pieces of history that hide in plain sight. Although the bus could be boarded by foreigners, we think that this is equally as suited to a local market as we too found ourselves learning new facts about certain parts of Colombo.

During the tour, we were informed that at two stops – the Colombo Museum and the Independence Square – passengers can choose to hop off, explore the locations, and rejoin the tour on the next rounds.

Thus, it is also a great educational tour, especially for children, to learn more about Colombo and the history of Sri Lanka.

Overall, the CCC Social Bus tour lasted 90 minutes, and took us on a journey around town that changed our entire perspective on Colombo City, especially upon listening to the true historical stories about the sites.

The tours will be operated on every Saturday and Sunday with three tours each day timed at 11.30 a.m., 1 p.m., and 2.30 p.m.

CCC and Ebert Silva Holidays recently signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for this project in order to make all people, both local or foreign, fall in love with Colombo and provide an opportunity to truly appreciate the city. Not only is this one of the best ways to discover the magic of the city, but also to discover the beautiful history and stories about Colombo that will amaze and astound.

For more information about this exciting new travel experience, follow the CCC Facebook and Instagram pages or ask the concierge desk on your next visit to the mall.

Harpo's...

Riot Clothing

A clothing brand designed for the rebellious and run by a local entrepreneur. This stall was absolutely perfect for a good sale; they had a range of tops, dresses, jumpsuits, and shorts – all on sale! We managed to bag ourselves a good haul that barely amounted to any money. They even had a lookbook handy, so customers had an idea of what the clothes would look like when worn.

If you're on the lookout for a Christmas sale that is actually a sale and not just a mere 20%, then this is the place to check out.

@riotclothingofficial

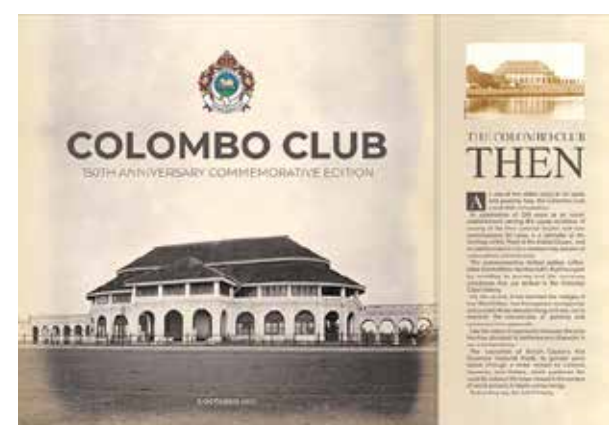
Crafts and Concepts



This crafts store is as timeless, functional, and versatile, as they promote it to be. They aim to refine the Lankan lifestyle while taking a progressive approach of interjecting personality and interest into any space.

They had a range of platter boards available – great for your upcoming Christmas dinner. What we found most interesting was the Tibetan singing bowl they were selling; it's especially a type of bell that vibrates and produces a deep, rich tone when played. A great gift for anyone who's spiritual and loves these intricate, handmade ornaments. We were told it helps one become more calm and centred.

@craftsandconcepts



Pieces from the Pavé Diamond Collection

Tiesh launches Pavé Diamond Collection

Tiesh is celebrating the forthcoming festive season with the launch of its new collection – the Pavé Diamond Collection.

Pavé is the method of setting smaller diamonds into a precious metal. Held in place with beads or metal prongs, they give the appearance of a line of continuous small diamonds. The beads or metal prongs that hold the diamonds in place are barely visible. Looking at a ring with a pavé setting, one will see several tiny diamonds set closely together, resulting in a line of continuous sparkle.

Tiesh Director Ayesh de Fonseka said: "The Tiesh Pavé Diamond Collection gets its name from the French word pavé (pronounced pa-vay) a method of diamond or gem setting, French in origin for paved, as in paving the ring, pendant, earring, etc.



Tiesh Director Ayesh De Fonseka with a guest



Ayesh De Fonseka (third from left) and guests

with tiny diamonds (much like a street paved with cobblestones). This is because it features many tiny diamonds or other gemstones set close to each other, predominantly in rose gold, yellow gold, and white gold. The collection is joyous and exuberant. It features youthful looking jewellery and is aimed at the younger community."

