



WEDNESDAY

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We wish our readers a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

AG's Dept sets record

The Attorney General's (AG) Department said that for the first time in its history, it had concluded 16,647 criminal cases during the course of last year. Coordinating Officer to the Attorney General, State Counsel, Nishara Jayaratne said yesterday (31), that 9,851 indictments had been forwarded to the High Court during the same period and that 2,957 suspects had been discharged.

She said, the Police had been advised on 3,568 criminal cases. (D)

Committee to probe SLBFE

Alleged corruption during Yahapalana period

Minister of Foreign Relations, Skills Development, Employment and Labour Relations, Dinesh Gunawardena, recently said a committee will be appointed to investigate corruptions and irregularities that took place at the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) during the previous Government's tenure. The Minister made this statement at a meeting held at the Labour Ministry with members of trade unions.



During the meeting, trade union members alleged that their ranks were replaced with members of the Jatuhia Sewaka Sangamaya, while some officials were transferred to remote areas without cause.

Story Continued on PAGE 2

Rajitha's hospital stint Gammanpila slams Prison's Chief

By THAMMENAN RAZEK

Alleging that the Commissioner General of Prisons T.M.J.W. Tennakoon did not do his job properly when the United National Front Parliamentarian Dr. Rajitha Senarathne was arrested, UPFA MP Udaya Gammampila said that Minister of Justice, Nimal Siripala de Silva should take the responsibility for the misconduct of the former.



Speaking to the Media yesterday (31), at the Pithuru Hele Urumaya Headquarters, Gammampila said the Commissioner General of Prisons had the power to transfer Senarathne from Lanka Hospital to a General Hospital, but that he did not do so.

Story Continued on PAGE 2

Shavendra appointed acting CDS



President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, in his capacity as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, yesterday appointed Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva, as acting Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), effective from 1 January 2020.

He has been appointed to serve in this position in addition to being the Commander of the Sri Lanka Army.

Chief of Defence Staff Admiral Ravindra C. Gunaratne retired from service yesterday (31).

That 'White Van' briefing Fmr SPC Chair remanded

By KAVINYA PERERA AND
DILANTRI AYAMANNAN

Former Chairman of the State Pharmaceuticals Corporation (SPC) Ranyu Mohammad, who was alleged to have furnished a sum of one million rupees each to the two suspects who had taken part in a press briefing regarding alleged white van abductions, was yesterday (31) remanded till 6 January by Colombo Additional Magistrate Shalini Perera.

Mohammed surrendered to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) yesterday and was arrested.

The prosecution was

represented by senior CID officers along with Deputy Solicitor General Dilupa Peiris and State Counsel Kasun Sarathchandra, while the suspect was represented by a group of lawyers led by Attorney Anura Senewiratna.

The CID submitted a progress report on the case to the Court and Peiris told the Court that the press briefing on 10 November 2019 had been coordinated by the third suspect Dr. Rajitha Senarathna and that the prosecution had constantly maintained that this incident was a concoction and a fabrication.



Story Continued on PAGE 2

Attempts to cause rift a failure - Dinesh

By W.K. PRASAD MANJU

Minister of Foreign Relations Dinesh Gunawardena said attempts by Opposition politicians and Non-Governmental Organisations to create a conflict between the Sri Lankan Government and Switzerland, in connection with the Swiss Embassy employee Garner Banister Francis, has failed and the two countries are maintaining a good relationship.

He said, the Acting Swiss Ambassador to Sri Lanka had met the Secretary of the Foreign Ministry after Francis was released on bail.

He said that as Francis is a Sri Lankan citizen, judicial actions will be taken under the criminal law prevalent in Sri Lanka, and this has been informed by him to Switzerland and that it has in turn been accepted by them and they also support these legal procedures.

Story Continued on PAGE 2

Excellent relations continue

The Embassy of Switzerland in Colombo stated that it regrets that certain recent developments have led to the Sri Lankan authorities' commitment to the due process being called into question and reaffirms that Switzerland, like Sri Lanka, is committed to upholding good governance and the rule of law.

Issuing a press release in this regard, they noted that in the last few weeks, the excellent bilateral relations was marred by misunderstandings surrounding an incident involving a local staff member of the Embassy, who was subsequently taken into custody by the Sri Lankan authorities.

In this context, uncorroborated facts made it into the public domain, putting an unnecessary strain on the otherwise cordial bilateral relationship, they further noted.

At no point during this time did Switzerland have the intention of tarnishing the image of the Government of Sri Lanka, the release pointed out.

Switzerland and Sri Lanka have maintained excellent relations for decades, and have engaged in substantial cooperation in a variety of fields, to the benefit of both countries and their...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

'Karu pressures NPC' NPC says no such meeting Karu says summoned NPC

The Secretary of the National Police Commission (NPC) N.D. Weerasingha has sent the following clarification regarding an article titled 'Karu exerts pressure on NPC' which was published in the *Ceylon Today* issue of yesterday (31).

The clarification is as follows:

'There is no truth of whatsoever to the details contained in the said article which alleged that Speaker Karu Jayasuriya had summoned NPC officers to his office on 27 December 2019 and had exerted pressure or influence on them in order to transfer certain officers who had been tasked with probing several high profile cases. The NPC can vouch for the fact that the Speaker...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

Four Air Force members killed in road accident

By RUDDHKA SAMARAWERA

Four Air Force members were killed in a road accident that took place near the Ranwala Junction in Warakapola yesterday (31).

An official of the Warakapola Police said, the accident occurred when a container truck and the three-wheeler the SLAF members were in collided head-on.

According to SLAF, the victims include one leading Aircraftman (LC) and three Sergeants attached to the Ratmalana Air Force Base and they are residents of the Kahalagaddiyala, Ballapana and Kosgama areas.

Story Continued on PAGE 2

Gammanpila queries Where was Karu when the 11 MPs were arrested?

By THAMMENAN RAZEK

Speaker Karu Jayasuriya, has issued a press release stating that the arrest of Parliamentarian Patel Chamugama Ratnasanka is a violation of parliamentary traditions, the law and parliamentary privileges. Where was he then when 11

MPs were arrested and harassed on the basis of personal agendas by the previous regime. Leader of the Pithuru Hele Urumaya (PHU), MP Udaya Gammampila, demanded to know. He questioned why the Speaker did not issue such statements then. Speaking to the media

yesterday (31), Gammampila noted that Jayasuriya is the first Speaker. In the country's parliamentary history, who was disgraced and labelled as a Speaker who was biased. He added that the Speaker was in no hurry to check on the 11 MPs that were arrested...

Story Continued on PAGE 2

Pr's New Year Message

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in his New Year message noted that the most valuable resource that we have as we enter a new decade, is the drive and motivation among young people to take an active part in developing the country.

"Sri Lanka enters the new decade in a context where a new generation has been entrusted to power by the people, with an overwhelming mandate. A new Government has also been formed. With this change, the

hope of a new Sri Lanka has galvanized and inspired the youth. The most important feature of this new trend is that young people have spontaneously come forward, without any Governmental intervention, to assume leadership over the task of building a new Sri Lanka. We have seen young people all over the country organizing themselves and clean the walls in public places and decorate them with attractive paintings. Similar groups of young people have

been experimenting with the cultivation and tending as well. All this is taking place through connections established via social media. We saw a similar trend among young people during the war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) where they never looked back until the LTTE was defeated and peace restored. It is my belief and expectation that the young people of today, who have been motivated and inspired to make a personal and direct

contribution to building a new Sri Lanka, will not stop until they have achieved their objective of a prosperous and well-governed country. We should make the third decade of the 21st Century, the Sri Lanka decade and be recognised as the decade in which Sri Lanka made its mark on the world. May 2020 and the new decade be a period in which all Sri Lankans realise their aspirations and the country achieves peace and prosperity," the statement further read.

UNP Leader's New Year message: "Continue on the democratic path"

United National Party Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe in his New Year message said that as citizens, we all have a responsibility to continue the democratic and positive path in the coming year.

Three years ago, we took over a country that was socially, economically and politically depleted. In the recent past, we have worked to bring about social, political and human development for the masses, to change the gloomy attitude of our country internationally, to create a positive atmosphere and to lay the foundation for economic stability through a sustainable development process," the statement read.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Former SP Chair remanded

He told the Court that alleged witness A was abducted and had been held before the country by Senarathna and that the ongoing probe was only a political probe but that the Attorney General had also been apprised of it as it is connected to crimes as well.

Peiris said that the first and second suspects had turned up in the said press briefing after having initially consented to a \$5 million bail. However, Senarathna had reduced it to two million and that sum had been paid to the first and second suspects by the suspect Mohamad.

He said that Mohamad had initially served as the SPC as a Managing Director in 2016 as before becoming its Head in January 2016.

He added that a probe is currently being conducted by the CID into how a Chairman of a State institution and an official of a foreign importing firm had gone to the extent of forking out cash to the first and second suspects in the case.

He also said that when the CID sleuths had gone to the Fairfield Gardens residence of suspect

Mohammad in Colombo 8 on 27 December 2015, the suspect had not been there. He further said that suspect Mohammad's wife had informed the CID that her husband had left their house on 21 December but that CID officers had discovered that the suspect had in fact fled his house on 27 December. Peiris said that Mohammad had surrendered to the CID after having witnessed Senarathna being enticed on bail on 30 December 2019 and with the sinister motive of changing the mindset of the judiciary. He then said that the prosecution has already obtained an order from the Court to prevent the suspect from fleeing the country.

The prosecution informed the Court that the suspect Mohammad had surrendered to the CID with the aim of obtaining an unfair forgiveness as if he had admitted himself to hospital and that this could be a means of importing funds to go to the best of his master who himself is currently hospitalised.

The prosecution makes further submissions said that the suspect Mohammad had owned two tea factories and a

computer parts manufacturing unit and that the CID was seeking to record a lengthy statement from him.

Peiris said that as the first and second suspects were planning to make confidential statements to the CID based on provisions contained in Section 127 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, they were opposed to enlarging the suspect on bail as it could scuttle the ongoing probe. Senarathna appearing for suspect Mohammad told the Court that the defence rejects allegations made by the prosecution that his client had acted with the aim of seeking forgiveness from the Police and to change the mindset of the Court. He also dismissed the charge made by the prosecution that suspect Mohammad had surrendered to the CID after Senarathna had been granted bail.

Senarathna said that his client had surrendered to the CID last morning, on instructions given by him and that the third suspect was the main figure of this ongoing drama. He then said that he was truly unaware as to whether his

client had actually forked out cash to the first and second suspects but that he was of the belief that his client had never resorted to such actions as had been alleged by the prosecution. Senarathna further said that the charges made against the first and second suspects were such that it would be impossible to further maintain such allegations in this case. He said that the charge filed against suspect Mohammad was primarily related to forking out cash and that if the Court could allow bail as per provisions contained in Section 14 of the Bail Act it would not adversely impact on the case and to therefore release him on bail under any condition.

Magistrate Perera said that a suitable timeframe will be needed to conduct initial investigations into the case. She added that if the suspect was to be enlarged on bail, it could be appointed as a condition that it concerns forking out cash to two other suspects and ordered that he be remanded till 6 January.

Further hearing was also put off to that date.

Excellent relations...

...populations. Both countries hope these relations greatly. The Embay's hopes for a swift return to an environment conducive to resuming the positive bilateral cooperation. Recognising that local staff is subject to local laws, the Embassy is convinced that both sides will remain attentive to the working conditions and the wellbeing of all staff of diplomatic missions.

