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**the morning**

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# 'Gas composition change led to the explosions'

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- Alagiyawanna states, citing CPC lab results showing 47% propane
- Says 'at the moment, cannot give 100% assurance about safety'

**C**o-operative Services, Marketing Development, and Consumer Protection State Minister Lasantha Alagiyawanna said yesterday (8) that lab tests conducted by the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) on 12 samples of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) obtained over the last month show a propane composition of about 47%, and said that he personally believes that this change in composition led to the LPG cylinder-based explosions which occurred over the past month.

Contd. on page 2

# CAA mulls legal action against gas companies

- Decision upon completion of probes into customer complaints and 430 explosions
- CAA orders companies to recall all pre-4 Dec. cylinders in distribution outlets islandwide
- Recalling cylinders at households to be looked into

**T**he Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) will consider legal action against the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) companies in the market in the future, following the 430 LPG cylinder-related explosions that occurred from 29 November to 5 December 2021.

"We have received a number of complaints from consumers already. Once all investigations are completed, we will consider legal action against the companies," a CAA official told *The Morning* yesterday (8).

Speaking in Parliament yesterday, State Minister of Co-operative Services, Marketing Development, and Consumer Protection Lasantha Alagiyawanna said that if it is revealed that a company or official had acted illegally, the CAA would take the highest possible legal action against them.

Contd. on page 2



# Speaker appoints 11-man committee to probe clash

- Chaired by Dep. Speaker Ranjith Siyambalapatiya
- SJB ends P'ment boycott



**S**peaker of Parliament, Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena has appointed a 11-member committee to look into the alleged attempt of a group of Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Government Parliamentarians to attack a Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Opposition MP during the parliamentary sessions held last week, and to recommend measures to be taken to prevent such incidents from recurring.

Contd. on page 2

# Chinese fertiliser ship will leave local seas

- Agriculture Minister informs Court of Appeal



**T**he "Hippo Spirit", the vessel currently in Sri Lankan seas carrying the controversial fertiliser consignment shipped by China-based Qingdao Seawin Biotech Group Co., Ltd., will leave Sri Lanka's maritime space, Minister of Agriculture Mahindananda Aluthgamage told the Court of Appeal yesterday (8) when a writ petition filed by the Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ) was taken up.

Contd. on page 2

# Over 600 K public servants conduct strike for salary hike

**M**ore than 600,000 public servants in several sectors affiliated to the Sri Lanka Government Officers' Trade Union Association (SLGOTUA) went on strike yesterday (8) in protest over what they claim to be the Government's failure to increase the salaries of public servants in the face of the rising cost of living (CoL).

Speaking to *The Morning* yesterday, SLGOTUA National Organiser B.A.P. Basnayake said that more than 600,000 public servants including grama niladhari (GNs), development officers, Postal Department officers, and those of several other state institutions had joined the strike. He claimed that the number of public servants who engaged in the strike action was about 80% of the total public servants cadre.

"The cost of living has risen to an unbearable level at present. We have therefore repeatedly called on the Government to increase the salaries of public servants by at least Rs. 18,000, but so far..."

Contd. on page 3

**COVID-19 CASES**

ACTIVE CASES: 11,743

TOTAL CASES: 569,743

DEATHS: 14,533

RECOVERED: 543,467

SOURCE: HEALTH PROMOTION BUREAU  
THE ABOVE STATISTICS ARE CONFIRMED UP UNTIL 8.15 P.M. ON 8 DECEMBER 2021

# Vehicles on Colombo's pavements to be towed away

**S**ri Lanka Police commenced an operation to tow away the vehicles parked on the pavements in the administrative districts of Colombo Municipal Council yesterday (8).

Speaking to *Ada Derana*, the Traffic Police Division noted that parking vehicles on the pavements is an offence under the provisions of the National Thoroughfares Act.

The Police said they would strictly enforce the law regarding the vehicles parked on...

Contd. on page 2

# CEB Engineers' Union says no manipulation in blackouts

- Claims internal probes confirm no external manipulation
- AKD accuses Lokuge of evading tabling agreement

**T**he Ceylon Electricity Board Engineers' Union (CEBEU) yesterday (8) said that internal investigations by the CEB have revealed that there has not been any external manipulation of the Biyagama and Kotmale power lines which could have led to the power outages that occurred in the country last week.

Contd. on page 2

# Over 400 schoolchildren have tested Covid-positive

**W**hilst stating that 400 to 500 out of nearly four million schoolchildren in the country have been infected with Covid-19, the Ministry of Health has claimed that no large-scale Covid-19 clusters have been reported among schoolchildren in a context where the majority of the infections, which are on the rise, have been contracted from their home environments.

Speaking to *The Morning* yesterday (8), Ministry of Health Communications Director and Deputy Director General of Public Health Services Dr. Hemantha Herath said:..

Contd. on page 3



# Multiple unions protest against Yugadanavi deal

**T**rade unions representing the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA), and the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) held a massive protest in Colombo yesterday (8) against, what they claimed are, plans by the Government to sell national resources and the agreement executed with...

Contd. on page 2

# CA permits petition against Police's LGBT discrimination

**T**he Court of Appeal has granted issuance of notice with a petition filed by civil society activists seeking the issuance of a writ order to prevent discrimination and harassment against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community at the hands of the Police.

Following preliminary consideration of the writ petition, the judge bench comprising Justices Sobitha Rajakaruna and Dhammika Ganepola declared that, at first glance, there is a cause of action and said notice would be issued on the respondents in the application.

Accordingly, the court ordered the respondents named in the petition, including the Inspector General of Police (IGP), to present their objections related to the petition, if any.

Contd. on page 2

# AG confirms 'no-objection' to granting bail for Muslim poet

**D**eputy Solicitor General (DSG) Nerin Pulle PC had informed the Supreme Court yesterday (8) that the indictment has been filed against poet and teacher Ahnaf Jazeem in the Puttalam High Court (HC), and that the Attorney General (AG) is not objecting to bail being granted for Ahnaf when the case is called on the 15 December in Puttalam HC, Jazeem's lawyers told *The Morning*.

This had been informed to the court by the DSG when the fundamental rights case filed in defence of Jazeem was taken up for support for leave to proceed yesterday in the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka before a bench constituting Justices...

Contd. on page 2

# Prez's 'Itukama' fund to help the children orphaned by Covid-19

**A** programme launched under the "Itukama" Covid-19 Health and Social Security Fund will provide educational scholarships to those below the age of 20 who have lost their parents to the pandemic.

Applicants are required to provide certified copies of the parent's death certificate, the child's birth certificate, confirmation from the grama niladhari division where the death occurred, and a principal's confirmation letter verifying the child attends school. The application may be mailed to the Presidential Secretariat, or to info@itukama.lk.

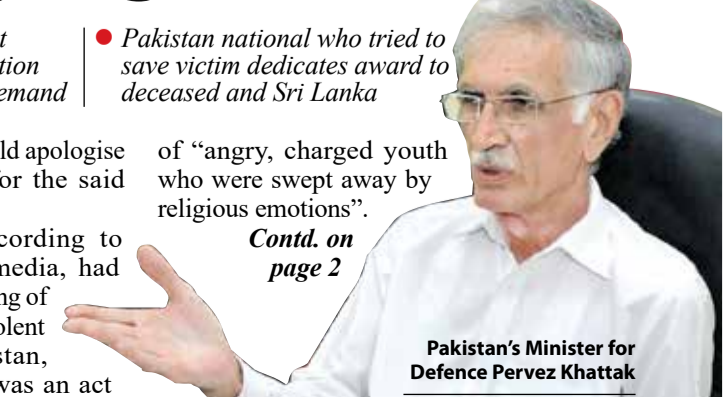
# SL demands apology from 'lynch justifying' Pak Minister

- Said killing was by 'angry, charged youth, swept away by religious emotions'
- Government and Opposition unified in demand
- Pakistan national who tried to save victim dedicates award to deceased and Sri Lanka

**S**everal Government and Opposition politicians have stressed that Pakistan's Defence Minister Pervez Khattak, who has allegedly justified the murder of Priyantha Kumara by a violent mob in Sialkot on 3 December, should apologise to the world for the said statement.

Khattak, according to international media, had labelled the killing of Kumara by a violent mob in Pakistan, saying that it was an act of "angry, charged youth who were swept away by religious emotions".

Contd. on page 2





# { NEWS }

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## CEB...

“Internal investigations carried out by the CEB have confirmed that there has not been any external manipulation of the relays in the Biyagama and Kotmale lines. These records cannot be altered and are available for any party to investigate,” said the CEBCU in a statement issued yesterday.

On 6 December, the CEB Senior Engineers' Association (CEBSEA) called for an impartial investigation into the unusual power outages that occurred in the country in the last two weeks, whilst claiming that the CEBCU's actions are suspicious in this regard. The CEBSEA further accused the CEBCU of being unprofessional in fighting for their demands.

However, the CEBCU said yesterday that the allegations by a “group calling themselves the CEBSEA” are “totally false”. “One of their allegations is that there was remote access to relays and thereby the settings had been changed to create a maloperation. The CEB has ‘Siemens’ and ‘Schneider’ (MiCOM) main protection relays and ‘Qualitrol BEN 6000’ fault recorders installed at the Biyagama and Kotmale grid substations. If anyone has accessed these relays, remotely or otherwise, and modified anything, all such changes and accesses are logged internally as ‘Events’ in the ‘Relay Events List’ and cannot be deleted,” said the CEBCU.

The CEBCU further said that there has been an actual fault in the Biyagama-Kotmale 220 kilovolt backbone transmission line, for which the cause is still being determined.

Two power outages were reported in Sri Lanka over the last two weeks, with the most recent one on 3 December being an islandwide blackout. The Government has stated that they are conducting investigations to verify the claims of sabotage.

The CEBCU has also been involved in ongoing trade union action over six main demands, including the withdrawal of the New Fortress Energy Inc. agreement, which they claim is “illegal”.

Yesterday, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)-led National People's Power (NPP) Leader MP Anura Kumara Dissanayake (AKD) accused Minister of Power Gamini Lokuge of deliberately evading the tabling of the said agreement in Parliament.

Dissanayake said: “I requested for the agreement that was signed between the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and New Fortress Energy Inc. to be tabled in Parliament. We have the right to know the details in the agreement. Public finances should be discussed in Parliament. This agreement includes public finances, so it is right for the public to know the truth.

“Ever since I asked for this agreement to be tabled in Parliament, Lokuge has not turned up in Parliament, and I have a feeling that he is evading this. He must remember that although he is the Power Minister and has a portfolio, he is dealing with public finances and that there should be some accountability. He must remember that these dealings cannot be hidden from the public.”

## 'Gas...

“We sent 12 samples to the CPC and all of them show a propane composition of 47% or 48%. There are no final, scientific decisions yet on whether this change in composition led to the explosions. However, my personal reasoning is that it was due to the change in gas composition that this problem arose,” said Alagiyawanna in Parliament yesterday.

However, Alagiyawanna said that the technical problem remains in the fact that the Sri Lanka Standards Institute (SLSI) has not put forward a regulation for the composition of gas in a gas cylinder. Allegations levelled against the two LPG companies in the market claim that the companies changed the ratio of propane:butane in a gas cylinder from the usual 70:30 to a dangerous 50:50 composition. “The SLSI only has a standard set for the pressure within a gas cylinder. Due to the current regulations, even if a company uses 100% propane in a cylinder, it will not exceed the pressure set forth by the SLSI. No government institution has properly regulated gas so far,” said Alagiyawanna.

He further spoke about the short-term measures that the Consumer Protection State Ministry has taken, alongside the relevant government institutions, in order to ensure that the two companies are meeting the safety recommendations now.

“The Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA), the SLSI, and the Industrial Technology Institute (ITI) will check new imports when they arrive at the docks in order to ensure that the 20% to 30% propane range is present. The two companies had not had equipment to measure the pressure of cylinders previously. We introduced those over the weekend, and now they have to check the pressure and release them to the market.”

He assured that the Government will accept responsibility and provide necessary relief for any consumers who were inconvenienced. “We will provide justice. Although at the moment we cannot give 100% assurance to the consumers about the safety aspect, our goal is to reach that 100% level as soon as possible.”

In the long term, necessary new laws will be introduced, alongside reforms to the relevant government institutions, he said.

Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)-led

National People's Power (NPP) Leader and Parliamentarian Anura Kumara Dissanayake, speaking in Parliament, requested that details be given about whether the companies had obtained lab reports, including reports about possible dangers, when they had changed the composition and whether the two companies had provided any reasons for removing the ethyl mercaptan odourant from the cylinders.

However, both Laugfs Gas PLC and Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. earlier said that they would not accept the CPC lab reports as the CPC lab facilities are not up to the required standard. Litro Gas Lanka further said that the CPC would be their competitor soon, as it is due to introduce its own product to the market, which would in turn lead to a conflict of interest. Both companies have further stated that their gas composition falls within the 30% (propane) and 70% (butane) range, as per the tests that they have conducted and the results that they have received from them.

Presidential Expert Committee Head and University of Moratuwa's Prof. Shantha Walpolage said this week that they have recommended that the companies ensure that the odourant be present in the cylinders in the correct dosage henceforth. Meanwhile, the CAA ordered both Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. and Laugfs Gas PLC to recall all sealed cylinders in the market that had been distributed before 4 December. Prof. Walpolage noted that 430 LPG cylinder-based incidents had occurred between 29 November 2021 and 5 December 2021.

## CAA...

Furthermore, the CAA said that it has instructed state-owned Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. and privately owned Laugfs Gas PLC to recall all sealed and unused gas cylinders currently in gas distribution outlets which were distributed before 4 December.

“Afterwards, we will also look into recalling gas cylinders which are currently being used in households, and were distributed prior to last week. If the consumer is worried about the gas cylinder, they will have the opportunity to send it back, and depending on the weight, a system of exchange will be worked out,” the official added.

Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)-led National People's Power Leader MP Anura Kumara Dissanayake proposed in Parliament yesterday that the consumers be given the opportunity to exchange their half-used cylinders, with due consideration to the weight of gas that is remaining in the cylinder.

The Presidential Expert Committee investigating the LPG cylinder-related explosions this year, headed by Prof. Shantha Walpolage of the University of Moratuwa, noted that 430 such incidents had occurred between 29 November and 5 December 2021. He further recommended that the two companies increase the ethyl mercaptan odourant to a correct dosage before releasing the cylinders to the market and has also requested the consumers to be aware of the standards and high-quality products during their purchase of components such as the hose, regulator, and gas cooker.

Meanwhile, a writ application was filed before the Court of Appeal yesterday with regard to the recent liquefied petroleum gas-related incidents.

The petition was lodged by public interest litigation activist Nagananda Kodituwakku, who has requested the Appeals Court to direct the Inspector General of Police to initiate criminal investigations against Minister of Trade Bandula Gunawardena and State Minister of Consumer Protection Lasantha Alagiyawanna, as well as the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) Chairman and the Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI) Director General over the matter.

## Speaker...

Abeywardena yesterday (8) informed the Parliament of the said committee's appointment. The committee is chaired by Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Ranjith Siyambalapatiya and the other members are Ministers Chamal Rajapaksa, Dr. Bandula Gunawardana, and Vasudeva Nanayakkara; State Minister Susil Premajayantha; Government MP Anura Priyadarshana Yapa; and Opposition MPs Ranjith Madduma Bandara, Gayantha Karunatileka, Rauff Hakeem, Vijitha Herath, and President's Counsel M.A. Sumanthiran.

The Speaker further said that a group of SJB MPs have met him on Tuesday (7) and requested that their safety be ensured during the parliamentary sessions. Accordingly, Abeywardena said that he has taken all necessary steps to ensure the safety of all MPs as he is bound to do so. “I have already taken all necessary steps to provide security to all MPs. However, everyone must exercise restraint in Parliament in order to prevent the recurrence of such incidents. I also strongly emphasise the need to avoid impulsive and personal insults, especially when speaking,” noted the Speaker.

Meanwhile, the SJB, which attended the parliamentary session yesterday after a three-day boycott over the incidents in question, warned that they would go before the Supreme Court (SC) if the Speaker does not issue an order on the incidents in addition to the aforesaid committee's appointment. Speaking in Parliament, SJB MP and Chief Opposition Whip Lakshman Kiriella said that if the Speaker does not issue an order regarding the incidents in addition to appointing

the said committee, the SJB will have to go to the SC seeking justice. He said: “We don't want these issues to be taken out of the Parliament. We are trying to resolve this issue within the Parliament itself. So you (Speaker) should make an order about this based on what you have seen on the days of the relevant incidents. If not, we will have to take this to the SC, albeit reluctantly, because chillie powder gangs cannot be allowed to destroy this Parliament as they did the last Parliament.”

Further claiming that it is not clear as to what was expected from the appointment of the said committee, Kiriella said that they will, however, consider it as a good move. Even though the SJB would consider the committee's appointment as a good move, he said that the Opposition's main demand was that the Speaker issue an order based on what the latter witnessed. “Our main demand is that you make an order on what you saw then. You are the main witness to those incidents. But you did not make such an order and didn't say as to what you saw, at the party leaders' meeting either.”

Kiriella alleged last weekend that a group of MPs of the ruling party had approached Manusha Nanayakkara on 3 December and attempted to assault the latter when he requested five extra minutes from the Speaker for his speech. He also claimed that ruling party MPs had again approached Nanayakkara on 4 December in the Opposition's lobby following his (Nanayakkara) parliamentary address and attempted to assault him.

However, the ruling party MPs, in response, accused Nanayakkara of making false allegations in the Parliament and called for an inquiry against him. Chief Government Whip and Minister Johnston Fernando on 4 December claimed that Nanayakkara ran to the Chair threatening the Speaker on 3 December, after the latter imposed a time limit for the debate in the Parliament. He said: “The closed circuit television (CCTV) footage of the incidents would provide evidence and prove the aggressive behaviour of Nanayakkara and how he turned violent after the Speaker ruled against additional time.” Alleging that Nanayakkara ran to the Speaker's chair menacingly, Fernando said that it is their duty to protect the Speaker. “I went there to defend the Speaker. A 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 Parliament when they make threats to and demands from the Speaker,” he said.

Against this backdrop, Abeywardena on Monday (6) informed the Parliament that a committee will be appointed within the course of this week to look into the alleged attempt by a group of Government MPs to attack Nanayakkara.

## Chinese...

The petition was called before Court of Appeal Judges Sobhitha Rajakaruna and Dhammika Ganepola.

Last month, the Ministry of Agriculture stated that it will not accept the reports of any tests carried out by a third party on the controversial fertiliser samples of China-based Qingdao Seawin Biotech Group Co., Ltd.

Speaking to *The Morning*, Ministry of Agriculture Secretary Prof. Udith K. Jayasinghe-Mudalige said: “It is not possible to import fertiliser from this company based on test reports of a third party. If the company wants to supply fertiliser to Sri Lanka, they should follow the prescribed procedure from the beginning by submitting samples to the local testing agencies, mainly the National Plant Quarantine Service (NPQS).”

This was after Schutter Global Inspection and Survey Company Ltd., the third-party testing agency selected by Qingdao Seawin Biotech Group, stated that no harmful characteristics such as coliform bacteria, salmonella, and ascarid eggs were found in the fertiliser samples provided by the said Chinese company.

Meanwhile, commenting on the “Hippo Spirit” ship at the time, Prof. Jayasinghe-Mudalige said the ship should go back and that there would be no point of asking for compensation or submitting third-party test reports.

“We did not ask for this ship to come here. Therefore, there will be no point of giving third-party test reports or asking for compensation for something we did not ask. Furthermore, we cannot get into the ship and test the fertiliser samples in it,” he added.

When contacted by *The Morning* at the time to query what action the Chinese fertiliser company would take in this situation, the local agent of the said company said that he was not aware of such.

The Chinese company has also sent a Letter of Demand seeking a sum of \$ 8 million in damages from the NPQS.

Following tests carried out by local testing agencies, including the NPQS, on the second set of samples of organic fertiliser made in China that have confirmed the presence of harmful bacteria in the said samples, the Agriculture Ministry recently decided not to import organic fertiliser from the said Chinese company.

In this backdrop, State Minister of Promoting the Production and Regulating the Supply of Organic Fertiliser, and Paddy and Grains, Organic Foods, Vegetables, Fruits, Chillies, Onion, and Potato Cultivation Promoting, Seed Production, and Advanced Technology Agriculture Shasheendra Rajapaksa told the media on 26 October that China had refused to accept the results of the tests conducted so far. “They (China) said the tests carried out on these fertiliser samples by local agencies

cannot be accepted, as they were not accredited laboratories. They said that this company in question manufactures fertilisers for about 16 countries, including Australia, Canada, and the US and, therefore, asked us to understand the quality of these fertilisers,” he said.

## SL...

He has said: “Even I can get excited and do wrong when it comes to religion. Therefore, instead of blaming the Government, it is the responsibility of the media to explain these to the people.”

Speaking in the Parliament yesterday (8), Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Opposition Parliamentarian Dr. Kavinda Heshan Jayawardhana said: “I would like to condemn the statement made by Khattak. He has said that those who killed Kumara were children and that they were emotional. However, I would like to tell him that if he considers these extremists children, he is insulting the children of Pakistan. Khattak, who has allegedly justified the murder of Kumara by a violent mob in Sialkot on 3 December, should apologise to the world.”

He further claimed that Khattak must be having some connection with the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) since the latter group was seen trying to whitewash the TLP even after witnessing the brutal killing of Kumara by TLP supporters.

“Those people were terrorists and racists. Even the people in Sri Lanka are made of flesh and blood. We also have emotions, but we have, at no point, reacted in the way that those terrorists have reacted. Therefore, I would expect Khattak to apologise to the world over the statement he made justifying the killing of Kumara. We urge the Pakistani Government and Khattak to apologise over his statement,” Dr. Jayawardhana added.

Meanwhile, Public Security Minister Rear Admiral (Retd.) Sarath Weerasekera also expressed his displeasure over the statement of Khattak about the killing of Kumara, where he has said that the killing was committed by some enraged children. Paying his last respects to the remains of Kumara, Weerasekera on 7 December said: “We heard that Khattak has claimed that this incident is a normal occurrence by angry youngsters. I vehemently condemn that statement.”

However Khattak, on Tuesday, issued a clarification regarding his earlier statement and said that he “vehemently condemns” the incident because “Islam does not allow the killing of humans, irrespective of their religious beliefs”.

In a video message, the Minister said that he was issuing the clarification as his earlier statement had received a lot of backlash in Pakistan.

“I was asked whether the Sialkot lynching occurred because of the deal between the Government and the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), and in response, I had said that no political party or the Government should be associated with the incident. Those involved in the incident acted on their own, and did something wrong,” he said, adding that the Government is trying its best to punish the culprits in a way so as to make an example out of them in Pakistan.

Furthermore, the Free Trade Zones and General Services Employees' Union (FTZGSEU) in a letter to Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has requested to adequately compensate Kumara's family. The FTZGSEU has also called on Premier Khan to instruct the owner of Rajco Industries – Sports Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Company, being Kumara's employer, to pay gratuity and compensation to Kumara's family for the service rendered to the company for 11 years.

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) has, in a letter dated 6 December, to Premier Khan, also requested the Pakistani Government and other law enforcement agencies to ensure the conduct of an impartial and thorough investigation into the killing of Kumara and to enforce the law to its fullest against those responsible. The letter further read that the BASL would closely monitor the progress of the investigations into the matter and that it has already reached out to and sought the assistance of the Pakistani Bar.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani national named Malik Adnan, who tried to save Kumara from the violent mob on 3 December, and was later awarded the Tamgha-i-Shujaat or “Medal of Bravery” for “endangering his own life by physically trying to shield the victim”, said that he has dedicated the award given to him by Premier Khan to Kumara and the Sri Lankan people.