"The Tiesh Pavé Diamond Collection is a youthful spin on classic designs and features pendants, necklaces, earrings, lapel pins, rings, bracelets, and even anklets. The jewellery is versatile and can be worn from morning till night, in fact the whole day



Tiesh Managing Director Lasantha De Fonseka and Co-Founder Bryony De Fonseka

In addition to the Pavé Diamond Collection, the expanded collections also feature the best diamonds, sapphires, and 22 carat gold jewellery at Tiesh's state-of-the-art showroom at 253 R.A. de Mel Mawatha, Colombo 03.

{ EVENTS/PEOPLE }

THE IVIES OFFERS PRESCHOOL, INFANT CARE, AND DAYCARE FACILITIES



Happy kids at The Ivies

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

Commenting on the launch, The Ivies Director – Operations Vindya Wijesuriya said: “The first five years of a child are the most formative ones which need a strong foundation of

mental and physical stimulation, wellbeing, and care. Keeping this in mind, The Ivies strives to provide an affectionate, caring, nurturing, stimulating learning

environment which aids molding a holistically developed child.

“More importantly, the staff at The Ivies are highly skilled and trained to closely observe children at play and use the emerging learning opportunities to enforce self-esteem, self-confidence, and build empathy among children which helps them become responsible and independent learners.”

The Ivies is being spearheaded by industry experts with decades of experience in early child development and learning. The low child-to-teacher ratio ensures every child receives the individual attention



The Ivies Director – Operations Vindya Wijesuriya

they deserve. Educators at The Ivies are skilled and qualified in early years education, child psychology, and in handling special needs children and are equipped to cater to children on a one-on-one basis. Well-maintained observation records developed by The Ivies helps maintain a steady communication line with parents and builds history during a child’s stay with the facility.

Play-based learning is most effective for children from birth to five years of age. Keeping this in mind, The Ivies has developed a curriculum that encompasses the natural desire of children to learn, play, and explore. Play is the foundation of learning for children as this is how they make sense of the world around them, hypothesise and experiment, learn to negotiate, and understand their feelings. The play-based curriculum at The Ivies ensures the children are happy to come to school each day and enjoy learning through play. The carefully planned

curriculum covers all learning domains which includes physical, social and emotional, language, and cognitive aspects. Furthermore, singing, story time, pretend play, and experimental activities enable children to develop creativity and imaginary skills.

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

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



The facilities at The Ivies

Huawei MateView GT 27” launching soon in SL

Huawei will soon be launching the Huawei MateView GT 27-inch curved high-refresh monitor, offering Sri Lankan consumers the chance to experience a bigger vision with 2K resolution, gaming level 165-Hz refresh rate, and cinematic colour. Consumers will feel the force of full immersion with its 27-inch screen and mainstream aspect ratio of 16.9, which fills one’s vision as the 1500R super-curved design brings individuals into a new world of immersive viewing.



Huawei MateView GT 27

Plus, it supports 8 bit colour depth allowing the 27-inch monitor to render 1.67 million colour displays; it’s what allows the monitor to show more precise, true-to-life gradients. Ensuring that the user feels like they are in the game, or in the movie or video they are watching.

Gamers always want to experience the best while they are playing and when it comes to monitors, the higher the refresh rate, the better. With Huawei MateView GT 27”, gamers don’t need to be in the dark about where the enemy is. “The Dark Field Control” feature lets them adjust the display brightness in low-light scenes, so they can spot their opponent first.

The Huawei MateView

GT 27” lets consumers stay immersed in their viewing experience for longer with the Low Blue Light and Flicker-Free display, as certified by TÜV Rheinland. It also comes with a complete selection of ports, including HDMI, DisplayPort, and USB Type-C for connecting laptops, game consoles, and everyday devices. There is one HDMI 2.0 port, one DisplayPort 1.2, and one USB Type-C charging port. The striking Huawei gaming “silver frost ring” lets Huawei MateView GT 27” really stand out from the crowd. Adjust the elevation by up to 110 mm and pitch angle by five degrees forwards and 20 degrees back. Plus, the bracket can be easily removed to make it fully wall-mountable.

The Huawei MateView GT 27-inch curved high-refresh monitor will be launching soon in Sri Lanka across all Huawei experience centers, Singer showrooms, authorised resellers, and e-commerce platforms such as Daraz.lk and Singer.lk.

