Return to authoritarian and illiberal governance with popular backing would mark a very negative phase of Sri Lanka’s contemporary politics.

The record of most of the ministries, from the President and the PM downwards, show that we have a regime which is least prepared for governance.

What a sad story of a transformative potential that the regime change of January 2015 opened up for Sri Lanka!

- Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda

- The Sunday Leader -
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**Edited by Leela Isaac**

**Layout designed by Hashini Rajaratna**
THE FEAR OF LOSING POWER GRIPS THE YAHAPALANAYA REGIME

When the yahapalanaya leaders took over power in 2015, defeating the corrupt, authoritative Rajapaksa regime, the country celebrated their victory expecting these leaders to do what they had pledged to do. Some of their oft repeated promises were: promoting democracy, good governance peace and reconciliation, minimizing corruption and meting out justice to those found guilty of crimes and violence. But at the end of two and a half years’ hopes and expectations have all but evaporated, leaving them with a sluggish inactive government in a state of paralysis mainly due to the fear of losing power.

There are many major issues that need immediate attention and action but the government adopts an ostrich like attitude, refusing to recognize these problems as danger signals and therefore not taking any decisions or implementing solutions to the problems. Many of these problems may have been inherited from the Rajapakse regime or even previous regimes. But the government in power today cannot remain inactive merely blaming the past. The Central Bank issue or the ‘bond scam’ as it is popularly known should have been dealt with immediately but the leaders chose to drag it on till it stinks today with some present government ministers accused of being involved in this ‘Great robbery’. Both the UNP and the SLFP seem to have powerful politicians who have benefited from the ‘Bond deal’. So they tried to sweep it under the carpet for fear of getting exposed and losing power.

The South Asian Institute of Technology and Medicine (SAITM) issue remains simmering, still unresolved. It is because the government is unable to take a decision on this matter that the Government Medical Officers Association (GMOA) is able to hold the whole country to ransom. All that it wants is to prevent the graduates of the medical faculty of SAITM from being registered as doctors of the Sri Lanka Medical Council (SLMC), defying the orders of the court of appeal. Apart from the faculty of medicine, SAITM has four other faculties including a faculty of engineering, if SAITM is wiped out of existence as the government doctors demand, what happens to the students of the other faculties. Why is it that only private medical colleges have to be abolished?

There are many efficient doctors working in government hospitals who are respected and loved by the people for their dedicated service. But a few among the members of the GMOA seem to fear competition from private medical college doctors though they do not admit that this the main reason. Doctors unlike other professionals in government service enjoy many perks and privileges while also carrying on a lucrative channeling service in private hospitals even during their hours of duty. It seems to be the fear of losing or sharing their privileges that results in the angry outburst of hate speeches and unreasonable demands they make. When they go on prolonged strikes it is the poor patients who die. The rich have private hospitals while the politicians fly off to Singapore, U.K. or USA even for a medical checkup. Firm action has to be taken against the GMOA but the government remains in a state of paralysis not taking any action against them because it fears that with Rajapaksa’s support the doctors could topple the government.

Another major issue faced by the government is the fast spreading religious intolerance violence and communal hatred that is being incited and promoted by Buddhist monks like Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thero of the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS). Even the influential powerful Mahanayakas of the Malwatte, Asgiriya chapters and Ramanna nikaya do not openly condemn this behavior of the BBS. The Mahanayakes and the Sangha have also now begun to invade the political space of the country’s elected representatives in parliament undermining its sovereignty. They call upon the ‘patriotic people’ of the country to challenge the threat to Buddhism they perceive in the proposed new constitution. They are alarmed that article 9 of the constitution on the status of Buddhism is to be taken away in the new or amended constitution. This is a false alarm for both president and Prime Minister have assured the sangha that there is no such amendment. But the people don’t seem to trust their words.

(Continued on page 4)
The Mahanayakes claim that it is their sacred duty to come forward and protect the country, its religion, and its people in the face of danger. Their claim is based on the ‘Mahavamsa’ story. This ancient ‘great chronicle of Lanka’ states that when Mahinda, the son of Emperor Asoka brought salvation to Lanka by converting it to Buddhism, many ascetics accompanied him. "Jambudipa is gleaming with yellow robes; and great is the number there of arahats, learned in the 3 vedas, gifted with miraculous powers, skilled in reading the thoughts of others, possessing the heavenly ear: the disciples of the Buddha‖ is what he said and with that these disciples of the Buddha were entrusted with the task of propagating Buddhism in Lanka, while guiding and advising the king.

Based on this incident the sangha has always claimed to be the custodians of the Buddha Dharma and advisers to the rulers of Lanka – the country specially chosen by the Buddha, but it is obvious that there are no such arahats today, among the monks who are supporting or opposing the government. If there are arahats they are in the forest aramayas – involved in peaceful meditation. But the government fears the politically motivated monks because antagonizing them would mean losing the nationalist votes at the next election. It is the fear of losing power that plagues ‘the yahapalanya’ government.

It is also the fear of losing the nationalist votes that prevents the two leaders from openly admitting that if not for the support from the minorities, they wouldn’t be in power today. The yahaplanya leaders also realise that at the next election the minorities the people of the North and East and the plantations will not vote for them enthusiastically as they did in 2015. While living conditions in the North and East have definitely improved, and some lands have been returned the anguish of the people whose kith and kin ‘disappeared’ during the last stages of the war continues. Those people mainly women continue their protests with no results. The government prefers to ignore these protests rather than displease the Sinhala majority by probing these disappearances in the North and East.

Although this government has made some progress towards peace and reconciliation, it is reluctant to hold any inquiry international or local into war crimes that the armed forces have been accused of. They fear that this would antagonize the forces and the ‘Sinhala patriots’ which would in turn erode their vote base. Therefore they would rather not seek the Truth and hold the culprits accountable. Once again it is the fear of losing power that grips them making them totally inactive. Regarding this the UN special rapporteur, Emmerson has issued a hard hitting statement. According to him, “None of the measures so afar adopted to fulfill Sri Lanka’s transitional justice commitments are adequate to ensure real progress, and there is little evidence that perpetrators of war crimes committed by members of the Sri Lankan armed forces are being brought to justice”.