A mob comprising hundreds of protestors, including the employees of the factory of which Kumara was the General Manager, had tortured him to death on 3 December and later burnt his body. His remains which were airlifted by a SriLankan Airlines flight arrived at the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) in Katunayake on 6 December. The remains were later handed over to his family and the last rites were held yesterday.

International media have reported that eight more suspects have been arrested by the Punjab Police yesterday on suspicion of their involvement in the killing of Kumara. A spokesperson of the Punjab Police has said that eight more key suspects have been apprehended with the help of closed circuit television (CCTV) footage, mobile phone call data, and videos.

## Multiple...

...US-based New Fortress Energy Inc. on the

Yugadnavi Power Plant in Kerawalapitiya.

The main demonstration of the protest was held in front of the Colombo Fort Railway Station after which they marched towards the Presidential Secretariat at Galle Face Green. There, several trade union representatives had the opportunity to hold discussions with officials of the Presidential Secretariat.

Speaking to the media after the discussion, CEB Joint Trade Union Alliance (CEBJTUA) Convenor Ranjan Jayalal said that a petition signed by employees of the CEB, the SLPA, and the CPC against the sale of national resources was handed over to the Presidential Secretariat officials.

“Senior Assistant Secretary to the President Malkanthi Rajapaksa and a group of officials had a lengthy discussion with us. They listened to us very attentively. In particular, the trade union leaders of the CPC informed them about the massive deal going on at the CPC and the SLPA trade union representatives informed the officials of the plans to sell the 13-acre land owned by the SLPA,” he said.

He further said that the officials of the Presidential Secretariat had promised to give them an opportunity to hold discussions with the President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and the Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa within a period of week. Jayalal also said that he believed that the opportunity for a discussion would be given within a week and if the sale of national resources was not stopped even after that discussion, a massive trade union struggle would be launched in the future.

He said: “So far the Government has not discussed these matters with us. They have been negotiating with various other parties, but they should discuss with those who are really involved in this struggle. Therefore, we hope to have this discussion within a week. However, if the sale of national resources is not going to end even after that, we have the ability to take trade union action against the President and Prime Minister. We will definitely do that.”

The said trade unions earlier launched a series of protests on 3 November challenging the sale of national resources in front of their respective workplaces.

## Vehicles...

...the sidewalks for the sake of the convenience of pedestrians who commute daily in the city of Colombo.

The Police will reprimand the motorists who park their vehicles on the pavement. However, if the owners are absent, such vehicles will be towed away to a nearby police station.

## CA...

The petition had been filed by a number of Sri Lankan civil society activists including Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, Tamara Andrea Flamer-Caldera, Anusha Shyami David, and Gowrie Ponniah. IGP C.D. Wickramaratne, psychological counsellor Ama Dissanayake, and the Attorney General (AG) have been named as respondents in the writ petition.

The petitioners state that as per the Police Performance Report 2018, a total of 48 gay individuals have been charged and prosecuted for apparent “homosexuality” from 2016 to 2018, in the country.

The petition further states that according to a report prepared by Human Rights Watch in 2016, LGBT individuals in Sri Lanka have been arrested and detained without cause, and have been subject to sexual and/or physical abuse and even raped by police officers.

The petitioners state that this situation is a result of the misconceptions, and lack of education on the LGBT community, as well as homosexuality itself within the country.

They state that this is in violation of the fundamental rights of the LGBT community in Sri Lanka, and therefore requests the court to issue notice on the respondents and also to issue a writ order against the IGP and the respondents preventing any forms of discrimination and harassment against the LGBT community.

## AG...

...S. Thuraiaraja PC, Kumuduni Wickremasinghe, and Arjuna Obesekera.

Senior Counsel for Jazeem had stated to court that he is ready to support the matter but that he would do it on a later date after bail is considered to Jazeem, given that the AG does not object to him being granted bail.

The court had recorded the fact that the AG is not objecting to bail being granted to Jazeem by the HC when the case is called on the 15 December and had ordered that, if there is any issue in this regard, the petitioner is entitled to file a motion.

Thus the case was fixed for support on the 8 March 2022 for leave to proceed and interim reliefs. In granting this date, the court considered the fact that there will not be an urgency to support the matter in the event Jazeem is granted bail by the High Court.

President's Counsel Dr. K.Kanag Iswaran PC appeared for the petitioner with Attorneys-at-Law A.A.M. Illiyas PC, Lakshmanan Jayakumar, Sanjaya Wilson Jayasekera, Swasthika Arulingam, and Tharindu Rathnayaka, as instructed by Attorney-at-Law S. Dev Devapalan.



**AT A GLANCE**

**CMC OFFERS FREE TESTING FOR THOSE WITH COVID-19 SYMPTOMS**  
 The Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) has urged persons showing Covid-19 symptoms to undergo free rapid antigen tests (RATs) conducted by the CMC, according to Colombo Regional Epidemiologist Dr. Dinu Guruge.  
 "You can get yourself tested at the rapid antigen site functioning daily at Campbell Park, Borella (Monday-Saturday) 9.30-11.30 a.m.," she said in a Tweet yesterday (8).  
 Dr. Guruge further stated that people should refrain from going to work or sending their children to school with symptoms.

**FAMILY KILLED IN TRAGIC TRAIN ACCIDENT**  
 Three members of the same family, including a small child, were reported dead yesterday (8) after being hit by a train near the Rozella Railway Station.  
 It was reported that a man, his wife, and their child died in the incident.

**COVID-19 VACCINES SHOULD WORK AGAINST OMICRON: WHO**  
 Existing vaccines should still protect people who contract the Omicron variant from severe Covid-19 cases, a World Health Organisation (WHO) official stated.  
 It comes as the first lab tests of the new variant in South Africa suggest it can partially evade the Pfizer jab. But WHO Emergencies Director Dr. Mike Ryan said there was no sign Omicron would be better at evading vaccines than other variants. "We have highly effective vaccines that have proved effective against all the variants so far, in terms of severe disease and hospitalisation, and there's no reason to expect that it wouldn't be so (for Omicron)," Dr. Ryan told the AFP news agency.

**10 PTA DETAINEES RELEASED AFTER SEVEN MONTHS**  
 Ten people who were arrested by the Sri Lanka Police on 18 May under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) were released on bail yesterday (8) by the Valaichenai District Magistrate's Court.  
 According to Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka, the party was arrested for lighting a flame of remembrance for war victims at Kiran beach in Kalkudah, Batticaloa.  
 It was reported that these individuals were held under the PTA for a period of seven months.

**Writ filed seeking criminal probes into recent LPG incidents**

**Calls for investigation against Bandula, Alagiyawanna, CAA Chairman, SLSI Director General**  
 A writ application has been filed before the Court of Appeal with regard to the recent liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)-related incidents.  
 The petition was lodged by public interest litigation activist Nagananda Kodituwakku.  
 He requested the Appeals Court to direct the Inspector General of Police to initiate criminal investigations against Minister of Trade Bandula Gunawardena and State Minister of Co-operative Services, Marketing Development, and Consumer Protection Lasantha Alagiyawanna, as well as the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) Chairman and the Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI) Director General, on the matter.  
 In his petition, Kodituwakku alleged that the import and distribution of substandard LPG have resulted in a number of dangerous incidents across the island.  
 He also sought a court order directing the country's two largest LPG suppliers - Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. and Laugfs Gas PLC - to recall the gas cylinders already released to the market.  
 Kodituwakku also wants the Appeals Court to issue an order preventing the release of gas cylinders to the market until a proper investigation is conducted and the safety of the public is ensured.  
 The writ application is scheduled to be taken up for consideration today (9).

**Contd. from page 1**

**Over 600...**  
 "...the Government has failed to find a solution. At the very least, the Government has not even given us an opportunity to discuss our demands with the authorities. In addition, the retirement age for public servants has been extended to 65 years. In protest over all these matters, more than 600,000 public servants did not report for duty and were on sick leave," he said.  
 Speaking further, Basnayake warned that if the Government does

not take action to provide the public servants with a salary increase even at the last reading of the Budget proposal for 2022, which is currently being debated in Parliament, a massive trade union struggle will be launched in the coming days.  
 The SLGOTUA had also organised a protest in Colombo yesterday over the same demands, which was attended by more than 500 public servants.  
 The SLGOTUA, on 14 November 2021, warned that it would initiate a trade union action without giving notice, if the Government did not

**Provincial non-medical health TUs commence strikes**

**First strike held yesterday in North Western Province; another today in Central**

**Non-medical health sector trade unions (TUs), including those in the nursing and paramedical services, launched a token strike in the North Western Province yesterday (8), as the first phase of a series of strikes which will be launched covering all provinces, over seven demands including resolving issues of salary anomalies and promotions.**  
 According to College of Medical Laboratory Science (CMLS)

President Ravi Kumudesh, health professionals related to nursing and paramedical services in all hospitals and other government health institutions in the North Western Province did not report for duty yesterday. They had also staged a protest in front of the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital.  
 Commenting on the series of protests to be launched in all provinces in the coming days, he told the media yesterday that the issues faced by paramedical and nursing services have already been conveyed to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, Minister of Finance

Basil Rajapaksa, Minister of Health Keheliya Rambukwella, and all other relevant authorities. However, he said the Government has not yet responded to their demands positively.  
 "We have drawn the attention of all the authorities to the issues we face, but so far, the Government has not paid attention to resolving them. Therefore, we have decided to launch the second phase of the trade union struggle. Accordingly, a one-day strike will be held in all provinces on separate days. We are waging this struggle from province to province in order to prevent the people from being inconvenienced," Kumudesh claimed.

Speaking further, he said the first of the series of such strikes was launched in the North Western Province, while the second is planned for today (9) in the Central Province. He added that both strikes and protests will be launched on a province-by-province basis in the coming days.  
 Furthermore, Kumudesh warned that if the Government fails to respond positively to their demands even after these trade union actions, all services provided by the paramedical and nursing personnel will be entirely suspended in the future. He charged that the Government,

which is creating the environment for such a serious course of action, should be held responsible for all inconveniences caused to the people in such a situation.  
 Earlier, nursing and paramedical services trade unions launched a token strike Islandwide for 48 hours from 7 a.m. on 24 November due to the said issues they face. In addition to the strike, several protests were held. They also organised a motorcade in Colombo on 30 November, demanding that the Government provide immediate solutions to their issues including salary and promotion-related issues.

**LAI D TO REST**



The funeral rites for Priyantha Kumara, the Sri Lankan factory manager who was slain by a mob in Sialkot, Pakistan, was held yesterday (8), in the presence of his wife, his two children, and other family members and well-wishers

**SL to become a marine sustainability hub, says PM**

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa told an international forum that he is committed to working towards making Sri Lanka a global marine sustainability hub in the region.  
 Delivering a keynote address yesterday (8) at the first World Ocean Summit Asia-Pacific, organised by The Economist Group, he stated: "As an island nation surrounded by the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka holds a great responsibility in protecting the Indian Ocean, which starts with respecting the ocean and its inhabitants."  
 The virtual summit, taking place from 6-10 December, features 100 speakers and 2,000 participants from all around the world. The discussions will focus on innovative blue-finance mechanisms and how mainstream finance can better support a sustainable blue economy.  
 "As research and development activities require significant amounts of financial and human resources, I invite well-equipped developed countries to transfer sustainable marine technologies and knowledge to developing island nations to improve ocean health and to enhance marine biodiversity," Prime Minister Rajapaksa said.  
 "I believe that developed countries must co-operate with developing countries in conserving our international waters, as we all share the same ocean," he added.  
 Speaking about the balance between economic development and sustainability, the Prime Minister said: "Instead of making sustainability a limiting factor of the economy, we are determined to use our green agendas to generate more economic growth. The national policy of my Government is to utilise ocean resources in a sustainable manner under the concept of a blue-green economy."

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Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa

**Home care patients on the rise**

**Programme Chief calls for adherence to guidelines, vaccination**

**Consultant Family Physician Dr. Malkanthi Galhena, the Head of the Ministry of Health's integrated home-based care programme for asymptomatic and mildly symptomatic Covid-19 patients, said yesterday (8) that the number of Covid-19 patients receiving home-based care has increased over the last three weeks.**  
 "Currently, we are monitoring 4,295 patients under this programme. This is an increase over the last three weeks, as we were monitoring on average only about 3,000 patients from October. This was a reduction from about 16,000 patients we monitored every day during August and September," Dr. Galhena told *The Morning* yesterday.  
 As such, Dr. Galhena stressed the importance of following the basic health guidelines such as wearing facemasks, hand washing, and social distancing as well as obtaining the Covid-19 vaccines as precautions to avoid contracting the disease.  
 The Omicron variant was named as a variant of concern (VOC) by the World Health Organisation (WHO) recently. It was first detected in South Africa, and cases

with this particular variant have been reported in the US, Europe, and Japan, amongst many other places. India, on 2 December, reported its first two cases of the Omicron variant, whilst Sri Lanka reported its first case of this particular variant on 3 December.  
 The Health Promotion Bureau (HPB) said this week that although there is very limited information on the Omicron variant so far, it is vital that people adhere to their vaccine schedules, including obtaining the booster dose if eligible.  
 Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health stated that there is no restriction for even asymptomatic Covid-19 patients to be admitted to a hospital, considering factors such as their age, as there is ample space and other facilities available in the hospitals at present.  
 Speaking at a media briefing held yesterday, Ministry of Health Communications Director and Deputy Director General of Public Health Services Dr. Hemantha Herath said: "There are no issues in hospitals at present. There is enough space and other facilities. Therefore, even an asymptomatic Covid-19 patient can be hospitalised, considering their age and other factors."  
 He also said that the Advisory

Committee on Communicable Diseases (ACCD) was to meet yesterday in order to discuss the future course of action the country needs to consider in the Covid-19 pandemic situation. Dr. Herath said that certain programmes that have been initiated in other parts of the world as well as recommendations made by the WHO and other relevant agencies would be reviewed during the ACCD meeting. He said that if there is a need to change the course of action taken so far in order to control the Covid-19 pandemic, it would also be discussed.  
 "In the ACCD meeting, the measures that other countries have taken in light of the current situation will be reviewed. Accordingly, the relevant agency will consider such matters and make recommendations as to what is the appropriate course of action for our country. Maybe in the future, we will make a change if needed, in those necessary measures, as per the recommendations given by it," he said.  
 According to the Epidemiology Unit, Sri Lanka, as of 10 a.m. yesterday, has recorded 14,505 Covid-19 deaths while the total number of infections stood at 569,171, of which a total of 543,467 patients have recovered.

**Indian Defence Chief and 12 others killed in helicopter crash**



The helicopter had just taken off from the Army base in Sullur when it crashed

India's Defence Chief Bipin Rawat, his wife, and 11 other people were killed after a military helicopter they were travelling in crashed in Southern India yesterday (8), the Indian Air Force (IAF) said.  
 It said Chief of Defence Staff Rawat and his wife were among 13 killed after an IAF chopper they were travelling in crashed near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu yesterday.  
 "With deep regret, it has now been ascertained that General Bipin Rawat, Mrs. Madhulika Rawat, and 11 other persons on board have died in the unfortunate accident," the IAF said in a Tweet.  
 Sources earlier said that at least three injured people from the crash were taken to a nearby hospital. The crash took place in the Nilgiris, shortly after the Mi-series chopper

took off from the Army base in Sullur. Rawat, 63, was appointed as India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Government in late 2019.  
 The accident took place around noon near the town of Coonoor, and the dead also include four crew members of the Mi-17V5 helicopter, the IAF said in a Tweet.  
 (Agencies)

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 has 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, 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, Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa 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."

been infected with the disease. Other than that, there are no Covid-19 cluster formations among schoolchildren. "The cumulative number of Covid-19 infections among schoolchildren is increasing. For example, if there were five infected schoolchildren yesterday and another two are reported today (9), the total number goes up to seven, but that is not a large-scale outbreak."  
 He also said that many of the schoolchildren who have been infected with Covid-19 so far have contracted it from their homes and added that there will be no room for a large-scale spread in schools in the future too, if the Covid-19-related health guidelines are properly implemented in schools.  
 However, teachers' trade unions

recently accused the Ministry of Education and other relevant authorities of not having prepared a programme to properly implement the Covid-19-related health guidelines in schools, claiming that as a result, teachers and students in nearly 1,000 schools have been reported to be infected with Covid-19.  
 Speaking to *The Morning*, Ceylon Teachers' Union (CTU) President Priyantha Fernando, on 21 November, charged that the authorities, including the Education Ministry, have not prepared a proper programme to implement the Covid-19-related health guidelines in schools.  
 Ministry of Education Secretary Prof. Kapila Perera was not available for comment.

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 Ministry of Education Secretary Prof. Kapila Perera was not available for comment.

**Over 400...**

"There are nearly four million schoolchildren across the country, out of which 400-500 schoolchildren have





# The way out of the severe health and food crisis Sri Lanka faces

**The global economic crisis has been aggravated by the health crisis due to Covid-19. In Sri Lanka, these have been compounded by a severe food crisis. The impact of the global economic crisis has been mainly the result of the neoliberal policies, based on a market economy, followed since 1977 by Rightist forces, both abroad and here, led by the United National Party (UNP), serving the interests of the US and its imperialist allies, the local comprador, capitalist class.**

This has undermined the gains that were made since 1956, through the establishment of a “national economy” regulated by the Centre Left (the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party [LSSP], the Communist Party) Governments serving the people, and the national capitalist class.

The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna led present Government returned to the national economic path after its massive victory over the UNP-led yahapalanaya (good governance) Government. But already, the people are disappointed that there has not been any change for the better in their situation.

There is a massive increase in the price of food due to uncontrolled exploitation by the private sector. With 60% of families living below the poverty line and the malnutrition rate going to a high level of 18%, not only are the people unable to buy much of their essential food requirements, many of them are having to manage with one meal a day.

People are asking “why there is no change” with the present Government coming into power and making Basil Rajapaksa the Finance Minister. The short answer is the failure to follow the progressive path taken by the Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike Government under the guidance of the LSSP Leader Dr. N.M. Perera as the Finance Minister.

The foreign exchange situation has also deteriorated sharply. The foreign exchange reserve which used to average \$ 8 billion (sufficient for six months of imports) has fallen to less than \$ 2 billion (sufficient for 1.3 months). This poses a serious threat to obtaining our imports, and impedes the use of Letters Of Credit (LOC), so that importers may have to make the payments in advance. An import shortage, even of essential items like medicines, can occur.

I would suggest that the Government take firmer action to drastically reduce non-essential imports so as to conserve the foreign exchange. The Government should have a better planned programme to increase exports by promoting the high tech institutes in the areas of nanotechnology (the Sri Lanka Institute of Nanotechnology – SLINTEC) and biotechnology (the Sri Lanka Institute of Biotechnology – SLIBTEC) to develop large scale

industries, as well as small and medium (SME) industries. I am informed that besides helping to promote over 12,000 SMEs for the local market, over a 1,000 are now exporting their products, with the help of the Vidatha Centres. These were established during my 10-year term as the Science and Technology Minister.

I hope that the Government will give more assistance to these institutions and promote their research efforts. For instance, at the SLINTEC, Dr. Nilwala Kottegoda and her team have produced nanoparticles with 43% nitrogen (10 times more than what was imported recently from India) to solve the fertiliser problem.

While welcoming the decision of the President to replace chemical fertilisers with organic, the process should be done step by step on a scientific basis. The decision to produce the organic fertiliser through the private sector companies on a commercial scale may lead to the exploitation of the farmers. This should be reconsidered as it is possible to train the farmers to produce their own organic fertiliser.

Dr. Lionel Weerakoon, who is a former Research Director in the Agriculture Department with years of research behind him, is an expert in the fertiliser field and his advice should be obtained. He is a representative for the South Asian region of the World Commission of the La Via Campesina (which is a farmer federation with over 200 million members worldwide).

He along with his team fine tuned his technology and used it while I was the North Central Province Governor. He is now assisting the Eastern Province Governor in all three Districts. His methodology should be extended to all parts of the Island. He has modeled his methods on those of Subhash Palekar, whose successful campaign in India has led to him being called the “Gandhi of the farmers”.

Their approach is by getting the farmers to produce the organic fertiliser to suit their individual needs on a scientific basis. I would recommend this approach in order to avoid the further exploitation of our farmers who are already deeply in debt. This, together with the replacement of mono crops by mixed farming, including leguminous plants like green gram, will provide adequate nitrogen to the soil.



People lining up to purchase essentials outside a Lanka Sathosa outlet in Dematagoda PHOTO KRISHAN KARIYAWASAM

While the above measures provide healthy food, the solution for the food crisis also requires eliminating the exploitation of the farmer and the consumer by a whole ring of profiteering middlemen, both traders and mill owners. This was overcome during the time of Dr. Perera by his active promotion of the State.

Besides getting rural banks to prevent farmers getting into debt, he got the State to compete with the private sector in the marketing of the farmers’ produce. He mobilised progressive elements in the Government as well as the LSSP to form more farmer cooperatives as well as consumer cooperatives that directly interacted, doing away with the profiteering middleman.

The consumer cooperatives were able to give all the essential food items at a low cost, while ensuring quality. He even gave the poorest sections of the population a free measure of rice. No one died of hunger or starvation in Sri Lanka, while thousands were dying in other third world countries, due the severe drought that had affected the whole world.

The magnitude of the food crisis in 1972-1973 is evident when the price of a ton of sugar, which was imported at Pound Sterling 40 per ton went up to £ 600 per ton. No doubt there were queues due to the limited number of cooperative outlets. Outsourcing to traders was not done so as to prevent profiteering and black marketing, which was entrenched in the society.

The other major health problem beside starvation confronting our people is the worldwide pandemic of Covid-19 which is continuing with the emergence of the new variant Omicron which is said to be 500 times more transmissible than the existing Delta variant.

I feel that the magnitude of the Covid-19 problem could have been reduced earlier if my suggestion at the Parliamentary Health Advisory

Committee, chaired by the Health Minister, had been implemented. At the early stage of the appearance of the community spread occurring at that time, I stated that the cluster control system would not suffice.

A community-based intensive campaign to educate every citizen and to ensure that they observed the health rules to prevent transmission had to be ensured. This was to set up properly trained volunteer Covid-19 committees throughout the country right down to the village and workplace levels. The Covid-19 committee should be officially empowered to strongly reprimand those not observing the four health rules for its prevention (the wearing of a proper mask outside the home at all times, adequate self distancing, the washing of hands with soap and water after touching any object that has been recently touched by others, and avoiding crowds).