Microsoft extends Cloud Skills Challenge in SL

Microsoft has extended its Cloud Skills Challenge in Sri Lanka through Microsoft Learn – a free, online training platform that provides hands-on, interactive learning for products and services within the Microsoft ecosystem – to help community members skill up and grow their technical expertise.

Throughout the challenge, participants will prepare for Microsoft Fundamentals certifications through short step-by-step tutorials, browser-based interactive coding and scripting environments, and task-based achievements. The challenge is designed to



build employability skills and accelerate the next generation of students for the growing digital economy and workforce.

There will be three challenges available to choose from. The Beginner Challenge is designed for students or professionals, starting their cloud learning journey, with no previous

experience. The Intermediate Challenge is designed for professionals, with previous experience and basic knowledge of cloud services. The Advanced Challenge is designed for cloud professionals with intermediate-level skills.

Over the entry period, participants can select different learning paths and engage with the content on Microsoft Learn. The entry period will end on 31 December 2021 and the winners will be awarded on 15 March 2022.

To register for the Sri Lanka Cloud Skills Challenge, visit www.microsoft.com/en-lk/cloud-training-events/cloud-skills-challenge.

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{ BRUNCHEVENTS }



Aku, Deepu, and Sri Kumar



Mackly opens first sleepwear store



Harshini Struyz



Shamini Nadesan

Mackly's first boutique and Sri Lanka's only dedicated sleepwear store was opened on Thursday, 25 November 2021 at One Galle Face Mall.

Mackly has slowly carved a name for itself for premium-quality sleepwear that is fun to wear. Beginning with children's pyjamas, Mackly has now expanded to cater to adults too, including accessories.

Having retailed online, and at department stores and boutiques in Colombo, the brand now has a space to call its own at Level 4, Unit 4, One Galle Face Mall, Colombo 2.

PHOTOS KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM



Roshanie, Maya, Sharmila, Marian, and Nisha



Harini, Asha, and Hasaini



Sharmila, Anju, and Laksmi



Maya Mahubani



Treshan



Roshanie and Stephan



Nisha



Durga



Reshan and Natharlea



Oshani



Sandy



Shaivi and Sandaru



Rukshi



Laker, Kumble, and Patel: How the trio claimed all 10

In 2,349 men's cricket Test matches, a 10-wicket innings haul has been achieved just three times. The latest came in Mumbai last Saturday (4) when New Zealand spinner Ajaz Patel took all 10 wickets to fall in the India first innings. Here is how ICC Cricket takes a look back at each of the three heroic efforts.

Jim Laker – 10/53 (51.2 overs) vs. Australia – Manchester, 1956

Travelling from Headingley after an innings victory to level the series one match apiece, England, largely through the off-spin of Jim Laker, came into the fourth 1956 Ashes Test match high on confidence.

Laker was in imperious form, taking 11 wickets as Australia fell to 143 and 140 all out, and the Old Trafford surface was tipped to spin big. Batting first after captain Peter May won the toss, England largely negotiated Australia's spin duo of Richie Benaud and Ian Johnson, posting 459.

England's opening quick bowlers Brian Statham and Trevor Bailey bowled just 10 overs between them, with Jim Laker working in tandem with Tony Lock. Changing to the Stretford End, Laker rolled through the tourists to claim 9/37 from 16.4 overs.

Following on, Australia could not answer the questions asked by Laker who continued to roll on, taking the wickets of Neil Harvey (0) and Jim Burke (33), though the "offie" faced another challenge; the weather.

Less than two hours of cricket were played across days three and four of the match, and play was delayed on day five, opening the door for Australia to save the Test with eight wickets in hand.

Laker was impeccable on day five, making the most of the Manchester surface which took spin. Despite a resistance from Colin McDonald and Ian Craig to take Australia through to lunch, Laker shone as the sun came out in the afternoon. He claimed 4/3 in a nine-over spurt in the afternoon session, and the key scalp of McDonald with the second ball of the final session for his seventh of the innings. Benaud fell as the last



James Charles Laker (1922-1986), the England right-arm off-spinner, took 51.2-23-53-10 on 31 July 1956 in Manchester against Australia in the fourth Test of a series. England won the match by an innings and 170 runs. In that England second innings, they were bowled out for 205 in 150.2 overs. Laker took 9/37 in the first innings and therefore had a match-haul of 19/90. Pictured is Laker completing his second innings' 10-for as Len Maddocks is trapped lbw

PHOTO © CRICKETER INTERNATIONAL

recognised batter, before Laker took the wicket of Ray Lindwall for number nine.