Even the ‘International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances’ which was signed and ratified by the new government in 2015 is not yet adopted by Parliament. It is not passed in Parliament due to opposition from the Rajapakse supporters or perhaps the government itself lacks the political will to do it. It fears that if this is given effect the ‘war heroes’ could be affected. The TNA MP M.A. Sumanthiran expresses a different view. “We should be ashamed that we have 100,000 disappearances, including the period of the JVP and LTTE insurgencies”. According to him ‘disappearances’ are even worse than murder. Such crimes have to be curbed and action must be taken against them. Reconciliation is impossible unless this is dealt with. According to this convention, those who are responsible for such crimes will be tried in Sri Lanka. It is a false fear that is being spread, that they would be tried under the jurisdiction of another country.

And so Sri Lanka may keep drifting towards lawlessness and chaos, unable to deal with the numerous strikes that will eventually paralyze the country. At the end of two years another election and another regime change? It is said that it is not power that corrupts but the fear of losing power and all the perks and privileges that go with it. How true in the case of this ‘yahaplanaya’ regime!

Leela Isaac
Meetotamulla: Shameful failure, human tragedy

The shame of Meetotamulla is that for 40 years successive Sri Lankan governments have not been able to find a location for an engineered, or sanitary, landfill to deposit Colombo’s garbage. Its tragedy is that people had to die because a make-shift mountain of garbage came crashing down on their dwellings. The problem, in its simplest formulation, is that Colombo has no place to bury its garbage and nobody else wants to bury Colombo’s garbage in their backyard. Underlying this simplicity are vested interests, identified as the ‘kunu mafia’, who want to keep making quick and dirty money hauling Colombo’s garbage to any open dump within the City. The mafia does not want Colombo’s garbage to leave Colombo. At the overarching level, our multiple layers of government cannot get their act together and find a burial place not just for Colombo’s garbage but for all the garbage generated in the entire Western Province.

Sunday Island - 23/04/2017

Meetotamulla and the Seeds of Things

The residents of Meetotamulla probably hoped their luck would change with the defeat of the Rajapaksas and the forming of the Sirisena-Wickramasinghe administration. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa’s project of class cleansing did come to a halt, but nothing was done to resolve the garbage issue. Promises were made only to be broken. When the people protested, they were attacked and arrested. Like their predecessors, the new rulers too had only one solution to the mounting crisis in Meetotamulla—set up a new garbage dump somewhere else. A court order prevented the CMC from dumping its garbage in Karadiyana, Piliyandala. Public protests prevented the setting up of a new dump in Ekala. Instead of looking for long lasting solutions, the Sirisena-Wickramasinghe administration allowed the problem to fester.

The tragedy in Meetotamulla proves that far from striving towards good governance, the current administration is wallowing in policies and practices reeking of bad; insensible and unintelligent governance.

Sunday Island - 23/04/2017

Meethotamulla Weeps, Blame Game Continues

From the start the CMC was in the practice of dumping the collected garbage at some place. When one location was full they would allocate another location. The garbage piles at Bloemendhal and Sedawatte are prior dumping locations of the CMC. However, for sometime now the Colombo garbage has been piled up at Meethotamulla and currently there is around a million tons of garbage piled up to about 300 metres. It was a part of that pile of garbage than fell on and buried the innocent people of the area.

Meanwhile, even if the garbage mountain had not fallen upon the residents, due to the large quantity of garbage seeping into the ground water table and polluting the water and the stench emanating from the garbage dump as well as the germs breeding there, over 90% of the residents of the area suffer from various health issues. This was revealed in a study conducted by several NGOs. It is no secret that there were issues with regard to the CMC and its incompetency in handling the garbage issue.

Many developed countries around the world follow proper guidelines when disposing garbage. Instead of piling garbage in the open, the garbage is packed into a scientifically prepared location, thereby preventing the
garbage coming into contact with ground water and contaminating the water and air. South Korea has implemented this method very successfully.

In fact the dumping of garbage to Meethotamulla, Pothuvilkumbura commenced many years ago during the UNP regime where garbage from Kolonnawa and Mulleriyawa was being dumped here. Subsequently, in 2008 the CMC began dumping Colombo’s garbage in Meethotamulla having obtained a court order to do so under the Rajapaksa regime. In any country the responsibility of garbage disposal falls under the purview of the Municipal Councils and this is no exception where the CMC is concerned. Hence it is high time the Municipal Councils take responsibility and find proper solutions to the garbage issue that is affecting the whole country.

For the people of Meethotamulla whose lands have been constantly filled with garbage, having staged protest after protest to save their lands, for which the only reward or answer they received was to be attacked by tear gas or water cannon assault. Recently when these people had met with politicians in order to state their grievance, they were given the promise that this issue will be resolved after the New Year season where their issue would be taken up in parliament.

However, on April 14 around 2.30 pm just after the residents of Meethotamulla, Nagahamulla 101 watte had welcomed the New Year and partaken in traditional milk rice, tragedy struck and a part of the garbage bump engulfed their property and loved ones. Eventually they ended up having to partake in their loved ones ‘Mala Batha’. Most of those who fought for the removal of the garbage dump and took part in endless protests finally were silenced buried under the very garbage dump. Although this incident has put a stop to many lives of the residents of Meethotamulla, for the politicians this is perhaps just another incident.

- The Sunday Leader - 23/04/2017

Forgotten people of past tragedies still await help

Koslanda disaster: All but 30 victim families resettled

It is now two-and-a-half years since a landslide in Koslanda, MeeriyaBedda left 39 people dead on October 29, 2014. The disaster left hundreds displaced — their houses and property buried. Many were later housed at the disused Mahakanda Tea Factory, which was converted into a welfare camp.

The families languished at the camp for well over a year. After several false starts, authorities finally made progress in building permanent houses. A batch of 75 houses were handed over to the families late last year.

Haldummulla Divisional Secretary Shiromi Jeewamala said the last of the displaced from the landslide were settled in the new houses on October 22, last year, almost two years to the day after the landslide swallowed large swathes of MeeriyaBedda.

While all those who lost houses due to the landslide have been resettled, the Divisional Secretary said there was still an issue surrounding about 30 families who live in two sets of line rooms near the site of the landslide. The area has been designated as a ‘danger zone,’ meaning that these line rooms were vulnerable.