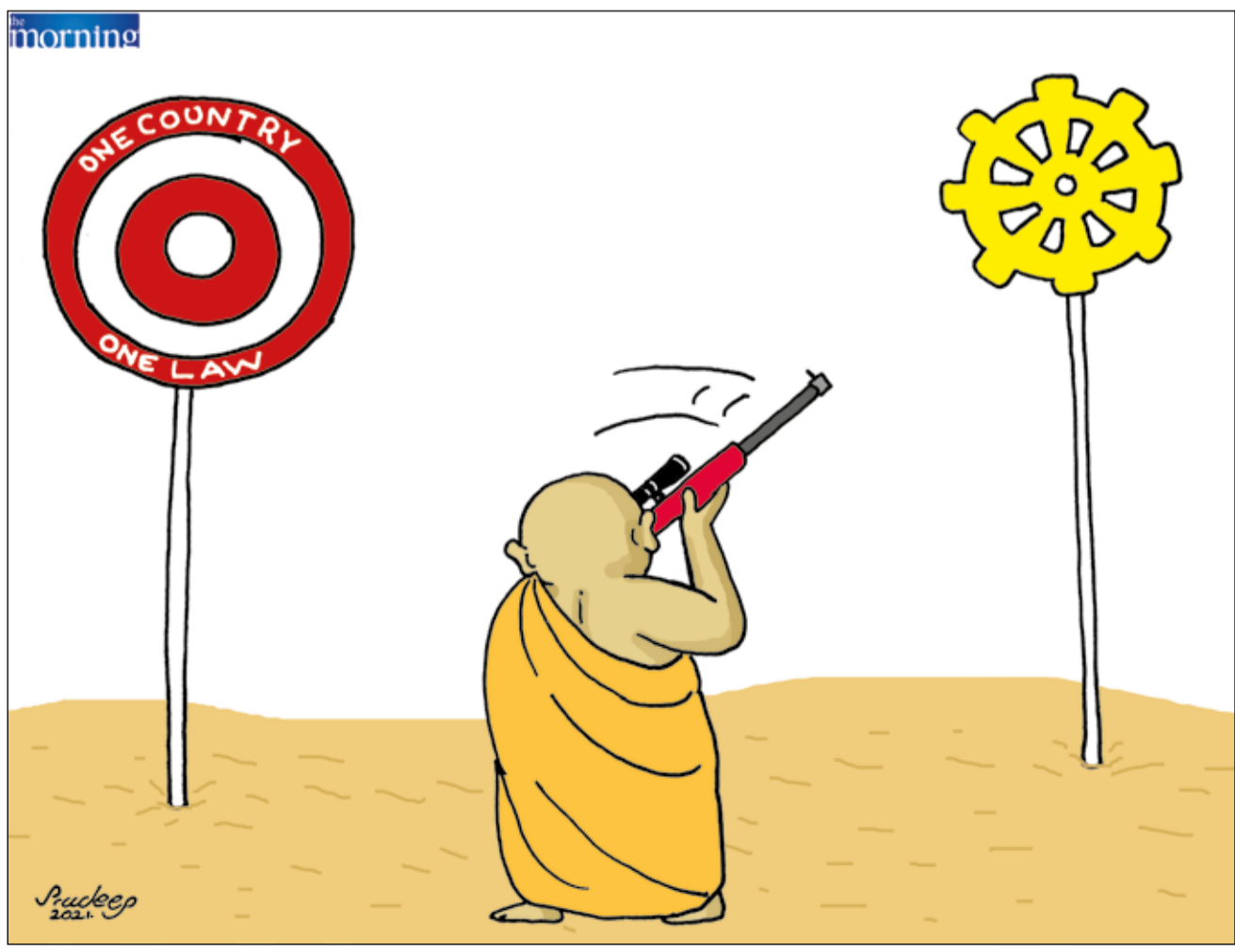
It must be remembered that vaccination only prevents a person from falling severely ill and dying, but does not prevent the transmission of the infection through the vaccinated person. The practice of these health rules should become automatic by every individual in the country if transmission is to be prevented. This needs the Covid-19 committees not only to educate the people in the village or work place, but also to ensure that everyone obeys the health rules.

The Government must be commended for its procuring vaccines to immunise a significant proportion of the population. This together with the immunity developed as a result of the natural spread of the virus in the community will provide sufficient herd immunity. Since the immunity from vaccination lasts only for a short period of less than six months, the question is whether repeated injections are necessary after the third dose is given.

In my view, this is only necessary in the vulnerable groups (those over 60 years and those with the relevant comorbidities). Many people are confused by the need to make a choice from among many vaccines. While the vaccines produced in countries like the UK, India and China are based on the traditional methods used and are safe and effective, I am reluctant to support the Government policy of persisting with the new messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) vaccines (which have not been used before on humans).

This is pure genetic material which is less stable than deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and is capable of bringing about various undesirable changes within the genetic material in our body cells. There have been many reports of reactions after the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna mRNA vaccines even in Sri Lanka and I know of cases that have had to be admitted to hospital. As the herd immunity builds up as expected within our community, vaccination is indicated only in vulnerable groups, and then the safer conventional vaccines should be used even if they are more expensive than the mRNA vaccines.

*(The writer is a virologist, Government Parliamentarian, the Committee on Public Accounts Chairman, and the LSSP General Secretary) The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of this publication.*





State Minister Lasantha Alagiyawanna conducted inspections of the factories of the country's two only LPG suppliers in late August, when supply scarcity had left consumers unable to purchase LPG cylinders. Although the scarcity issue has been resolved, there are now concerns over the safety of using the cylinders now available in the market



Alagiyawanna explained what the Government has done in this regard, and how the temporary restriction imposed on the distribution of LPG for domestic usage was lifted. He added: "The SLSI, the CAA, and the Sri Lanka Accreditation Board for Conformity Assessment (SLAB) took samples of gas from ships anchored in the ports before LPG was unloaded, and got the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC - CEYPETCO) to test those samples. The test results have shown that these samples meet the standards. The CAA issued the necessary instructions to release to the market the gas that met the required standards. It is according to those instructions that the LPG was issued to the market with a new badge cum sticker."

# Seeking answers to the 'EXPLOSIVE' gas question

Companies, the Government, consumer rights activist groups, and legal experts weigh in on the LPG issue

BY SUMUDU CHAMARA

The past few months have been a tremendously challenging time for Sri Lankan consumers, and the economic crisis created a crisis concerning food and several essential goods.

However, the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinder-related crisis, which began as a mere shortage, has now morphed into a threat to consumers, with a spate of explosions reported from different parts of the country. While the authorities, the LPG companies, and the people pointed fingers at each other over what could be the underlying reasons behind these explosions, the issue has not been resolved, and LPG consumers are still in fear.

Even though there has not been any concrete decision that could alter this discussion, the authorities have been holding discussions with the LPG companies and the experts.

regulations, even if a Company uses 100% propane in a cylinder, it will not exceed the pressure set forth by the SLSI. No Government institution has properly regulated gas so far," said Alagiyawanna.

### The LPG companies

Speaking to the media, officials of both Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. and Laugfs Gas PLC have shed some light on their side of this situation, and what measures they are taking to address it.

Laugfs Holdings Ltd. Chairman W.K.H. Wegapitiya said that in a context where Laugfs Gas exports LPG to Bangladesh, if there was something wrong with the LPG cylinders, such should be reported not only from Sri Lanka, but also from Bangladesh.

"During the past few years, a number of LPG cylinder-related accidents were reported. When we looked into the matter, only in two instances had these incidents been caused by Laugfs Gas LPG cylinders. The first incident, which took place in a leading restaurant, had been caused by negligently forgetting to turn off the gas valve. I would like to stress that all LPG cylinders and other appliances we have supplied to the market are of the highest quality. Under no circumstances did we change the composition of LPG or take some other measure that is not in accordance with the standards for profits or for any other reason."

Speaking of the composition, he noted that the generally accepted composition, which according to him is 30% propane and 70% butane, has been maintained since the beginning.

**I personally believe a change in the composition led to the explosions:**  
**Consumer Protection State Minister Lasantha Alagiyawanna**

"However, within this 30:70 ratio, small fluctuations are possible and therefore, the ratios may change slightly," he added.

Speaking of the recent gas shortage, Wegapitiya said: "Our distribution activities were not disrupted due to the CAA's directives. This shortage was caused by the difficulties pertaining to the importation of LPG which we are facing at present. The CAA has requested us in writing to refrain from distributing LPG if the chemical known as mercaptan (an odourant added to natural gas to detect it easily especially in the event of a leak since natural gas is odourless) is less than 14%. Stopping our operations completely was not

Meanwhile, Litro Gas Lanka Director - Health, Safety, and Environment Jayantha Basnayake, speaking on the allegations that a change in the composition of LPG has contributed to explosions that were reported from around the country, explained the composition of LPG, noting: "When we talk about LPG, it exists mainly as a combination of propane and butane, but in addition to them, there are a number of other gases as well. LPG is issued in accordance with the Sri Lanka Standards Institute (SLSI) Standard 712, and a maximum limit has been set to LPG's vapour pressure. What needs to be done is maintaining that pressure below the specified maximum level. If we pay attention to percentages, propane and butane alone cannot make up 100% of the LPG due to the presence of other gases. If we take the average composition during the past three to four months, the propane percentage was close to 35% while the butane percentage was around 62%. The propane percentage can fluctuate between 25% and 45%, while the butane percentage can fluctuate between 55% and 75%." When questioned whether a random cylinder may have a different composition, he said even though a slight change is possible, it should remain within the said range.

### The authorities' response

Meanwhile, State Minister

**CAA instructs gas companies to recall all sealed and unused gas cylinders in the gas distribution outlets that were distributed before 4 December**

Speaking on the discussions with the LPG companies regarding the CAA guidelines, based on which LPG distribution was permitted, Alagiyawanna further said: "Those companies have not expressed opposition to these guidelines. Instead, at every discussion we had with them, they expressed agreement. As a matter of fact, it is because these guidelines were followed that permission was granted to issue gas. No company can violate the instructions given with the aim of protecting consumers. In the event of such a violation, steps will be taken to institute legal action according to the law."

Contd. on page 8

**Legal action can be taken seeking compensation:**  
**Justice Ministry Snr. Advisor Udaya Rohana De Silva PC**

However, the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) yesterday (8) announced that it would consider legal action against the LPG companies in the market in the future, following the 430 LPG cylinder-related explosions that occurred from 29 November 2021 to 5 December 2021.

The CAA also said that it has instructed the state-owned Litro Gas Lanka Ltd. and the privately owned Laugfs Gas PLC to recall all sealed and unused gas cylinders currently in the gas distribution outlets that were distributed before 4 December.

Furthermore, the Co-operative Services, Marketing Development and Consumer Protection State Minister Lasantha Alagiyawanna said yesterday (08) that lab tests conducted by the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) on 12 samples of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) obtained over the last month show a propane composition of about 47% and said that he personally believes that this change in composition led to the LPG cylinder based explosions which occurred over the past month.

"We sent 12 samples to the CPC and all of them show a propane composition of 47% or 48%. There are no final, scientific decisions yet on whether this change in composition led to the explosions. However, my personal reasoning is that it was due to the change in gas composition that this problem arose," said Alagiyawanna in Parliament yesterday.

However, Alagiyawanna said that the technical problem remains in the fact that the Sri Lanka Standards Institute (SLSI) has not put forward a regulation for the composition of gas in a gas cylinder. Allegations levelled against the two LPG Companies in the market claim that the Companies changed the ratio of propane:butane in a gas cylinder from the usual 70:30 to a dangerous 50:50 composition. "The SLSI only has a standard set for the pressure within a gas cylinder. Due to the current

**Government and LPG companies must educate consumers:**  
**Consumer rights activist Ranjith Wlthnage**

the intention behind it; it was aimed at ensuring that the LPG we distribute contains adequate odourant to meet the standards."

Adding that while Laugfs Gas was ready to extend its support to address the prevailing situation, he said, however, that filling Litro Gas Lanka LPG cylinders with Laugfs Gas, is not possible, due to industry standards.

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# When water treatment proves to be deadly

● *Case reports highlight that hydrogen sulphide toxicity in working environments calls for tox investigation*

● *Scene investigation and autopsy assists next of kin in claiming insurance, compensation, and benefits in accidental workplace hydrogen sulphide exposure deaths*



BY RUWAN LAKNATH JAYAKODY

**S**ince toxicological investigation is vital when there is a suspicion of hydrogen sulphide (H<sub>2</sub>S) toxicity, scene investigation together with the autopsy assists in addressing possible issues which could arise in cases of hydrogen sulphide toxicity, in particular in the working environment.

This was noted in a research article based on case reports titled “Hydrogen sulphide toxicity: Two case reports” which was authored by K.R. Munasinghe, M.A. Rascon and J. Diaze (all three attached to the Office of the Medical Examiner and Forensic Laboratory in El Paso, Texas, the US) and A.N. Vadysinghe (attached to the Peradeniya University’s Medical Sciences Faculty’s Forensic Medicine Department) and published in the *Sri Lanka Journal of Forensic Medicine, Science and Law* 9 (2) in December 2018.

Hydrogen sulphide inhalation is, as Munasinghe et al. explained, not a rare presentation in the routine forensic practice as the majority of such cases are accidental (“Dung lung: A report of toxic exposure to liquid manure” by L.N. Osborn and R.O. Crapo, “A fatal disaster case based on exposure to hydrogen sulphide – An estimation of the hydrogen sulphide concentration at the scene” by K. Kimura, M. Hasegawa, K. Matsubara, C. Maseda, M. Kagawa, S. Takahashi and K.I. Tanabe, “The usefulness of thiosulfate [an ion] as an indicator of hydrogen sulphide poisoning: Three cases” by S. Kage, K. Takekawa, K. Kurosaki, T. Imamura and K. Kudo, and “A fatality caused by the accidental production of hydrogen sulphide” by A.K. Chaturvedi, D.R. Smith and D.V. Canfield) and rarely intentional (“Death from hydrogen sulphide fumes” by C. Winek, W. Collom and C. Wecht, “Suicidal poisoning due to hydrogen sulphide produced by mixing a liquid bath essence containing sulphur and a toilet bowl cleaner containing hydrochloric acid” by K. Kobayashi and H. Fukushima, and “An autopsy case of death due to hydrogen sulphide poisoning” by K. Hatake, Y. Morimura, R. Kudo, A.

Ishitani, M. Kusatani, A. Fukudome and S. Kasuda).

Hydrogen sulphide is a colourless gas with the smell of rotten eggs, commonly generated through the degradation of protein-based waste. It is, as J.S. Schneider, E.H. Tobe, P.D. Mozley Junior, L. Barniskis and T.I. Lidsky’s “Persistent cognitive and motor deficits following acute hydrogen sulphide poisoning” noted, also identified in sewers and is therefore commonly known as the sewer’s gas, and is, per the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health’s Criteria for a Recommended Standard Occupational Exposure to Hydrogen Sulphide and “Provisional advisory levels for hydrogen sulphide” by T. Marshall, D. Dorman, D. Gardner and F. Adeshina, flammable at ambient temperature, while pressure acts as an irritant and causes asphyxiation.

Hence, Munasinghe et al. presented two fatal cases of hydrogen sulphide toxicity where the toxicological analysis played a vital role in addressing important medico legal issues.

## First case

A previously healthy 40-year-old male was working in a water treatment plant which was almost closed. His body was recovered hours later, submerged in spilled sewage. The body was refrigerated until autopsy. The post-mortem examination revealed early stage putrefaction including a foul odour, the swelling of the body, the marbling and the peeling of the epidermis and greenish colour skin (hypostasis where there is an accumulation of fluid or blood in the lower parts of the body or organs under the influence of gravity, as occurs in cases of poor circulation or after

death). The upper and lower airways showed a small amount of dark coloured semi solid substance with the retention of patency (the condition of being open or unobstructed) of the air passage. A mild frothy fluid was noted on the cut surface of the lungs. The brain was greenish in colour but otherwise normal. The other organs were normal macroscopically and microscopically except for early putrefactive changes. Femoral (a large artery in the thigh and the main arterial supply to the thigh and leg) blood was positive for thiosulfate.

## Second case

A 34-year-old male working in a water treatment plant was trapped in a closed space due to the sudden spillage of sewage. He died prior to initiating resuscitation. He was an adult of average build. There was no evidence of putrefaction or the greenish discoloration of the skin (the skin colour was therefore normal). The respiratory passages were normal with no evidence of sewage within. The cut surface of the lungs showed a mild frothy fluid. Mild atherosclerosis (thickening or hardening of the arteries caused by a buildup of plaque in the inner lining of an artery) of the left coronary (relating to or denoting the arteries which surround and supply the heart) and mild fatty changes in the liver were noted. Other organs appeared normal, macroscopically and microscopically. The toxicology revealed the presence of thiosulfate.

The cause of death in both cases was confirmed as hydrogen sulphide gas toxicity. The manner of death was concluded as accidental.

Hydrogen sulphide is, as the “Oxidation of sodium sulphide by rat liver, lungs and kidney” by T.C. Bartholomew, G.M. Powell, K.S. Dodgson and C.G. Curtis, “A critical review of the literature on hydrogen sulphide toxicity” by R.O. Beauchamp, J.S. Bus, J.A. Popp, C.J. Boreiko, D.A. Andjelkovich and P. Leber, and “A simple screening

test for sulphite oxidase deficiency: Detection of urinary thiosulfate by a modification of Sorbo’s method (a colourimetric method for the determination of thiosulfate)” by V.E. Shih, M.M. Carney and R. Mandell noted, extremely unstable and rapidly converts to its main metabolite – thiosulfate, which remains stable in the body. Therefore, the level of thiosulfate is considered a reliable marker for hydrogen sulphide poisoning, per Kage et al., and S. Kage’s “Usefulness of thiosulfate as an indicator of hydrogen sulphide poisoning in forensic toxicological examination: A study with animal experiments”.

That said, thiosulfate, according to the “Determination of sulphide, thiosulfate and polysulphides in biological materials for diagnosis of sulphide poisoning” by S. Kage, K. Kudo and N. Ikeda, “Reversed phase ion pair liquid chromatographic procedure with electrochemical detection for the analysis of urinary thiosulfate” by B. Kagedal, M. Kallberg, J. Martensson and B. Sorbo, and the “Determination of thiosulfate in human urine and plasma by high performance liquid chromatography with a dual electrochemical detector” by T. Kawanishi, T. Togawa, A. Ishigami, S. Tanabe and T. Imanari, is naturally present in very low levels in blood and urine even in healthy individuals.

In both the local cases, the blood levels of thiosulfate were however above the toxic level (per Osborn and Crapo, Kimura et al., Winek et al., B.H. McAnalley, W.T. Lowry, R.D. Oliver and J.C. Garriott’s “Determination of inorganic sulphide and cyanide in blood using specific ion electrodes: Application to the investigation of hydrogen sulphide and cyanide poisoning” and K. Maebashi, K. Iwate, K. Sakai, A. Takatsu, K. Fukui, M. Aoyagi, E. Ochiai and T. Nagai’s “Toxicological analysis of 17 autopsy cases of hydrogen sulphide poisoning resulting

from the inhalation of intentionally generated hydrogen sulphide gas”) and was sufficient to cause death.

Hydrogen sulphide is produced naturally during putrefaction, per T. Nagata, S. Kage, K. Kimura, K. Kudo and N. Noda’s “Sulphide concentrations in post-mortem mammalian tissues”. Maebashi et al. noted the absorption of hydrogen sulphide via the skin if the body is exposed to a high concentration of hydrogen sulphide; but in the instant cases, there was no major influence on the concentration in the blood levels which showed a very high level of toxicity.

As R.P. Smith and R.E. Gosselin’s “Hydrogen sulphide poisoning” explained, the mechanism of action of hydrogen sulphide involves the prevention of oxygen utilisation at the cellular level. Low and moderate exposure to hydrogen sulphide causes local tissue irritation with cyanosis (a bluish purple hue to the skin which indicates that there may be decreased oxygen attached to the red blood cells in the bloodstream and may in turn suggest a problem with the lungs or the heart), coma and rapid death in severe exposure (per the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, J.W. Peters’s “Hydrogen sulphide poisoning in a hospital setting”, L. Adelson and I. Sunshine’s “Fatal hydrogen sulphide intoxication: Report of three cases occurring in a sewer” and J.W. Snyder, E.F. Safir, G.P. Summerville and R.A. Middleberg’s “Occupational fatality and persistent neurological sequelae after mass exposure to hydrogen sulphide”).

Minimal local reaction due to hydrogen sulphide in the two local victims indicated that the victims were exposed to a high level of hydrogen sulphide, according to Munasinghe et al. The mild frothy fluid seen on the cut sections of the lungs in both the deceased indicates the possibility of asphyxia due to rapid exposure to high concentrations than local irritation which occurs in low and moderate exposure (L.D. Knight and S.E. Presnell’s “Death by sewer gas: Case report of a double fatality and review of the literature”, D.S. Gabbay, F.D. Roos and J. Perrone’s “20 foot fall averts fatality from massive hydrogen sulphide exposure” and S. Tanaka, S. Fujimoto, Y. Tamagaki, K. Wakayama, K. Shimada and J. Yoshikawa’s “Bronchial [the larger air passages of the lungs, including those that lead from the trachea/windpipe to the lungs and those within the lungs] injury and pulmonary [pertaining to the lungs] edema [swelling caused by excess fluid trapped in the body’s tissues] caused by hydrogen sulphide poisoning”).

On the other hand, the greenish discoloration of the skin as seen in one of the local cases is a recognised feature of hydrogen sulphide poisoning (S. Kage, S. Ito, T. Kishida, K. Kudo and N. Ikeda’s “A fatal case of hydrogen sulphide poisoning in a geothermal power plant”, T.H. Milby and R.C. Baselt’s “Hydrogen sulphide poisoning: Clarification of some controversial issues” and M. Ago, K. Ago and M. Ogata’s “Two fatalities by hydrogen sulphide poisoning: Variation of pathological and toxicological findings”). Moreover, per Adelson and Sunshine, greenish discoloration was seen in the brain at autopsy in the same case.

Therefore, the findings at the scene investigation and the autopsy leading to the conclusion that the manner was accidental in both the instances, in turn assists Munasinghe et al. elaborated, the next of kin when claiming insurance, compensation or any other benefits.

# WHO warns against mandatory vaccinations

The World Health Organisation (WHO) warned against mandatory vaccinations unless all other options have been exhausted.

WHO Europe Director Dr. Hans Kluge told a press conference today that vaccinations should not be made mandatory “if you haven’t reached out first to the communities”.

“Mandates around vaccination are an absolute last resort and only applicable when all other feasible options to improve vaccination uptake have been exhausted.”

Dr. Kluge admitted that such measures had been proven effective in some environments, to increase vaccine uptake.

However, the effect that mandating vaccination could have on public confidence and



public trust, as well as vaccination uptake, must be considered.

“Ultimately, mandates should

never contribute to increasing social inequalities in access to health and social services,” Dr.

Kluge said.

While cases and deaths have more than doubled in the past two months, Covid-19 deaths have remained significantly below previous peaks. Dr. Kluge said that the mortality would have been far worse without vaccination. Of all people in Europe and Central Asia, 55% are fully vaccinated and 43 out of 53 countries now offer an additional booster dose to their most vulnerable populations.

Dr. Kluge pointed to new research conducted by WHO Europe and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, which found that from December 2020 to November 2021, at least 470,000 lives were directly saved through Covid-19 vaccination.

“This is an overwhelming affirmation of the value of vaccines and science, a testimony to government and healthcare worker commitment, and most of all a great recognition of the public’s acceptance and support to tackling this pandemic,” Dr. Kluge said.

He said that Europeans needed to shift from “reaction” to “stabilisation” mode in this crisis. Five pandemic stabilisers were needed to keep mortality down, including increasing vaccine uptake, administering a booster, doubling the rate of mask-wearing indoors and ventilating crowded spaces.

Dr. Kluge said it was imperative to create Covid-safe learning for young children to avoid school

closures and home learning. However, it had to be taken into account that there were often two to three times higher incidence of infections among young children than in the average population.

“As school holidays approach, we must also acknowledge that children contaminate their parents and grandparents at home, with a 10 times increased risk for these adults to develop severe disease, be hospitalised, or die when non-vaccinated.”

Therefore, WHO Europe calls for the use of masks and ventilation, and regular testing, at all primary schools. Vaccinating children should be discussed and considered nationally, as part of school protection measures.