Switzerland recalls that it is the responsibility of any Government to protect the diplomatic missions of other States on its territory. Attaching great importance to its relationship with Sri Lanka, committed to maintaining and to further strengthening these relations in a constructive manner, and convinced that both countries will together continue to build relations which are based on mutual respect, the Embassy of Switzerland in Colombo avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, the assurances of its highest consideration," the release concluded.

Attempts to...

He claimed that as the statements made by Francis were contradictory, he would not clearly understand that the statement made by her regarding the abduction is false.

He stated that he would be glad to hear a group of people were eager to gain political advantages from this incident by changing the story. Those expectations faded with the information that was revealed before the law.

Where was...

...during the tenure of the previous Government. According to a circular issued by the Inspector General of Police, in April 2019, the Speaker should have been informed after the arrest of an MP, and the procedure had been followed by the

Police in the arrest of Ranawaka. When Ranawaka was taken into custody at 6.57 p.m. on 18 December 2019, the Speaker was not in Sri Lanka and the Deputy Speaker had been informed about the arrest," he claimed.

Four Air...

They had been travelling in the three-wheeler after the arrest and were identified as in the ages of 39, 38, 37 and 28 years.

The truck driver had been arrested in connection with the accident and was due to be produced before the Warakapola Magistrate's Court yesterday.

NPC says....

...either on the aforesaid date or on any other date never summoned officers of the NPC and had never exerted pressure on them as had been alleged in that said article.

Further, the NPC would like to stress here that on 27 December 2019, during the entire day, media had been placed with NPC officials. The Deputy Speaker had informed the NPC and that the manner of the recent apprehension of Parliamentarian Chandiya Chamappa Ranawaka was not in keeping with the accepted Parliamentary traditions. Besides that, the NPC would like to clarify that the Speaker had not at all stage exerted any

kind of pressure on the NPC with regard to the transfer of Police officers, their appointment and promotions." Meanwhile, the Speaker's Office in a press release issued on 27 December 2019 acknowledging that the Speaker had summoned NPC officials to his office on 27 December 2019 however, categorically rejected the claim that the officers had been brought to bear upon the NPC officials. The Speaker's Office, issuing a clarification to the headlines carried in a few national newspapers yesterday, under the caption 'Karu exerts pressure on NPC', has claimed that the said news item is completely untrue and a total

fabrication of the truth. The Speaker's Office said that though the said news item had stated that the Speaker had summoned officers to the NPC to his office on 27 December 2019, under no circumstance had he resorted to the alleged actions. Therefore, the Speaker's Office has advised the publishers of said news item to verify the story from the officers of the NPC. Furthermore, the Speaker's Office further stated that an orchestrated campaign to tarnish the Speaker's image in the eyes of the public is currently being implemented by a few disgruntled politicians.

However, the Speaker's Office stressed and affirmed that Speaker Jayawartha's political journey could never be derailed by unsubstantiated news publishing fabrications and falsehoods making him a target in the eyes of the public. The Speaker's Office further added that Speaker Jayawartha had dedicated himself towards the setting up of independent commissions since 1990 and under no pressure or influence on officers attached to said commissions. **Editor's Note:** We continue to stand by the contents contained in the said news item.

APPLICATION FOR A LICENCE FROM THE REGISTRAR OF COMPANIES

Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of Section 34 (1) (a) of the Companies Act No. 7 of 2007, application has been made to the Registrar of Companies for a license directing that an Association to be formed under the name and style of 'SARAKUMBA CHARITABLE TRUST' is agreed with limited liability without the addition of the word 'limited' to its name.

- OBJECTS**
- The objects for which the Association is established are:-
- to guide the implementation of an action plan to establish a retirement savings and savings scheme in the past to harmonize the deteriorated mother Sri Lanka Community influenced by various cultural communities in the form of economic, political and religious views;
 - Organizing a charitable promotion program for school children and organizing activities to improve the quality of their education, organizing skills development programs for children, organizing educational tours, promoting school education and raising pre-school education;
 - Making the senior citizen's engagement in charitable activities, assisting them with their needs, investigation had been done; citizens who refer to the homes of the elderly, organize programmes;
 - Conducting maternity clinics in association with hospitals and organizing programs that show the importance of health. Primary and secondary Education will not be promoted or carried out in this institution.

A copy of the Articles of Association may be inspected at the office of 'SARAKUMBA CHARITABLE TRUST', No. 81, Dematagala Place, Dematagala, Colombo 09.

Any person or Corporation objecting to this application, may bring such objections before the Registrar of Companies within 21 days from this publication by a letter addressed to the Registrar of Companies, 'Sangam Madura', No. 400, D.R. Wijewardena Mawatha, Colombo 10.

PROMOTORS

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Sancorn Holding (Pvt) Ltd hereby gives notice to the public on incorporation under the Companies Act No. 7 of 2007.

Name of the Company: Sancorn Holding (Pvt) Ltd

Registered office: No.81, 271, Galle Road, Colombo 07.

Registration Number: PV/0218257

Gammanpila slams...

"According to the law, any arrested suspect should be either in Prison or in a hospital. It is a blot on the Government, Lanka Hospital is a State Hospital and the Commissioner General has never to transfer Senarathna to a State Hospital," he further said.

Committee to...

...after the Yahapalana Government came to power in 2015. In response, the Minister said that due attention and necessary action will be taken regard said issues. "Unqualified officers have been promoted merely on the basis of political needs," trade union members said, adding that such appointments to labour divisions of embassies were unfair to qualified persons. They also emphasised that this situation may cause the collapse of the foreign employment sector. They went on to say: "Several posts such as Assistant Managers and Administrative Officers had been given to certain people based on political needs. Those who faced these injustices taking legal action may persons had travelled abroad with the SLRFE. In addition, those who had obtained higher marks at interviews conducted to recruit officials for embassies had been neglected, while those who received low marks had been recommended for available vacancies." According to information received during the meeting, in 2014, 300,703 persons had travelled abroad for foreign job opportunities after being registered with the SLRFE; however, by 2018, the number plummeted to nearly 200,000. This is a decline of more than 100,000 registrations within four years. Among other irregularities discussed at the meeting were, renting vehicles through discount agencies, missing SLRFE funds for political activities, allowing over 3,500 women who had failed to provide family background reports to go abroad, introducing a foreign insurance scheme causing an outflow of money, changing existing laws and regulations regarding sending labourers to Qatar, giving vacancy orders to only a few foreign employment agencies and sending unskilled labourers abroad after conducting a two-day household training program at the Panipitiya Training Centre.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Hyena Super (Pvt) Ltd hereby gives notice to the public on incorporation under the Companies Act No. 7 of 2007.

Name of the Company: Hyena Super (Pvt) Ltd

Registered office: No. 638, Galle Road, Colombo 07.

Registration Number: PV/0218247

NOTICE OF ENROLLMENT

LABOUR DIVISIONS OF EMBASSIES ARE BEING PROMOTED TO POLITICAL NEEDS. UNQUALIFIED OFFICERS HAVE BEEN PROMOTED MERELY ON THE BASIS OF POLITICAL NEEDS. TRADE UNION MEMBERS SAID THAT SUCH APPOINTMENTS TO LABOUR DIVISIONS OF EMBASSIES WERE UNFAIR TO QUALIFIED PERSONS. THEY ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT

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Family members of involuntarily disappeared persons

Devananda assures: Will take grievances to President

By I SIVASANTHAN

Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Douglas Devananda assured family members of involuntarily disappeared persons that he will take immediate action to address their grievances.

The family members of involuntarily disappeared persons who staged a mass demonstration highlighting their plight in Kilinochchi on Monday (30) met Minister Devananda at his office in Jaffna yesterday (31).

The meeting between Devananda and family members of the disappeared persons

yesterday was very moving.

Devananda pledged to address their grievances by meeting President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and other relevant officials.

He also alleged that the TNA who is trusted by North and East constituents could have resolved their grievances when they were supporting the previous administration but chose to protect their political interests.

Instead of resolving the humanitarian issues as well as the basic needs of people affected by war, the TNA strove hard to protect its vested interests politically. They wanted the humanitarian issues in

the North and the East to persist for their political benefits, whereas I have been continuously emphasising the need to resolve problems of civilians affected by three decades of war in the North and the East. Since I experienced that same pain in my personal life, I can very well understand what the lilt and kin of disappeared persons are going through, Devananda said.

He also assured help representatives of the involuntarily disappeared persons, who have been protesting for the past few years, meet the President and promised to take necessary steps to resolve their issues.



German Embassy funds latrines

35 underprivileged families benefit



By PANETHYA AMERESKERE

The German Embassy in a statement last Monday (23 December) financially supported the construction of latrines for the underprivileged communities and hamlets in Kilinya, Trincomalee. The construction was executed by the Embassy's project partner the 'Serving Humanity Foundation'.

The civil war and tsunami 2004 had a negative impact on the economic development of communities in the east of Sri Lanka. Continuous displacement and economic hardship took its toll on most families and the need to have toilets didn't hold much importance to them. This resulted in most families going

without one as it was cheaper and much more economical to relieve oneself outdoors. However, the lack of appropriate sanitation means a lack of privacy, safety and hygiene and in some instances could prove to be dangerous.

The German Embassy regards the construction of sanitation facilities to improve the living conditions in rural areas an important task for hygienic and health reasons. Furthermore, the construction of latrines gives women the added security from unwanted views and advances of men.

The sanitation facilities were provided to 35 families. The construction of the latrines was completed in early 2019 and Ambassador Jorne Rohde visited the project recently.

Families conclude third year of protest

Families of involuntarily disappeared persons staged a demonstration in Kilinochchi on Monday (30) to mark the end of the third year (2019) of their protest. The families, accompanied by locals and politicians, walked from the Kilinochchi Kantharawamy temple carrying placards and portraits of their loved ones. They urged President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to address their grievances.



From North to South

March for Peace winds up at Kataragama

A peace march undertaken by two injured Armed Forces personnel from Nagadeepa Islet in the Jaffna Archipelago to Kataragama shrine in the country's south was concluded on last Saturday (28).

The two former Armed Forces personnel, Private (RD) J.B. Pyatissa of the Cagaba Regiment who is visually impaired and physically handicapped Navy's Petty Officer (Rtd) S.D.S. Kumara, commenced their march on 22 November. The former service men called it a long march for peace and prosperity in the country. Setting out from Nagadeepa, the duo travelled through Yakkalamudi, Anuradhapura, Dambulla,

Kandy, Sri Pada, Avesawella, Kalutara, Galle and Matara, reaching their final destination at Kataragama after 36 days on 28 December. Major General Loharajit Waduge, Commander, Security Forces Central, Major General A.L.P.S. Thilakaratna, General Officer Commanding 12 Division, Brigadier W.B.S.M. Abeysekera, Director Rehabilitations, senior officers, family of both the soldiers and a gathering of Security Forces personnel gave Pyatissa and Kumara a warm welcome at the completion of their long walk.

The march's conclusion was followed by religious ceremonies at Kiri Vehera peremas and at Kataragama temple.



(PA)

Troops clean up Pottuvil Beach

By OUR AMPARA CORRESPONDENT

On the initiative of Army Commander Lt. Gen. Shavendra Silva, the coastal area and beachfront adjoining Mahinda Maha Viharaya in Pottuvil was cleared by Army personnel with the support of Marine Environmental Protection Authority (MEPA) and local organisations.

Accordingly, troops attached to the Sinha Regiment led by Major A.M.M.P.K. Medagedera, along with Brigade Commander 242 - Komart Colonel T.C. Peries, participated in this beach cleanup.