At 5.27 p.m. local time, Laker created history. Hitting Len Maddocks in line, he claimed the final wicket leg before wicket, finishing with figures of 10/53, and match figures of 19/90. No other player has taken more than 17 for the match.

Reflecting on his opponent's achievements years later, Benaud declared that he was so impressed by Laker's performance, he tinkered his own style to resemble that of Laker's.

Anil Kumble – 10/74 (26.3 overs) vs. Pakistan – Delhi, 1999

The second Test of the 1999 series between India and Pakistan will forever be remembered for Kumble's perfect 10.

Needing a victory to level the two-match series after Pakistan's dramatic 12-run win in Chennai, Kumble looked in fine touch, taking 4/75 to help India to an 80-run first innings lead. Claiming the wickets of Ijaz Ahmed, Inzamam-ul-Haq, and Mohammad Yousuf, Kumble also finished the job by trapping Saqlain Mushtaq in front to end the innings.

India pushed on to set Pakistan a target of 420, who had the best part of two days to claim an unlikely win, and made a strong start through a first-wicket partnership of 101 between Shahid Afridi and Saeed Anwar.

Kumble broke the partnership with a quicker delivery, as a striding Afridi edged to Dinesh Mongia with the gloves for 41. He then struck the front foot of Ijaz next ball, dismissing him lbw.

Pakistan's hopes of victory were dashed in a matter of minutes, and efforts moved to saving the match. Kumble, with his probing, aggressive line, continued to torment. Forcing tourists to play at everything, Kumble's fizzing pace through the air, and the natural variation thrown up by the Feroz Shah Kotla surface, made the leggie impossible to counter.

Inzamam-ul-Haq chopped on trying to push a ball into the covers, and two balls later, Yousef was adjudged lbw as Kumble again picked Pakistan's middle order apart. Moin Khan fell to a diving catch from Sourav Ganguly at slip, and Saeed Anwar, who provided the biggest challenge, was caught at bat pad for 69.

At 128/6, the match result was



Anil Kumble (born 1970), former Indian right-arm leg-spinner, took 26.3-9-74-10 on 7 February 1999 in Delhi against Pakistan in the second Test of a series. India won the match by 212 runs. In that Pakistan second innings, they were bowled out for 207 in 60.3 overs. Kumble took 4/75 in the first innings and therefore had a match-haul of 14/149. Pictured is Kumble being congratulated by his team-mates after taking the 10th wicket, that of Wasim Akram

PHOTO © AP

a foregone conclusion, though Kumble had a record to try and match. Bowling through the entire second session of the fourth day, Kumble regrouped at tea, and claimed his seventh when a short ball kept low on a pulling Saleem Malik, whose stumps were disturbed.

Kumble passed his previous best individual figures of 7/59 with his eighth wicket, finding the glove of Mushtaq Ahmed who ballooned a catch to Rahul Dravid. As the field crept in, Kumble fired the next ball past Saqlain Mushtaq, who was unable to get his bat down in time for a plumb lbw. Kumble completed the perfect 10 in his next over, with Wasim Akram (37), edging another close-in catch for V.V.S. Laxman. Kumble was mobbed by teammates, as he rushed to collect a stump as a memento.

Ajaz Patel – 10/119 (47.5 overs) vs. India – Mumbai, 2021

After Laker and Kumble, Ajaz Patel made his mark in the record books on day two of the second Test match between India and New Zealand in Mumbai, the city he was born in.

"I remember (Kumble's) 10-for," Patel said after the haul of his own on day two.

"I have seen highlights of that game plenty of times. It's a very illustrious group to be a part of, it's great to see his message and his kind words. Humbled and fortunate to be in that company."

Saving the first Test through a resolute batting performance, it will forever be his record-equaling bowling performance

that this tour will be remembered by – joining the 10-wicket club as the only player to do so away from home, and in the first innings of the match.

Patel claimed the first four wickets of India's innings in a truncated day one, with India sitting on 221/4 at the conclusion of play. The Black Caps' quicks were unable to make any early headway, with Patel breaking through a tough Indian top order through a mixture of guile and clever angles with his left-arm orthodox.

Dismissing Wriddhiman Saha and Ravichandran Ashwin in consecutive balls, Patel registered his first six-wicket haul, though the story would end in an unbelievable fashion. He was tried with the second new ball to no avail, though New Zealand's pace attack also went without success, unable to make the most of the movement in the air.