# Putting the enterprise back in state ownership

BY SHIRAN ILLANPERUMA

**Neoclassical economists have at best a sceptical, and at worst a hostile, attitude towards state-owned enterprises (SOEs) which are often derided as politicised, inefficient, rent-seeking, and a burden on the taxpayer.**

There are two main arguments levelled against SOEs. The first argument is the “principal-agent” argument, which says that SOEs are run by managers not owners, and therefore lack the incentives to improve commercial performance. The second argument is the “soft-budget constraint”, which means that state-owned firms do not manage expenditures according to expected cash flows due to the high likelihood of being bailed out by the state through subsidies, a “soft” approach in tax and debt collection, and interventions in pricing.

The first argument entails that SOEs have no incentive to succeed, while the latter argues that they have no disincentive to fail. But time and history have shown that these arguments can be just as true of many large private sector firms that enjoy official or unofficial political patronage.

In modern capitalism, shareholders in large private companies are rarely directly involved in management, which is delegated to professionals, making the “principal-agent” argument relevant here, too. Meanwhile, being “too big to fail” is perhaps the private sector version of “soft-budget constraint” and was evident in how the US bailed out large banks in the 2008 financial crisis, despite these banks failing to manage their own risks.

## SOEs are here to stay

Regardless of what economists think about them, SOEs are here to stay. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), SOE assets were worth \$ 45 trillion – about half of global GDP – in 2020. Between 2005 and 2014, the percentage of SOEs in the Fortune 500 more than doubled from 9% to 23%. This was driven largely by the growth of

Chinese SOEs, which accounted for 82 of the Fortune 500 companies in 2020.

But it’s not all China. In free trade-loving Singapore, SOEs contribute 22% of GDP. Temasek Holdings is a AAA-rated investment and asset management firm fully owned by the Singaporean Government, whose subsidiaries include SOEs in sectors such as transport, banking, engineering, telecommunications, and mass media.

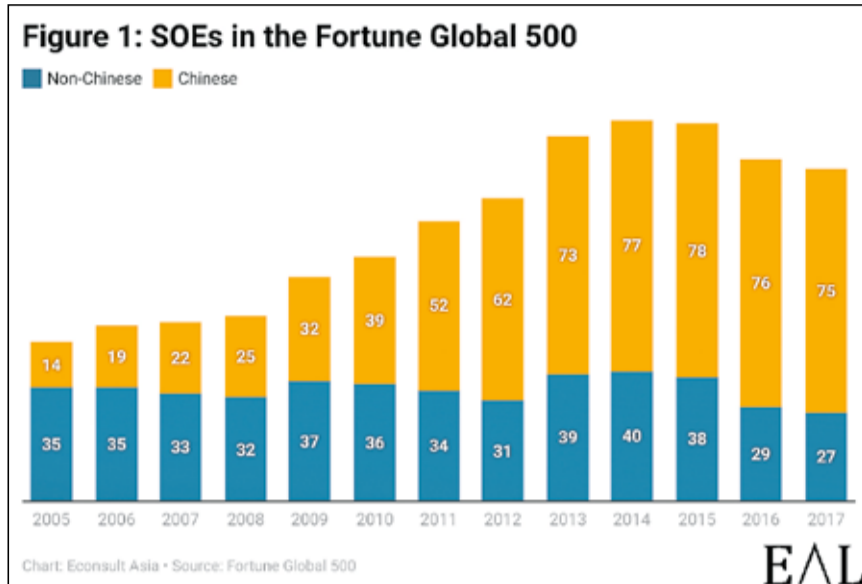
Liberal Europe is also home to a vast number of SOEs, with industrial powerhouses such as Germany and Sweden having many SOEs owned by municipalities, rather than the central or federal government. In Norway, 9.6% of all non-agricultural employment is in SOEs, though this figure rises to over 12% when including companies where the state has a minority share.

South Korea’s POSCO is a steel-making company which was the fourth largest steelmaker in 2015. Yet, its origins are as an SOE set up by the Korean Government in the 1960s, with a former Army General placed in charge. Despite not having its own iron ore reserves, South Korea’s steel production helped improve the competitiveness of local construction and manufacturing of electronics and automobiles.

## From natural monopoly to developmentalism

SOEs have their origins in classical economic theories about “natural monopolies” – areas of economic activity where pure competition and profit maximisation cannot function without gross externalities such as transport, healthcare, education, and communications.

A 2017 survey on the sectoral distribution of value in OECD countries,



excluding China, found that 26% of SOEs were in finance, 21% in electricity and gas, and 18% in transport – closely mirroring the classical economic argument of natural monopolies (Figure 2).

The concern over “natural monopolies” is somewhat a moral argument and developed in response to the rapacious nature of capitalism in the 19th Century. Other arguments are that SOEs are needed to mitigate market failures and invest in socially necessary infrastructure which is not immediately profitable for the private sector.

These are, however, arguments put forward at a time when Europe had already achieved a certain level of industrialisation in the early 19th Century and the domestic market was fully developed. The rationale for SOEs in developing countries is more complex and linked to the need to stabilise costs of production, expand market frontiers, and introduce new technology through state entrepreneurialism.

## SOEs as macroeconomic stabilisers in China

Prof. Zheng Yongian, an influential expert on international relations and political science in Mainland China, recently said that despite US opposition, China will not abandon SOEs as the government sees them as important for

“macroeconomic stability”. He argued that it was indeed the state sector that allowed China to rebound from the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and 2008 Global Financial Crisis.

The notion that SOEs can be a tool for macroeconomic stability might just induce an aneurysm in neoclassical economists who view SOEs as distorting the utopia of free markets and private property. To them, macroeconomic stability is the narrow domain of fiscal and monetary policy wonks. States can stabilise markets by directly participating in them (through production of upstream goods, bulk trading, and price hedging), but this is rarely offered as a policy tool in neoclassical textbooks, despite many historic precedents.

Prof. Yongian frames SOEs as part of the history of China’s economic governance. Since at least the Han Dynasty, China has maintained state monopolies in strategic sectors such as iron and salt production, while also engaging in the trade of agricultural produce in order to stabilise prices of grains. During the Chinese revolution, SOEs set up by the Communist Party of China performed a similar role, effectively out speculating middlemen and ending hyperinflation.

China began a process of restructuring SOEs in the 1990s. At the time, it was seen in the West as a victory for laissez faire proponents of private property. In retrospect, China never committed to wholesale privatisation as an end in itself. Instead, the government adopted the slogan “Grasp the large, let go of the small”, whereby SOEs were restructured and consolidated into larger, more productive entities, many of them focusing on heavy industries such as mining, refining, transport, and manufacturing of automobiles and aircraft.

China’s impressive road and rail

infrastructure is almost solely thanks to SOEs. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has provided Chinese SOEs with an outlet to build many of the most modern highways, railways, ports, and airports in developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Ironically, while developing countries are told by economists to privatise their SOEs, these same countries rely on Chinese SOEs to modernise their infrastructure.

## State entrepreneurialism in Sri Lanka

Here in Sri Lanka, SOEs are a source of bitter political and intellectual contention due to various historical reasons. Many SOEs are dysfunctional and burdened with debt, surplus labour, and outdated technology, while lacking professional management and long-term vision.

However, these arguments tend to sidestep the fact that SOEs were needed because investment in heavy industry, new technology, and production of intermediate goods was anathema to the private sector during the relatively laissez-faire period from 1948 to 1956. It was the state that played an entrepreneurial role by importing new technologies and kick starting economic activity that the private sector was too risk-averse to undertake.

In 1978, 65% of Sri Lanka’s manufacturing output came from SOEs, with heavy industries like the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) and the State Rubber Corporation (SRC) being highly capital-intensive and therefore boasting the highest rates of labour productivity (output divided by number of employees) in the country. Fifty-three percent of export sales came from chemicals, petroleum, rubber, and plastic goods – a sector almost entirely built up by the state.

The criticism that SOEs were geared towards the domestic market and not for export fundamentally misunderstands the purpose of heavy industry, which is to provide stable input prices for downstream firms. China, for example, dominates market share in the refinement of nearly every major industrial metal and mineral, allowing it to provide price-competitive inputs to lighter industries which are export-oriented.

Combining lessons from developed and developing countries, we see that SOEs are a fact of actually existing modern production economies. Their purpose is to: 1. Eliminate private rent-seekers by operating natural monopolies for the public good, 2. stabilise prices and therefore costs of production, and perhaps most importantly, 3. invest in new technologies and activities that are too risky for the private sector.

To quote John Maynard Keynes: “The important thing for government is not to do things which individuals are doing already, and to do them a little better or a little worse; but to do those things which at present are not done at all.”

*(The writer is a Global Macro Research Analyst at Econsult Asia, which is an economic research and management consultancy firm with an alternative development outlook)*

Figure 2: Sectoral distribution of SOEs in OECD countries excluding China

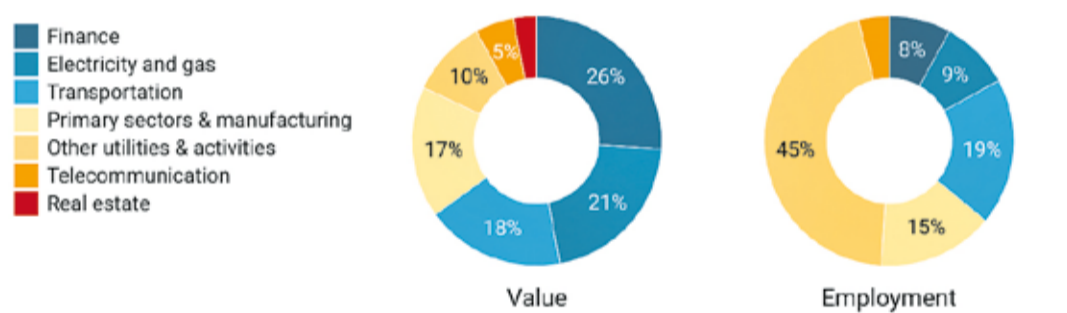


Chart: Econsult Asia • Source: OECD (2017)

BY LANKA PROPERTY WEB

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

To get more insight on deeds and lands in Sri Lanka, Lanka Property Web interviewed Attorney-at-Law Saminda Jayasekara.

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

Private lands on the other hand can be owned by a person including but not limited to any individual, corporate,

# ‘Stamp duty charges vary based on how property is acquired in SL’

## ● AAL Saminda Jayasekara shares insights on deeds and lands

diplomatic mission, religious place/organisation and a charitable trust. However, it is always subject to the Lands (Restrictions on Alienation) Act No. 38 of 2014 and its amendments.

“Owners of private lands have the freedom/right to make changes the way they want to the property, including whether they want to build a house, apartment, or use it for agricultural purposes. But it is subject to the zoning and development



Attorney-at-Law Saminda Jayasekara



Official reports indicate that 82.25% of the land in Sri Lanka is owned by the Government, while only 17.75% is owned privately

regulations of the UDA. To prove the ownership of the property, they need to have a deed with the title of the property registered in the relevant Land Registry under their name,” said Jayasekara.

According to Sec. 2 of the Prevention of Frauds Ordinance, every transaction related to land should be in writing and such documents should be executed in front of a Notary and two witnesses. In fact, a notariably

attested document is a must for a transaction related to land or building. This document is called a deed and is an official record and proof of ownership of a property.

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

If a person intends to purchase

property, he pays the relevant consideration to the present owner and gains ownership of the property through a Deed of Transfer attested by a notary. In a Deed of Transfer, details of the vendor and the purchaser, consideration, and details of the property are mentioned. It also describes how the vendor obtained the ownership to the property. The vendor may declare that the property has a good title, meaning that there are no encumbrances or lawsuits against it as well in the Deed of Transfer.

But what about the stamp duty charges?

Commenting on this, Jayasekara stated that irrespective of the consideration passed at the transaction, the purchaser has to pay stamp duty for the deed based on the market value of the property determined by the Provincial Department of Revenue. If the property is purchased through a Bank Loan, then bank valuation should also be considered when paying stamp duty.

He also revealed that for the first Rs.100,000 of the property’s value, a

stamp duty of 3% should be paid while for the balance value of the property, 4% should be paid as stamp duty to the relevant provincial council.

In the attestation, the Notary must mention how the vendor and witnesses signed, how the consideration passed, and the way stamp duty was paid.

Another way of getting ownership of a property is as a gift through a Deed of Gift. It can be used to give property to a family member, servant or employee because of love and affection, honest and loyal service, or any other acceptable reason towards the beneficiary. In the Deed of Gift, the grantor has to mention his relationship with the grantee.

When asked about the exception in a Deed of Gift, Jayasekara said: “The grantee must also sign in the deed for acceptance of the gift for it to become valid. If the grantee is a minor, an adult can accept the gift on behalf of him. Deeds of Gift may also be drawn with specific conditions such as the life interest of the grantor or someone in the family of the grantor.”

Contd. on page 8



# Omicron: Can it be a game changer?



BY DR. CHARUNI KOHOMBANGE

**F**ollowing the advice of its Technical Advisory Group on Virus Evolution (TAG-VE), the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 26 November designated the variant B.1.1.529 as a variant of concern and named it as "Omicron". This decision was based on the evidence presented to the TAG-VE that Omicron has several mutations that may have an impact on how it behaves – for example, on how easily it spreads or the severity of illness it causes.

Omicron is now found in nearly 40 countries across the globe. On 3 December, Sri Lanka detected its first case of Omicron. Amidst the public enthusiasm for the upcoming festive season, there is major doubt: Can this Omicron change our lives?

In this light, University of Colombo (UoC) Professor in Medical Education and Asia Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH) Secretary General Prof. Indika Karunathilake shared his views based on the current scientific evidence.

*Following are excerpts of the interview.*

## What is Omicron?

Omicron is a variant of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19. This variant has an unusually large number of mutations, several of which are new, and a significant number of these mutations affect the spike proteins. This B.1.1.529 variant was first reported to WHO from South Africa on 24 November 2021. The epidemiological situation in South Africa has been characterised by three distinct peaks in reported cases, the latest of which was predominantly the Delta variant.

In recent weeks, infections have increased steeply, coinciding with the detection of this B.1.1.529 variant or, according to WHO nomenclature based on the Greek alphabet, the Omicron. The first known confirmed B.1.1.529



Prof. Indika Karunathilake

infection was from a specimen collected on 9 November 2021.

## How virulent can it be in terms of transmissibility and the severity of the disease?

Researchers in South Africa and around the world are conducting studies to have better understanding on Omicron, and the world is awaiting the new findings. In terms of transmissibility, still there isn't adequate data to conclude that Omicron is more transmissible or that it spreads more easily from person to person, compared to other variants such as Delta. However, South Africa has reported that the number of people testing positive is increasing in the areas affected by this variant. However, epidemiological studies are underway to understand whether it is because of the Omicron variant itself or due to other factors.

Still it is not very clear whether infection with Omicron causes more severe disease compared to infections with other variants, including the Delta variant. Preliminary data suggests that there are slight increases in the rate of hospitalisation in South Africa. However, it has to be further assessed to see whether this is due to the new variant

or due to the increase in the overall number of people becoming infected.

There is currently no information to suggest that symptoms associated with Omicron are different from those from other variants. Initial reported infections were among younger university students who invariably tend to have more mild disease and better understanding on the level of severity of the Omicron variant may take several weeks. All variants of Covid-19, including the Delta variant that is dominant worldwide, can cause severe disease or death, in particular for the most vulnerable people. Higher the rate of spread, the chances of those who are vulnerable getting infected too increases.

## What can be the effects on the effectiveness of currently available testing and the effectiveness of current treatment options?

Based on current evidence, the widely used PCR tests are continuing to detect the infection, including infection with Omicron, as scientists have seen with other variants as well. Studies are ongoing to determine whether there is any impact on other types of tests, including rapid antigen tests (RATs). According to the clinicians, current management strategies that are being used for hospitalised patients affected with Covid-19 should still be effective for managing patients affected with this variant. Other treatments are also being assessed to see their effectiveness on the Omicron variant.

## According to current available data, can you comment on the effectiveness of vaccines against this variant?

The WHO is working with their technical partners to understand the potential impact of this variant on all the existing countermeasures, including vaccines. According to present understanding, vaccines remain critical to curtail severe disease and deaths, including against the currently dominant Delta variant. According to evidence, presently available vaccines



Researchers in South Africa and around the world are conducting studies to have better understanding on Omicron and the world is awaiting the findings

remain effective against severe disease and death. Hence, it is important to obtain both vaccine doses and get the booster dose to ensure proper immunity.

## What is your advice to the public, especially during this festive season?

According to current findings, prevention of the disease is the key. The most effective steps individuals can take to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus is to keep a physical distance of at least one metre from others, wear a well-fitting mask, open windows to improve ventilation, avoid poorly ventilated or crowded spaces, keep hands clean, cough or sneeze into a bent elbow or tissue, and get vaccinated as earliest possible and take the booster when you get the chance.

People are more enthusiastic about celebrating Christmas and New Year, as they have been under mobility restrictions for a long period. It is highly advisable to avoid overcrowding when shopping and finish your shopping early where there are less crowds. Take care of the elderly and patients with long-term illnesses. Make sure to keep them safe at home and fulfil their needs for

the festive season. Most importantly, look after their nutrition, hydration, etc. and get them the vaccine booster dose immediately.

## Finally, do you think Omicron can be a game changer?

Still very early days, and no conclusive data to comment either way. However, there is some data emerging from South Africa that suggests the Omicron variant might be a milder variant and is rapidly replacing the much more deadly Delta variant, which is accounting for almost 99% of the cases globally at present. According to this emerging evidence, Omicron shows some features of high transmissibility. Hence, there is a possibility for Omicron to be the dominant variant in near future.

According to literature, the coronavirus that has led to pandemics in the past, too, has descended into such milder forms, facilitating the culmination of those pandemics. However, we should bear in mind that the Covid-19 pandemic is still far from over and we should prepare, be cautious, and not panic but follow all the precautions until the confirmed scientific evidence is available.

## Contd. from page 5

### Seeking...

He noted that permission to accept imported gas will only be allowed after subjecting it to tests to ascertain its quality. He further said that the recommendations of the expert committee, which was appointed by the President to look into the LPG cylinder-based explosions, will be implemented.

### Consumers rights and safety

The spate of explosions is also one of the biggest threats to consumer rights in the recent past, and how the affected consumers should be assisted while safeguarding the others is an integral part of this discussion. However, consumer rights activists claim neither the Government nor LPG companies have paid adequate attention to the affected.

Speaking about this, National Movement for Consumer Rights Protection (NMCRP) Chairman Ranjith Withanage said that the LPG companies must pay compensations.

He added: "Consumers are scared to even purchase a LPG cylinder, and they ask for our guidance. The two LPG companies must provide a certain level of safety to the consumers. The programmes aimed at making consumers aware are not adequate. Therefore, these companies must take the initiative to raise awareness among consumers on how to change the regulator, how to handle a cylinder, and how to check if there is a leak. At present, a meter that can be used to check a leakage is being sold at around Rs. 20,000, and a certain group is attempting to exploit consumers. Therefore, these two companies should issue guidelines regarding the correct use of LPG. Even though instructions are being given currently, consumers are not aware of them. Therefore, there is a need for more programmes. Consumers have been rendered helpless as they don't know what to do. Neither the Government nor these companies educate consumers. Even though leaflets are being distributed, overall, consumers are not adequately educated. Had that happened, perhaps, issues of this nature would not have arisen."

Withanage added that even though certain politicians express different

opinions about the factors leading to LPG cylinder-related explosions, when they looked into the matter, it had been revealed that other factors have also contributed to the issue. He emphasised that the two LPG companies, as responsible firms, must pay compensation to the consumers. In addition, he said the two companies have a responsibility to issue safe LPG cylinders and thereby ensure consumers' safety. "This is not just a matter of whose fault led to the prevailing situation. In a context where the people have been LPG consumers for around 150 years, these companies have a responsibility to provide compensation. Those affected by this issue are not affluent. We expect that safe and quality LPG cylinders will be made available in the future. However, consumers should feel that safety. When consumers feel that what they are buying is similar to a bomb, it places consumers under stress."

Speaking on the measures taken in the past few days, especially the Government's directive to LPG companies to refrain from distributing LPG, which was later changed, Withanage said that the decisions taken by the Government also need to be clear to consumers, and that directives to companies should be conveyed properly.

### Legal action

Meanwhile, also speaking for the consumers, former Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) President and Senior Advisor to the Justice Ministry President's Counsel (PC) Udaya Rohan De Silva said that the consumers can take legal action and seek recourse including compensation. He explained: "It is important to know how the people could get compensation for the problems they are facing due to gas leaks. In most of the cases, we need to find out whether there has been negligence on the part of the people who are using LPG, and if not, then they have a good ground to go and argue the matter before a court and ask for compensation. It is an important fact that under the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL) Act No. 35 of 2002 it contains a provision, i.e. Section 14, which states that when there is a problem of this nature that affects the people, the PUCSL can intervene and do the

needful." The said Section says that the PUCSL shall exercise, perform, and discharge the powers, functions, and duties conferred on or assigned to it by or under the Act and any other industry Act, in a manner which it considers is best calculated to protect the interests of all consumers. De Silva PC further explained: "On that basis, the PUCSL has come forward to help the people in this regard, and they will find out whether the two gas companies are liable for negligence on their part. If that is the case, then they can be charged under Section 27 of this particular Act. If the particular companies are charged and found guilty, the penalty will be Rs. 1 million to Rs. 10 million for an individual, or if it is a company, it will be from Rs. 10 million to Rs. 100 million. That is the normal fine that can be imposed under the PUCSL Act. If more compensation should be awarded, then they have to go to courts and ask for compensation under the civil law. That is the normal procedure. If the people are ready to do so, then the Legal Aid Commission of Sri Lanka (LACSL) or the BASL can help them to get it done, by way of filing cases in district courts." He also said that if LPG companies are found to have contributed to LPG cylinder-related explosions by failing to carry out the production and distribution-related activities properly, the Government should take prompt legal action. He added that if the Government Analyst as well as the other authorities say that those two companies are liable for negligence, then the Government should take necessary and immediate action against those companies. "That is the normal procedure at this stage – the people can go to court and ask for compensation and the Government should pay the necessary compensation to the people for the damages caused. Apart from that, the PUCSL has the power to file the cases and fine the two companies if they are found to be guilty."

All persons looking into these explosions have an opinion, and are trying to decipher what led to the explosions. Although it is important, it is an extremely complex and time-consuming endeavour, and these sudden explosions call for much more immediate action. As consumer rights activists have pointed out, awareness-raising is the most immediate and the biggest short-term step, and it requires much more attention that it receives at the moment.

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### 'Stamp duty charges...

The main difference between a Deed of Gift and Deed of Transfer is the consideration. In a deed of gift, there is no consideration, but parties still have to pay stamp duty for them. Here stamp duty is calculated based on the acquired value of the property by the grantor and the value of any improvements made to the property (i.e. constructing or renovating a house/building). But, here the rate of stamp duty is lower than for a transfer. For the first Rs. 50,000 of the property, value stamp duty of 3% should be paid and for the balance, the stamp duty is 2%.

If a person has an undisturbed and uninterrupted possession of a property for more than 10 years, he can make a declaration on the said property using a Deed of Declaration. Once it is registered at the relevant Land Registry, the declarant's title for the property will commence.

Commenting on this, Jayasekara said: "Banks and other financial institutes accept declaration titles only 10 years after the registration of the deed. So if you register the property under your name today, you can only get a mortgage loan for the property 10 years from now."

Prior to registering a Deed of Declaration at the Land Registry, the relevant land registrar will get confirmation from the Government Divisional Secretariat on whether the declared property is owned by the state. If it's a government property, the registration will be refused.

People can also acquire property through last wills written by the owner of the said property who nominates a person who will own his movable/immovable assets after his death. Nominees can be anybody including corporations, charities, or religious places. The person should also nominate an executor in the will. The executor shall file a testamentary case in the relevant district court and have to prove the will. Once the case is concluded, the court issues a probate, and the executor has to execute a deed known as the "Executor's conveyance". Beneficiaries of the last will then get titles to the properties mentioned therein after the registration of the same.