The cleanup was conducted under the Waste Free Beach programme with the participation of a large number of volunteers



from local, sports clubs, civic organisations and fishing community. The cleanup covered up to Sinna Ulla; a local distance of 1km where waste such as used

plastic bottles and polythene bags. Furthermore, Major Medagedera urged locals to refrain from improperly disposing garbage, especially single use

plastics. "One should think that protecting the coastal areas will even protect the marine ecology," Senior Public Health Inspector M.S. Malik said.

Hydro and Wind Electricity

Go Under 50% for 1st Time in 25 Days

By PANETHYA AMERESKERE

Due to the weakening of the North-East monsoon, cheap and clean electricity, led by hydroelectricity and followed by wind electricity, together, fell under 50% of total electricity produced for the first time on 30 December (Monday), after 25 days, latest official data showed.

Clean electricity, hydro and wind together, however continued to be the number one supplier of electricity to the island for the 30th day to 29 December, having occupied that top position since 30 November with the onset of the NE Monsoons.

Meanwhile, hydroelectricity and wind electricity together have been

meeting over 50% of the island's electricity needs from 5-29 December of last year (2019).

Whereas total consumption of electricity on 30 December was 40.68 giga Watt hours (GWh), hydro and wind together supplied 46.01% (18.57GWh) of that electricity, followed by the dirty and more

expensive imported oil and coal at 37.91% (15.3GWh) and 16.08% (6.8GWh) respectively.

Hydroelectricity is led by the Mahaweli, built by a combination of grant aid and concessional aid, followed by Laxapana, built by a mix of Treasury funds and concessional World Bank aid, respectively. As at 30

December, Mahaweli met 24.69% (10.05 GWh) of Sri Lanka's total electricity needs and Laxapana, 13.58% (5.52GWh) respectively.

Electricity transmission and distribution are a monopoly of State-owned Ceylon Electricity Board and its subsidiary Lanka Electricity Company (Pvt.) Ltd., respectively.

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61,000 Female dogs spayed annually

Director of Veterinary Services L.D. Kithirani said that a total of three million dogs currently roam across the country. He made this comment after having participated in the national rabies eradication programme held at Ratnapura on 26 December. He further said that annually 61,000 female dogs are spayed by them and that a cost of 100 million had been incurred for this purpose.

Rape cases

Judicial reasoning should be value-added - Lawyer

By **RUVAN LACHATH JAYARDENA**

Attorney-at-Law Keshari Inesha Hettiaratchi, pointed out that judicial reasoning should be exercised in a value-added manner, and not from a subjective or personal point of view.

In an article titled 'Judicial discretion vs. mandatory sentencing in rape convictions and victims' rights in Sri Lanka', a critical analysis, published in the *Juror Bar Law Journal* (2019), she stated that since rape is a brutal crime, in preserving the rights of women, Courts should bear a greater responsibility while trying an accused on charges of rape.

"Sentencing Judges must deal with such cases with utmost sensitivity. It is apparent that the clash between the theories of judicial discretion and mandatory sentencing prevails. Minimum mandatory sentencing in a criminal justice system is accepted as a partial remedy in addressing this issue. It is true that judicial response to human rights cannot be blurred by legal bigotry. But justice should be dispensed not only to the offender, but also to the victim and the society proportionately."

Consumer items price hike

Explanations of Ministers unacceptable - Aberywardana

By **SAUNDARYA WELLABODA**

United National Front (UNF) Parliamentary Whip Aberywardana, recently made statements about the rise in prices of consumer items being increased is because of the inclement weather conditions, are false.

Speaking at a Media briefing held yesterday (31), Aberywardana stated certain Ministers introduced the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, established 15 independent commissions to guarantee the democratic nature of the country, and also made sure to adhere to the Standing Orders of Parliament.

Aberywardana said that by propping up Parliament, the Government has taken away the platform which the Opposition and other political parties had, to present and discuss their concerns and voice their opinions, and added that due to this reason, the Opposition is not able to present their ideas and concerns to the Government.

Meanwhile, UNF MP Sandith Samarasinghe questioned, as to how the Government is going to keep their promise on making sure that all students with qualifications to attend local universities, are given the opportunity to do so, when local universities at present are lacking in lectures and are overcrowded.

"When the previous Government was appointed, we increased the wages of Government employees by Rs 10,000, gave a special allowance to the elderly, and also allocated subsidies for pregnant mothers," he added. Samarasinghe alleged that even though a large number of people were affected by the recent inclement weather, the Government is yet to take any steps to make sure that such conditions do not cause the same damage in the future. He added the Government must take action to develop the areas that were affected by the recent weather conditions, and make sure that people in heavily affected areas are provided with aid.

Failure to forward account statements

Go to delist Parties

By **J.T.SILVA**

Steps will be taken to delist recognised political parties that did not hand over account statements to the Election Commission before the end of the year. It is reported that 20 out of

the 70 recognised political parties had not handed over these statements to the Election Commission thus far. Election Commission sources said that certain political parties had requested that the time given to hand over the account statements be

extended. The sources further added that the Election Commission will take steps to send final notices to political parties that have failed to hand over the statements by yesterday (31), and that political parties that ignore these notices will be delisted.

To conserve diesel SLTB devises scheme

By **PANETHA AMERASEKERA**

The Sri Lanka Transport Board (SLTB) has devised a scheme to conserve diesel fuel consumption for the New Year, the Transport, Power and Energy Ministry said yesterday (31).

It was found that with regard to the consumption of diesel by the SLTB, the wastage was as high as between 80-90 litres per a long distance bus run in respect of certain long distance buses, the Ministry said. The fault, in respect of high fuel consumption was not in regard to the condition of those buses, the SLTB audit had found out. The Ministry added. Consequently, 50 per cent of the SLTB's earnings are spent on paying its diesel bill.

The SLTB consumes 375,000 litres of diesel daily. Its daily earnings are between Rs 5-6 million. The SLTB, islandwide, flies 5,400 buses, which covers 102.2 million kilometers daily. These buses are managed by 107 depots. This diesel fuel consumption conservation scheme will be operated through the SLTB's 107 depots, it added.

Accordingly, Minister of Transport Management, Power and Energy, Mahinda Amerasekera has instructed the SLTB management to focus on fuel management in order to increase the SLTB revenue.

The Chairman of the SLTB, Kingsley Ranawaka, has informed Amerasekera over the new project introduced by the SLTB and it has been introduced as a Fuel Operating System which will provide technical advice to drivers on how to reduce the burning of fuel.



Park gets facelift

Acting under the instructions of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, steps have been taken to carry out daily maintenance work again in the Nawal Wetland Park. This is after a lapse of a couplet years when the park fell into neglect.

Dengue affected numbers drop in December

10,000 Cases less than November

By **DILANTHI JAYAWARNE**

Deputy Epidemiologist Dr. Samitha Gintuge urged the farming community and their assistants to assist in the battle against leptospirosis better known as rat fever by taking their weekly dose of Doxycycline either from the Medical Officer of Health or the Public Health Inspector (PHI) of the area. Addressing a media briefing at the Health Promotion Bureau on 30 December 2019, he said that there had been over 5,600 cases of rat fever this year while last year there had been 5,257 cases recorded by the Epidemiology Unit.

With the increasing tendency to cultivate barren paddy lands, people would be more open to the hazard of contacting rat fever. He observed that the use of pesticides and other lands were being used by the public as garbage dumps and as a result, the rat infestation in those parts also increased. A small abrasion or slight wound on human feet could cause the leptospirosis bacteria to enter the body. The high risk areas for the disease were Kegalle, Ratnapura, Matara, Galle, Colombo and Kalutara. In addition, there were children who play in the fields or those who enter such muddy areas during a picnic.

Dr. Gintuge said that many farmers were reluctant to take the weekly dose of Doxycycline in spite of the PHIs being willing to administer the medication at their doorstep.

Director of the Dengue Control Unit, Dr. Anura Jayasekera said that the number of dengue cases with the sero type III dengue virus had topped 98,000. The highest number of cases was recorded in the month of November when there were over 21,500 cases. Numbers dropped in December and as of 30 December 2019, there were over 12,000 cases recorded. The dengue death toll would according to the Unit's statistics was a few over 90, he said.

Jayasekera said that the Government health service had discussions with the Consumer Affairs Authority about the exorbitant fees charged by the private sector for dengue tests, namely the full blood count (FBC) and the NS1 (non-structural protein), and have decided to come up with a maximum price to be charged for both.

He said that the Unit would also initiate its pilot project with the Wolbachia bacteria in February 2020. It has been a success in several countries and hopefully Sri Lanka too would be able to control and battle the disease with it.

Treasure hunters busted

By **CHAMARA AMERASEKERA**

Seven suspects, including a Scene of Crime Officer (SOCO), Inspector of Tangalle, and a Navy soldier, who had gone treasure hunting in the Mahawakelenna area, were arrested by the Balangoda Police on 30 December 2019. The gang used a van.

Police said the soldier is attached to the Galle Dakshina Navy Camp. The suspects are residents of Gandara, Hunamgama, Puyala, Hunuwala and Opamawala, and a 71-year-old exorcist had also joined the gang. Some of the goods used for the treasure hunt were seized. The suspects were arrested, following a tip-off from villagers.

Emeritus Professor Mangala Illangasingha passes away

Emeritus Professor Mangala Illangasingha who was attached to the History Education Department of the Kelaniya University passed away recently. His funeral took place at the General Cemetery Kanatta (Borella) at 4 p.m. yesterday (31).

Second Provincial Photographic Exhibition

Governor of the Central Province, Lalith U. Gamage lights the traditional oil lamp at the opening of the Second Provincial Photographic Exhibition, to celebrate the 70th Chinese National Day. The event was held on 27 December at the Pushpadona Hall, P.S. Senanayake Street, Kandy. Deputy Head of Mission and Political Counsellor of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China Hu Wei and President of the SLCPA Ananda Goonatileke too are present.

Govt will assist apparel manufacture with natural products - Weerawansa



Minister of Small Medium Enterprise and Enterprise Development, Industries and Supply Management, Wimal Weerawansa said present Government was ready to give a helping hand to those engaged in manufacturing apparel items with natural products. He said the present Government will pay more attention to youth aid to all those who show prowess at turning out garments to natural products. Weerawansa was speaking at an event organised by the Sri Lanka Institute of Textile and Apparel in Colombo recently.

President to be requested

Disolve Parliament on 2 March

By NARIYA VAPPOOR

Minister of Tea Industry Development Ruchana Wijesekara said that they would request the President to dissolve the current Parliament on 2 March 2020 and hold the Parliamentary Election.

He said this yesterday (31) while he was expounding that a two-thirds majority is required to pass important decisions of the Government

especially to change many erroneous decisions made by the previous Government.

"We believe that the judiciary and the Police Department are impartial, however the way they react in certain cases is questionable. Even the act of Speaker Karu Jayasuriya when a certain former Minister was arrested is known to be biased. When the former Government took revenge on us by filing fake cases and arresting

us, many had to go through many injustices such as missing Parliament sessions and being arrested without adequate evidence where the Speaker did not even speak a word on our behalf," he said.

He further stated that though the previous Government gave first priority to its revenge agenda by appointing the Financial Crimes Investigation Division, this Government has no such intention.

CB Treasury Bonds scam in hold

Awaits Mahendran's return

By THAMERAN RAZEK

The investigations into the Central Bank Treasury Bonds scam will be on hold till former Central Bank Governor Arjuna Mahendran returns to Sri Lanka, claimed Parliamentarian Udaya Gammanpala.