Patel was re-introduced, impressive and indefatigable. Breaking a 67-run stand between Axar Patel and the imperious Mayank Agarwal with a peach to remove the opener on 150, one felt something special may have been around the corner. Dismissing Axar half an hour later, Patel had the final three Indian batters in his sights. Jayant Yadav holed out to Rachin Ravindra at long-off for Patel's ninth, and Mohammed Siraj could only top edge a slog, also taken by Ravindra at mid-on. Before the celebrations, Patel had his heart in his mouth.

"It was a nervous time. We backed Rachin to take it, but the ball wobbled and we were all nervous," he said. "I told Neil Wagner, during drinks, that I was more nervous now than I was all game. We don't have these moments as cricketers often."

For Patel, his name being in the same record column as Kumble and Laker still doesn't feel real.

"After I came off the field, things happened too quickly. These things don't sink in until later. It's brilliant for me, my family, and my wife. You spend a lot of time away from home as a cricketer, and I'm just grateful to God for this occasion."



Ajaz Yunus Patel (born 1988), current New Zealand left-arm leg-spinner (or orthodox bowler), took 47.5-12-119-10 on 4 December 2021 in Mumbai against India in the second Test of a series. The match was continuing on its third day yesterday (5). New Zealand were chasing a mammoth target of 540 to win. In that Indian first innings, they scored 325 all out in 109.5 overs. Patel took 4/106 in the second innings and therefore had a match-haul of 14/225. Pictured is Patel ecstatic after taking his 10th wicket last Saturday (4), that of Mohammed Siraj

PHOTO © BCCI

ON THIS DAY



The 'Blood in the Water' water polo match between Hungary and the USSR at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics



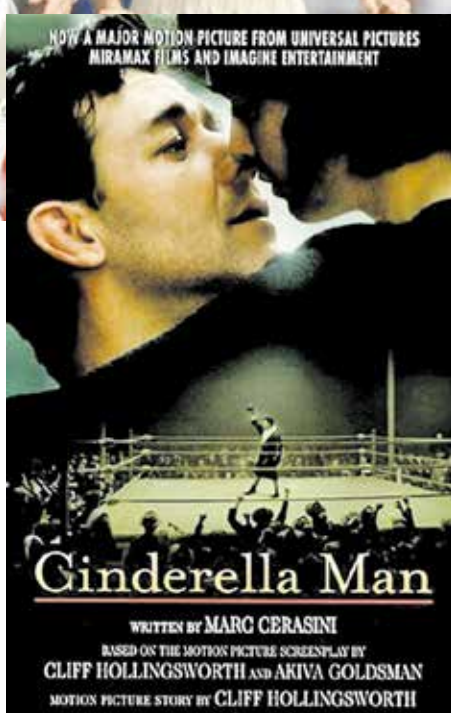
Andrew Flintoff was England's hero as they beat Australia in the 2005 Ashes in England by 2-1

- 1905** Birth of American boxer James J. Braddock, who in his comeback in 1935 fought Max Baer for the heavyweight title and won – and for this unlikely feat, Braddock was given the nickname *Cinderella Man*
- 1948** Birth of Finnish auto racer Keke Rosberg, winner of the 1982 Formula One World Championship
- 1956** Against the background of the Soviet invasion of Hungary, the two nations squared off at the Melbourne Olympics in a famous water polo match. The game was called off with Hungary leading 4-0 and a near

- riot was halted by the Police. Hungary went on to win the gold medal
- 1956** Randhir Singh Gentle scored the winner as India beat Pakistan 1-0 in the Melbourne Olympics field hockey final to win their sixth consecutive gold medal in the event
- 1966** Birth of Swiss tri-athlete Natascha Badmann, a six-time winner of the Ironman World Championships in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii
- 1968** Birth of Australian women's cricketer Zoe Goss, who played in four World Cups

- for Australia, including the victorious campaigns in 1988 and 1997
- 1977** Birth of English all-rounder Andrew Flintoff. Undoubtedly, 2005 was his year, with the Ashes series against Australia being his watershed moment
- 1982** Birth of Zimbabwean cricketer Sean Ervine, one of the 15 players who walked out of Zimbabwe cricket in April 2004
- 1984** Helena Suková snapped Martina Navratilova's 74-match winning streak by beating the latter 1-6, 6-3,