Expressing his views on the will, Jayasekara stated that one person can execute any number of last wills. But the final one will be the authoritative document. In it, the executor must

expressly cancel his previous last wills as well.

When a person passes away without a last will, distribution of his properties will be based on the law of succession in the country. In the common law of succession, when a person dies, half of his property will be inherited by his spouse and the balance will be distributed among the children. If there are no children, the remaining half will be distributed among parents/siblings.

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

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

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

"Property can be partitioned in two ways. One is through a partition case where one co-owner files a case in the district court against the other co-owner and the court delivers a partition decree with the final partition plan, and the other is through a partition deed," stated Jayasekara. In a partition case, the said partition decree should be registered in the Land Registry, and claimants then get ownership of the property according to the final decree.

While in a Partition Deed, all co-owners agree to divide the property amicably. Here, a plan is prepared according to the agreement and a partition deed is executed jointly. However, the beneficiaries do not acquire a perfect title compared to the title from a partition case.

### Matters to be considered prior to purchasing a property

- **Title search:** Prior to purchasing a property, anyone shall conduct a title search at the relevant land registry for a minimum period

of 30 years. The only exception is if the title commences from a partition decree. The Notary must be satisfied about the clear chain of the title for the property prior to executing a deed

- **Local authority documents:** Purchaser must obtain the following documents from the relevant Local Authority for the property prior to the purchase
- **Street line certificate:** If there is a proposed road widening in the access road to the property by acquiring the subject property or part thereof, the street line certificate will notify you
- **Building line certificate:** When you plan to build something in the property, the building line certificate notifies the amount of metres/feet to be kept free from the road within the property
- **Non-vesting certificate:** If the owner of the property has not paid assessment rates to the local authority, there is a risk of the property being acquired by the said authority. However, when the payments are regular, the authority issues this certificate stating that the property is not identified for vesting
- **Ownership certificate:** Once a person purchases a property and registers the deed in the Land Registry, application for registration in the Assessment Registry at the local authority should be done through a lawyer. The ownership certificate shows who is the owner according to the Assessment Registry
- **Utilities:** Check whether the current owner of the property has paid for all utilities (electricity/water/telephone/cable TV, etc.). If it's an apartment, additionally check whether the management fee has been paid
- **Special clearances due to the location:** If the property borders or is within close proximity to a waterway, sea shore, high-security sensitive location, airport or any other important place, clearance from the relevant authorities have to be obtained. For instance, a property next to the President's house has to get clearance from the President's Security Division while a beachfront property shall obtain a clearance from the Coast Conservation Department.

*(LankaPropertyWeb is an online portal for real estate in Sri Lanka)*



| ASPI      | S&P SL20 | Market           |
|-----------|----------|------------------|
| 11,021.07 | 3,959.84 | Market Closed    |
| -67.10    | -4.58    | Share Volume     |
| ↓ -0.61%  | ↓ -0.12% | 617,366,146      |
|           |          | Turnover         |
|           |          | 5,674,433,233.75 |

# Loan from India only in Jan.

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



- Attygalle says discussions still ongoing
- Amount yet to be finalised
- Official forex reserves at \$ 1 billion

**T**he financial assistance sought by Minister of Finance Basil Rajapaksa from India will only be received by January next year, contrary to reports that it has already been received during Rajapaksa's recent visit to New Delhi, *The Morning Business* learns.

Speaking to us, Ministry of Finance and Treasury Secretary S.R. Attygalle stated that the Government will be seeking to acquire the discussed financial assistance from India as soon as possible, most likely by January.

Explaining further, he noted that although the delegation has returned to the country, all efforts will be taken, at the urging of the Finance Minister, to obtain this financial assistance as quickly as possible in accordance with the due process, as this involves public money.

Minister Rajapaksa was on an official visit to New Delhi on 1 and 2 December, and reports were circulating that he obtained financial assistance when in India, which would amount to around \$ 1.4 billion.

However, Attygalle refused to confirm



Sri Lankan Minister of Finance Basil Rajapaksa and delegation meeting with Indian Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

this figure, stating: "We haven't issued any numbers as of yet; there is a process to be done and right now, I cannot divulge the exact figures at this particular moment."

However, it was previously disclosed to us last month by a senior government source that the Minister of Finance will be seeking to obtain a \$ 1.5 billion credit line from India in order to ease pressure on the country's foreign reserves, while also preventing a scenario where the Government would have to seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to address the current economic crisis.

Contd. on page 10

# Trade union wants new BOI Board

A request has been made by the Collective Trade Unions of the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka (BOI) to appoint a new Chairman, Director General, and the Board of Directors for the BOI, according to the trade union sources.

Despite the fact that Secretary to the President Dr. P.B. Jayasundera has informed that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has not accepted the resignations through individual letters dated 2 December 2021, following the resignation of the Chairman, Director General, as well as the Board of Directors of the BOI a few days ago, the request has been made.

According to reliable sources, it was said that a meeting was held in the evening of last Monday (6) at the BOI boardroom, attended by all Executive Directors together with heads of departments.

It was said that at this meeting, recently resigned BOI Chairman Sanjaya Mohottala had stated that he had already resigned from the post of Chairmanship and that he would not return to work despite the Secretary to the President announcing that the President had not accepted the resignations, trade unions claimed.

However, our sources noted that Mohottala is yet to arrive at a decision on this matter.

BOI Director General Pasan Wanigasekara had also stated that he will resign soon after formally handing over the duties to the new Director General and that he has no intention of remaining in the post under a new Board of Directors, according to the trade union.

Accordingly, the Collective Trade Unions of the BOI have requested President Rajapaksa to appoint new officers for carrying out the functions of the institution properly in the current situation.

Contd. on page 10



CBSL Governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal, accompanied by Commercial Bank Chief Operating Officer Sanath Manatunge, accepted the first deposit at the opening of the new counter

# Bank branches at Immigration Dept. to facilitate remittances

Several bank branches were opened yesterday (8) at the premises of the Department of Immigration and Emigration of Sri Lanka with the object of easing the inflow of worker remittances due to the dwindling foreign exchange reserves in the country.

The opening of the bank branches took place with the participation of Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) Governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal as the Chief Guest of the event.

During his speech, Cabraal requested the general public, with the help of these established banking services, to contribute in order to improve foreign exchange inflows to the country.

Accordingly, People's Bank, National Savings Bank (NSB), Commercial Bank, and Hatton National Bank (HNB) were few among the branches that were opened for transactions at "Suhurupaya", where the Department of Immigration and Emigration is located.

Contd. on page 10

# Budget 2022 fails to establish stable fiscal regime: Verité Research

Issuing a public report on Budget 2022 ahead of third budget reading, Colombo-based think tank Verité Research said that Budget 2022 fails in establishing a stable fiscal regime.

"In January 2020, a new tax structure was established, introducing substantial reforms to major taxes including corporate and personal income tax, and VAT (Value-Added Tax). The stated objective of that change was to establish a stable and predictable regime of lower taxes for at least five years. The proposed budget undermines those aspirations. Through measures such as financial VAT and surcharge tax, it introduces tax increases (reversing reductions), one-off taxes (reducing stability), and retroactive taxes (reducing predictability)," it stated.

The year 2022 will be a pivotal year in Sri Lanka's external debt management and the economy as a whole. Budget 2022, currently being debated in Parliament, provides an opportunity to map a path out of Sri Lanka's prevailing economic troubles. On 10 December 2021, Members of Parliament will vote on that Budget. To do so with responsibility, they require a robust analysis of the assumptions and estimates that underpin the budget proposals.

Further, the release pointed out: "The one-off taxes proposed not only create a shock in the present, but also increase uncertainty in the future. Businesses and investors are left speculating about the new tax measures that might be taken in 2023 to address revenue needs met with the one-off taxes in 2022."

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# Fuel imports monopoly to LIOC?

- Ajith P. Perera alleges Basil entered into agreement with India during recent visit
- Claims agreement to permit LIOC to import entire national requirement
- Ministry of Energy denies allegations

Former United National Party (UNP) MP Ajith P. Perera has alleged on social media that Lanka IOC (LIOC) has been granted complete control over fuel imports



Former UNP MP Ajith P. Perera

Explaining this allegation, Perera claimed that according to the agreement entered into by Minister of Finance Basil Rajapaksa in his recent visit to India, LIOC will import sufficient quantities of

fuel to fully cater to the country's fuel demand and that subsequently all fuel requirements of Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) sheds must be purchased from LIOC.

However, these allegations were refuted by Ministry of Energy Secretary K.D.R. Olga, who spoke to *The Morning Business* yesterday (8). "We have no idea on what he is basing these allegations on, but what he stated is completely false. They (LIOC) will, as per their right to do so, import the necessary fuel for their requirements and the CPC will continue to import separately the necessary fuel for its requirements. There is no other arrangement as he claims so," she said.

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# WindForce PLC declares total dividend payout of Rs. 1.76 b

WindForce PLC declared a dividend of Rs. 743 million, totaling a dividend payout of Rs. 1.76 billion for this year.

The commitment to exploring alternative energy for greener energy choices saw WindForce pioneering wind power generation in Sri Lanka and also becoming one of the first to enter solar power generation at a utility scale. It is also the first Sri Lankan company to install solar plants in Uganda, Pakistan, and Ukraine.

The earlier dividend of Rs. 1.01 billion declared in June 2021, just two months after its heavily subscribed initial public offering (IPO) in April – the largest IPO in Sri Lanka since 2013 – bolstered significant investor confidence at a time of lackluster sentiments in Sri Lanka's capital markets.

This positivity was further augmented when WIND shares began trading considerably above its debut price.

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# Internet use affected by irrational tax: Oshada

- Says high taxes limited connectivity expansion
- Claims telco industry stagnated for 3 years due to litigation



ICTA Chairman and TRCSL DG Oshada Senanayake

Irrational and unjustifiable policies, including taxation by successive governments, have impacted the growth of Sri Lanka's internet use, claimed Information and

Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) Chairman and Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL) Director General (DG) Oshada Senanayake.

The use of the internet in Sri Lanka within the 15-plus population has increased to 44% as of 2021, from 37% in 2018.

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# Apparel exporters request booster shots

The Sri Lanka Apparel Exporters' Association (SLAEA) Executive Committee, during their recently held Annual General Meeting (AGM), stated that they are in need of securing Covid-19 booster shots for employees of the sector, given that the six-month window since the vaccinations were rolled out is fast approaching.

These views were expressed at the recent 39th AGM of the SLAEA, the pioneer association representing the country's apparel exporters.

Apparel exporters highlighted the need for Covid-19 vaccine booster shots for staff, addressing domestic macroeconomic constraints – particularly the lack of foreign exchange – and strengthening export market access, for the industry to realise its potential.

"The apparel industry's contribution to the Sri Lankan economy remains unparalleled, a fact duly recognised by the Government," SLAEA Executive Committee for 2021/22 Chairman Aroon Hirdaramani said. "However, we are now facing significant issues in the context of the country's foreign reserve shortages and overall economic issues. Together with our apex body – the Joint Apparel Association Forum (JAAF) – we are working with the authorities on solutions that can continue the growth witnessed from 2021 onwards, with minimal disruption."

In addition, apparel exporters discussed the vital importance of retaining the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) trade concessions to the EU as well as the UK. It was noted that the country needs to strengthen access to other key and emerging export markets.

The SLAEA Chairman also commended and appreciated the contribution of the Executive Committee and the members of the association. Under the Executive Committee's leadership, overcoming pandemic-induced disruptions, the SLAEA undertook several key initiatives. These include the key role played by the association and its individual members in collaborating with the authorities on worker safety and vaccinations, as well as the rebranding of the SLAEA.

In 2020, as part of its rebranding, the SLAEA rolled out a new logo, website, and a video promoting the industry, the culmination of more than a year-long activity performed diligently by the association's branding committee. The SLAEA is seeking to further leverage digital tools to strengthen the positive positioning of Sri Lanka's apparel industry, to assist in increasing its market share.



## Three Party FEXTE Partnership Agreement for Supporting 'Ceylon Tea' Value creation through the development of Geographical Indication and International Quality / Sustainability Certification

7 December 2021



Sri Lanka Tea Board Chairman Jayampathi Molligoda and AFD Director Rida Shawd signing the agreement

# SL receives French aid to develop tea industry

**T**he French Development Agency (AFD) signed a grant agreement worth € 1 million with the Sri Lanka Tea Board and the French Agricultural Research Centre for Development (CIRAD) towards the development of a geographical indication (GI) for Ceylon Tea. The agreement was signed by the AFD Country Director and the Tea Board Chairman in the presence of the Minister of Plantation and the Ambassador of France to Sri Lanka.

The creation of a GI for Ceylon Tea aims at promoting quality products, protecting traditional know-how it is based upon, enhancing its commercial value, and enhancing recognition in international markets.

Sri Lanka's tea sector dates back to more than 150 years and is the second

highest net foreign exchange earner of the country. Ceylon Tea, identified by the Lion logo, exhibits unique qualities with a range of flavours and aroma. The geographical aspects and conditions of each of the seven tea-producing regions have significant influences on the characteristics of teas they produce.

Despite its uniqueness, Ceylon Tea does not have protection to uphold and authenticate the quality reputation of the product, as a result of which counterfeit Ceylon Tea is sold in various consumer countries.

A GI certification serves to uphold and authenticate the quality, reputation, and characteristics of a product by linking them to a specific territory through intellectual property protection, while also giving it added value in national and international markets.

This grant will, over a four-year period, provide technical assistance to establish GI and the relevant certification systems for Ceylon Tea. It will enable the

CIRAD, which has proven experience in the implementation of GIs, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), which has been working for several years on the establishment of a GI for Ceylon cinnamon, to support the Sri Lanka Tea Board and numerous actors from the tea industry.

Through this process, the Ceylon Tea value chain is expected to become more productive, inclusive, and sustainable, and Ceylon Tea will have enhanced value-addition in international markets through intellectual property protections as well as national and international certifications.

## edotco Sri Lanka inks an agreement with BOI

- Commits 400 more multipurpose smart street lamp pole sites

edotco Services Lanka (Pvt.) Ltd., a fully owned subsidiary of Malaysia-based edotco Group Sdn Bhd, recently signed an agreement with the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka (BOI) to include a further 400 multipurpose smart street lamp pole locations to its investment portfolio.

edotco was granted BOI Section 17 status in 2015. Aligned with its group's purpose of helping nations to advance its digital infrastructure in all the countries it operates, edotco has pledged an investment commitment of \$ 55 million in 2019.

Today, edotco has built close to 500 street lamp poles and invested close to \$ 15 million in tower infrastructure since it entered the Sri Lankan market. The additional commitment of 400 smart street lamp poles will help mobile network operators and other technology service providers to enhance their

network capacity and coverage to meet the emerging demand of increased data usage by the end customers.

The innovative and sustainable smart pole solution will reduce data congestion, provide positive customer experience, and contribute to the nation's digital ambition by addressing the digital infrastructure readiness for future advanced technology.

Commenting on this initiative, edotco Acting Country Managing Director for Sri Lanka Gayan Koralage said: "We are committed and are relentless in our pursuit to help the country roll out its national digital infrastructure agendas to connect the unconnected and under-connected citizens.

The post-pandemic data boom has forced citizens to do more remotely on digital platforms which rely heavily on mobile internet availability, stability, and speed. We are committed to helping the Government of Sri Lanka enable digital connectivity by delivering next-gen engineering solutions."



BOI Chairman Sanjaya Mohottala (extreme right) exchanging the signed agreement with edotco Acting Country Managing Director for Sri Lanka Gayan Koralage in the presence of edotco and BOI officials

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### Loan from...

Regardless of the existing ambiguity as to its exact figures, this financial assistance sought from India is expected to involve a currency swap to help Sri Lanka address the existing balance of payment (BOP) issues; a line of credit to cover the importation of food, medicines, and other essential items from India to Sri Lanka; and a line of credit to cover fuel imports from India.

Obtaining this financial assistance within the next two months will be critical for Sri Lanka, as its official reserves had fallen to \$ 1.6 billion by end-November, down 40% from October. From the remaining reserves, foreign currency reserves amount to only \$ 1 billion, which is sufficient to cover only around three weeks of imports, according to Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) data.

This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that over the next two months, the predetermined drains on the country's reserves in the form of repayment of foreign currency loans, securities, and deposits amount to \$ 1.3 billion. These pre-determined outflows include the International Sovereign Bonds (ISBs) repayment of \$ 500 million due in January 2022.

Therefore, considering the current reserve position of the country and the predetermined drains, it can be reasonably asserted that Sri Lanka is at risk of defaulting on its sovereign debt and will not have sufficient foreign exchange to fund its essential imports such as food, medicine, and fuel over the next two months. Thus, obtaining this financial assistance as soon as possible from India must be a priority for Sri Lanka.

Foreign exchange inflows into Sri Lanka have been significantly affected in 2021 as recurrent Covid-19 waves have decimated the tourism industry of the country, and worker remittance through official channels have also fallen significantly due to the premium offered in the black market of around 20% as the Government continues to implement its moral suasion strategy of maintaining the exchange rate at Rs. 203.

Remittance inflows through official channels have fallen to \$ 317.4 million in October down 99% Year-on-Year (YoY) and cumulative remittance inflows for 2021 have fallen 14% YoY to \$ 4.9 billion. October is said to be the fifth consecutive month, where worker remittances recorded a drop. In June, remittances dropped to \$ 478 million while in July, August, and September, it dropped to \$ 453 million, \$ 447 million, and \$ 353 million.

In contrast, recent data released by the World Bank on 17 November has projected remittance inflows to South Asia to grow by 8% in 2021, supported by high oil prices driving incomes in the Middle East, a key source market for remittances to the region. Remittances to Pakistan were projected to grow by 26%, and remittances to India were projected to grow by 4%.

### Trade union...

It was also proposed to establish 11 new export processing zones (EPZs) through this year's budget proposals. Therefore, the trade union urged the President and the Government to appoint a team of new officers who have the required experience, knowledge, and capability to understand and to collectively guide the BOI staff in achieving the desired government policies and goals.

### Inflation prompt...

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

"We have revised US growth in 2021 to 5.7% (from 6.2% in the September GEO) and cut 2022 growth to 3.7% (from 3.9%). We also lowered our eurozone growth forecast for 2021 to 5.0% (from 5.2%), but our forecast for 2022 is unchanged at 4.5%. Growth in emerging markets excluding China is forecast at 5.7% in 2021 and 4.6% in 2022, both 0.1 pp lower than in September, partly reflecting a sharp deterioration in Brazil's economic outlook," Fitch stated.

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

However, there have been widespread upward revisions to inflation forecasts and the increasing prospect of inflation pressures broadening is making central banks nervous. Inflation has become a public concern – now amplified by energy price shocks – and inflation expectations have increased. US wage growth now exceeds pre-pandemic rates as the labour supply recovery lags. Stimulus is taking US GDP above pre-pandemic trends and the US output gap will turn positive in 2022. US core CPI inflation is expected to settle at around 3% in late 2022 and 2023, significantly higher than pre-pandemic rates.

### Internet use...

However, this growth in internet use over this period is not impressive when compared

with peer countries such as India and Nigeria, whose connectivity had been lower than in Sri Lanka in 2017 but have since surpassed Sri Lanka.

These revelations were made during the virtual research launch on "Digital Sri Lanka during Covid-19 Lockdowns" by LIRNEasia yesterday (8). According to the national survey conducted by LIRNEasia, internet use among Sri Lanka's 15-plus-years-old population has increased by compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6% over the period 2018-2021 reaching 44% of the population from 37%.

However, in India, internet use has increased by a CAGR of 25% over the period of 2017-2021, with over 47% of the 15-plus population using the internet. This represents a significant increase compared to 2017, when only 19% of the population were internet users.

Similarly, in Nigeria, internet use among the 15-plus population has increased to 54% as of 2021, from 30% in 2017. Therefore, internet use in Nigeria has grown at a CAGR of 16% over the period of 2017-2021.

Commenting on this issue, Senanayake claimed that internet penetration of Sri Lanka had stagnated over the period of 2017-2019, before increasing sharply over the past two years to reach 44%. In comparison, internet penetration of both Nigeria and India has grown progressively.

Explaining further, Senanayake claimed that the primary reason for the slow growth in internet penetration in Sri Lanka are the inconsistent and irrational policies of successive governments.

"Sri Lanka has over multiple governments looked at the telecommunication sector as a tax haven. It has not been looked at from a pragmatic and holistic view, that this is an industry that has to be empowered to ensure that they can provide the basic piece of infrastructure which is connectivity, which is important for any country's digital transformation," he explained.

He questioned the rationality of imposing a tax on telecommunication towers when Sri Lanka is seeking to accelerate connectivity. According to him, from a technology or telecommunication perspective, such policymaking is not justifiable.

Senanayake further claimed that this situation was exacerbated by the serious litigation situation the industry was embroiled in a couple of years ago, due to which the industry was completely fragmented. Consequently, the industry stagnated for over three years.

"In 2019, there were 16 Supreme Court cases where the regulator and the industry were embroiled in. This meant that the complete regulation and management of spectrum and awarding of spectrum that is required to manage quality of service and to expand 4G and connectivity was at an absolute deadlock," he added.

He further pointed to the telecommunication tax regime applicable to citizens, which was as high as 49.6% in 2016 and has since improved, decreasing

to 37.7% by 2019. However, he claimed that compared to other emerging countries, this represents a staggering rate of taxation which will have a negative impact on internet adoption.

Commenting on the policy reforms introduced since 2019 to assist in Sri Lanka's digital transformation, he claimed: "The first step we took was to ensure that this tax rate was completely cut down and we cut down the overall taxation to 22.6% again, and if you take the internet rate, it has come down to 10.2%."

### Fuel imports...

The Minister of Finance visited New Delhi on a two-day official visit at the invitation of Indian Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Obtaining financial assistance from India in order to ease pressure on the country's foreign reserves, while also preventing a scenario where the Government would have to seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to address the current economic crisis, was expected to be a priority in this visit.

A new release published by the High Commission of Sri Lanka in New Delhi on 3 December claimed that the Sri Lankan Finance Minister had briefed the Indian authorities of the economic situation in Sri Lanka and his Government's approach to addressing post-Covid-19 challenges. In return, the Indian authorities had expressed India's solidarity with Sri Lanka at this juncture and had reiterated that India will stand by Sri Lanka as per its "Neighbourhood First" policy.

Accordingly, it was claimed that both sides had discussed the offer of a currency swap to help Sri Lanka address the current balance of payment (BOP) issues, as well as a food and health security package on an urgent basis that would envisage an extension of a line of credit to cover the import of food, medicines, and other essential items from India to Sri Lanka and an energy security package that would include a line of credit to cover import of fuel from India, along with an early modernisation of Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm.

However, as per reports, both parties did not arrive at a final decision on the above proposals and will be communicating with each other directly and indirectly in order to achieve a satisfactory resolution within a mutually agreed timeline.

### WindForce...

ICRA Lanka awarding WindForce the highest-ever rating conferred on a Sri Lankan corporate at the time of issuance – (SL) AA- (Stable) – added fillip to investor mindset.

Having recently acquired Sky Solar (Pvt.) Ltd. a rooftop solar plant, and with Solar Universe (Pvt.) Ltd., a 10 MW solar power

plant currently under construction, as well as their newest 15 MW wind power plant commencing construction in February 2022, the WindForce portfolio will hold a noteworthy 30 plants in renewable energy. This pioneering stance was aptly rewarded with the award for the "Fastest Growing Renewable Energy Company in Sri Lanka" at the Global Business Outlook Awards 2021.