Gammanpala highlighted this during a press briefing held at the Pivithura Hela Urumaya (PHU) Headquarters yesterday (31). He said that many critics of the Government for not probing the Treasury Bonds scam and the Easter Sunday attacks.

"Everyone should understand that such investigations take time. We were able to probe MP Patali Chamika Ranawaka's incident since the investigations were done," he added.

Gammanpala stressed that investigations such as the

Treasury Bonds scam should be conducted in a very delicate manner. He added that there is a lot of evidence and many suspects connected to the bond scam.

Meariwe, Gammanpala claimed that some decisions made by the Government about the Bonds scam are problematic and added that he will question them about it in Parliament.

About the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) development assistance grant he said "We will hand over documents and give evidence before the special committee that was appointed to comprehensively study the Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact. We as a Government are responsible to give enough reasons to the United States Government for not signing the Agreement."

Helped by rising food prices

Inflation hits 12-month high

By PANEETIKA AMERSEKERE

Colombo inflation increased by 0.4 percentage points to 4.8 per cent last month (December) over November (2019). Month on Month (MoM) and 12 month moving average hit 4.2 month high of 4.3%, with Year on Year (YoY) inflation in the Food Group increasing sharply by 1.7 percentage points over November 2019 to 6.3% and the Non Food Group by 0.1 percentage points to

4.3%, official data released yesterday (31) showed.

The hike in YoY inflation was aided by the increase in the prices of the two cheapest rice varieties in the market, namely the prices of red rice and white rice increasing by 25.86% (Rs 21.11) to Rs 102.75 and by 25.71% (Rs 21.37) to Rs 104.51 a kilo respectively as at end of the December.

Inflation was given a further boost by red onion prices increasing by 146.08% (Rs 285.38) to Rs 480.74 a kg, big

onion by 56.17% (Rs 27.24) to Rs 184.08 a kg, garlic by 50.97% (Rs 143.71) to Rs 399.37 a kg, dried chillies by 58.49% (Rs 185.19) to Rs 901.81 a kg on a 100g basis.

Additionally, the prices of a kg of carrots spiked by 28.49% (Rs 90.52) to Rs 268.19 a kg, beetroot by 43.89% (Rs 74.80) to Rs 245.40 a kg and coconut by 6.56% (Rs 3.31) to Rs 53.78 a nut, last month (December) over November (2019), the Census and Statistics Department said.

New Parliamentary session 3 January

The new Parliamentary session is scheduled to be held under the patronage of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on 3 January 2020.

President Rajapaksa is scheduled to chair the inaugural meeting at 10 a.m. and as provided by Article 33(2) of the Constitution on the duties, powers and functions of the President, the Statement of Government Policy will be delivered by the President.

This will be the fourth

session of the eighth Parliament. President Rajapaksa ended the term of Parliament issuing a special gauge notification on 2 December 2019.

The new Parliament will commence with the arrival of the invited members of Parliament which will be followed by the arrival of the Speaker of Parliament Karu Jayasuriya, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Jayasuriya and Secretary General of Parliament

Dhammika Dissanayake will do the honour of welcoming President Gotabaya Rajapaksa at the main staircase of the Parliament building followed by the hoisting of the national flag by the President. There will then be a 21 – gun salute, and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa will be accompanied to the house of Parliament by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms and the Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms.

(NVI)

Fmr Minister introduced middle man concept

Eggs to rise in prices

- Poultry farmers have no choice
- Traders create artificial shortage of feed

By DILANTHI JAYAMANNE

All the Ceylon Egg Producers Association (ACEPA) yesterday (31) warned that they would be forced to increase the price of an egg by Rs 1.50 if production costs were not reduced. The red egg now sells at Rs. 18 and the white at Rs 17.

ACEPA Secretary, Ratnaarati Alahakoon claimed that the warned that they would be at its highest, this year. A kilogram of corn sold at Rs 85 while a kilo of rice polish and soya was sold at Rs 55 and Rs 45, respectively. He said that this had been the price from the beginning of this year.

Alahakoon said that the country required 500,000 metric tons of corn, while the

local farmers can only provide 200,000 of it. The remaining 300,000 has to be imported. He said that the Ministry of Livestock Development gave permission for the importation of corn for animal feed and the majority of what was imported was provided to the poultry industry.

Earlier, the poultry farming associations, the feed mills and traders were themselves allowed to import their required quotas of corn. However, the former Minister P. Harrison of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development had handed over the task of importing animal feed to the National Food Promotion Board (NFPB). The NFPB is involved in promoting food for human consumption.

Alahakoon accused Harrison of having disrupted the whole process of importing animal feed. By transferring the process over to the NFPB, the poultry farmers were deprived of their rights to import animal feed and outside traders were permitted to invest creating the concept of the middle man and thereby incurring an unnecessary cost. The traders on the other hand in spite of having sufficient stocks, created an artificial shortage by issuing less corn to the market.

He said that unless the old system was reinstated and the middle man removed, poultry farmers would have no option but to increase the prices of eggs as they had no way to control the increasing price of animal feed.

Low-income Samurdhi earners get Relief package

By BUDDHIKA SAMARAWERA

The Government has planned to provide a relief package worth Rs 3,600 to the Samurdhi beneficiaries and families with low incomes.

Commenting on this, State Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Lakshman Yapa Abeywardena said that the programme would be launched soon. He also said that although the Opposition

Parliamentarians expressed various negative views on the aid relief provided by the Government, people would definitely get the benefits of it from this month onwards.

Addressing the media in Colombo yesterday (31), he also commented on the rising prices of vegetables and rice these days. He claimed that he would be introducing a package that prevailed for the past few months had occurred. Abeywardena further said that the Government could

not control such natural matters. People gave us power, not considering the prices of rice and vegetables. They are not strong enough to protect the country's economy and ensure national security. So our Government is implementing those things in a proper manner. We have about Rs 21 – gun salute, and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa will be accompanied to the house of Parliament by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms and the Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms.

Impact of 'bloody Easter Sunday'

Inemployment at 45-month high

Passes 400,000 mark

By PANEETIKA AMERSEKERE

The unemployment rate rose to a 45 month high of 4.9 per cent in the second quarter (2Q) which ended on 30 June of last year (2019). Due to the deleterious effects of 'bloody Easter Sunday' of 24 April 2019 which virtually crippled the economy, official data released yesterday (31) showed.

An unemployment number higher than this was last seen in the 3Q which ended on 30 September 2015, as a figure of 5% coinciding with floods that devastated a large part of the island, including Colombo, in September 2015.

This was also the first time in 45 months that the unemployment rate passed the 400,000 mark with a figure of 420,231 at the end of the 2Q of 2019. The last time prior to this that the unemployment rate passed the 400,000 mark was in the 3Q which ended on 30 September 2015 with a figure of 453,956.

Nonetheless, the economically active population, the 2Q which ended on 30 June 2019, over the 1Q which ended on 31 March 2019, increased to 8,623,249 from 8,582,753 up by 0.47% (40,496) and employment numbers in the same period was up by 0.24%

(20,048) to 8,203,018, aided by the Services Sector which added 39,731 jobs to take it up to 3,804,074 jobs in this Sector in the commensurate period.

However, the Agriculture Sector, 2Q of 2019 over the 1Q of 2018 lost 28,059 jobs to 1,990,892 while the Industry Sector, in the same period increased the number of jobs by 6,576 to 2,319,047 in the review period. Meanwhile, the labour force participation rate in the 2Q of 2019 over the 1Q of 2019 remained stagnant at 52.6%, meaning that persons, though unemployed, had yet not given up hope of finding a job.

T.N. Journoos booked for interviewing SL refugees

Two Tamil Nadu journalists have been booked for interviewing Sri Lankan refugees in a news story on their perspective on the CAA-NRC issue, India Today reported.

A reporter and a photojournalist from the Vikatan Group were booked under Indian Penal Code sections 188 (obedience to laws) and 153A (incitement to public servant), 447 (criminal trespass) and 506-11 (publishing material with an

intent to cause fear or alarm). The FIR claims the duo entered a refugee camp and interviewed the refugees to conduct a revolution against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

But, the Nagercoil Press Club said the two journalists spoke to the refugees only for the story and had no other intentions. It asked that the case against the refugees be withdrawn. The journalists have been booked under non-bailable charges, and the

police are trying to track them down. In Tamil Nadu, the issue of Sri Lankan refugees is part of the ongoing debate on the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the law which would grant citizenship to illegal immigrants (belonging to six non-Muslim minority religious groups from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan). Several opposition parties have demanded that Sri Lankan Tamils be included in the purview of the legislation.

(India Today)

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Walking Away From Yesterday

As we arrive at the end of an year and look apprehensively towards the tragedies that the new year will bring the world, bring us, our neighbours near and far, we fear the fact that as Russian President Vladimir Putin put it unflinchingly some time ago that "if there must be a fight, hit first".

While that might be the preferred voice of advice that politicians and others hear from the spirits within them, the horror of that optin lies first that it is the right unless a historical interrogation of the incident traces back to the original evil, the trigger that sparked death to not only a few miscreants perhaps, but to the world of peace and hope around them.

What works, that too being underscored by the word unadorned, is that one's sense of moral and civil rights and wrongs and of correctness can far too many times be determined by other facts. Are actions right or wrong on their own accord, or whether they stand established in a historical context or whether any supposed righteous coats on it a fake tinsel of truth?

Where do we stand at the end of this year? We are exactly at the precise point at which US and Russia, armed with a mammoth 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons, much of it disposable at the touch of a little cyber button, are poised to destroy each other into dust, within a mere 40 minutes of time, with their mutually destructive cyber-activated nuclear weapons. The rest of the world that lies within striking blow of those explosions will perish likewise. Few know the back of the fear are the hidden torments of a world encased in the man-created horrors or elements hidden behind the much vaunted climate crisis. Those weapons, because of cyber transmitters, a touch button on a mere phone-sized weapon, can send into array a vast number of nuclear weapons to simultaneously destroy multiple sites around the world manned by the US or Russia and their allies. No more are the people of the world assured in such a vicious network of utter destruction as that which accompanies these world leaders day and night. Even China, despite their vast war resources cannot dream up such cyber weapons too quickly. Arms sales now save economies, not consumer goods.

This is one of the reasons why men of knowledge and arrogance with a bloated sense of arrogant nationalism dare to challenge the world with words of failed peace while they cross out into other countries, to arm their armed civilian armies and take over neighbouring nations to state their law for hegemony. Nations of peace and democracy which have stood against their historical lusts for world power couch their words in the names of democratic peace.

The crisis is at such a awful pitch away from the threat of commission that we have stopped asking questions about, who's the contributor and who's the disrupter? Who's the villain and who's the culprit? The freedom lover is asked for being identified as the culprit and the aggressor dines within silence. We sell out nations and our shreds of vestige to them welcoming the criminal with tragically deceived opinions. The interlopers around the world have their dialogues words perfect, with huge scale corruption and bribery awash in the world's political citizenry. We ask it, is any different in Sri Lanka? If we do not have the answer to that question, it's something we should be examined very quickly because even now the axe has been laid and the results will be too drastic for future generations.

And we ask "So what's new in Sri Lanka? What's new in this or that country whose Governments have been under an apparently kindly foreign interference?" The answer is plain. It's the power from abroad that determines a Government's decisions and actions that is its master.

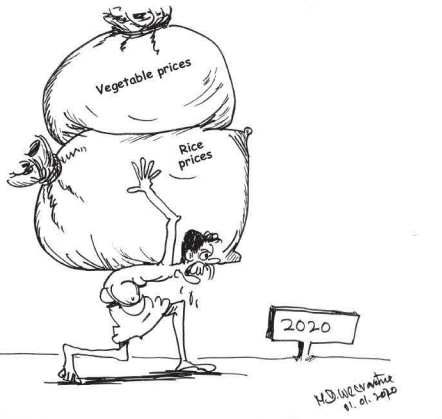
World leaders ask "What are the prospects for peace?" They have no answer. It's all conched in words of defence or negation.