- 7-5 in the semi-finals of the Australian Open
- 1988** Birth of Indian cricket all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who made his limited-overs debut in early 2009 but grabbed the headlines for his run-scoring in that year's Indian Premier League (IPL) and was bought by Chennai Super Kings for \$ 2 million in the 2012 auction
- 1993** Birth of another current Indian cricketer, Jasprit Bumrah, who too came to notice in the IPL, where he featured in all five of Mumbai Indians' title campaigns from 2013-20



Russell Crowe and Renée Zellweger in 'Cinderella Man', the 2005 American biographical sports drama film directed by Ron Howard, which was titled after the nickname of world heavyweight boxing champion James J. Braddock, who was born today

Quote from a legend

"The aim of English cricket is, in fact, mainly to beat Australia"

– Jim Laker

James Charles Laker (9 February 1922-23 April 1986) was an English professional cricketer who played for Surrey County Cricket Club from 1946-59 and represented England in 46 Test matches, during 1948-59. He was born in Shipley, West Riding of Yorkshire, and died in Wimbledon, London.

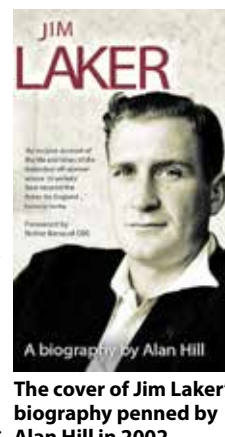
A right-arm off-break bowler, Laker is generally regarded as one of the greatest spin bowlers in the history of cricket.

In 1956, he achieved a still-unequaled world record when he took 19 (of a maximum 20) wickets in a Test match at Old Trafford Cricket Ground in Manchester, enabling England to defeat Australia in what has become known as "Laker's Match". The next best record for bowling in a Test match is taking 17 wickets for 159 runs, by England's fast-medium bowler Sydney Barnes, against South Africa in 1913 at Johannesburg.

There were three 16-wicket efforts after Laker: (i) Narendra Hirwani (16/136) of India vs. the West Indies in 1988 in Chennai, (ii) Bob Massie (16/137) of Australia vs. England in 1972 in London, and (iii) Muttiah Muralitharan (16/220) of Sri Lanka vs. England in 1998 in London.

For his achievements in 1951, Laker was selected by Wisden Cricketers' Almanack as one of the five Wisden Cricketers of the Year in its 1952 edition.

Laker's above statement depicts the reality of the day; there was no "India vs. Pakistan", no "West Indies vs. Australia", or any other great rivalries of cricket – which had begun during that period – when Laker "spun a web" for the benefit of England.



The cover of Jim Laker's biography penned by Alan Hill in 2002

the morning sports

Sri Lanka U-19 take 2-1 lead against England

Sri Lanka Under-19 beat their England counterparts by two wickets in a hard-fought 50-over game yesterday (5) at SSC grounds, Colombo and took a 2-1 lead, after three games, in their five-match Youth One-Day International series. **Brief scores: England U-19** 114 all out in 34.3 overs (Rehan Ahmed 19, Alex Horton 18; Dunith Wellalage 3/13, Treveen Mathew 2/10, Raveen de Silva 2/18, Yasiru Rodrigo 2/29); **Sri Lanka U-19** 115/8 in 44 overs (Anjala Bandara 29, Dunith Wellalage 18, Pawan Pathiraja 17, Thomas Aspinwall 2/10, Rehan Ahmed 2/20)



LPL 2021 takes off!

The second edition of the Lanka Premier League (LPL) took off yesterday (5) in a simple yet colourful opening ceremony yesterday at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo. The venue will hold from Match 1 (5 December) to 20 (17 December) before the three Play-offs and Final move to Mahinda Rajapaksa Stadium, Hambantota from 20-23 December. The photo depicts the toss of the first match last evening between Galle Gladiators, led by Bhanuka Rajapaksa, and Jaffna Kings, led by Thisara Perera. Graeme Labrooy was the Match Referee.