WindForce has been consistent with its return on investment (ROI) to shareholders giving 8.1% on its IPO subscription price, which, in context, the 8.1% rate of ROI is significantly higher than prevailing rates by local banks.

Once projects in the pipeline are added in, WindForce will have a total output capacity of 245 MW, reaffirming the company's premier status as Sri Lanka's largest independent power producer (IPP) in renewable energy and among the largest in the region.

### Bank branches...

While responding to a question raised by the journalist whether the CBSL will be taking action against those who make illegal transactions by deactivating such transactions from a particular account, Cabraal advised the public not to make monetary transactions via illegal methods and to instead utilise legal methods. Further, Cabraal added that action taken by the CBSL regarding the above, is absolutely possible.

Elaborating further, Cabraal noted: "There is a law in this regard. Therefore, the law would be exercised against the wrongdoers."

During the event, Cabraal also commended the efforts of the staff of the Department Immigration and Emigration as well as the officers of the CBSL who contributed to this venture, emphasising that within a period as short as a week, the establishment of the bank branches took place.

Earlier, a "Foreign Remittances Facilitation Department" (FRFD) was established at the CBSL to facilitate the aforementioned purpose of easing the worker remittance inflows to the country as a means of supplying foreign exchange.

### Budget fails...

"The Budget also fuels macroeconomic instability by setting a path of high deficits. Using the Government's own budget and economic data, Verité has projected that the budget deficits will remain around 10% and above till 2025."

Accordingly, Verité Research has compiled this public report on the Budget to meet the need in reporting the analysis on the estimates and assumptions used in the formulation of the Budget. It serves to assess whether Budget 2022 can achieve three critical outcomes: Establish stability, build credibility, and instil confidence.



# People's Bank donates portable ultrasound scanner to Jaffna Hospital

As part of the series of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives organised to mark People's Bank's 60th anniversary, a portable ultrasound scanner worth over Rs. 7 million was donated to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital recently. This state-of-the-art equipment, which can be deployed to treat Covid-19 patients, was funded by the

People's Bank staff members by donating a part of their salaries. People's Bank Chief Executive Officer/General Manager Ranjith Kodituwakku, Jaffna Teaching Hospital Director Dr. T. Sathiyamoorthy, Jaffna Teaching Hospital Deputy Directors Dr. S. Sribavanatharaja and Dr. C. Jamunanantha, People's Bank Head of Marketing Nalaka

Wijayawardana, People's Bank Jaffna Regional Manager K. Kodeeswaran, Assistant Regional Manager M. Mathiyalagam, People's Bank Jaffna Stanley Road Branch Manager P. Partheepan, bank staff, and hospital staff were present at the event.

Once the Covid-19 pandemic settles, the hospital expects to



People's Bank Chief Executive Officer/General Manager Ranjith Kodituwakku, Jaffna Teaching Hospital Director Dr. T. Sathiyamoorthy, Jaffna Teaching Hospital Deputy Directors Dr. S. Sribavanatharaja and Dr. C. Jamunanantha, People's Bank Head of Marketing Nalaka Wijayawardana, People's Bank Jaffna Regional Manager K. Kodeeswaran, Assistant Regional Manager M. Mathiyalagam, People's Bank Jaffna Stanley Road Branch Manager P. Partheepan, bank staff, and hospital staff were present at the event

use this scanner for the benefit of other patients as well. Similar equipment was earlier donated to national hospitals in Colombo and Kandy, courtesy of the People's Bank staff.



Tea tasting at Eswaran Tea

## Sri Lanka's first-ever eBL by Eswaran Brothers

The electronic Bill of Lading (eBL) facilitated by the blockchain underpinned TradeLens platform spurs innovation by digitalising manual, time-consuming, paper-based shipping and logistics processes, while also contributing towards greater ease of doing business across supply chains for all involved stakeholders.

Eswaran Brothers Exports, one of Sri Lanka's premier tea suppliers for over five decades, became the first exporter out of the country to adopt eBL from TradeLens, a digital supply chain platform underpinned with blockchain technology that allows electronic issuance, transfer, and surrender of original bills of lading.

Eswaran Brothers' initiative to adopt TradeLens eBL comes at the time when the Digital Ministry of Sri Lanka is building and implementing a holistic strategy to address all pillars of digital transformation. The strategy includes a cluster of digitisation projects and organisations that have come together to unlock the potential of new technologies for economic growth and the overall betterment of society. One such project, which TradeLens is also involved in, is the installation of a data integration solution called ASYHUB, currently developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which allows for the smooth exchange of cargo data between the customs IT system, ASYCUDA, and multiple trade data providers. The Ministry has immensely supported Maersk's drive to promote the use of TradeLens eBL and other digital solutions in the country.

## Aitken Spence, most awarded at the Best Corporate Citizen Sustainability Awards 2021

Aitken Spence PLC was on a winning streak yet again at the Best Corporate Citizen Sustainability Awards 2021. Winning the highest number of awards, the company demonstrated their leadership, continuous commitment and drive to pioneer the corporate sustainability movement in Sri Lanka. The company was also the recipient of the highest number of certificate awards for "Consistent Commitment and Continuous Improvement" which goes to show the robust sustainability strategy and unparalleled commitment to sustainability from its teams across the diversified Group even during extremely challenging times.

This year was more significant as there were two additional wins for the "Best Sustainability Project Awards" won by Western Power Company (Pvt.) Ltd. — Sri Lanka's first waste-to-energy power plant project and Elpitiya Plantations PLC's Go Green and Beyond Project.

Organised by the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, this annual event recognises best practices of organisations that have successfully achieved a sustainable balance between social, environmental and economic performance.

With an indisputable reputation as one of Sri Lanka's pioneering corporates, Aitken Spence is a blue-chip conglomerate anchored to a heritage of excellence spanning over 150 years.



# UoK signs MoU with Ogilvy Digital for digital marketing degree

The University of Kelaniya (UoK) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ogilvy Digital to obtain its industry expertise and knowledge for the university's specialised digital marketing degree programme.

The digital marketing degree is the first such programme to be introduced by a state university.

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

The MoU for the new degree programme was signed between UoK Vice Chancellor Prof. Nilanthi de Silva and Phoenix Ogilvy Group Chairman Irvin Weerackody.

The occasion was also attended and addressed by the UoK Faculty of



Exchanging of the MoU between UoK Vice Chancellor Prof. Nilanthi de Silva and Phoenix Ogilvy Group Chairman Irvin Weerackody

Commerce and Management Studies Dean Dr. Narada Fernando and Department of Marketing Management Head Prof. Ravi Dissanayake.

Under the MoU, Ogilvy will develop the curriculum for the degree together

with the University and be an advisor to the content and assessment methods of the programme, and function as a member of the Certified Professional Marketing Graduate Programme (CPMG) Accreditation Committee.

# Seylan Bank Kollupitiya branch now on Galle Road



Seylan Bank Director/Chief Executive Officer Kapila Ariyaratne together with Seylan Bank Chief Operating Officer Ramesh Jayasekara ceremoniously opening the doors of the new Kollupitiya branch

Seylan Bank relocated its Kollupitiya branch to a spacious new location on 22 November 2021. The branch which was previously located at Walukarama Road is now conveniently located at No. 490, Galle Road, Colombo 3, offering an array of enhanced services for discerning corporate and retail customers.

The service offerings at the new location have been expanded to reflect its mission of enabling growth and enriching lives for customers who have come to count on the Kollupitiya branch for banking solutions, over many years.

Seylan RED, the latest addition to its range of exclusive services for

premier customers, brings in a host of personalised value-added services and benefits.

Seylan Customers can reach out to the new Kollupitiya branch on 0112 564 080 for information on all products and services or contact the branch via email on kollupitiya.bmg@seylan.lk. The bank invites all customers to utilise Seylan's multiple digital platforms for day-to-day transactions or visit www.seylan.lk for further information. Customers can also call the Seylan 24/7 hotline for further assistance on 0112 008 888.

# Chint Energy introduces all-new luxury switches and sockets series to Sri Lanka

Chint Energy (Pvt.) Ltd. is expanding its product portfolio by introducing the all-new 2L series of switches and sockets to Sri Lankan customers. Chint Energy (Pvt.) Ltd. is the authorised distributor for Chint Electric brands in the country, and it consists of industry specialists who have a vast knowledge of electrical products in Sri Lanka. The Chint brand is the third largest electrical company in the world.

The 2L series switches, named "Feliz" means "happy" in Spanish. It is designed to break the norm and monotony of the standard switches and sockets arena. The 2L series comes with an ultra-modern frameless design and is the top of the line in ultra-luxurious switches and

sockets, manufactured with the highest quality material and the latest technology. The 2L series also comes with a lifetime warranty.

This new 2L series offers a complete range of modular switches and sockets which cater to the demand of the household which is now available with all authorised dealers islandwide. Chint Energy also offers an opportunity for users to experience all Chint products at the Chint flagship store on Havelock Road, Colombo 5.

Chint Energy (Pvt.) Ltd. has always been committed to delivering power solutions of the highest and most durable quality, with the aim of enhancing the quality of life for all Sri Lankans.



From left: Chint Energy (Pvt.) Ltd. Managing Director Kamil Hussain, Manager - National Sales Chandana Gunasena, and Manager - Field Sales Mahinda Ekanayake

# Pelwatte offers exclusive offer in partnership with Keells

Pelwatte Dairy Industries welcomes the festive season of Christmas and December with an exclusive partnership with Keells offering their signature Salted Butter at a concessionary discount of 15% off from 1 to 31 December 2021.

Pelwatte butter is produced using the fat from locally sourced milk, is

high in nutrients, and healthy as well; the butter is made from the fat in fresh milk with no added preservatives. Fresh milk contains about 84% fat and the process of butter production tends to increase the fat percentage, so in order to control the fat percentage, a standardisation process is used which is also another reason why

Pelwatte Butter is considered all-natural. They are manufactured to the highest quality standards and have no artificial preservatives added to extend shelf life.

Pelwatte Dairy has always aimed to supply the country's domestic milk demand while also improving the socioeconomic position of local

# Sustainability made simple at Ecohub.lk

Ecohub.lk is a virtual marketplace that brings together eco-friendly, natural, and sustainable products to make healthy and sustainable living easier.

Ecohub's products consist of a wonderful range of toys, wellness products, tableware, and culinary ingredients, all of which are made from materials such as bamboo, clay, coconut, and wood. Every single product passes through Ecohub's five-pillar criteria to make it to the platform. As such, products are rated based on: sustainability of the material, sustainability of the production method, potential to lower the user's carbon footprint, quality and durability, and capacity to minimise or generate zero waste.

Environmental consciousness has been on the rise, and even more so since the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. A global analysis conducted across 54 nations by the Economist Intelligence Unit in association



with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) reports a rising tide of public concern for the environment and a shift towards green consumerism. According to the report, the popularity of internet searches for sustainable goods around the world have increased by 71% in just five years.

Those interested in being a part of the solution can head on over to [www.ecohub.lk](http://www.ecohub.lk) where sustainability is made simple.

# DFCC Bank signs MoU with NCE to drive the growth of SL's export industry

DFCC Bank announced the landmark signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Chamber of Exporters (NCE) and will now act as one of the Chamber's key strategic partners. Through this MoU, DFCC Bank extends the comprehensive array of end-to-end financial solutions to all members of the NCE, providing access to customised export financing solutions that in turn enable them to do bigger and better business.

The membership of the Chamber represents leading exporters across all product and service sectors in Sri Lanka, ranging from large to small export-oriented enterprises.

The MoU is valid for a period of one year and enables all export-related businesses to obtain a host of benefits offered by DFCC Bank. The MoU is therefore of notable importance for all individuals and businesses involved in the production of exportable goods and services, both private and public in nature.

Foreign exchange income generated through exports is currently a critical requirement towards ensuring that the country gains financial stability. As such, the partnership stands to add significant value in growing exports overall, while securing economic stability and resilience.



From left: DFCC Bank Vice President - Marketing and Sustainability Nilmini Gunaratne, Vice President - Offshore Banking, Trade, and Institutional Business Development Anton Arumugam, and Deputy Chief Executive Officer Thimal Perera and NCE Secretary General and Chief Executive Officer Shihan Marikar and Director - Operations Menaka Wanniarachchi

# Harpic celebrates World Toilet Day with efforts to develop public sanitation

Harpic disinfectant toilet cleaner, a brand of globally renowned consumer goods conglomerate Reckitt, recently marked World Toilet Day by renovating and upgrading the sanitation infrastructure of Meerigama Base Hospital.

As a Base Hospital, this serves a large catchment area of the public that sees 750 to 1,000 people a day. The official handing over of the renovated facilities coincided with World Toilet Day 2021 which fell on 19 November under the theme of "Harpic: Mission Wellbeing".

Reckitt Sri Lanka, the distributor for Harpic locally, has partnered with local health authorities throughout the years to deliver similar support to empower the local healthcare sector. Since 2017, they have worked to refurbish toilets in peoples' homes, helping about 150 families per annum and a total of 600-plus families over the last four years.

Last year, Harpic renovated toilets at the Minuwangoda Base



Harpic, Reckitt Sri Lanka Brand Manager Chanuka Perera handing over a consignment of Harpic to the Gampaha Regional Director of Health Services

Hospital. They also donated mobile sanitation units to the Anuradhapura Base Hospital which was a Covid-19 testing centre; another benefit for the public.

Harpic is a global brand with a widespread presence in six continents. Inspired by a vision to create a world where people are healthier and live better, Reckitt, the parent company, produces a popular range of health and hygiene products, including Dettol and Lysol, apart from Harpic.







**Nick Cannon mourns loss of his youngest child**  
 Television host and actor Nick Cannon shared with his talk show audience on Tuesday (7) that his youngest child, Zen, had died. "Over the weekend I lost my youngest son to a condition called hydrocephalus that was pretty much a malignant, invasive midline brain tumor, brain cancer," an emotional Cannon said. "It's tough." The five-month-old infant was Cannon's child with model Alyssa Scott. He has six other children from other relationships.

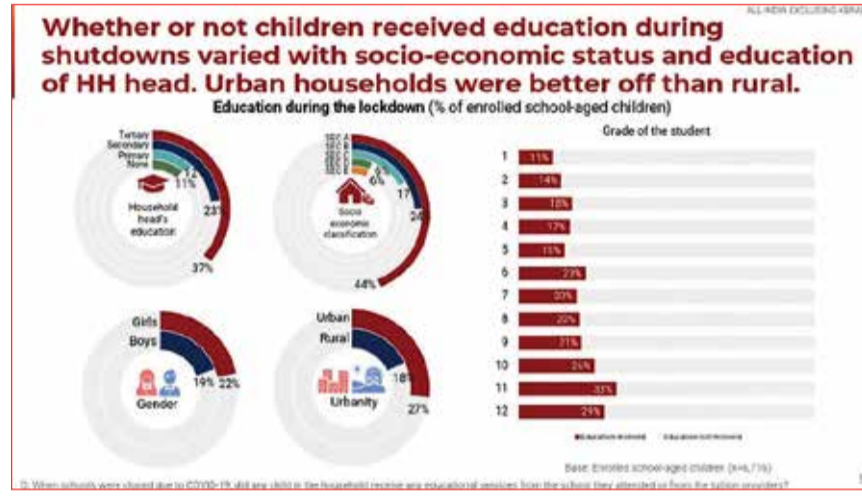
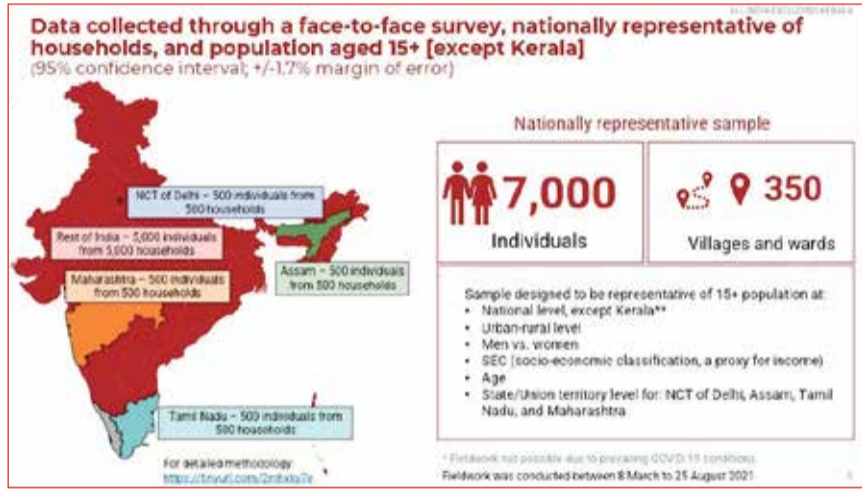
**Thought for the day**  
 "I believe that if one always looked at the skies, one would end up with wings."  
 - Gustave Flaubert

# LIRNEasia conducts study on post-Covid-19 digitisation of SL

'Access to education during the first lockdown was high, but not without problems,' survey shows

BY VENESSA ANTHONY

The Covid-19 pandemic has been termed "the first global pandemic in the digital age". Measures to combat the pandemic, including lockdowns and the need for social distancing, have forced many of our everyday spheres of activity online, including work, education, buying essentials such as food and medicine, and our social lives. Furthermore, digital tools are a widespread part of pandemic response itself, including using the online world for risk communication, as well as digital/online applications for contact tracing, quarantine monitoring, and more recently, vaccine distribution.



These changes have brought tremendous opportunities, allowing many activities that would otherwise have been interrupted to continue. Digital technologies also open up the opportunity to make pandemic control faster and more efficient through harnessing numerous and varied sources of data. However, inequalities in access to digital technologies and broadband have meant that some have been affected worse than others, along lines such as gender and socioeconomic status.

A new survey shows that 85% of enrolled school-aged children had some form of education services during school closures between March and July 2020. While some received educational services through multiple means, 54% of students received information, instructions, notes, or assignments sent to smartphone, tab, or computer, 50% had live lessons delivered over Zoom and other applications (potentially alongside other methods). Sixty percent received education services through "offline" methods like physical delivery of material (also potentially alongside other methods).

The 2021 islandwide survey conducted by digital policy think tank, LIRNEasia, showed that though 85% received some form of education services, only 48% relied exclusively on services from their school, while 4% relied exclusively on tuition providers and 33% relied on both.

The survey findings were released at a virtual launch event conducted on 8 December 2021, which included a panel discussion with leading government, private sector, and civil society representatives. Panellists included Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL) Director General and Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) Sri Lanka Chairman Oshada Senanayake, Northern Province Secretary – Education, Cultural Affairs, Sports, and Youth Affairs L. Ilaangovan, PickMe Founder/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Jiffy Zulfar, Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) Team Leader – Sustainable Development Karin Fernando, and LIRNEasia Senior Research Manager Gayani Hurulle. The discussion was moderated by LIRNEasia Chair Rohan Samarajiva.

At the virtual conference, it was made known that the research was funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) through a grant given to three regional think tanks, LIRNEasia, Research ICT Africa, and Instituto de Estudios Peruanos. The nationally representative sample for the survey conducted in Sri Lanka consisted of 2,500 households and individuals across the country covering 125 grama niladhari divisions. The sampling

methodology has been designed to ensure representation of the target group (population aged 15-plus) at a national level with a +/-2.8% margin of error at a confidence level of 95%. The data also allows for disaggregation by urban/rural divide, gender, and socio-economic classification at the national level, as well as by within and outside the Western Province.

### How children received education during the lockdown

The main aim of the survey is to highlight if and how Covid-19 changed the state of digital connectivity and the impact that it had on different facets of life, including education, and work in government services.

The survey does not directly reveal information about the continuity or the quality of the education services provided, but the rate of dissatisfaction with the services provides some indication. Despite high access to remote education, over 58% of households were dissatisfied with their remote education experience.

Education Forum Sri Lanka Co-Convenor Dr. Sujata Gamage noted: "These survey data are consistent with ground realities. Soon after schools closed, teachers and local education authorities mobilised whatever resources were at their disposal, whether using WhatsApp messages or leaving notes and assignments at the

### Of the 20% of children who received education during COVID, variety of channels & methods seen. 75% received information/assignments on their smartphones



school gate for collection, to reach out to their students." She observed that parents seem to have risen up to the challenge as well by increasing their internet access.

She also stated that the survey was designed to look at some indicators that are on a more national level – known as human suffering versus the rest of Sri Lanka and different socioeconomic classification.

Of the households with enrolled school-age children, 76% had access to the internet in 2020, in contrast to the 34% of such households in 2018, according to LIRNEasia's AfterAccess survey. She further stated: "Not surprisingly, 90% of the enrolled children living in internet-connected households received

remote education services."

Furthermore, it was noted that inequalities in who had access were evident (e.g., children in better-off households being more likely to receive education) as well as what or how content was received (e.g., 50% had live online lessons while 50% did not). There were also inequalities in terms of receiving feedback, with just 48% receiving feedback and the balance 52% not receiving feedback.

The survey also highlighted some of the difficulties that households faced in their children accessing education during this time, ranging from poor signal quality, to not having enough devices to go around in the house, and as stated, many remained dissatisfied with the entire experience.

BY NAVEED ROZAIS

## Colombo Club

# 150 years of discreet distinction

Colombo Club, while it may fly under most people's radars, is one of those rare institutions that is not to be underestimated, for, if anything, they persevere. Originally set up as a gentlemen's club by the name of The Assembly Rooms Company in 1869, Colombo Club, now an exclusive, private member institution remains a luxurious and discreet oasis in the heart of Colombo.

Colombo Club is steeped in history. Its founding President was then-Governor of Ceylon Sir Hercules Robinson. Its original building is now a heritage site – the old building that is now part of the Taj Samudra Hotel. The Colombo Club itself was inaugurated in 1871 and is one of Asia's oldest social clubs with a membership of 500 people.

"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.

An even further testament to just how much a part of Colombo's history the Colombo Club is, is the fact that as its members were several Governors from our colonial days – Rt. Hon. Sir William Henry Gregory, Sir James Robert Longden, and Hon. Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon being a few of them. The roll call of Chairmen of Colombo Club reads like a veritable who's



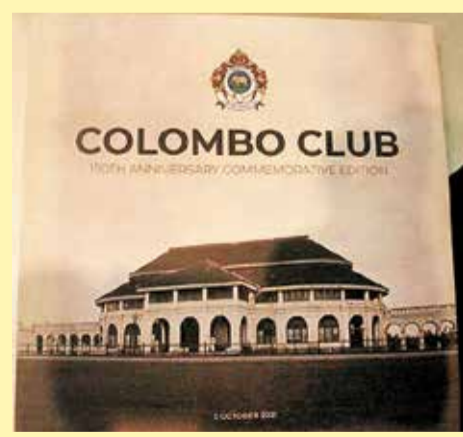
Chief Guest Printcare PLC Chief Executive Officer K.R. Ravindran speaking at the event



Renu Samarasinghe reading an excerpt from the special coffee table book launched at the event on Colombo Club's illustrious history



Colombo Club Chairman Kumar Jayasuriya speaking at the event



Colombo Club coffee table book

who of Sri Lanka. R. Singleton-Salmon, Mallory Wijesinghe, Ranjan Canekeratne, 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.

Colombo Club, in its 150-year journey, has been attracting prominent persons of the day, such as Planters' Association President J.A. Bell, District Judge of Colombo T. Berwick, Municipal Councillor, later Chief Justice of Ceylon

Sir Richard Cayley, 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.

In celebration of its 150th anniversary, Colombo Club launched a very special book; a coffee table edition of its illustrious history that re-threads the club's journey milestones, 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 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.