We had Mikhail Gorbachev, after introducing Russia, the Soviet Union, to the winds of democracy, democracy and human rights, the torches of peace and freedom, or dignity, of humanity, have ceased to exist. They have been replaced with poor choices. The world struggles on into the new millennium, not with fears of what one's nuclear armed opponent can...and we might do.

In this globe, we have the millions of businessmen, politicians, professors, teachers, clergy, academics, intellectuals etc, continuing to dream their impossible dreams, as if as the world was lit, to dare to follow their dreams, or visions for peace.

Here in Sri Lanka, the pages of this newspaper and the world will tell you just as far as they are concerned in that direction. Hopes of yesterday have vanished with the dusk's desire to bring along yet another strange set of newspapers with the same old news, same hatreds and denunciations, of evils and punishments, of the evil striding over others in their games of egotistical pride.

But, for now, our homes and much of our social gatherings remain hives of peace. May that peace struggle progress in so far as they be distanced from the hands of the usurpers as 2020 draws night!



A symptom of fragile anti-US alliances Russia accuses China of technology theft

By Dr. JANAK M. DORSEY

Chinese Russian military and geopolitical cooperation is flourishing - for now.

If, however, the weapons industry is anything to go by, a fraying at the edges of close ties between the two Asian powers may be in the horizon. To be sure, Russia remains by far China's foremost arms supplier even if China has no scruples about stealing Russian military technology, much like it allegedly does in the West.

So far, Russia, with a weak economy desperately in need of the revenues of weapons sales that undergird Moscow's geopolitical heft, has been willing to look the other way.

The question is for how long. By the same token, it's a question that also applies to various other opportunistic alliances such as relationships between Russia, Turkey and Iran that are driven by short-term interests, first and foremost a desire to institutionalise a multi-polar world in which US power would be counterbalanced by others.

Pragmatic approaches These alliances, adopting pragmatic approaches, have so far worked by focussing on immediate interests while carefully managing significant differences.

Those differences, nonetheless, surface regularly. Recently, alleged Chinese intellectual property theft as well as diametrically opposed Turkish, Russian and Iranian policies towards conflicts in Syria and/or Libya that have figured prominently in media reports.

Russian State defence conglomerate Rostec this month, in a rare public display of friction that echoed long-standing US allegations of Chinese technology theft, accused China of illegally copying Russian military hardware and weapons.

"Unauthorised copying of our equipment abroad is a huge problem. There have been 500 such cases over the past 17 years. China alone has copied 200 Russian engines, Su-35 fighter jets, air defence systems, portable air defence missiles, and analogues of the advanced medium-range surface-to-air systems," said Yevgeny Lavrsky, Rostec's chief of intellectual property protection. Lavrsky appeared to be referring among other things to



alleged Chinese intellectual property theft after Russia sold to China in 2015 six S-400 anti-aircraft systems and 24 Su-35 fighter jets for US\$8 billion. China is thought to have benefited from Russian technology when it in 2017 rolled out its fifth generation Chengdu J-20 fighter that is believed to be technologically superior to Russia's Su-57. Similarly, China is suspected of having based its J-11 fighter jet and HQ-9 surface-to-air missiles on Russia's Su-27 fighter jets and S-300 missile systems purchased in the 1990s.

Chinese technology theft is unlikely to persuade Russia any time soon to forego the strategic advantages of its geopolitical cooperation with China. But with China's defence industry significantly improving its technological capabilities, Russia needs to ensure that it remains crucial to the People's Republic's military development for economic reasons as well as in a bid to maintain a balance in an alliance that is based on pursuing short-term common interests while kicking potential friction points down the road.

When it comes to arms, Russia is pressuring China to engage in technology exchange while seeking to maintain a technological edge.

Technological advantage

Russia last week sought to press its technological advantage by announcing that its new Avangard hypersonic intercontinental glide vehicle that can fly 27 times the speed of sound had become operational. Positioning Russia as the first

In geopolitical terms, the Avangard may give Russia a first-starter advantage but at best is yet another band aid to work around the fragility of the Russian-Chinese alliance, but also alliances like that of Turkey with Russia and with Iran

country to have hypersonic weapons, the Avangard is a limited step an intercontinental ballistic missile, but unlike a regular missile warhead that follows a predictable path after separation it can make sharp manoeuvres in the atmosphere en route to target, making it much harder to intercept. In geopolitical terms, the Avangard may give Russia a first-starter advantage but at best is yet another band aid to work around the fragility of not only the Russian-Chinese alliance, but also alliances like that of Turkey with Russia and with Iran.

Syria and Libya. Turkey has criticised the ongoing Syrian-Russian assault on Idlib, the last Syrian rebel stronghold, and called for an immediate ceasefire.

Turkey and Russia are also at odds when it comes to Russian interference in Ukraine, the exploitation of natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict in the Caucasus or Nagorno-Karabakh and they compete for influence in the Balkans and Central Asia.

In Libya, Russia supports rebel Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar while Turkey has responded positively to a request by the United Nations-recognised Government headed by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj for military assistance.

"We believe that foreign interference will hardly help," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in response to reports that Turkey would deploy its navy to protect the Libyan capital of Tripoli, the seat of Al Sarraj's Government which has been under attack by Haftar's Russia, Egyptian, United Arab Emirates and French-backed forces for the past eight months.

Peskov conveniently ignored the presence of hundreds of Russian mercenaries and snipers that are supporting Haftar's insurgents.

To be sure, Turkey and Russia's alliances tap into long-standing anti-Western, civilisationalist ideologies adopted by men like Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Vladimir Putin who envision a Turkish and a Russian world that are spheres of influence.

In discussing the fragility of the Turkey-Russia alliance, scholars Gonal Topal and Omer Taspinar could be varying degrees here just as we are when talking about relationships between Russia and China, Russia and Iran or Turkey and Iran.

"Moscow and Ankara disagree on almost all issues of regional and strategic significance. In other words, a Eurasianist Turkey is very well served by frustrated with both Washington and Brussels, but its military arrangements with Moscow does not automatically translate into harmony based on shared national interests in relations with Russia," the two scholars wrote. (www.modernintl.com)

U.S.-SL SOFA Agreement

Don't anticipate the outcome by Sri Lanka

By Dr. C.G. ILANGAKON

There is an ongoing huge debate on the US-Sri Lanka SOFA Agreement. It has exploded into such an altitude that several political and even religious corridors have already begun to cast aspersions on the content of the SOFA. The agreement already signed or yet to be formulated, signed and ratified. Besides, there was the bomb blast of Islam terrorists, killing hundreds and hundreds of innocent God-worshippers in the Christian churches and injuring over 500 civilians. Heartburning talk of scorching firestorm is also getting disseminated in the land, on the unparitetic releasing and granting of 200,000 acres of the motherland to a superpower. US Ambassador Alaina Tepitz rushed to meet the Buddhist Chief Incumbents in Kandy, and give assurances that the SOFA to be signed is not inimical to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka. India and China are advancing in their military might and economic growth. The geopolitics of South and South East Asia has erupted like a volcano. In such a critical concentration of circumstances, the present writer feels to be well deemed and absolutely advising to assemble a couple of impact aspects to dispel the panic being created by some vested interest. The most crucial component in disentangling the SOFA is the demand that everything is not lost, and the devil being depicted is possible to be tamed, rather than being discarded. The demon-disciplining agenda are jurisprudential wisdom, political pragmatism, efficiency of perseverance, exactitude of well-identified country profiling objectives, and finally, professionalism.

Yet, the chaotic higgledy-piggledy might and could be an unequivocal possibility. In what circumstances? In the historical backdrop, the motherland is not taken into serious consideration. (2) If the sovereignty of the country is disregarded. (3) If the empirical operation of the presently existing jurisdiction of the receiving partner is paralysed. (4) If the country's Constitution is superseded by the constitutional norms of the foreign force-sending country. (5) If a high-ranking officer of the alien forces can reject the elements of the juridical process of the receiving partner. (6) If the granted territory to be operative is

legally converted into a subject of International Law. (7) If the mutually agreed upon legal norms of SOFA, delegate the operative territory of the foreign forces, the status of an embassy. (8) If a criminalised act of a member of the occupying forces cannot be subjected to the criminal jurisdiction of the receiving partner. (9) If the enshrined territory or a part thereof, is converted into a military base of the sending country. (10) If the SOFA circuitously permit foreign forces and their top-ranking officers for the devious interference into internal affairs of the receiving partner. (11) If the SOFA contributes the foreign forces to create tension among the living minorities of the receiving country and then. (12) Appear as a compassionate divine messiah and mitigate the artificially created tension where there was no tension at all etc., and many more, the SOFA can become a very dangerous issue.

DLPP triad

Nevertheless, the dangers dispelling scope is available. For the beautiful spectrum to be available, what must be constituted is the DLPP triad. To be more exact, diplomats, legal luminaries and the politicians. Most pivotal component of this crucial subject is that the DLPP triad must have a precise agenda and a plan of discerning exactitude. Such agenda should be a compassionate divine structured and efficiently orchestrated in order to pragmatically address the public interest. The public cannot take part in this complicated treaty conclusion process directly. The job is done by the representatives, democratically elected by the people and by the members of the public servants personnel, whose salaries and emoluments are paid from the funds of the public coffers-exchequer. Hence, it is the duty and responsibility of the DLPP triad to efficiently coordinate and work hard for the final positive result, which would conduce the march of the land into peace and economic prosperity.

SOFA operation duration

Herein, it is very central to note the pragmatism of the duration of the legal and existential validity of the Status of Force Agreement (SOFA). For the most part, long operative SOFA durations are very dangerous, since, the rectification of mistakes, correction of flawed commissions, and



US Ambassador Alaina B. Tepitz

the commission of omissions become not only improbable, but also impossible. Why? Once a text on a precise content is agreed upon and signed, to renegotiate, amend and rescind same shall be a very difficult task of ceaseless irritation, particularly, should one party is to lose the benefits and profits, the agreement in question would grant. The issue would further get aggravated, when it is a nexus with global geopolitics. On the other hand, decision-making lawmakers are elected by the people, as a rule for 5 or 6 years. They have no legal or moral rights to convey the land ownership more than the period, they are elected and appointed for. If any constitutional norm or any other normative context empowers the politicians to stagger beyond the prescribed duration, that would be tantamount to infraction of law and transgression of the right of the people. Voting and passing in the Parliament and the ratification of an act by the Legislature would not grant it validity, if the said ratified act is in violation of the constitution.

Thus, as a maximum, SOFA empirical operational duration should be limited to the duration, to the end of which Parliamentarians are elected and it should not exceed that five, six-year limit. There is no complication here, since renewal is possible.

What is SOFA?

Many do not know or are only superficially aware, that there is going to be a SOFA with the US. Those who know it, do not understand what it is, the contents of it and the context of the essence of it. Generally, people come to know of SOFA from poor scattered statements, made by politicians in the Media. Therefore, the present writer, as an International Treaty Lawyer, decided to impart a reasonable extent of general knowledge, constituting SOFA, in simplified English.