FOOTBALL NEWS FROM EUROPE

We earn a lot more than you: Mourinho tells journalists



José Mário dos Santos Mourinho Félix, the Portuguese professional football Manager who is the current Head Coach of Serie A club Roma

COMPILED BY RANJIKA PERERA

Jose Mourinho refused to take questions after Roma's 3-0 home defeat against Inter last Saturday (4) at Stadio Olympic in Rome and told a reporter that there's a reason "we earn a lot more than you". He said being a Manager was much more difficult than journalism, leading to the gulf in pay. Rather than answer for his squad's performance, he delivered a brief monologue and exited the press conference.

"Your job is a lot easier than ours which is why we earn a lot more than you," the Roma manager told the first reporter who tried to ask a question.

In his monologue, Mourinho said: "I apologise to the studio, to the people at home who might be interested in their questions. Inter are stronger than us in normal conditions. In non-normal conditions, they are much stronger than us. Last season, they were 29 points ahead of Roma. Today, with injuries and suspended players, it was very, very difficult. Our attacking potential was practically nil. It was very important to score a goal, because we would only have two or three chances. We had three and didn't score. When you play with a defence that has (Roger) Ibanez and various others in positions that are not their usual ones, you still cannot concede the first and third goals. You just can't."

'I don't like being a role model,' says Messi

Lionel Messi says he does not feel comfortable being a role model and has never dreamed of being the best player in football history. He won the Ballon d'Or for the seventh time, extending his record

as the man with the most wins in the history of the award. The Argentina international has been hailed as an example for young players to look up to throughout his career, but Messi admits he does not see himself as a role model.

"I don't know if I'm a role model," he said to France Football. "I don't like being a role model or giving advice. I fought for my dreams. At first it was to be a professional player, then I tried to surpass myself and achieve new goals every year. In the midst of it all, there is also an element of luck. It also depends on God, and I believe he chose to have all of this happen to me."

City and Liverpool profit from Chelsea slip

Liverpool left it late to claim a valuable 1-0 win over Wolves through a 90th-minute Divock Origi goal, also on Saturday at Molineux Stadium, England. With Chelsea dropping points to London rivals West Ham earlier in the day, Jurgen Klopp would have known that a win would take his side above Chelsea.

Chelsea was stunned by the high-riding West Ham United. The blues were leading twice in the game but goals from Manuel Lanzini and Jarrod Bowen levelled terms for West Ham. The winner came through Arthur Masuaku in the 87th-minute for the Hammers who solidified their spot inside the top four.

Double strike from Bernardo Silva helped Manchester City beat Watford 3-1 last Saturday at Vicarage Road, Watford. The win meant that they went past Chelsea to the top of the table.



To LISTEN to our sports page lead story, scan this QR code on your device



Russia sets Croatia Davis Cup final

Daniil Medvedev defeats Jan-Lennard Struff on Saturday (4) in Madrid

Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev produced dominant performances Saturday (4) at the Davis Cup Finals to guide the Russian Tennis Federation to victory against Germany in Madrid.

Russia has so far won the Davis Cup, the annual virtual world cup of men's international tennis, twice before; in 2002 and 2006.

In the first match of the tie, Rublev cruised past Dominik Koepfer 6-4, 6-0 after 49 minutes to give the former champion's the perfect start.

The world No. 5, who has also beaten Roberto Quiroz and Elias Ymer this week, won 84% (27/32) of his first-serve points and fired nine aces to triumph.

Medvedev then sealed victory for the Russian Tennis Federation, overcoming Jan-Lennard Struff 6-4, 6-4 in

66 minutes. The 25-year-old committed just six unforced errors and saved the one breakpoint he faced.

The Russian Tennis Federation was to play Croatia in the final last night from 8.30 p.m. Sri Lankan time.

"I am really happy for

the team to be in the final," Medvedev said in his on-court interview. "It has been an amazing week. It won't be easy (against Croatia). They have the best doubles team in the world, we need to try to close it out in singles, but we believe in our guys in doubles."

FOREIGN SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

Spinners floor NZ, India close in on win

Chasing a mammoth target of 540, New Zealand were reduced to 140/5 at stumps on day three yesterday (5) after India declared their innings on 276/6 at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai. With two days to go in this second and final Test, India are now five wickets away from a win while New Zealand will need a huge miracle to make a game out of this as they are still 400 runs away from victory.

Ravichandran Ashwin ran through New Zealand's top four with a three-wicket haul. Daryl Mitchell and Henry Nicholls showed some grit but two wickets towards the end of the day put India firmly in the driver's seat going into the penultimate day today. The first match ended in a draw last week in Jaipur.