At an intimate launch event (the club eschewed a grand launch in favour of a smaller gathering given the pandemic), the event's Chief Guest Printcare PLC Chief Executive Officer K.R. Ravindran shared with the assembly that while many

books are published for many reasons, and read in many ways, this 150th anniversary commemorative book at Colombo Club is one book that will be read with the greatest care by its members because of the powerful and intricate history it captures.

And this is certainly so, for the book contains 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.

One memorable excerpt from the book was read by Renu Samarasinghe (incidentally, the Colombo Club's youngest member), highlighting the club's momentous history: "It has survived the onslaught of two World Wars that ensured the sun set on an empire of which it was once said there would be no end (whether literal or geographic). In addition, there's the dice of time and chance, not to mention the shifting sands of political and socioeconomic trends. This speaks volumes for its character, spirit, and resilience. It's a 150-year-old skein worth rereading as the club revisits journey mileposts, reflecting how it fitted into the larger fabric of British Ceylon being transformed from a Crown Colony into a Democratic Republic."

Here's to Colombo Club's next 150 years of weaving themselves into Sri Lanka's many-storied historical fabric.



# Twerk SL

*A fun-loving, bubbly, and boujee brand*

BY VENESSA ANTHONY

**Trends come and go, but shorts will forever be a staple. Out of all the summer staples, stylish shorts for women are one of the trickiest items to shop for.**

Not only is there that old debate on their age-appropriateness, but there's also a fine line between casually cool shorts and sexy shorts.

Whether it's a pair of cut-offs or biker shorts, finding an option that fits properly and looks polished is a particularly challenging task. As we continue to work from home, there are more opportunities to wear shorts than ever before, and we don't mean just on the weekends.



Twerk is Sri Lanka's latest shorts clothing brand and their collection is one that is striking and bold.

Natasha Kristina De Silva, the main lady behind the brand, is a mompreneur and hails from Colombo. Natasha (27) possesses an immense passion for "not your basic" fashion, and also runs two family businesses; W and J Springtime and Aquasealers together with her siblings.

Having lived in Dubai for five years, she worked in real estate apart from her job as a model manager for many top models from all around the world. Her goal has always been to bring to Sri Lankan brands and concepts that are nonexistent, to add value to our tiny island, which, upon having a look at her collection, we can say she has succeeded in.

*The Morning Brunch* had a chat

with Natasha on her brand and more.

Upon returning to Sri Lanka in 2019, Natasha embarked on a shopping spree for shorts and when she didn't find a single place or an online shop to get a decent pair of shorts, she took the opportunity and turned that into a business idea with her own twist to it and that is how Twerk was born.

Giving us some insight into what Twerk is all about, she shared that it is your go-to store for shorts but, emphasised that it is not limited to Sri Lanka as they do also ship worldwide. When asked about the inspiration behind the brand, she commented, "I created it to stand out, to be different, and not be simply another clothing brand. I did the same with my marketing campaign as well. I wanted it to pop. Twerk has a very fun-loving, bubbly and boujee vibe to it." She also added that Twerk is literally her personality expressed through clothing.

Taking us through the manufacturing process, she shared: "Our shorts are sourced and manufactured right here in our island. Twerk is not your 'basic short' brand." They manufacture premium quality



shorts of all sizes, producing UK sizes 6-12 and are expanding up to UK 16 by popular demand.

When it comes to material, Natasha has been very careful in picking each one for her designs since it's a crucial element. She informed us that the material is what completes the whole short, and stated that it adds so much value to the core need most women want: comfort.

Having encountered so many hands-on horror experiences with online orders and material, Natasha made sure to deliver the best possible quality when it comes to material and comfort to all clients.

Whether you pair Twerk shorts with sneakers and a T-shirt or a blazer and heeled sandals; they are pretty versatile, making up for that "effortless look", so one can be dressed up or down. Whatever your preference might be from buttercup, print, or bubble shorts to more minimal silhouettes in grazing lengths, there's something for everyone, "enticing" even the most adamant non-shorts wearer.

She explained that this season's collection is named "Sexy Back" and is focused on

pops of colour, mainly neon, pastels and animal prints. The designs have been immaculately chosen to stand out and be unique in every possible way. "Our shorts serve any occasion whether it's a day out at the beach, a workout at the gym, a night out, or if you fancy lounging around. In no way do we want to be normal," she added.

Twerk used a range of diverse fabrics when creating the Sexy Back collection. From stretchy, flowy to fleece, Natasha's used all of them, but she says a strong "no" to polyester.

Natasha also shared that bringing Twerk to reality was an arduous task. "As I launched this business amidst the pandemic it took me a year to launch given the constant lockdowns," she commented, adding that even sourcing the fabric with a pandemic was challenging. She also stated that none of this would have been possible without God, her mum and her amazing support system - her family.

PHOTOS © ISA ASIF  
MAKEUP MOONDRIP (ALI)

@twerk\_sl

brunch  
in  
style

## THE BODY SHOP

*unveils new Christmas gift collection*

This Christmas, The Body Shop is spreading love and kindness with stocking-sized treats and epic showstoppers packed with body-loving goodness for everybody and every budget. The Body Shop's Community Fair Trade partners behind their most-loved gift boxes and jute bags. Every purchase over the Christmas period will also help support thousands of children who have lost their families or primary caregivers to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Body Shop's gift packaging is more sustainable than ever before. The last remaining plastic components have been removed from their advent calendars, saving 29 tonnes (that's around 112,000 Christmas baubles). Plus, they've expanded their range of bath and body accessories made with sustainable alternatives to plastic.

Their bath lilies are now more sustainable than ever, made with ramie, an eco-friendly fibre, helping to save over 50 tonnes of plastic across the whole collection. That's the same as 1.8 million plastic water bottles. To make buffing that body a little better for the planet, they've created a jute scrubber, handmade with materials sourced through their Community Fair Trade partner, and a new biodegradable konjac sponge.

They've designed most of their gift packaging to be reused or repurposed too, so your treats and surprises have a long life after Christmas.

### Special edition body care is back

The Body Shop has brought back two of its popular festive fragrances. Love and Plums is enriched with plum extract from Turkey. This rich, bright, fruity-floral range combines notes of plum sorbet, peony, and comforting musk.



Kindness and Pears is enriched with pear extract from Italy and notes of juicy pear, strawberry, and warm tonka bean. This sweet, vibrant, fruity fragrance will put you in the Christmas spirit. Joy and Jasmine is also here to brighten up your stocking, enriched with jasmine extract from India and fresh, light, joyfully floral notes of orange flower, rose, and sensual jasmine.

### Christmas gifts for every body

The Body Shop has gifts to delight everybody on your list. From the Comfort and Cheer Body Butter Trio to the Shake and Swish Ginger Haircare Gift, there are top-to-toe treats to surprise and pamper every inch this Christmas.

Fans of their iconic fragrance will love the Florals and Frost White Musk® Big Gift, overflowing with floral, cruelty-free favourites. For the Christmas party aficionados, the Flutter and Flick Eye Makeup Gift makes nailing the perfect eyeliner flick effortless.

For someone you really want to spoil, the Fresh and Festive Drops of Youth™ Skincare Gift is packed with treats to help smooth and give you a fresh-faced looking glow. For a gift you can feel really good about



giving, The Gift of Joy is bursting with Community Fair Trade must-haves, perfect for pampering. It even comes in a handwoven, reusable chest.

The perfect cat eye is just a swish and a flick away with the Happy Go Lash Mascara, and don't forget the bestselling Chamomile Cleansing Balm.

For something a little more personal, the personalised gift range lets you create something truly special, filled with the treats they love. Every element of the gift is down to you, including the packaging.

Shop the perfect gift at *The Body Shop flagship store on Bagatole Road, Odel in Alexandra Place, the Kandy City Centre, and the Colombo City Centre.*



## New look Chagall celebrates first year

Chagall at Parkland celebrated its first anniversary recently, and master stylist and hair wizard Gerald Solomons, the owner of Chagall, attributed its success - despite the challenges - to his personal brand of affability and warmth as well as upbeat attitude which has permeated down to all his staff.

Gerald was also a recipient of the World Beauty Awards held recently in the US. World Beauty Awards is an exclusive celebration of hair and beauty gurus that operate across the globe, bringing awareness to the pageant community and

highlighting the excellence of those involved.

Gerald's signature colour scheme of red, black, and white, inspired by Marc Chagall, revitalises all those who walk in and his wide range of styles cater to an eclectic clientele. "Our doors are open to everyone who wants to look good, who wants to make a statement and who dares to be different," he shared.

Manicures, pedicures, long and short hair cuts and styles, make up, facials, bridal dressing, saree draping, and the whole gamut of services are available in a brand new surrounding.



For more information or reservations, call 077 7353177 or 011 2335555.

## Spring & Summer launches showroom in Negombo

Spring & Summer announced plans for islandwide expansion of the illustrious apparel and fashion brand with the opening of its first store in Negombo on 2 December 2021. The ceremonious unveiling of the new store located at 367A, Main Street, Negombo was attended by Chief Guests Mr. and Mrs. Colin Rodrigo and



Spring & Summer Co-Founder Shyamalie Wijegunawardena

the Spring & Summer family.

The boutique-style showroom is designed as a more exclusive space spread across one main floor and is located in the commercial hub of Negombo.

Spring & Summer Co-Founder Shyamalie Wijegunawardena noted: "Negombo is a highly populated area and the opening of this store today is yet another first step towards expansion islandwide. We are elated to announce to our Spring & Summer family that we are now available in Negombo just in time for the season."



Vileshka Wijegunawardena, Dulan Wijegunawardena, Shyamalie Wijegunawardena, Dulanka Wijegunawardena, and Chamathka Wijegunawardena at the Spring & Summer Negombo outlet opening



Mr. and Mrs. Colin Rodrigo with Shyamalie Wijegunawardena

Spring & Summer Finance Director Dulanka Wijegunawardena



# 'ViewMe' by RACUOK

## Supporting the youth beyond basics

**With the current pandemic situation, staff retention has been an issue that has been widely discussed. A steady income and a stable employment are what people around the world are striving for. In this backdrop, the youth advocates at the University of Kelaniya have looked beyond the basics to support the growth of the country.**

The Professional Development



BY MELEEZA RATHNAYAKE

Avenue of the Rotaract Club of University of Kelaniya (RACUOK) recently conducted a unique event dubbed "ViewMe" with the goal of re-creating a corporate environment. The event gave undergraduates preparing to enter the vast corporate world with a simulated interview experience. RACUOK aims for innovation in order to provide the greatest potential contribution to society, and "ViewMe" is one such project to assist students who are preparing to enter the business sector.

"The organising team focused on candidates individually, leading and helping them throughout the process, and meticulously collecting cover letters and CVs in order to give a far more realistic and beneficial interview experience. As a result, the approach brought value to the interviews by tailoring each feedback to each particular personality that faced the interview," said ViewMe Co-Chair Rtr. Rahma Zuhri.

Prior to the interview process, the project consisted of two sessions, performed by business experts to educate participants on the conditions that must be met before facing an interview. Unilever Sri Lanka Senior HR Business Partner – Corporate Functions Keshavi Puswewala, University of Kelaniya Senior Lecturer Dr. Prabhshini Wijewantha, Ruby & Violet Studio Creative Director Ludmila Bopitiya, and AIA Insurance Lanka Life Insurance Specialist Ashane Wādasinghe led the sessions.

CVs and cover letters were collected from applicants for five employment openings in various fields, after which interviews were held. Professionals conducted the interviews in order to present the applicants with an interview experience via the Zoom platform. Each candidate received descriptive comments on how they performed throughout the interview, highlighting their strengths and areas for improvement.



The event lasted four months, from choosing the organising committee to conducting interviews and gathering participant input, from 7 August to 7 December 2021. Registrations for all undergraduates were open, and essential information and instructions were issued to all universities.

The organising committee focused on applicants individually, directing and supporting them throughout the process, and collected cover letters and CVs systematically in order to provide a much realistic and valuable interview experience. Thus, the process added value further to the interviews, as each feedback was customised according to each individual who faced the interview.

"During the processing of the project 'ViewMe', various difficulties arose. One of the biggest issues was that because the candidates were undergraduates from several institutions and had examinations, finding a date that worked for everyone was difficult. However,

the organising team recognised the situation and ensured that everyone was allowed to attend the project by responding to the matter in a timely manner. Despite the packed timetable, the committee effectively handled the difficulty, allowing all candidates to participate," added Rtr. Zuhri.

@racuok

Rotaract Club of University of Kelaniya

### CORRECTION

On the feature that was published on 4 November 2021 on the "Voice Unheard by Meleezza Rathnayake" column, there has been an error made with regard to the supporting organisations on the story "RIC Law Journal 2021". Please note that RIC Law Journal 2021 is further supported by the Royal Institute of Colombo and its academic and non-academic staff in its laws programme.

## Hemas launches special Ayati song and ideation zone

### In celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Hemas Outreach Foundation, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) arm of Hemas Holdings, marked International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December with the release of a special song by Bhathiya and Santhush (BNS) dedicated to children with disabilities as well as the launch of an ideation zone at the Ayati National Centre for Children with Disabilities in Ragama.

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

Commenting on the initiative, Hemas Holdings Group CEO Kasturi Chellaraja Wilson said: "At Hemas, we strive to enrich the lives of the communities of our nation and we work through the Hemas Outreach Foundation to create a more inclusive world. All children must be given the opportunity to unleash their full potential and it is vital that each of us play our part to empower children with disabilities and their families to lead a dignified life.

"As part of our commitment to make healthful living happen across



From left: Hemas Outreach Foundation Trustee and Hemas Pharmaceuticals MD Jude Fernando, Hemas Outreach Foundation and Ayati Trust Sri Lanka Executive Director Shiromi Masakorala, University of Kelaniya Vice Chancellor and Ayati Trust Sri Lanka Chairperson Prof. Nilanthi de Silva, Hemas Holdings Group CEO Kasturi Chellaraja Wilson, University of Kelaniya Faculty of Medicine Dean Prof. Janaki Hewavisenthi, Hemas Outreach Foundation Brand Ambassador and Ayati Trust Sri Lanka Trustee Roshan Mahanama, and Colombo North Teaching Hospital Director Dr. L. Ranaweera

the nation, we launched the 'Piyawara' programme in 2002. Earlier this year, we also launched 'Eka Se Salakamu' (Treat All Alike), a social movement aimed towards empowering children and families with Down's syndrome, creating a platform to recognise their rights and promote inclusivity in today's society."

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

University of Kelaniya Vice Chancellor and Ayati Trust Sri Lanka Chairperson Prof. Nilanthi de Silva spoke about the importance of

the work done by the centre. "This year's theme for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is 'Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible, and sustainable post-Covid-19 world'. Sadly, the Covid-19 pandemic combined with myths and lack of awareness and understanding about disabilities has led to the worsening of social isolation experienced by countless numbers of children. Though many children with disabilities have their innate talents, they are not given opportunities to shine in the same way as other children. At the Ayati Centre, we work towards bridging this gap."

The "My World" ideation zone was also launched at the Ayati



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

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



## Finch Trading unveils Pokka's beverages in SL

Finch Trading (Pvt.) Ltd. in partnership with Pokka Pte. Ltd. unveiled a new range of drinks on 25 November. Positioned as one of the most popular brands in the Singaporean market, the Pokka ready-to-drink beverages are renowned for their quality, taste, and novelty and is considered a favourite among health-conscious consumers.

With this unveiling, Finch offers Sri Lankans a selection of premium-quality Pokka teas and coffees. The range of exotic teas include Pokka Premium Milk Tea, Pokka Oolong Tea, and Pokka Jasmine Green which come in 500 ml and 1,500 ml ready-to-serve bottles. Pokka real-brewed tea contains natural antioxidants, with no preservatives or artificial colouring.

The brand's refreshing coffee range consists of Pokka Black Coffee, Pokka Black Coffee (No Sugar), and Pokka Premium Milk Coffee, offering coffee-lovers a boost of energy to kick-start their days. The coffee range, which is 100% real-brewed from specially selected gourmet coffee beans,

comes in 240 ml cans.

Speaking about the launch of Pokka in Sri Lanka, Finch Trading Founder and Managing Director Fawaz Fassi said: "Pokka is one of the biggest beverage brand names in the Asia Pacific region and we are very excited to introduce its products to the Sri Lankan market. From the get-go, Finch has been dedicated to enhancing the lifestyles of Sri Lankan consumers by bringing them healthy, premium-quality products of international standard, and Pokka is another proud addition to our portfolio.

"In addition to their tea and coffee range, Pokka also has a wide variety of juices, functional drinks, sparkling drinks, milk-based drinks, and Asian drinks. Our plan is to introduce these products in phases to the local market in time to come."

**Pokka beverages are available for purchase via Finch Trading's website at <https://finch.lk/>; in all major supermarkets and retailers islandwide; and online via Uber Eats, PickMe Market, and Daraz.lk.**

## ComBank commits more funds to expand Koggala mangrove restoration project

The Commercial Bank of Ceylon (ComBank) has increased its commitments to the "Koggala Mangrove Restoration and Conservation Project", making it possible to extend mangrove coverage by a further 600 metres with replanting on an island in the Koggala Lake.

The bank supported the first two phases of this project implemented by Wildlife and Ocean Resource Conservation

(WORC) of Sri Lanka, under which 550 metres of the Kathduwa island's banks devastated by erosion were restored with mangroves.

In the third phase of this project, the bank said it will fund the planting of 4,500 mangrove saplings, 500 mangrove associates, and 250 terrestrial trees in an extended area around Kathduwa island.

ComBank Chairman Justice K. Sripavan, Managing

Director and Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) S. Renganathan, and trustees of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Trust of the bank recently visited the area to inspect the progress of the project and observed that it has been successfully implemented.

At the recommendation of the Central Environmental Authority (CEA), the latest phase of the project will



The members of the ComBank team who visited the project (above) and some of the volunteers at work replanting mangroves around the Kathduwa island in the Koggala Lake and at the mangrove nursery created for the purpose (below)

also see the participation of students from select schools in the Southern Province who will take part in environmental conservation and knowledge-

building activities by being involved. Students from overseas universities too will volunteer for the project on a weekly basis.



{ SPORTS }

# REVISITING ALIANZA LIMA AIR DISASTER OF 1987

● The tragic plane crash that robbed Peru of its best team since Copa America glory

**F**orty-four years of painful waiting came to an end on Sunday, 7 July 2019, when Peru take to the Maracana turf. In that period every single South American nation, with the exception of Venezuela, has qualified for at least one Copa America final, while Peru, aka Inca, have been left out in the cold.

Here is Daniel Edwards writing on the tragic “1987 Alianza Lima air disaster” occurred on 8 December 1987, when a Peruvian Navy Fokker F27-400M, chartered by Peruvian football club Alianza Lima, crashed into the Pacific Ocean seven miles from Jorge Chávez International Airport near the city of Callao. Of the 44 people on board, only the pilot survived. The article first appeared in the renowned *Goal* magazine on 7 July 2019.

## The glory days

The Inca had not been left out in the cold in the years before the tragedy. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the nation boasted an enviable pool of talent that established them firmly among the continent’s giants. The likes of attacking greats Teofilo Cubillas and Hugo Sotil, the elegant midfielder Julio Cesar Uribe and other stars led a golden generation for the nation which included World Cup appearances in 1970, 1978, and 1982.

Their finest moment, however, came in 1975. In that year’s Copa America, the first to carry that name – previous tournaments carried the rather clunkier tag of Campeonato Sudamericano – and the first Copa to be played across the continent rather than in one host nation, Peru waltzed to a 3-1 semi-final victory in Belo Horizonte against Brazil in one of the nation’s most celebrated performances.

The Selecao fought back to win the second leg 2-0 in Lima, and in the absence of away goals and penalties, the two sides drew lots, leaving Peru as the winner. A similar scenario played out in the final, with both the Inca and Colombia winning their home leg before Sotil’s solitary goal led his side to the trophy in front of a capacity crowd in Caracas, Venezuela, chosen for the tie-breaker.

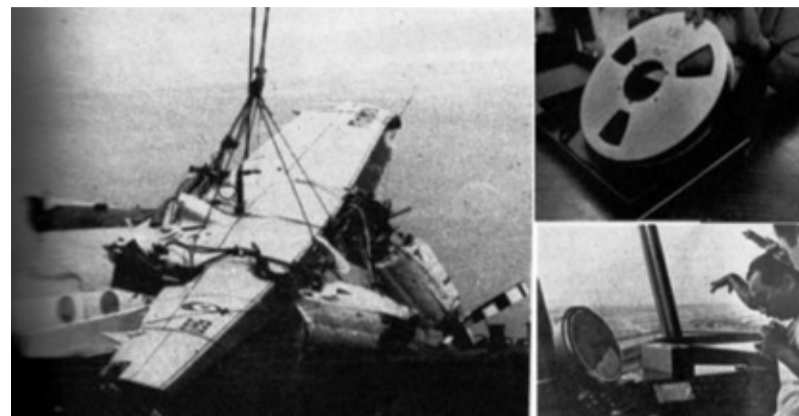
## Luis Escobar

Like all great generations, that team eventually saw its time pass. Peru narrowly missed out on qualification to the 1986 World Cup as Cubillas, Sotil, and other former mainstays of the team began to hang up their boots. A ray of hope loomed on the horizon, though, in the shape of Los Potrillos of Alianza Lima.

The symbol of that great team, coached by the man who had delivered Copa glory to Peru in 1975, Marcos Calderon, was Luis



On board the aircraft were 16 football players of the Alianza Lima football team



The crash site and the plane, Fokker F-27 Friendship 400M

Escobar. Having made his debut at the tender age of 14 at Alianza, Escobar was tipped to become the next Peruvian great – winning comparisons with none other than Cubillas as he began to shine.

At 18, he was a fixture in the Alianza line-up, accompanied by fellow young stars such as Jose Casanova, Juan Reynoso, Carlos Bustamante, Alfredo Tomassini, and Johnny Watson. Behind them in goal stood Jose “Caico” Gonzales, club legend and a part of Peru’s Copa America-winning team in 1975 as well as the uncle of current idol Paolo Guerrero.

## Paolo wears first Alianza shirt

“He loved him as if he were his own son,” Guerrero’s mother recalled to Alianza’s official website. “He was always looking after him, from a young age. He played with him, took him out on the field as the mascot. “He was the first to put the Alianza shirt on (Paolo), from there he loved Alianza. Ever since uncle Caico put the Alianza shirt on him he would not take it off. We had to buy him another. One was in the wash while he wore the other, because he always wanted to be well-dressed.”

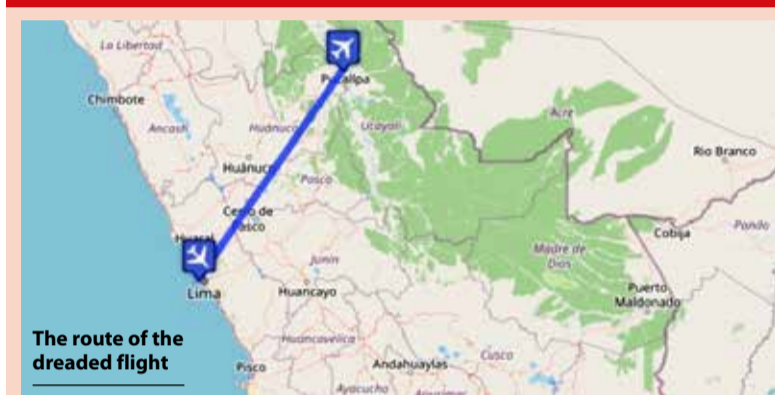
That team won back-to-back regional titles in 1985 and 1986 and the following year, entered the Copa Libertadores, missing out on qualification to the semi-finals after finishing behind eventual winners Penarol at the group stage.