The source, from which the SOFA stems, is the United States of America. The SOFA, first of all, is an agreement of global nature. Being many in number and signed with various countries, the SOFAs are classified into bilateral and bilateral international instruments. They, as any other international treaties, regulate relations between two or more countries. The object of the relationship regulation is the Status of the Forces of the United States of America with their presence in a foreign country. Taking Sri Lanka as the example, the said relationship regulation signifies the empirical application of the two legal systems of Sri Lanka and the United States, in relation to the recognition and operation of the framework of US military personnel in Sri Lanka and particularly, the degree of the possibility and capacity of the legal norms of Sri Lankan jurisdiction to address the issues, arising out of the pragmatic operation of US forces on Sri Lankan soil.

There are no set standard requirements, which facilitate the form, content, length or the title of SOFA. A SOFA can be concluded for a specific purpose or activity, or it may wish for a long-term relationship basis, or be directed towards a maximum possible flexibility and applicability.

Generally, a SOFA is an agreed upon stand-alone document, guided by an executive nature. The provisions, contained in a SOFA are many, yet central among them is: Can the receiving country, in our case, Sri Lanka, exercise its criminal jurisdiction over US personnel (the sending country)? This does not mean that SOFAs are constrained only by the application or non-application of criminal jurisdiction. There are also other domains, such as uniforms wearing, taxes and fees payment, weapons carrying, use of radio

frequencies, licenses and custom regulations prescribed to be regulated by SOFA.

Other types of military agreements are not excluded from SOFA. It can comprise a part of a comprehensive security arrangement with a particular country. Yet, a SOFA cannot be a security agreement. It only encourages and establishes the rights and the privileges of US personnel perched in an alien land in support of the larger defence arrangement. Apart from being an executive agreement, the power to enter into a SOFA can be derived from an already existing treaty and from congressional actions.

The absence of a SOFA, would not imply that the relations in respect of the status of the US forces, are not addressed and unregulated. There are non-SOFA treaties, enshrined with SOFA norms of relationship regulation. They execute that task. Thus, the SOFA is not an absolute must. It is interesting to note that the termination of the validity of SOFA is a risk possessed mutually by both parties. It is a matter of the will of each. SOFA is a peacetime contract. They cannot retain rules of war, laws of armed conflict or laws of the sea, if an armed conflict transpires between the two SOFA parties, the contract deems no longer applicable. The context of personnel to be regulated by SOFA can be articulated as: US Armed Forces personnel, civilian employees of the Department of Defence and/or contractors, working for the Department of Defence. The applicability scope of SOFA is defined and determined in each and every agreement mutually between the personnel sender and the receiver. The practice shows that in the process of SOFA treaty conclusions, the US maintains its own jurisdiction over the US personnel. Yet, the shared jurisdiction with the receiving country is not an impossibility. The leaders of lands, filled with the love for their motherland may make use of this wonderful space of opportunity, to protect and preserve their dignity and sovereignty. A SOFA is not a mutual defence agreement or a security agreement. The existence of a SOFA does not affect or diminish the parties' inherent right of self-defence under the law of war.

To be continued...

About the writer:
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In Southern Indian town

Women are for the New Year art

By Roli Shrivastava

Sithara Shahwanas is torn between wearing a gown or a party dress in a vibrant colour when she attends the first all-night New Year Eve party for women, in her hometown in Southern India. The Local Government at Perinthalmanna, a small municipality with about 60,000 people in the State of Kerala, is holding week-long New Year celebrations exclusively for women for the first time as a 'women's empowerment' exercise. The events, aimed to ensure that women are more included in cultural and business activities, will culminate with an all-night party on 31 December, that officials and local community members expected will draw over 2,000 women.

Only boys celebrated New Year until now. The Christmas to New Year period was meant for them to party', Shahwanas, 23, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by email from Perinthalmanna. 'This is the first time I will be with my friends. I am looking forward to seeing women fulfil their desire without any fear or discomfort. We are all very excited.'

them to organise a New Year celebration during some of their women's empowerment events a few weeks ago in Perinthalmanna. Such norms and regulations often restrict women's movements after sunset in many parts of India. In major Indian cities, Police have announced measures - from mobile apps that can track a woman's movement, help lines and street patrolling - to keep women safe on New Year's Eve.

'They are not making it to the society's mainstream and face stigma with it. This event is for the social empowerment', Avani said. (Thomson Reuters Foundation)



People release balloons as they celebrate the New Year's countdown event on a road in Ahmedabad, India (Reuters)



Wimal Weerawansa



Ven Udawa Dhammaloka Thera



Ven Akmeemana Dayarathana Thera



Tiran Alles



Udaya Gammangila



Nimal Rajapaksa



Janaka Bandara Thero



Mahindananda Aluthgamage

Have Yahapala

It is doubtful whether members of the former government, who are currently in the opposition, remember how the Yahapala Government filed cases against and jailed the members of the Maha Sangha, rival politicians and public employees in a very oppressive manner for political reasons. This is how the Ceylon Today camera lens captured the manner in which they were jailed for various allegations; The Maha Sangha was targeted for various reasons, politicians for being members of rival Parties, and public employees for implementing the decisions of the former Government.



Jayantha Samarawera



Mohammed Mozammel



D.V. Chanaka



Prasanna Ranawera



Premalal Jayasekara



Dr Nihal Jayathilake



Ven Magalkande Sodaththa Thera



Ven Iththekande Saddhathissa Thera



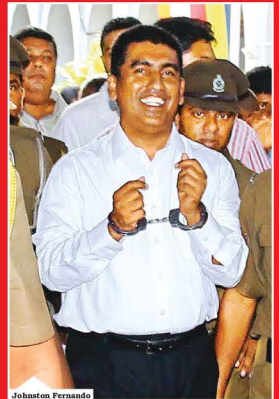
Dasil Rajapaksa



Rishali Weerewansa



Duminda Silva



Johnston Fernando

those in the ana Government forgotten how they jailed rivals?



Yoshika Rajapaksa



Lalith Weerathunga and Anusha Palpitta



Gemini Senarath and Piyadasa Kudabalgala



Commodore D.K.P. Dassanayake



Major General Anai Karunasekera



Admiral Ravindra Wijegunaratne



Dr. Nalaka Godabawa

Baghdad, Iraq
Following air strikes

Protesters outside U.S. Baghdad Embassy rage

Thousands of protesters and militia fighters gathered on Tuesday outside the main gate of the US Embassy compound in Baghdad, to condemn air strikes on bases belonging to an Iranian-backed militia in Iraq.

US Forces carried out air strikes on Tuesday in the Kutbah Hezbollah militia in response to the killing of a US civilian contractor in a rocket attack on an Iraqi military base.

The strikes risk drawing Iraq further into a proxy conflict between the United States and Iran, at a time when it is being rocked by mass protests against the political system.

Some protesters threw stones at the gate, while others chanted, "No, no, America... No, no, Trump!" Iraqi Special Forces were deployed around the main gate to prevent them from entering the Embassy.

Qais al-Khazali, leader of the Iranian-backed Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia, and many other senior militia leaders were among the protesters. Kataba Hezbollah flags were hung on the fence surrounding the building.



Protesters and militia fighters gather to condemn air strikes on bases belonging to Hashd al-Shabahi (paramilitary forces), outside the main gate of the US Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq (Reuters)

Iraqis are taking to the streets in their thousands almost daily to condemn among other things, militias such as Kataib Hezbollah and their Iranian partners that support Iraq

Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi's Government. Abdul Mahdi condemned the strikes, which killed at least 25 fighters and wounded 55.

The huge bushfires have destroyed more than 4 million hectares (10 million acres), with new blazes sparked into life almost daily by extremely hot and windy conditions in bushland left tinder dry after a three-year drought.

Melbourne, Australia
Dangerous bushfires

Thousands trapped on Australian beaches



A crowd of people at the beach evacuate from the bushfires at Batemans Bay, Australia (Reuters)

Thousands swarmed to beaches on Australia's East Coast on Tuesday, to escape fierce wildfires breaking down on several seaside towns, as the Government reacted.

Naval vessels and military helicopters are aid firefighting and evacuations. Government officials called for Australian military support and assistance from US and Canadian fire crews, as authorities confirmed that 11 of the 12 total deaths in wildfires since the beginning of October.

Fuelled by searing temperatures and high winds, more than 200 fires are now burning across the southern States of New South Wales and Victoria, threatening several towns and snapping their power.

mode and internet links. This is absolutely one of the worst fire seasons we've seen," Shane Fitzsimmons, commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service, told a briefing in Sydney. Helicopters are aid firefighting and evacuations. Government officials called for Australian military support and assistance from US and Canadian fire crews, as authorities confirmed that 11 of the 12 total deaths in wildfires since the beginning of October.

Some of those trapped in the town of Malleoona in Victoria headed to the waterfront after the main road was cut off. Those who could not make it there scrambled for shelter in a grassy area and other public buildings, as emergency siren wailed.

Some of those trapped in the town posted images of blood-red, smoke-filled skies on social media. One beachfront photograph showed people lying shelter-to-shoulder on the sand, some wearing gas masks. (Reuters)

London, United Kingdom

Greta Thunberg says

'I wouldn't have wasted my time on Trump'

Teenage climate change activist Greta Thunberg, said on Monday, that talking to US President Donald Trump at a United Nations global warming would have been a waste of time, since he would not have paid any attention.

In an interview with BBC's Today programme, for which she was the Guest Editor

Sweden's environmental activist Greta Thunberg speaks at a climate change rally in Charlotte, North Carolina, US (Reuters)



Sweden's environmental activist Greta Thunberg speaks at a climate change rally in Charlotte, North Carolina, US (Reuters)

wouldn't have wasted my time," she said.

This month Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro called Thunberg "a bait". Trump has said on Twitter she needs to work on her anger management problem.

"Those attacks are just funny because they obviously don't mean anything," she said. "I guess of course it means something - they are terrified of young people bringing change which they don't want - but that is just proof that we are actually doing something, and that they see us as some kind of threat."

(Reuters)

Leipzig, Germany

Researcher says

CIA devised way to restrict missiles launched to restrict missiles given to allies

The US Central Intelligence Agency has devised technology to restrict the use of anti-aircraft missiles after they leave American hands, a researcher said, a move that experts say could persuade the United States that it would be safe to disseminate powerful weapons more frequently.

The new technology is intended for use with shoulder-fired missiles called Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS), Dutch researcher Jos Wetzels told a cybersecurity conference here in Leipzig, Germany on Saturday. Wetzels said the system was laid out in a batch of CIA documents published by WikiLeaks in 2017, but that the files were mislabelled and attracted little attention until now.

Wetzels said the CIA had come up with a "smart arms control solution" that would restrict the use of missiles "to a particular time and a particular place." The technique, referred to as "generating," blocks the use of a device outside a

specific geographic area. Weapons that are disabled when they leave the battlefield could be an attractive feature. Supplied to US allies, the highly portable missiles can help win wars, but they have often been sold, or passed to extremists.

For example, Stinger MANPADS supplied by the United States are credited with helping mujahideen rebels drive Soviet forces out of Afghanistan, in a conflict that spanned the 1980s and 1990s. But US officials have since spent billions of dollars here to clear the missiles from the country - and from other conflict zones around the world.

Wetzels said it was unclear whether the CIA's design ever left the drawing board or where it was meant to have been deployed, but he noted that the apparent period of development in the documents' metadata - 2014 to 2015 - roughly coincided with media reports about the deployment of MANPADS to rebels in Syria. (Reuters)



A MANPADS (Man-Portable Air-Defence System) missile is detonated above the ship Beluga in the Pirat Bay, east of the Libyan capital Tripoli (Reuters)

Berlin, Germany

Merkel says

'I'm using all my strength to fight climate change'

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in her New Year's message she is fighting climate change with all her strength, to enable future generations to live in peace and prosperity.