- The Sunday Times - 23/04/2017

An extract from Sarath Wijesinghe’s article

WASTE NOT WASTE: WASTE IS GOLD

Waste is Gold – not a nuisance

Waste is Gold in other parts of the world, managing to derive the power, fertilizer, chemicals, and many other subsidiaries for their development and prosperity, not considered a nuisance but an asset. Other parts of the Global states have given priority on waste management including disposal, recycling, converting to consumer items and used in industry, with national and local plans linked to education and “good practices” adopted by the citizen compatible with the master plan of the state. Unfortunately we were not ready to serve our selves and the environment causing disasters to us and “Mother Earth”. We are responsible for the environmental pollution, deforestation, poaching, excavation for sand and construction on materials adopting all types of illegal and unlawful destructive methods. Today crisis stage has reached in Sri Lanka on garbage disposal and environmental protection due to the mismanagement and neglect by successive governments. Waste consist of valuable resources, easy to be recycled if planned from “sources” as has been practised in EU, and the West where the citizen is conscious and educated on the importance of safeguarding environment and taken personal and collective measures to save the environment and themselves.

- Daily Mirror - 25/04/2017
An extract from Kishali Pinto Jayawardene’s article
Too many excuses for incompetence of government

The very idea that more law is needed to effectively operate relief to affected persons hit by natural disasters in Sri Lanka, as put forward by some bright ministerial sparks in recent days, is an asininity which needs to be peremptorily dismissed.

Have we lost all propriety?

Let us be very clear. The issue is not the law. It is the sheer woeful incompetence of the political leadership and more specifically the imbeciles in charge of disaster management even though many government officials rendered yeoman service in helping the afflicted in recent weeks.

It is only in nations as unfortunate as ours that the Minister in charge of the subject can dawdle overseas in some international conference or the other in some luxurious resort or the other while the country staggers under the worst floods in a decade or more.

The unbridled arrogance on the part of the responsible Minister at the time, Anura Priyadarshana Yapa in meeting questions that were raised regarding the accountability of the Government even after he returned belatedly to a grief stricken populace, beggars the imagination.

Are the afflicted supposed to live on the streets?

The ministerial worthy could only snap that the Department of Meteorology should be closed down if it is thought to be of no use. Let alone accountability at ministerial or official level, there was not even the slightest sense of empathy in responding to an unprecedented disaster. The other fantastical notion put forward by this worthy was that Sri Lankans are unique in that they do not want to leave their homes even when there are warnings issued of impending disaster and that therefore a law was needed to compel such action to be taken, when it is so warranted.

Pray, where are these people, liable to be now dragged out of their homes in anticipation of future disasters supposed to go to? Nearby Bangladesh coped far more effectively with the sweep of cyclonic fury that hit Sri Lanka. The Bangladeshis did so by putting effective disaster response schemes into place. In contrast, in this unfortunate paradise isle, the afflicted of past disasters have yet not been given relief, including those caught up in the Salawa explosions. How can a populace allow its politicians to escape without any minimum responsibility in this manner?

Learning lessons in general

While that is so on one side, the so-called Joint Opposition can only capitalize on the misery of the people by saying that government officials are afraid to help due to fears of action being taken against them by the Financial Crimes Investigation unit. Certainly its leader, former President Mahinda Rajapaksa does not need to be educated on the benefits of natural disasters, given the corruption that took place directly under his command in the Helping Hambantota Fund.

And lest we forget, when investigations were launched by the police into the Helping Hambantota corruption, a former Chief Justice of this country, Sarath Silva not only absolved Rajapaksa of all culpability but ordered costs against the police officer who had investigated. The exercise degenerated from farce to comedy when this same former Chief Justice apologized for his actions when his political loyalties switched. One wonders (if one bothers) as to whether one would be privileged to witness another apology in these shifting winds of political allegiance?

– The Sunday Times – 04/06/2017

An extract from Namini Wijedasa and Sandun Jayawardena’s article
Unpreparedness reigned as lives, properties were destroyed

Last week’s disasters in several districts of the country highlighted just how unprepared Sri Lanka still is to handle such situations. The local authorities found themselves with little or no resources—no power generators, no communications equipment, no boats, lifejackets or other equipment essential to deal with flash floods and landslides. If any village-level disaster management or preparedness systems were in place, they mostly crumbled under the weight of the natural catastrophes that befell multiple settlements.

Ironically, Sri Lanka already has a Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) to cover the period 2014-2018. It was produced with technical assistance from the UNDP. It also has a roadmap, a National Disaster Management Policy and a Disaster Management Plan. And, yet, last week saw 211 deaths, 72 missing and 91 injured due to floods and landslides.

– The Sunday Times – 04/06/2017
Sri Lanka hunts Buddhist monk over anti-Muslim hate crimes

Sri Lanka’s police launched a major manhunt Thursday for a controversial Buddhist monk wanted in connection with a spate of attacks against mosques and Muslim-owned business.

Police said they were working to track down and arrest Galagodaatte Gnanasara, head of the radical Buddhist Force or BBS, after he went into hiding.

His party is accused of instigating a recent wave of hate attacks against the country’s Muslim minority.

Police said in a statement they had secured a court order to prevent him from leaving the country.

“He is wanted in connection with obstruction of justice, hate speech and several other crimes,” said the statement.

It came shortly after the BBS announced that Gnanasara had gone into hiding, fearing he could be assassinated.

“The monk is at a secret location,” BBS spokesman Dilantha Vithanage told reporters in Colombo.

“We have told him not to venture out as he could be assassinated after he is arrested.”

Police sources said they had received more than a dozen complaints of hate speech against Gnanasara, who already faces charges of contempt for causing a disturbance inside a court.

His party denies orchestrating the attacks against Muslims, who account for just 10 percent of the country’s 21 million people but are a formidable political force.

The BBS was accused of instigating religious riots in mid-2014 that left four people dead, but the then government of former strongman president Mahinda Rajapakse did not prosecute them.

Rajapakse’s brother Gotabhaya, a former defence minister, was said to be close to the party.

A new government has since been elected and this week it debated the latest wave of anti-Muslim attacks and ordered tough action to prevent an escalation.

Reported by Amal Jayasinghe
-Sunday Island - 28/05/2017

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An extract from Hilmy Ahamed’s article
Yahapalanaya Unleashes Rabid Dogs

Within the last two months (April 16th to May 22nd) 16 attacks have taken place on Muslim villagers, mosques and other institutions.