## The crash

At international level too, the team was having an impact, supplying three members of the Peru squad for the 1987 Copa America squad as they set their sights on that year’s Torneo Descentralizado (Peruvian league) title. Escobar and Co. were tipped to form the backbone of the national team going into qualifying for the next World Cup in Italy, before one of the worst tragedies in football history decimated Alianza and Peru as a whole.

Returning from a Descentralizado game against Deportivo Pucallpa on 8 December, the Fokker navy plane transporting the Alianza squad crashed on its descent into Callao’s Jorge Chavez International Airport. Of the 44 people on board only pilot Edilberto Villar survived, with 17 players, Calderon, and his entire

## ‘AVIATION-SAFETY.NET’ RECORD ON THE ACCIDENT



The route of the dreaded flight

**Date:** Tuesday, 8 December 1987  
**Time:** 8.15 p.m.  
**Operator:** Servicio Aeronaval de la Marina Perú  
**First flight:** 1977  
**Total airframe hours:** 5,908  
**Crew:** Occupants: six / Fatalities: five  
**Passengers:** Occupants: 37 / Fatalities: 37  
**Total:** Occupants: 43 / Fatalities: 42  
**Aircraft Damage:** Damaged beyond repair  
**Location:** 11 km (6.9 miles) northwest off Lima-Jorge Chavez International Airport, Peru  
**Phase:** Approach  
**Nature:** Domestic non scheduled passenger  
**Departure airport:** Pucallpa Airport, Peru  
**Destination airport:** Lima-Jorge Chavez International Airport, Peru  
**Narrative:**

A Fokker F-27 Friendship 400M, operated by the Peruvian Navy, crashed at sea off the coast of Lima, Peru. On board the aircraft were 16 football players of the Alianza Lima football team, staff, cheerleaders, and referees.

Alianza Lima had played a match against Deportivo Pucallpa and was returning to Lima in the evening. The aircraft departed Pucallpa at 6.30 p.m.

During the approach to Lima, the flight crew noticed an indication that the nose landing gear would not lock

down. A low flyby was flown to let the air traffic control tower check the gear. The gear seemed okay and the flight repositioned for another approach. In darkness, at about 8.15 p.m., the aircraft impacted the water. Initially three occupants survived the impact, but only the pilot was rescued alive the following morning.

An investigation showed that the flight crew members were not accustomed to flying at night. The captain, the only survivor of the accident, recorded only 5.3 night-flight hours in the last 90 days before the accident, 3.3 hours in the last 60 days; and none in the last 30 days. The co-pilot had 90 minutes of night-flight experience two months before the crash.

Also, because of the limited proficiency in English, the co-pilot carried out the wrong emergency procedure after being instructed by the captain to carry out a procedure to take care of the landing gear indication.

Additionally, the aircraft was dispatched with several technical issues. The airplane did not have an inertial navigation system (INS); UHF communication had low reception; the very high frequency omnidirectional range (VOR) receiver had low sensitivity; the radio altimeter oscillated preventing the pilots from seeing the exact altitude; and finally, the actuator for the front landing gear had worn down.

coaching staff, and two referees travelling with the team.

Juan Reynoso had received a red card in Alianza’s previous clash and did not travel with his team-mates to Pucallpa, an act which saved the 17-year-old Peru international’s life.

Now an established coach, Reynoso caused a scandal some years later in leaving his boyhood club for hated Lima rivals Universitario. He has not returned to Alianza since – and remains reluctant to talk about the accident.

## Juan Reynoso’s remarks

“I don’t like being asked about the Fokker because it is like sticking a finger in an open wound for those bereaved,” he told Peru 21 in 2009, one of the few times he has addressed the tragedy publicly. “They are still suffering.”

“It was more likely back then for me to be on the plane than not to be. I have thought about it many times and I start thinking about what it would have been like for my family more than for me. But I do not like the subject.”

Incredibly, and thanks to the selflessness of stars like Cubillas, who returned to the club from the United States at the age of 38 to play the rest of the season for free, Alianza went on to take the 1987 Descentralizado title, which was postponed until well into 1988 due to the crash.

But the ultimate effect was devastating for the club, who had to rebuild from scratch and with the pall of grief hanging over the tough working class neighbourhood of La Victoria synonymous with Alianza, in the same way that La Boca is inseparable from the Buenos Aires giants.

## A Peruvian setback

The tragedy also set back Peruvian football as a whole. The Inca lost all four games in qualifying for the 1990 World Cup and picked up just one point of 18 for the following edition, while winning a paltry two Copa America games in the four tournaments played between 1989 and 1995.

Results began to improve towards the end of the 20th Century, with several appearances in Copa semis. That coveted World Cup spot, however, remained elusive, until the arrival in March 2015 of Ricardo Gareca, the livewire Argentine with more than a passing resemblance to Iggy Pop that has revolutionised Peru’s fortunes.

## Just short of fourth birthday

Like Calderon before him, Gareca gambled on youth. The likes of Christian Cueva, Edison Flores, Miguel Trauco and Andy Polo were drafted in during his first days in the job in 2016, and came through together as Peru gained a play-off spot for Russia 2018 by the skin of their teeth over Chile before dispatching New Zealand to make

their first finals in 34 years.

And just as that tragic Alianza side had Caico as the experienced old warrior leading and cajoling, Gareca can count on his nephew. Guerrero returned to competitive action with “Internacional” for the first time since the World Cup as recently as April this year after serving a doping ban, but at 35 remains a key member of the Peru side. He sealed their 3-0 semi-final win against Chile on Wednesday by rounding Gabriel Arias and netting with ease.

While he was just short of his fourth birthday that awful day, the scars of his uncle’s passing are yet to fully heal. “I am scared of flying,” he admitted to Bandeirantes during his spell at Brazil’s Corinthians. “When my uncle died I was three or four. I remember my mother’s screams. She was listening to music, I think she was ironing, and that was when she screamed when she heard talk of a tragedy.

## ‘Plane fell in the sea’

“The Alianza Lima players are all dead, the plane fell in the sea’. I only remember that. That is why I am scared of planes. Everyone here at Corinthians knows it. When the plane goes through turbulence...”

When Guerrero scores he often holds both arms aloft and raises his eyes to the heavens. With that gesture he celebrated for Inter his first goal since returning from suspension, explaining after the game that he was paying tribute to nephew Julio Rivera, who passed away after falling under the wheels of a car during a botched robbery attempt in Lima.

Cartoonist Gio, an avid Alianza fan, immortalised the moment, picturing Gonzales and Rivera embracing each other from above as they watch Guerrero return from the toughest challenge of his professional career.

## Overcoming personal tragedy

“(Paolo) has a lot of things (from Caico),” his mother adds. “One of those is humility. My mother taught us, you have to stay focused. Don’t let fame go to your head. Stay centred. Caico complained very little.”

That focus and humility has allowed Guerrero to overcome personal tragedy and strife to become the figurehead of this Peru team, whose passage to the Copa final to meet Brazil sparked wild celebrations in Lima and across the nation.

A 5-0 defeat in the group stages and Brazil’s status as hosts make the Inca overwhelming underdogs when they walk out to a baying Maracana crowd on Sunday. But the journey itself is a reward for this exciting, dynamic side, who under the watchful eye of Gareca have evoked in equal measure memories of great teams past and great teams that might have been.

## UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ROUND-UP

# Liverpool and Ajax proceed to knockouts undefeated

COMPILED BY RANJIKA PERERA

## Liverpool 2-1 AC Milan

Mohamed Salah’s 20th goal of the season and Divock Origi’s second goal of the week gave Liverpool a thrilling win over AC Milan in San Siro. Meanwhile, they became the first English team ever to win all six of their group matches in the Champions League.

The Rossoneri needed to secure a Matchday Six victory to stand any chance of progressing from Group B but could not overcome the visitors and will now drop out of Europe after finishing bottom of the pool in their first season back in the Champions League after a long absence.

## Dortmund 5-0 Besiktas

Erling Haaland came off the bench



Liverpool’s Divock Origi scored the opener against AC Milan

to score a brace and help Dortmund to a convincing victory over 10-man Besiktas as the Bundesliga giants ended their Champions League campaign on a high. With third place in Group C and a spot in the Europa League already assured, Marco Rose’s side had little to play for other than pride.

## Sheriff 1-1 Shakhtar Donetsk

Boban Nikolov scored a last-gasp equaliser for Sheriff Tiraspol as they drew 1-1 with Shakhtar Donetsk to reach the knockout stages of the Europa League. Fernando had given Shakhtar

the lead in the 42nd minute, but Nikolov stabbed in after a goalmouth scramble in the final seconds to ensure the Moldovan club’s hope of a European berth was intact.

## Ajax 4-2 Sporting Lisbon

In Group C, Ajax thrashed Sporting Lisbon 4-2 to maintain their 100% win record in the group stages. Sebastian Haller opened the scoring in the eighth minute before Nuno Santos pulled a goal back for the visitors in the 22nd minute. Antony restored Ajax’s lead before David Neres and Steven Berghuis added a goal each to the hosts’ tally. Tabata scored a consolation for the visitors in the 78th minute.

## RB Leipzig 2-1 Manchester City

Manchester City suffered a surprise

defeat in the last week of her group stage game against RB Leipzig behind closed doors in the Group A game. Dominik Szoboszlai and Andre Silva both scored for the hosts. Kyle Walker was sent off for a wild challenge on Silva and Riyad Mahrez scored a consolation goal.

## PSG 4-1 Club Brugge

PSG ended the group stages with a convincing win over Club Brugge to proceed to the knockouts as runners up of Group A. Kylian Mbappé and Lionel Messi both scored a brace. Mats Rits scored for the visitors in the 68th minute, but Brugge’s hopes of qualifying for the Europa League knockout stages are over.

## Atletico Madrid 3-1 Porto

The defending champions of Spain

Atletico Madrid beat Porto 3-1 to proceed to the knockout stages of the Champions League. This result means that the Portuguese club will play in the Europa League after Christmas. Antoine Griezmann gave the hosts the lead before the match descended into chaos with Yannick Carrasco, Wendell and Agustin Marchesin – who was off the pitch – all received red cards for their involvements in two separate on-the-pitch exchanges.

Atletico wrapped up the win in added time thanks to goals from Angel Correa and Rodrigo De Paul.

## Real Madrid 2-0 Inter Milan

In Group D, top spot was still up for grabs and it was Real Madrid who took it after beating Inter Milan 2-0. Goals from Toni Kroos and Marco Asensio secured victory for Real.



the morning

## Sports

## Mendis, Mushikhan give New Youngs win

New Youngs (2) vs. Blue Eagles (0): New Youngs found the opener in the 38th minute after Ramesh Mendis' cross was sent in by Mohamed Mushikhan in their Football Super League 2021 encounter yesterday (8). In the 54th minute, Mendis took advantage of a lacklustre Blue Eagles defence to score again. With four minutes remaining, Lasitha Fernando pulled one back for the Eagles. It was a corner kick that was spilled by New Youngs' keeper Gihan Kurukulasuriya, which led to the goal. However, it proved too late as Youngs held on to the win to keep Eagles at the bottom of the table.

## World Cup 2022 'multicultural team' meets ICC officials

A "multicultural team" in Melbourne, Australia has recently met with International Cricket Council (ICC) Men's T20 World Cup 2022 Local Organising Committee CEO Michelle Enright, Media and Communications Manager Max Abbott, and their local staff in Melbourne. The team has discussed various engagements including how the Sri Lankan community is going to take part in the World Cup in Melbourne later next year. The team comprised Vernon Tissera, Johann Jayasingha, Associate Prof. Luckmika Perera, Dihan Dewage, Adrian Symons, and Earnie Fernando.



## FOREIGN SPORTS IN BRIEF



## Sajid Khan 'hero' as Pakistan claim series win

The stage was set for Sajid Khan as he returned sensational bowling figures of 8/42 and 4/86, guiding Pakistan to an unforgettable win in the Dhaka Test against Bangladesh yesterday (8). The victory keeps Pakistan on the second spot in the World Test Championship standings, taking their win percentage to 75%, while Bangladesh are languishing at the bottom with two in two losses and zero points.

No final session on day one, only 6.2 overs of action on the second day, not a ball being bowled on the third day, and a delayed start on day four, yet Pakistan managed to claim an emphatic win over a hapless host.

Khan spun his magical web to dismantle the Bangladesh line-up with his brilliant performance. He wrapped up the hosts' second innings for 205 as Pakistan sealed a victory by an innings and eight runs, and the series 2-0.

**Brief scores:**  
Pakistan 300/4 declared  
Bangladesh 87 and (following on, overnight 76/7 in 26 overs) 205 all out in 84.4 overs (Shakib Al Hasan 63, Mushfiqur Rahim 48, Litton Das 45; Sajid Khan 4/86, Shaheen Afridi 2/31, Hasan Ali 2/37)

## Australia bowlers dominate day one of the Ashes

Australia dealt their English foes an early Ashes blow on day one of the first Test in a stunning bowling performance in Brisbane before rain washed out the final session yesterday (8).

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

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

England were unable to cause late-innings drama, falling to 147 all out, with Pat Cummins



leading from the front with figures of 5/38. It was the first time a Captain had got a five-for after the late Bob Willis did the feat earlier for England.

**Brief scores:**  
England (won toss) Jos Buttler 39, Ollie Pope 35, Haseeb Hameed 25, Chris Woakes 21; Pat Cummins 5/38, Mitchell Starc 2/35, Josh Hazlewood 2/42 vs. Australia

## Olivier returns to South Africa for India series

South Africa have named a 21-member squad for their three-match World Test Championship series against India, starting 26 December.

The series will begin on Boxing Day with the first of three Tests at Centurion, with Johannesburg and Cape Town hosting the remaining two Tests. The sides will also contest in three ODIs in Paarl and Cape Town from 19 to 23 January.

**Squad:**  
Dean Elgar (Capt.), Temba Bavuma (V. Capt.), Quinton de Kock (wk), Kagiso Rabada, Sarel Erwee, Beuran Hendricks, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, Lungi Ngidi, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Anrich Nortje, Keegan Petersen, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne, Marco Jansen, Glenton Stuurman, Prenelan Subrayen, Sisanda Magala, Ryan Rickelton, and Duanne Olivier.

## Dialog to power Battle of the Saints



From left: St. Joseph's College Rector Rev. Fr. Ranjith Andradi, Dialog Axiata General Counsel and Vice President - Group Legal and Regulatory Trineesh Fernando, and St. Peter's College Rector Rev. Fr. Rohitha Rodrigo

Sri Lanka's premier Catholic boys' schools - St. Joseph's College, Colombo and St. Peter's College, Colombo - are set to battle it out for the Rev. Father Maurice J. Le Goc Trophy in their 87th Battle of the Saints to be held on Monday, 13 and Tuesday, 14 December at the SSC Grounds, Colombo.

The Josephians will be led by Sri Lanka Under-19 Captain Dunith Wellalage while the Peterites will be led by Nipunaka Fonseka.

"The global pandemic has crippled the world and yet, we are fortunate to embrace a unique tradition - a game of cricket which helps protect and preserve traditions, values, and history," said

St. Peter's College Rector Rev. Fr. Rohitha Rodrigo in a communiqué yesterday (8).

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

## Sri Lanka U-19 clinch series against England with resounding victory

● Win fourth Youth ODI in Colombo by 126 runs

BY ISHANI UPATHARITHA

**S**ri Lanka Under-19 won their second back-to-back Youth One-Day International (ODI) series, this time against touring England Under-19, by winning the fourth match yesterday (8) at the Singhalese Sports Club (SSC) Grounds in Colombo by 126 runs to take an unassailable 3-1 lead with only one match to go in the series.

After making 243/7 in their allotted 50 overs on what was more a spin-friendly track, Sri Lanka, under St. Joseph's College Colombo player Dunith Wellalage, made use of as many as nine bowlers and restricted the visitors to 117 all out in 33.3 overs.

## Pathiraja and de Silva

Sri Lanka were propped up by a handy 111-run stand for the fifth wicket by Pawan Pathiraja and Raveen de Silva. The former, from Trinity College Kandy, struck 60 off 104 with only two fours, clearly playing a sheet-anchor role for his side, whilst de Silva, a Nalanda College Colombo schoolboy, made an 87-ball 59, inclusive of four fours and a six.

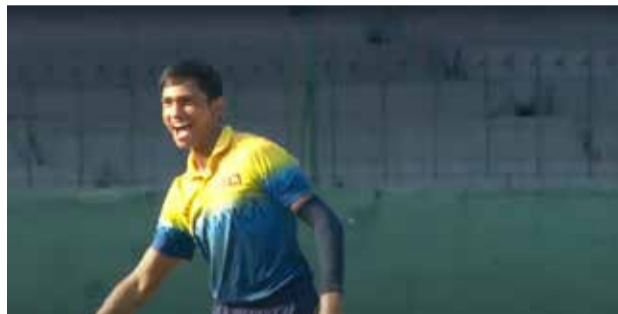
England U-19 too, playing under 18-year-old Tom Prest, utilised seven bowlers yet the local youngsters went on to post a challenging total, opting to bat first after winning the toss, in a third time out of the four games played so far.

## After whitewashing Bangladesh U-19 5-0

Less than seven weeks ago, on 25 October, Sri Lanka U-19 recorded a 5-0 whitewash of the touring Bangladeshi counterparts in Dambulla.

The wins in two back-to-back series, under the guidance of their new Head Coach Avishka Gunawardene, will prepare themselves well for the age group's World Cup coming up next month.

The next or the 14th edition of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Under-19 (50-over) World Cup is scheduled to be held from 14 January to 5 February 2022 in the West Indies with the participation of 16 countries including Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has never won the title.



**A tricky one.** Pictured is Sri Lanka U-19 middle-order bat and leg-spin bowler Raveen de Silva, in a somewhat awkward celebration yesterday (8), after taking a wicket at SSC. De Silva spearheaded an impressive 126-run win for Sri Lanka with a fine all-round performance. Yet, do these kinds of fanciful celebrations by future national cricketers go down well with the strict Sri Lanka Coach Avishka Gunawardene? Doesn't Gunawardene, an old-school mentor, have something to do with the youngsters' on-field action, despite how successful they are as per their results? Talent apart, the country needs thoroughly disciplined ambassadors of the sport for the future, one may argue. Hats off, anyway, to Raveen, Dunith and Co. for making the country proud with a series of promising victories!

PHOTOS © SLC YOUTUBE CHANNEL

## Five wickets for three runs

Yesterday, Sri Lanka U-19 never allowed England to break loose in their run chase, cutting off runs bowling on very tight lines. Their spinners did the trick for them as was expected.

England opener George Thomas got run out for 40, which he made off 61 balls with five fours, reducing them to 83/3 in the 21st over. Since then they lost wickets in tandem in pursuit of quick runs.

## Raveen shines with the ball too

From 114/5, though, in the 32nd over, they suffered a sharper slide losing the next remaining five wickets for mere three runs in 2.2 overs, to be bundled out for 117 in the 33rd over.

Leg-spinner Raveen de Silva was the chief destroyer of England taking three out of the last five to return impressive figures of 3.3-1-6-3. Matheesha Pathirana took 2/8 in three overs.

## SERIES RESULTS AFTER FOUR MATCHES

Sri Lanka U-19 vs. England U-19 Youth ODI (50-over) series at SSC, Colombo

1. England U-19 won by 25 runs on 30 November
2. Sri Lanka U-19 won by 148 runs on 3 December
3. Sri Lanka U-19 won by two wickets on 5 December
4. Sri Lanka U-19 won by 126 runs on 8 December

## BRIEF SCORES YESTERDAY (8)

Sri Lanka U-19 vs. England U-19 4th Youth ODI at SSC yesterday (8)  
**Sri Lanka U-19** (won toss) 243/7 in 50 overs (Pawan Pathiraja 60, Raveen de Silva 59, Shevon Daniel 39, Chamindu Wickramasinghe 19; Benjamin Cliff 3/43, Nathan Barnwell 2/39)  
**England U-19** 117 all out in 33.3 overs (George Thomas 40, Harry Crawshaw 31; Raveen de Silva 3/6, Matheesha Pathirana 2/8)

## Avishka's appointment

In September, former Sri Lanka batter Gunawardene was named Sri Lanka U-19 Head Coach until the end of 2022.

Gunawardene had been approached by the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) by then for the post of the country's Batting Coach.

He had reportedly agreed to take up the position temporarily, for the series that was meant to be played against Pakistan, in Hambantota, the same month.

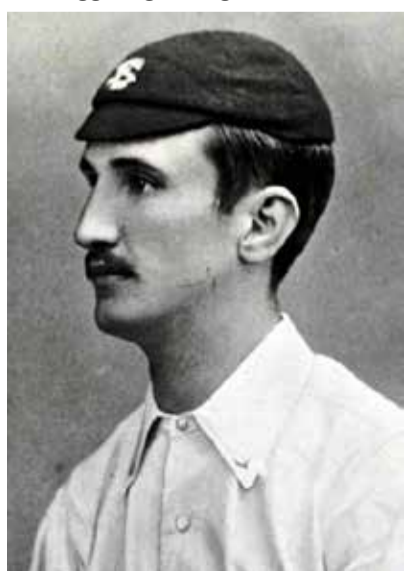
## Next World Cup

"The next Under-19 World Cup is just in January next year, so I've only got about 100 days to prepare the boys for that," Gunawardene told the media upon receiving his new Sri Lanka job probably after deciding to miss the ACB offer.

"A lot of these boys (Sri Lanka U-19) haven't played for the last 18 months (because of the pandemic), so there's work to do." He had added them before the start of his first assignment, against the touring Bangladesh U-19.

## ON THIS DAY

**1866** Birth of England's one-eyed cricketer John Sharpe, who lost an eye as a youth, but it didn't stop him playing three Tests between 1890 and 1892 and taking 338 first-class wickets, most of them for Surrey, at a staggering average of 16.06



England's one-eyed Test cricketer of the 19th Century, John Sharpe

**1889** Birth of Finnish long-distance runner Hannes Kolehmainen, a four-time Olympic gold medallist and a world record holder



**1922** Margaret Molesworth beat fellow Australian Esna Boyd 6-3, 10-8 in the first-ever Australian Open women's championship, then named "Australasian Championships"

**1936** Australia's lowest total in the 20th Century on home soil. Gubby Allen and Bill Voce skittled them out for only 58 runs as England recorded a mighty 322-run victory in the first Test in Brisbane. It was also Don Bradman's first Test as Aus Captain. However, from 2-0 down, Australia recovered to take the series 3-2

**1949** Birth of American golfer Tom Kite, who won the US Open in 1992 and 19 other major titles whilst spending 175 weeks in the top 10 of the world

**1968** Birth of American wrestler Kurt Angle, the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) star



American WWE star Kurt Angle

who won gold medal in freestyle wrestling at 1996 Olympics

**1992** In Port Elizabeth, Kapil Dev ran out Peter Kirsten for backing up too far before he had bowled. Kirsten was fined half his match fee for refusing to leave the crease. South Africa came on top with the win eventually

**1992** Sri Lanka recorded her all-time third Test cricket victory, and the first match-winning performance by Muttiah Muralitharan, 20 then. New Zealand were beaten by nine wickets at SSC

**2000** Tottenham defender Ledley King scored the fastest goal in English Premier League history - in 9.82 seconds in a 3-3 draw at Bradford City

**2019** The World Anti-Doping Agency banned Russia from all major sporting events including 2020 Tokyo Olympics and 2022



Muralitharan, only in his third Test, took 3/22 and 4/134 to guide Sri Lanka to their third Test win in Colombo

football World Cup in Qatar for manipulating laboratory data

**2020** Death of Italian footballer Paolo Rossi, who led Italy to the 1982 FIFA World Cup title