Brief scores:

India 325 all out and 276/7 declared
New Zealand 62 all out and (target 540) 140/5 in 45 overs (Daryl Mitchell 60, Henry Nicholls 36 n.o., Will Young 20; Ravichandran Ashwin 3/27)

Russell fireworks guide Gladiators to Abu Dhabi T10 title

West Indies' all-rounder Andre Russell whacked 90 not out off 32 deliveries to guide Deccan Gladiators to their first-ever Abu Dhabi T10 cricket league title on Saturday (4). They beat in devastating style the Delhi Bulls by 56 runs in the tournament's final held at the Zayed Cricket Stadium, Abu Dhabi.



Andre Russell inspired Deccan Gladiators to their first Abu Dhabi T10 cricket league title on Saturday (5)

This was the sixth edition of the league, launched in 2017. Northern Warriors, who won in 2018 and 2020 (held in January-February 2021) tournaments, is the only franchise that has so far won the title more than once.

Brief scores:

Deccan Gladiators 159/0 in 10 overs (Andre Russell 90 n.o., Tom Kohler-Cadmore 59 n.o.)

Delhi Bulls 103/7 in 20 overs (Chandrapaul Hemraj 42; Tymal Mills 2/4)

Skipper names Aus XI for first Ashes Test

New Australian Test cricket Captain Patrick "Pat" Cummins yesterday (5) named their side to face England at the Gabba on Wednesday, 8 December for the first Ashes Test. Following the news of Alex Carey's inclusion as the team's wicket-keeper during the week,

Australia have also named Travis Head and Mitchell Starc in the side, with Cummins ending the speculation of potential re-inclusions of Usman Khawaja and Jhye Richardson.

Australian XI for the first Test: David Warner, Marcus Harris, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Cameron Green, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins (Capt.), Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc

Day two of Mirpur Test spoilt by rain

Play was called off early on day two yesterday (5) in Mirpur, Bangladesh in the second Test between Bangladesh and Pakistan due to persistent rain. Only 6.2 overs of play were possible yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium. Pakistan, electing to bat first, are 188/2. Pakistan won the first Test by eight wickets on 30 November at Chattogram.

Dialog President's Gold Cup volleyball 2021

The tournament was held yesterday (5) in Colombo in open women's and men's categories

RESULTS

Women's Open:

- Third place – Golden Sports Club, Radawana
- Runners-up – Hirdaramani Sports Club, Galigamuwa
- Champions – Vijaya Sports Club, Koswadiya

Men's Open:

- Third place – Balares Sports Club, Boralessgamuwa
- Runners-up – United Sports Club, Nattandiya
- Champions – Rantharu SC, Debagama, Ruwanwella



DUBAI RUGBY SEVENS WORLD SERIES

South Africa men and Australian women make it two in two

The South African Blitzboks team found just enough in the tank to win their second consecutive Dubai Sevens title in two weeks, beating Australia 10-7 in a tense final in the UAE on Saturday (4).

It was Siviwe Soyizwapi – the Captain who scored first for the Boks. But the try was not to keep them in front for long. Australia found a gap, then two, and before long they had put together enough passes for Corey Toole to go over and take the lead by a slim two points.

Aus women beat Fiji in the final

The game hung in the balance, and the tension was clear, but the Blitzboks hero of the day – the irrepressible

J.C. (Johannes Christoffel) Pretorius, who found the smallest of gaps as he stepped left and broke the tackle, and then pinned his ears back for the sprint of his life, beating the defence to score the try that would take the Blitzboks to victory.

Also on Saturday, the Australian women maintained their dominant, unbeaten sequence over the past two weeks to lift the title with a convincing 15-5 triumph in the final over Fiji, who they also beat in last weekend's showdown.

In the women's clash on Saturday, two tries from Madison Ashby and another from the Player of the Final, Faith Nathan, were enough for the Australian women to secure the trophy.

106th colombo championship tennis

The 106th Colombo Championship, a Grade-1 open ranking tournament, is now being held at the Sri Lanka Tennis Association (SLTA) Playing Section clay courts at Green Path, Colombo. Here is Vishmi Serasinghe of Ave Maria Convent, Negombo, in action. She beat Saajida Razik 5-4 (2), 4-1 in the final to clinch the girls' Under-16 singles title yesterday (5)

PHOTO ISHAN WANNIARACHCHI