16th April, 2017
Petrol Bombs thrown at shops in Godapitiya
Four shops owned by Muslims were attacked with petrol Bombs in Godapitiya, Poruva. This incident went unreported due to the pressure brought on by the local Police. This was not even reported on social media by local residents, fearing further police intimidation. Although it has been more than a month, the Police have still not been able to investigate and apprehend the perpetrators of this act of violence.

25th April 2017
Incitement by Ven. Gnanasara Thero in Irrakamam.
Ven. Gnanasaratthera visited Irrakamam and made a very provocative speech violating his bail conditions.

Police complaints have been made and no action has been taken up to date.

May 14th 2017
Theratening Muslims in Onegama in Pollonaruwa
A group of Buddhist monks led by Ven. GalagodaatteGnanasara Thera threatened Muslims in Onegama in Pollonaruwa and broke their huts. The Police who were present did not attempt to stop this mob from causing this violence. Hiru TV showed the destruction of the huts of the Muslims. Here again, Ven. GnasasaraThera insulted Allah using most demeaning words by talking about Allah’s “labba”. Defaming Allah this way hurts the sentiments of Muslims in no uncertain terms. Police complaints have been made with video evidence and they have failed to take any action yet.

15th May 2017
Masked men attack KohilawattaIbrahim Jumma-Mosque –
Unidentified men had arrived on motorbikes and

(Continued on page 9)
attacked the mosque. When some workers renovating the mosque came out, they had fled on their bikes.

16th May 2017

Attack on Muslim Selva Nagar in Thoppur

A large group of Buddhist extremists numbering about 200 had gone to Selva Nagar in Thoppur with clubs and swords and caused extensive damage to 16 houses and property. No police action has been taken despite several complaints.

16th May 2017

Gang attacks Kohilawatte Mosque

The Kohilawatte Mosque in Sedawatte was attacked with stones and clubs around 1:30 a.m. by an unidentified gang, resulting in extensive damage. Wellampitiya Police has been provided with CCTV footage of the attack and no arrests have been made as yet.

The Government of President Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe needs to deal with this major crisis which will destabilise their hard earned victory in January 2015. The Muslim Parliamentarians, Civil Society, the business community and Academia have requested the Government to act with a strong resolve to ensure that rule of law prevails. A peaceful environment will contribute to reconciliation between all communities in Sri Lanka.

- The Sunday Leader – 04/06/2017

CM wants perpetrators of Trinco mosque attack brought to book

Swift action should be taken in connection with the attack on the Trincomalee, Periykadai Jummah Mosque and legal action should be initiated against the perpetrators, Eastern Province Chief Minister requested the District Senior DIG on Saturday.

A petrol bomb attack was made on the mosque early on Saturday and the CM insisted to take action so that such an incident would never occur in the future.

He said that it was apparent that racially oriented violence taking root gradually in the Eastern Province. “It is the duty of the Police to nip these racially motivated incidents in the bud.” the CM said.

He said that those who attacked places of worship and incite racial violence should be dealt with stringently and called on the government to strengthen the judicial set up in the country.

Reported by A.H.A.HUSSAIN, AND M.S.M.NOORDEEN

-Daily Mirror - 05/06/2017

Govt. must assure democratic space and freedom

May, 2017 – The National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka issued a report on attacks by various parties against Evangelical Christian churches across the country. Highlighting the need of the urgent concern by relevant authorities, the report cited 20 attacks in the last few months of 2017. The report also included details on similar violent incidents since 2015.

May 31, 2017 – The Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission wrote to President Maithripala Sirisena raising the Commission’s concern over the attacks on religious minorities mentioning the spate of attacks on places of Christian religious worship.

June 14, 2017 – Human Rights Lawyer Lakshan Dias raised the issue of attacks on places of Christian religious worship during a TV talk show aired by the Derana TV. As his comment mentioned the involvement of Buddhist priests in some of these attacks a hostile situation arose with an agitated reaction from the program presenter and some of the other panelists.

June 17, 2017 – Justice and Buddha Sasana Minister Wijedasa Rajapakse said, addressing the audience at the opening ceremony of the new Court complex in Mankulam, Killinochchi that he would take necessary legal action to remove lawyer Lakshan Dias from his profession for the comment the latter had made during the TV talk show.

June 17, 2017 – President Maithripala Sirisena at another public event said that the Colombo Archbishop Rt. Rev. Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith denied any knowledge of attacks on churches.

-Daily Mirror - 03/07/2017
The story, first reported by AP, isn’t the first around nauseating allegations of sexual abuse by members of the Sri Lankan military serving under the UN as peacekeepers. It is however the most detailed account we have so far. AP’s investigations reveal that Sri Lankan peacekeepers wanted sex from girls and boys as young as 12. A girl who says she did not even have breasts at the time, for three years, from when she was 12 to 15, had sex with nearly 50 peacekeepers, including a “Commandant” who gave her 75 cents. At least 134 Sri Lankan peacekeepers exploited nine children in a sex ring from 2004 to 2007, according to an internal U.N. report obtained by the AP. The report, as published in the New York Times, the full report is online and a Google search away. The details are horrific.

Speaking to BBC’s Sinhala website, the military itself openly admits that no peacekeeper has been charged under the law or brought to courts on account of the allegations. The Army notes that ‘disciplinary’ action has been taken against a Commandant and eight others. The nature of this action is indeterminable. The media, including the BBC, didn’t probe more into what actions the military took – their word is simply taken at face value, normalising the most heinous violence through the ‘rotten eggs’ theory, which is paraded whenever questions of accountability are raised.

According to this line of argument, the actions of a few do not colour the service and avowed professionalism of the Army writ large, and whenever identified, the personnel in question responsible for infractions, we are told, have been dealt with. No more details are available. The local mainstream media has successfully managed to ignore and downplay the entire story, revealing even post-war, what is a pervasive, deeply ingrained mentality, out of fear or just misguided patriotism, that holds the military above any law, scrutiny and accountability. Our heroes are our gods – they play us for their sport.