"Global warming is real. It is threatening," Merkel said in the recorded speech which will be broadcasted on Tuesday evening. Rising world temperatures and the problems created by global warming are all man-made, Merkel added.

"So we have to do everything humanly possible to overcome this human challenge. It is still possible," Merkel said. "At 65, I am at an age at which I personally will no longer experience all the consequences of climate change for what I believe in for politicians do not act," the Chancellor said. "It will be our children and



German Chancellor Angela Merkel gives a New Year's speech at the Chancellery in Berlin, Germany (Reuters)

grandchildren who have to live with the consequences of what we do or refrain from doing today. That is why I will use all my strength to ensure that Germany makes its contribution to ecological, economically, socially - to getting climate change under control." (Reuters)

Warsaw, Poland

Power prices for households

Poland plans to offset hikes

Poland is working on legislation that will ease the burden on consumers of the rising cost of electricity, Minister of State Assets Jacek Sasin said on Tuesday.

The country's energy regulator URE has allowed State-run power companies Energa and PGE to hike prices in 2020, it said on Monday, following its approval for rival Tauron too.

New power prices have not yet been approved for Poland's biggest energy group, State-run PGE. The ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS) promised last year that households would not be hit by increases despite rising carbon emission costs and



The ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS) promised last year that households would not be hit by increases (ET Energy)

surging wholesale power prices. Mateusz Morawiecki's Government was ready to launch a scheme to offset the impact on households. (Reuters)

Johannesburg, South Africa

Corruption allegations

Angola freezes assets of ex-President's daughter

An Angolan Court has ordered the freezing of assets held by former President Eduardo dos Santos' daughter Isabel. State news agency ANGOP reported on Tuesday, the latest high-profile case in the Government's anti-corruption drive.

The asset freeze follows an injunction application by the State, which is seeking to recover around US\$ 1 billion of funds it believes are owed to it by Isabel dos Santos and her business associates. Isabel dos Santos has repeatedly denied wrongdoing.

She wrote on Twitter late on Monday: "I would like to leave a message of tranquility and confidence to my teams. We will continue, everyday, in every business, doing our best and fighting for what I believe in for Angola. The road is long, the truth will prevail. United we stand stronger." Ranked in Africa's wealthiest woman by Forbes, she chaired State oil company Sonangol before being sacked in late 2017 by President Joao Lourenco, who has since launched a crackdown on corruption. (Reuters)



Isabel dos Santos, the daughter of Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, speaks during an interview in Luanda, Angola (Reuters)

Exclusive Honours Hamilton



Lewis Hamilton

Lewis Hamilton's absence from Britain's New Year's honours list has angered his Formula One fans and triggered fresh debate about the sport's status and whether the six-times world champion is sufficiently appreciated at home.

The 34-year-old Mercedes driver has come from an under-privileged multi-racial background to become an all-time great, and team boss Toto Wolff has long felt the Briton deserves greater recognition from his compatriots.

December will not have made the Austrian think any differently.

World Cup-winning cricketer Ben Stokes was 2019 BBC Sports Personality of the Year, after Tour de France winning cyclist Geraint Thomas in 2018, and also won the Sports Journalists' Association Awards.

Hamilton, who won the BBC award in

2014, was European Sportserson of the Year - beating tennis number one Rafael Nadal and Austrian Alpine skier Marco Hirscher in a vote of 27 of the continent's news agencies.

England's cricketers also led the sporting honours list, with World Cup captain Eoin Morgan made CBE and Stokes OBE - a higher award than the MBE Hamilton received in 2008.

Double Olympic judo gold medalist Jade Jones, now OBE, also ranks higher than Hamilton.

Those who question Formula One's credentials as a sport, given the fear of the car in making the start, or its carbon footprint might have no problem with that.

Hamilton's Monaco residency, and his tax arrangements, also crop up frequently as likely negative factors in social media debate about him.

"I fear motorsport is regarded as a privileged sport. It may even be considered an anti-social sport by many," commented 1996 world champion Damon Hill, who has an OBE, on Twitter.

"That said, I think they are wrong and missing the contribution I'll give Hamilton and the sport has made for GB. It's globally over many years."

Most of the 10 teams are based in Britain, and the country's race at Silverstone is the best attended of any on the calendar, but Formula One's audience is mainly on pay TV.

While Britain has produced more F1 champions than any other country, only triple title holder Jackie Stewart has been knighted - nearly 30 years after retirement.

Stirling Moss, the Nation's only other racing knight, had to wait until he was 70.

Hamilton's fans can point to a lack of consistency with Wimbledon tennis champion Andy Murray, Olympic athlete Mo Farah, Tour de France winner Bradley Wiggins and cricketer Alastair Cook all knighted while still active.

Hamilton may be less concerned, however.

"I don't really like to think too much about it," he said in November. "Just the fact that people have mentioned it is already an honour, but it's not been something that I've been chasing in my life."

(Reuters)

Booker, Suns shoot past Trail Blazers

Devin Booker registered 33 points, seven assists and six rebounds to help the Phoenix Suns rally to a 122-116 road victory over the Portland Trail Blazers on Monday night.

Kelly Oubre Jr. made a career-best seven 3-pointers while scoring 29 points as the Suns snapped an 11-game losing streak to the Trail Blazers. Phoenix trailed by 19 after one quarter but outscored the Trail Blazers 39-27 in the decisive fourth quarter.

Ricky Rubio recorded 18 points and 13 assists, Mikal Bridges scored 13 points and Aron Baynes added 12 points and nine rebounds for the Suns, who have won two in a row after an eight-game losing streak. Deandre Ayton had 20 points and 12 rebounds on 26 minutes off the bench after missing the previous five games due to an ankle injury.

Damian Lillard had 33 points and seven assists, and CJ McCollum contributed 25 points and six assists for Portland, which lost its fourth straight game.

Hassan Whiteside recorded 16 points, 22 rebounds and three blocked shots for the Trail Blazers.

Bench players Arnette Simons and Gary Trent Jr. scored 12 and 11 points, respectively, for Portland. Veterans Carmelo Anthony shot 4 of 16 from scoring 10 points for the Trail Blazers, who hit 45.8 percent from the field and were 14 of 38 from behind the arc.

The Suns shot 47.8 per cent from the field, including 13 of 23 from 3-point range. Phoenix was 21 of 22 from the free-throw line, while Portland hit 14 of 18.

Phoenix scored seven of the game's first nine points before the Trail Blazers scored the next 14.

(Reuters)

Injured Slade doubtful for Six Nations start

England centre Henry Slade is a doubt for the start of the Six Nations in February after his club Exeter said he faces six to eight weeks on the sidelines due to a small fracture.

The 26-year-old sustained the injury in the Premiership earlier this month and missed Exeter's 14-7 home victory over Saracens on Sunday.

Slade has 27 caps for England, who begin their Six Nations campaign against France in Paris on 2 February.

"Henry has a small fracture to his ankle around the site of the plantar fascia but it's a couple of seasons ago when he fractured it at Wasps," Exeter's Director of Rugby Rob Baxter told the club's website.

"The prognosis of anything like that is six to eight weeks of healing time, but no information at this stage that says it will be quicker or slower than six to eight weeks."

(Reuters)



Devin Booker

The Suns never led again until Ayton's tip-in with 2:48 left that gave them a 109-108 advantage.

Rubio and Booker followed with jumpers to give Phoenix a five-point lead with 1:51 remaining.

Portland later pulled within 115-113 on Lillard's three-point play with 1:13 left.

However, Oubre's seventh 3-pointer provided the Suns with a 120-114 advantage with 44.4 seconds remaining.

Booker finished off a 15-of-15 effort from the free-throw line, making two with 15.7 seconds left to seal it.

Lillard made five of his six 3-point attempts in the first quarter while scoring 16 points to help Portland take a 38-10 lead.

The Suns were within 48-39 after Booker's basket with 6:22 left in the half before the Trail Blazers answered with a 10-2 burst to push the lead to 17. Portland led 64-55 at the break.

Portland was up by 10 late in the third quarter before the Suns scored the final four points of the quarter to trail 89-83.

(Reuters)



Henry Slade

"It's not for me to say for which game exactly he'll be back because things can shorten up considerably towards the end of rehab time or they can relapse at the end, so it's impossible for me to say."

(Reuters)



No.1 ICC Test ranking team India

ICC to consider mandatory four-day Tests

Four-day Test matches could become mandatory as part of the World Test Championship in 2023, with the ICC's Cricket Committee likely to formally consider the change in 2020 amid widespread discussions among Member Boards about how to reduce numerous pressure points in the global cricket calendar for the future.

However, the world's cricketers stand as the most likely source of opposition to the change, with many viewing the step up from four-day first-class games to five-day Tests as a critical point of difference at the top end of the long-form game.

The ICC's increasing demand for event windows, the proliferation of domestic T20 leagues, the BCCI's push for its own share of bilateral calendar space, and the costs of staging Test series, are all factors contributing to the move, which would shave off a significant amount of time from the calendar for the 2023 to 2031 cycle.

"As an example, mandatory four-day Test matches rather than five-day matches as part of the current cycle from 2015 to 2023 would have freed up a total of 355 days of scheduled cricket over the period, a valuable amount of time that would also be enhanced by the ability to consistently schedule Test matches on a Thursday-Sunday basis, not dissimilar to the rhythm of golf tournaments on the world's major professional tours."

It would also allow for more Test series to be played, over three or five matches, affording host Boards and broadcasters a greater share of the higher revenue-raising early days of a Test without having to budget for a fifth day. Australia's recent history against India has seen Test series played over four matches for a total of 20 scheduled days - the same number that would be scheduled for a five-match series over four Test matches.

Matches played over four days would likely see the increase of the

minimum overs in a day from 90 to 98, meaning that over four days only 58 scheduled overs would be lost. There has been an increasing proliferation in the number of Test matches finishing inside four days - more than 60% of matches played since the start of 2018 have ended in four days or fewer.

"It is something that we have got to seriously consider," Cricket Australia Chief Executive Kevin Roberts told SEN Radio this week. "It is something that can't be driven by emotion, but it needs to be driven by fact. We need to look at what's the average length of Test matches over the past five-ten years in terms of time and overs."

The contrasting view, shared among many players, was provided by Australia captain Tim Paine at the conclusion of Australia's 2-1 Test victory over New Zealand in Melbourne. "We might not have got a result if we'd done that in the Ashes, I think every game went to a fifth day," he said. "That's the point of difference with Test cricket, it is five days, it's harder mentally, it's harder physically, and it tests players more than the four-day first-class fixtures do. I think that's what it's designed to do, so I hope it stays that way."

A shift to four-day Tests would place an even greater premium on the quality of pitches around the world, with batsmen being required to provide a surface that aids pace bowlers, batsmen and spin bowlers over their course, without the chance of an extra day for the pitch to deteriorate over. It would likely also

force captains to think more in terms of scoring rates and declarations to create enough time to bowl opposition teams in the reduced time available.

Tony Irish, the head of the International Players' Body (IPB), said that while four-day Tests would provide a solution to many of the game's growing problems around squeezing cricket's three formats into the global calendar, such a move could not be made without an integrated approach to scheduling and a far more "coherent" structure for the international game.

"There are two aspects to four-day Tests, the cricket aspect and the scheduling aspect," Irish told ESPNcricinfo. "It would take pressure off the schedule, but our concern would be that the ad hoc way the schedule currently works they would simply plug in more cricket into the gaps. If introduced it therefore has to be part of a more coherent structure."