Sunday Island - 23/04/2017

An extract from Sanjayan Rajasingham’s article

Ending Ragging in Sri Lanka’s Universities

It is a familiar cycle. An incident of ragging makes national headlines. Reactions of shock and horror follow: “How could this happen?” “Aren’t these the educated in our society?” and so on. There are calls for legal action. And then it ends. Ragging goes on, the cycle continues, and the question remains: why can’t we end ragging in our universities?

There are many reasons. Ragging is a deep-seated social practice. It is found in State universities, vocational training institutes, certain “elite” schools and, to my knowledge, at least one private educational institute. Ending it requires the kind of creative, long-term hard work that is behind any permanent social change. In particular, our approach must be holistic and strategic. It must be holistic in the sense that it addresses the different facets of the practice; it must be strategic in that it must address the root causes behind the practice.

Human Dignity and the University

A holistic response recognises that ragging is wrong because it violates the human dignity and worth of students. From dress codes and verbal abuse to regular beatings, sleep deprivation and even sexual abuse, they are treated as objects of amusement and domination. It is one of the most serious problems they face. However, a holistic response will recognise that there are also other serious problems students face. Such a response requires us to be concerned about any violation of their dignity and worth, not just one.

For example, are students not oppressed if they have low quality food at canteens and cannot afford anything else? Are students not humiliated if they are forced by their financial situation to live in unhygienic, overcrowded university hostels? Is not their worth and potential jeopardised if English teaching programs at university do not enable them to

(Continued on page 11)
access the international community of learning? Are they not harmed when orientation programs do not prepare them for the leap between secondary and tertiary education, handicapping them throughout their degree program? Is it not a violation of their worth if they are crippled intellectually by a system of education that does not help them learn how to think? Is their worth not violated if they are kept in poverty by the slow neglect of State education which reduces the relative value of their degrees?

Let me suggest that these all violate the dignity and worth of students in some way, and can mar their prospects permanently. Yet many who are vocal about ragging have little to say about them. This is partly a matter of “blind spots” – wealth, connections and English knowledge can mean that these other problems are not “seen”. When those who oppose ragging are silent about these other violations of dignity, their efforts are easy to delegitimise. Raggers are quick to ask: “If they oppose ragging because they care about the students, then why don’t they speak about these other issues? Why don’t they even know about these problems that so many students face?”

Any response to ragging starts with a concern for the dignity and worth of students. We cannot fight every battle, but we can raise these issues and stand with those who are fighting them. This is the first step towards a holistic response.

Ragging 2.0

A holistic response also recognises that ragging is often an off-campus phenomenon. Many students are ragged long before they step into university – in some cases, as soon as their A-Level results are released. Their contact details are passed on by an area-based network of university seniors, and they soon receive a call from a senior at their prospective university. They are required to call their seniors several times a week (at their own cost) and complete various “assignments”. This is known as “phone ragging” and it is where the indoctrination begins. Sometimes seniors take things further. They summon groups of prospective freshers from their area to different places near their hometowns and rag them there. As a result, by the time freshers enter they already know they must submit to their seniors. Of course, the ragging continues once they join – either in the hostels or in rented out rooms. The long-term violence (lasting from a month to two years), submission, and indoctrination eventually turns vibrant freshers into the willing servants of seniors, and then into raggers themselves.

Such displaced ragging is hard to detect and even harder to stop. Perhaps a better feedback loop and the use of technology is part of the answer – say, a smartphone app that discreetly records and alerts authorities to ragging at private locations. Whatever we do, it is an aspect of the problem that must be cracked if we are to succeed.

Self-Esteem vs Structural Dependence

Some argue that the answer to all this is for students to simply say “no” – that they just need to summon up the courage and self-esteem to do this. Frankly, this is a naïve view. A holistic response will realise that the real reason students cannot say “no” is not because of a lack of self-esteem. It is because of structural dependence on their seniors.

For instance, a fresher’s ability to live and study in a hostel often depends on the goodwill of their seniors, who can make life miserable if they do not submit. Students who are new to the locality of the university are extremely vulnerable. They rely on seniors for where to buy food cheaply, where to get photocopies at a low price, even for which bus to take to get to their rooms. Seniors guide them through notes and “kuppi” classes (revision classes that cover the syllabus). There are hidden dependencies as well. For instance, when I was a law student my friends told me that a failure to follow the instructions of the seniors from their areas would result in “difficulties” for them when they eventually began their legal practice there.

How can students summon up the courage to say “no” when the result will be a loss of support, ostracism from their batch and even physical violence? Only those who have the money, the accommodation, the language skills and the connections can afford to risk this.

To end ragging in Sri Lanka we need creative methods that fatally undermine this structural dependence. Already, students around the country have taken the lead. Some have prepared a booklet with key information freshers need – bus routes, train schedules, cheap places to eat and cheap lodging.

-Daily Mirror- 25/04/2017
Colombo police unit abducts two men in white van

BRUTAL POLICE TORTURE
Leaves victim crippled, another missing

One of the two men who were abducted from their houses in Gampola on Tuesday night by an unidentified armed gang that came in a white van who claimed themselves to be from the police, had been dumped at his residence on Wednesday night with severe bruises all over his body allegedly caused by brutal assault.

The victim, Samille Gedara Rathnayake, a 40-year-old father of three of Rajathalawa, Pupuressa in Gampola, and 27-year-old Ushada Jayasuriya of the same area were abducted in this manner.

Though initially it was not known who their abductors were, it came to light on the following day that they were abducted by the Police Unresolved Crimes Unit based in Colombo.

Rathnayake had been brutally beaten up and finds difficulty in moving about as his toes were severely injured. He has related that the incident reminded him of the 1988-89 uprising when he was held high and allowed to swing while the abductors assaulted him. Not stopping at that, shopping bags soaked in petrol wrapped around his head during the assault as means of suffocation.

Describing the incident, Rathnayake said that on April 25th night he was with his nephew in front of his house when a jeep had halted on the road near his house. Four persons alighted from the Jeep approached him brandishing a pistol and carrying clubs. They took him to the jeep and sped away. They said that they were from the police. They tore his T-shirt, blindfolded and hand-cuffed and mercilessly beaten him inside the vehicle. After several hours inside the van, they took him out and laid him flat on a wheel and continued beating.

They crushed Rathnayake’s toes and pulled out his toe nails and hit him on knees and feet with the clubs they carried. During the torture, they had questioned him as to where he had hidden the T-56 gun. When he said he had no knowledge of such, they wrapped a shopping bag containing petrol around head which had made him difficult to breathe and he cried out loudly.

The torture continued until early morning. They again brought Rathnayake back to Gampola the following day around 11.00 pm and produced him before the Gampola Magistrate and forced him to confess to the Magistrate that he was caught with a bundle of Ganja (cannabis).

However the Magistrate, who had seen him unable to stand asked him what the reason was for it and he had told her that after prolonged travelling in the van his legs were stiff and admitted he was arrested for possessing a packet of Ganja. As he did not have anyone to stand as surety for bail, he was told by the Magistrate to go home and appear the next day and sign the bail documents.

Rathnayake said further that when he came out of the Magistrate’s Chamber, the policemen were there threatened him not to disclose this to anyone. On 27th morning they brought him and dumped in front of his house.

When he appeared on 27th to sign these documents through Attorney-at-law Shanthi Kumara, he confessed to courts that he was tortured by the police. The Magistrate had questioned as to why he did not disclose about it when he first produced in courts, he said he had fears posed by threats by policemen.

The Magistrate then ordered that he be admitted to the hospital and to appear again on May 3. He had lodged a complaint with the the Prelate of the Rajathalawa Temple Ven. Rajakeeya Panditha Kurunegoda Dammananda Thera had said that the victim was a devotee of his temple and deplored the police action.

Meanwhile, it was reported that the whereabouts of the other individual Oshada Jayasuriya, who too was abducted in a similar manner, is not yet known, said his mother K. S. Sriyakanthi.

She said after they had lodged a complaint to the police about her son being abducted, they understood that he was released but did not return home. She begged the authorities to allow them to live in peace without the children being harassed in this manner.

Reported by Suranga Rajanayake
-Daily Mirror - 28/04/2017

You can chain me, you can torture me, you can even destroy this body, but you will never imprison my mind

-Mahatma Gandhi
The country is once again preparing to celebrate the liberation of the country by defeating the LTTE terrorists after a war that devastated the country for nearly 30 years.

However, it is still questionable as to how much freedom we still enjoy despite the war coming to an end. This is a topic that has been focussed on by many human rights activists.

Are the people’s human rights assured? This is a question that has received mixed responses from various groups. If one were to ask the politicians of today, they would claim that human rights is definitely secured now, but on the other hand there are many who still claim that they have been deprived of their most basic human rights.

The Sunday Leader spoke with two leading Human Rights Activists regarding their opinion of the current human rights status in Sri Lanka.

According to Brito Fernando, President of the Families of the Disappeared, we can be happy that there are no more killings, shootings, bombs exploding etc. However, he said the government has still not addressed the core issue that led the Tamils to take up arms. He said the government is only focussing on economic factors and not the crux of the issue that led to the conflict. He said one simply cannot be satisfied with the government’s reconciliation programme either.

Meanwhile, human rights activist Ruki Fernando said the human rights situation anywhere should be measured in terms of compliance with international and domestic human rights laws and principles, not in comparison to situation of war or different time or different country.

“In this sense, major human rights concerns remain in Sri Lanka to date, despite some improvements that have been there since the end of the war and change of government in 2015.”

In response to our query on what the major concerns of human rights activists today are, he said, “Human Rights concerns in today’s Sri Lanka are too numerous to mention – but major concerns would include those related to the war – such as truth, justice and reparations to families of those killed and disappeared, justice to political prisoners, return of land occupied by the military, de-militarization, especially from civilian activities such as pre-schools, farms, hotels, transportation, shops, tourism industry etc. Establishment of transitional justice mechanisms as committed by the government and ensuring they are effective an independent, repeal of the draconian prevention of terrorism act (PTA) and ensuring right to memorialization and commemorate those killed and disappeared are key concerns that remain undressed even 8 years after the end of the war and nearly 2 and half years of the new government. Human Rights concerns in today’s Sri Lanka are too numerous to mention – but major concerns would include those related to the war – such as truth, justice and reparations to families of those killed and disappeared, justice to political prisoners, return of land occupied by the military, de-militarization, especially from civilian activities such as pre-schools, farms, hotels, transportation, shops, tourism industry etc. Establishment of transitional justice mechanisms as committed by the government and ensuring they are effective an independent, repeal of the draconian prevention of terrorism act (PTA) and ensuring right to memorialization and commemorate those killed and disappeared are key concerns that remain undressed even 8 years after the end of the war and nearly 2 and half years of the new government.

“— Sunday Leader — 14/05/2017

Human Rights activists call for release of prisoners held under PTA

In Sri Lanka, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and the Emergency Regulations introduced to combat LTTE terrorism and other Tamil militant groups are considered by Human Rights activists to be draconian pieces of legislation. They charge that those detained under the PTA are unjustifiably remanded for decades with no charges against them or charges which are based on confessions made to police officers under duress. Human Rights activists claim that apart from the injustice faced at the hands of the police and the prison officials, they also undergo harassment from fellow prisoners. These prisoners detained under the PTA are constantly referred to by the Tamil politicians and Human Rights activists as “Political Prisoners.”

Sri Lanka has had a history of certain abuses targeting prisoners under PTA. As a result of unrest

(Continued on page 14)
created between those held under PTA and other non-Tamil prisoners in the past, those detained under the PTA and the Emergency Regulations are now exclusively housed at the New Magazine prison. However they are sent to the Welikada prison hospital for medical treatment.

Velayutham Varatharajan, remanded at the New Magazine Prison, was implicated in an attempt to assassinate former President Chandrika Kumaratunga. He was convicted by the High Court of Colombo under the PTA for aiding and abetting the attempt. His appeal is currently pending at the Court of Appeal. On April 22, he had fallen sick and was admitted to the Welikada prison hospital. Initially he was admitted to the open ward. Thereafter he had been moved to the cell section in the hospital which is similar to a prison cell. K.S. Ratnavale, human rights activist and senior lawyer who is appearing on behalf of Varatharajan said that most PTA detainees were directed to this cell section. "This is not because of prison overcrowding but simply because they are political detainees and are of a particular ethnicity," he said.