"We would need to understand exactly how the cricket aspects are intended to work and we would need to take that to the players. In the past, many players have been against a change to four days. However, if we have a clear picture of how it all works in an improved and well-structured schedule, then it would be something that could be taken to the players for their consideration."

"Unfortunately with the ICC there is a history of introducing these types of changes in an unstructured way and that would need to change. We reckon they need to do a lot of work on how the schedule will look and not just present it as a concept."

Four-day Tests have already been added to the calendar in a limited format, for matches such as a Test between South Africa and Zimbabwe, and then England hosting Ireland earlier this year. Australia will likely play its first four-day Test against Afghanistan at home next summer.

(ESPN)

Kandy, CR in crunch battle



CR centre Janidu Dilshan scores against CH

Top points scorer Riza Mubarak

Thilina Wijesinghe (banned for doping)

By **NARESHIA CHATURANGA**

The Dialog Rugby League Championship will heat up this week when two unbeatens sides, defending champions Kandy Sports Club and CR & FC, face each other at Louglen Place.

With just four weeks of the Championship gone, these are still the early days of the season, but whoever wins this battle will certainly hold a significant psychological advantage going into the second round.

Kandy had a difficult start to the season and had some unconvincing wins, but they got into their rhythm against Army Sports Club, hammering them 64-19.

They also played very well against Police SC in the fourth week when they defeated the Cops confidently, playing away from home.

Wijesinghe banned

Despite winning four out of four, Kandy will be without their full back Thilina Wijesinghe, who has been given a provisional ban after he



Unstoppable CR skipper Omalika Gunaratne

tested positive for doping.

Wijesinghe is a key player for Kandy and they would certainly miss his place kicking skills. His absence will be dearly missed until he is permitted to play after an official inquiry is conducted.

CR in form

CR have won all their four games and will be a difficult team to beat at home, with their forwards playing remarkably well.

Led by inspirational number 8 Omalika Gunaratne, CR have

stacked to their plans this season and produced a very impressive brand of rugby, and their match against Kandy will draw much spectator interest.

Riza, Janidu racking up points

While their forwards have done a tremendous job carrying the ball forward, the backs have been able to rack up the points for CR by making maximum use of the opportunities that came their way to score.

Full back, Riza Mubarak joined CR from Havlocks this season and has done an outstanding job, adding 48 points with 12 conversions and 8 penalties. He is the highest points scorer of the season so far.

Young Janidu Dilshan of CR, a product of Royal College, along with Buddima Piyaratne of Kandy, are the highest try scorers with four tries each. It will be an interesting battle when they go against each other this weekend.

Title long way off for CH

CH & FC was one of the leading contenders to win the Dialog Rugby League Championship this season, but have not performed like a champion team, winning only one out of four games played so far.

They drew their first game against Army and were beaten by CR and Havves, but edged out Navy in the fourth week.

As it stands, winning the title seems a long way off.

Havves recover from Police shock

Havves were shocked by Police in the second week when they lost 24-36 in a very unlikely result.

But the Pink Army have recovered since then and won the next two games to take third place in the points table.

Place kicker Prince Chamara, who replaced Riza Mubarak as the Club's full back, has done a brilliant job with his accurate kicking and would look to maintain his form next week.



Pat Cummins

Kohli ends decade as No.1 Test batsman

A career-best fourth position for Marnus Labuschagne and a move up to No.10 for Quinton de Kock were the headlines of the year-end ICC rankings for men's batting in Test cricket. India captain, Virat Kohli stayed on top of the list - for 274 days in 2019 - with second-placed Steven Smith, who was the No.1 batsman for 91 days earlier in the year, behind him.

Labuschagne's scores of 63 and 19 in Australia's 247-run win against New Zealand in Melbourne pushed him up by one slot from No.5. He began the year ranked 110th, with only two Tests against his name, but was prolific in his 11 outings in the format since, making 1,104 runs in 17 innings at an average of 64.94. Wicketkeeper-batsman de Kock, meanwhile, advanced eight places to get to the top ten following his Player-of-the-Match contribution, with scores of 95 and 34, in South Africa's 107-run victory in the



Virat Kohli

series-opener against England in Centurion.

Australia fast bowler Pat Cummins retained his spot atop the bowler's rankings in Tests following his first-innings five-wicket haul in Melbourne. He has occupied the top position for 322 days this year, while South Africa

paceur Kagiso Rabada, who was No.1 for 44 days after starting 2019 in top position, finished the year at No.3.

Replacing Rabada in the second spot was New Zealand quick Neil Wagner, who climbed one position on the back of his seven-wicket match haul in Melbourne. The

retiring Vernon Philander advanced three positions up to No.5 to complete the top five on the bowlers' rankings alongside the fourth-placed Jason Holder, who continued to lead the all-rounders' rankings in Tests. Save for the fifth-placed R. Ashwin, who climbed up one spot, the top five all-rounders in Tests - Ravindra Jadeja, Ben Stokes and Philander - the others retained their spots.

As far as team rankings for the World Test Championship (WTC) go, Australia consolidated their position in second place of the points table. They added 40 points from their win in Melbourne to take their tally to 2566 points from nine games. Top-placed India are 104 points clear of Australia while South Africa collected 30 points after their first win in the WTC and trail New Zealand and England, who occupied the fifth and sixth positions with 60 and 56 points respectively. **(ESPW)**

Tokyo Olympic Games 2020

Mathilda on verge of becoming first Sri Lankan Equestrian Olympian

Enjoying holiday down south and waiting for release of ranking update before celebrating

By ANJANA KALUWARGUCHI

Sri Lankans are not too familiar with equestrian sports and most of them wouldn't have even seen an equestrian event live within the country, while they may have only seen it on TV once in a while - probably during the Olympics.

Sri Lanka is now on the verge of entering their first Olympic qualified equestrian for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, as Mathilda Karlsson, Sri Lankan born show jumper who grew up in Sweden, is now on the brink of grabbing a regional qualification spot for the Olympic Games.

The qualification system for Olympics is a bit tricky. There are 200 slots allocated for three disciplines - show jumping, dressage, and eventing - for the 2020 Olympic Games. Of the 200, 15 are reserved for individual show jumpers not representing any team. These individuals are chosen by FEI Olympic Ranking.

From the South East Asia and Oceania region, which includes Sri Lanka, there are only two individual spots up for grabs.

Based on her recent international performance Mathilda is well in contention to grab one of these spots, but confirmation will only come once the latest official ranking is released.

Mathilda Karlsson was born in Sri Lanka but given up adoption to a Swedish family at three months, and grew up just like any other Swedish girl spending her spare time among horses and ponies. Just like cricket or track and field, go to sports for little girls in Sweden is horseback riding. Every little girl goes to riding school in Sweden and so did Mathilda, and as time passed her interest in horse riding never waned and she

grew up to be a professional show jumper.

"It took lots of hard work to qualify. I have occupied the second spot in the rankings (for this continent) throughout the year until last August when my horse 'Chopin VA' was felled by a disease. The treatment took three months and after that we had to perform some magic to qualify as it was too late and needed double points. But he is such a special horse we did that, and if my calculation is correct, I think we got it," said Mathilda in an interview with Ceylon Today just after she came to Sri Lanka yesterday.

She will be enjoying a holiday down south following last week's competition and keeping her fingers crossed awaiting the latest ranking update, which she said will be out later this week, and which will confirm whether she has been successful in grabbing one of the two qualification slots.

"I don't want to announce anything beforehand. I just want to wait until the official ranking is released. I also said to my team, 'wait until it's official, then we can celebrate as much as we want,'" added Mathilda.

Mathilda is now based in Germany and is a regular rider on the Longines Global Champions Tour and currently a member of the Global Champions League (GCL) team, the Hamburg Giants. Global Champions League is the most prestigious international league for show jumping, and she travels around the world to compete.

"We own a stable in Grönwohldorf, Germany where I'm based now. We own a couple of horses and I have an amazing team working for me there."

Raised in Sweden from infancy,

Mathilda switched back to her native Sri Lanka following a visit in 2018. Her decision had the full backing of the Sri Lanka Equestrian Association.

Since then she has been competing worldwide representing Sri Lanka with the aim of fulfilling her Olympic dream, which is now closer than ever before.

"With the Olympics around the corner I thought it will be such an honour to represent the country of my birth and an amazing thing to do, so I did the switch. It wasn't easy [switch]. It took a lot of paper work and a lot of time to do the switch, especially since I had been adopted. There were several documents missing and stuff but I'm glad we did it."

Equestrian is the only Olympic sport where men and women compete in the same category. "It's great actually. It proves that riding such a strong and powerful animal is not about physical strength; it's about connection. I'm just 42kg, but can ride a horse just as well as a strong well-built man," said Mathilda.

Officially no athlete from Sri Lanka has qualified for the 2020 Olympic Games yet, but Mathilda will be the first (subject to ranking update). She will also make history as the first equestrian to qualify for the Olympic Games from Sri Lanka in the history of the Olympics.

Picture courtesy: www.noelleloyd.com

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Mathilda Karlsson

SLC 'Limited Over Tournament 2019'

Chilaw Marians end year with a bang

Clinch title with comfortable 91-run win

Chilaw Marians completed a superb 61 runs win over NCC to clinch the SLC Limited Over title at the SSC yesterday.

NCC captain Angelo Perera won the toss and decided to put Chilaw Marians into bat. They were given a good start by Lasith Croonpulle and Sumit Ghadigaonkar who added 63 runs for the first wicket.

Lasith scored 21 runs in 22 balls while his partner Sumit smashed his third consecutive half century scoring 70 runs in 77 balls including 14 boundaries.

Middle order batsman Kamindu Mendis then consolidated the innings with a very good knock of 44 runs in 70 balls hitting 3 boundaries. He and Ramesh Buddhika added 43 runs for the third wicket. Ramesh Buddhika also chipped in with a useful unrun 60 runs including 6 boundaries.

After the dismissal of Kamindu, Chilaw Marians needed someone to carry on and accelerate the scoring, and that was exactly what Thishitha de Silva did with a useful unrun 36 in 36 balls with 3 boundaries and 3 sixes.

Lower order batsman Chaturanga Kumara also chipped in with a useful contribution (16) to help Chilaw Marians reach a healthy 205



Victorious Chilaw Marians celebrate with the trophy. (Pic: By Venura Chandramathil)

runs for 8 wickets in 50 overs. Chamika Gunasekara picked up 2 wickets.

In reply NCC started strongly with their openers Pathum Nissanka and Lahiru Udara putting on a 70 run partnership for the first wicket. After the first two wickets went down, the NCC middle-order lost wickets at

regular intervals and were eventually bowled out for 204 runs in 43.3 overs. Lahiru Udara was the top scorer with a fighting half century in 40 balls including 4 boundaries and sixes. Opener Pathum Nissanka and lower order batsman Chamika Karunaratne also contributed with

Skipper Shehan Jayasuriya was the pick of the bowlers taking 3 wickets for 38 runs in 6 overs. Kamindu Mendis, Pathina Tharanga, Thishitha de Silva, Nimesh Vinukuni and Asitha Fernando took one wicket each as Chilaw Marians completed a superb win. (CT sports)

Chief scores

Chilaw Marians: 205-8 (Sumit Ghadigaonkar 70, Ramesh Buddhika 60, Thishitha de Silva 47, Kamindu Mendis 44; Chamika Gunasekara 2-67)
NCC: 204 all out (Lahiru Udara 50, Pathum Nissanka 38, Chamika Karunaratne 32; Shehan Jayasuriya 3-38, Kamindu Mendis 3-32)