Varatharajan, who is under medication for hypertension, had refused to go to the cell section. He had been writhing in pain and doctors expressed suspicion that he may have contracted dengue. Despite his condition, the Officer-in-charge had moved him to the cell section and he had to sleep on the floor. "The doctor who checked him the next day recommended that he should be admitted to the National hospital. But he was not taken and the officers assaulted and verbally abused him saying that he was from the Tamil community. He was extremely difficult to prove that a confession was extracted by inflicting fear and under duress. So the burden of proof lies with the accused,‖ said Perera. He pointed out that in practice, it was extremely difficult to prove that a confession was extracted under duress. So the burden of proof lies on the accused. "In most cases, the main evidence is the confession. In the Voir Dire inquiry, we must prove that the confession was extracted under duress. So the burden of proof lies with the accused," explained Perera. He pointed out that in practice, it was extremely difficult to prove that a confession was extracted under duress as there would be no witnesses to speak on behalf of the accused. "So in most cases the accused pleads guilty," he pointed out.

Bail cannot be granted under the PTA and therefore many who have been implicated in LTTE-related violence have been in remand for decades. The PTA permits arbitrary arrests without warrants. "They can be housed in unofficial places such as STF and army camps," said Perera. Activists point out that the worst forms of human rights abuses take place in such places. (Continued on page 15)
place in these unofficial detention centres. Perera also noted a hesitance on the part of judges and state counsels to initiate trials as they were time-consuming. As a result, trials are postponed. Perera further pointed out that plea bargaining was no longer in use, which has also restricted the options available to political prisoners. In plea bargaining, the defence counsel bargains with the state counsel and the judge on a punishment before the case is called. Then at the trial the accused pleads guilty and the decided punishment is given, which is most often a reduced sentence. "They amend the indictment for lesser charges for which there are no minimum charges. Then the judge can give a lesser sentence. Before February this year, the Attorney Generals Department had a policy to amend the charges under the PTA, where there was no damage to property or life. But they no longer amend charges," he said. The Counter Terrorism Bill which is to replace the PTA has been approved by the Cabinet. However, activists have pointed out that it is more draconian than the PTA.

A timeline of major incidents affecting those held under PTA

1983- During the Black July riots, 50 Tamil prisoners were gruesomely killed at the Welikada prison. Prison authorities had allegedly encouraged convicts to attack the political detainees. Compensation was paid to the families of the victims consequent to cases filed in the District Court of Colombo by the Civil Rights Movement, spearheaded by the late Desmond Fernando P.C. who was twice President of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) and Ms. Surya Wickremasinghe.

2000- Two prisoners at the Kalutara prison were killed as a result of being attacked by fellow prisoners and guards. PTA detainees had organized a memorial event to commemorate leading politician and lawyer Kumar Ponnambalam on January 7, 2000. Prison authorities, angered by this gesture, opened the compound of the convicts who pounced on the political prisoners. Though the perpetrators were identified at the inquest, the Attorney General’s Department did not prosecute or pursue the matter. However the family of Sivaratnam Sri Kumar who was killed, filed a civil case for damages before the District Court of Kalutara. They received compensation of a reasonable sum. The Attorney General’s Department appealed against the award of compensation but the order of the Kalutara District Court was affirmed by the Appellate Court.

2012- When prisoners protested against certain measures taken by the prison authorities at the Vavuniya prison, the Special Task Force was brought in on the orders of the leaders of the previous government. The STF allegedly assaulted the prisoners who sustained grave injuries. The twenty prisoners were taken to the Anuradhapura prison in the middle of the night where they were allegedly further assaulted. That same night they were then taken to the Mahara prison, where officers finally decided to direct them to the hospital. However two prisoners succumbed to their injuries.

OMP Act should be activated soon: Sumanthiran

In the wake of a petition submitted by the next of kin of those gone missing, MP M.A. Sumanthiran said today said his party would continue to urge the operation of the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) Act without further delay.

Addressing the next of kin, he said though the OMP Act was passed in parliament the government had failed to set up the OMP.

"The reason is because the Act needs to be brought under a ministry by the President as stated in the Constitution," the MP said and added that the President had assured that the Act would be operational after incorporating the proposed amendments.

"We will no longer accept this as an excuse because the amendments can be made at anytime. That is no bar the Act being operational or bought under the purview of a particular ministry," he said.

A copy of the letter was also submitted to the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Speaking on the matter Brito Fernando, a representative of the next of kin said the operation of the OMP Act was a step towards reconciliation.

"Despite its shortcomings, we see the Office on Missing Persons Act as an important first step towards revealing the truth about those gone missing, especially Tamil journalists, which has not been given due attention. We also extend our fullest support to the government to ensure that this Act is safeguarded," he said.

Mr. Fernando said it was sad to note the lapse of eight months since the OMP Act was enacted in Parliament in August 2016, with no steps being taken to make it operational.

He said he hoped it would be operational before the international week of the disappeared.

By Thilanka Kanakarithna

-Daily Mirror - 30/05/2017
An extract from Nirmala Kannangara’s article
Rathupaswela Shooting Incident

Three Killed, But Brigadier In Turkey For ‘Bravery’

The Brigadier who had allegedly ordered the contingent of army personnel to fire live bullets to disperse the Rathupaswela peaceful demonstrators had been sent to the Sri Lankan mission in Turkey two months after the incident, as a reward for his ‘bravery’ in aiding and abetting the then administrators, it has been revealed.

Brigadier Suriya Arachchige Don Anura Deshapriya Gunawardena alias Deshapriya Gunawardena was sent to Turkey in October 2013 for two years in order to ‘protect’ him from the Rathupaswela shooting incident which killed three civilians including two school boys and caused grave injuries to more than fifteen including one retired army officer.

During the Rajapaksa regime, it became a trend to post those who helped the regime to suppress the parties that rose against them to Sri Lankan foreign missions abroad.

• Brigadier Deshapriya Gunawardena was sent to Turkey in October 2013 for two years in order to ‘protect’ him from the Rathupaswela shooting incident

• What the protestors did was to block the road but still allowed the vehicular traffic and demanded pure drinking water.

• The area PH1 warned the people not to use well water even for cleaning purposes.

• Army personnel were collecting the used cartridges in shopping bags while another group was cleaning the blood stains.

- The Sunday Leader-04/06/2017

Sooka Continues Her War On Sri Lanka

A former member of a UN panel appointed to make inquiries on Sri Lanka, is continuing her campaign to push for justice for the victims of the brutal war.

In a new report made public last week Yasmin Sooka ’s International Truth and Justice Project says President Maithripala Sirisena should start prosecuting alleged war criminals and not promote them.

The ITJP’s document implicates the former Chief of Army Staff, Jagath Dias, in attacks on civilians and hospitals in the final phase of the civil war in 2008-9.

A report recently published by The Associated Press found Jagath Dias was put in charge of investigating alleged rape by Sri Lankan UN peacekeepers in Haiti but never even interviewed the complainant or medical staff who examined her and exonerated his soldiers.

“Putting Jagath Dias in charge of investigations into allegations of rape by Sri Lankan UN peacekeepers given his own alleged involvement in war crimes is an insult to Haitian victims,” said the ITJP’s Executive Director, Yasmin Sooka.

“Jagath Dias should himself be investigated. The UN must stop deploying Sri Lankan peacekeepers until such time as there is an independent investigation of past violations in Haiti – it’s not responsible to have alleged war criminals exonerate alleged rapists. Surely the people of Haiti deserve better, not to mention the people of Sri Lanka.”

The ITJP dossier describes multiple targeted attacks on civilians or civilian sites that Jagath Dias’s 57 Division allegedly participated in; if proven in a court of law these would amount to war crimes.

According to a UN Investigation, the Val- lipunam makeshift hospital in the “No Fire Zone” suffered 15 direct hits in January 2009 and there were 50 more artillery impact sites within a one-kilometre radius.

This was despite the 57 Division and other units being specifically informed of the coordinates of the hospital, which was clearly marked and visible to the military’s drones. The hospital, where hundreds of injured civilians were sheltered, was attacked with wide-area impact weapons such as multi-barrelled rocket launchers and cluster munitions, making the slaughter foreseeable.

“This scale of these repeated attacks on hospitals packed with injured people is frankly barbaric,” said Ms. Sooka, “We have overwhelming evidence to indict those in command but eight years on absolutely nothing has been done. Instead, international inaction has shown other regimes they too can get away with mass atrocities if they copy the tactics of the Sri Lankan military.”

One of the most heavily hit medical sites was the Puthukkudiyiruppu (PTK) Hospital whose location was well known to the Government. UN examination of satellite imagery showed in a fortnight at the end of January 2009 at least 30 hospital buildings were either severely damaged or destroyed. Also in PTK, a

(Continued on page 17)
The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein made some key recommendations to Sri Lanka in March but the government now gives the impression those recommendations will not be fully implemented.

Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera, who was Foreign Minister at the time the recommendations were made, says Sri Lanka has not agreed to implement the recommendations on Sri Lanka by Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein.

The recommendations were in a report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council during its regular session in March this year.

Samaraweera said that the government had only agreed to a Resolution on Sri Lanka and the Resolution did not include the recommendations of Ra’ad Al Hussein.

The recommendations were in a report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council during its regular session in March this year.

Samaraweera said that the government had only agreed to a Resolution on Sri Lanka and the Resolution did not include the recommendations of Ra’ad Al Hussein.

He said Sri Lanka had refused to agree to an international investigation on the war and instead pushed for a domestic mechanism.

Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said that although progress to establish transitional justice mechanisms has been slow, he was heartened by the recent report of the Consultation Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms, synthesising thousands of submissions from across all ethnic and religious groups.

“I urge the government to embrace and make the broadest possible use of the report, following its inclusive and thoughtful consultations. What is needed now is agreement on a comprehensive strategy, with a time-line and detailed benchmarks, to address all the transitional justice pillars identified in Resolution 30/1 – which as the Foreign Minister recently reminded us, was co-sponsored by Sri Lanka,” he said.

The ITJP dossier calls on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the international community to ensure (a) that the hybrid Special Court for Sri Lanka is established speedily and (b) that it is preceded by an independent international investigation to establish the facts with particular regard to establishing criminal accountability.

Sooka was a member of the UN panel of experts which was appointed by former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to investigate incidents related to the final stages of the war.

-The Sunday Leader - 04/06/2017
Constitution

An extract from Kusal Perera’s article

Federalism: Why only for Tamils?

A Federal Union of Ceylon would have allowed the Sinhala South to take their destiny into their own hands, in their own regions

“We must ask, why Federalism to Tamils? Why not to the Sinhalese in the South? We need Federalism for South because centralised power from 1947 Parliament to 2017, for 70 years, have failed to develop the rural Sinhala society” said Dr. Rajitha Senaratne, speaking on Federalism, Minister Senaratne said, it was politically wrong to interpret “Federalism” as an opening for “Separation”.

Federalism is the most democratic form of power sharing within a single united country, he said. Minister Senaratne’s explanation on Federalism was simple. It allows people in different regions to take care of their day to day responsibilities including their cultural life, while politically acting together as a single Nation State.

He is certainly right.

If Federalism leads to “separation”, Velupillai Prabhakaran would have first negotiated for a Federal System. He would have been the hard line campaigner to have the “Oslo Declaration” signed in December, 2002 to be enforced without delay. The Norwegian facilitated peace deal was declared as signed between the GoSL and the LTTE on 05 December with Anton Balasingham, the chief negotiator for the LTTE announcing—

“That is what we decided, that we will opt for a Federal model. This Federal model will be within united Sri Lanka which will be appreciated by the Sinhalese people I suppose.”

If Prabhakaran was as convinced as the Sinhala extremists that Federalism leads to a “separate” State, he would have been the first to demand a Federal System.

That it doesn’t and accepting a Federal model would derail his armed campaign for a separate State was why Prabhakaran never pursued the “Oslo Declaration”.

But why Chelvanayagam wanted a Federal State was for simple reasons, Minister Senaratne explained.

That was to take care of their day to day responsibilities including their cultural life in the North-East, while acting together as a single Nation State.

As the first National Convention of the ITAK in 1951 resolved, “...It is their (Sinhala and Tamil) common motherland and with a view to promoting and maintaining national goodwill and close cooperation with the Sinhalese people.” The “common motherland” that “Thanthai” Chelva stood for and believed would be best served as a “Federal Union of Ceylon”, would not have allowed Prabhakaran his dream of an “Eelam” State.

A “Federal Union of Ceylon” instead would have allowed the Sinhala South to take their destiny into their own hands, in their own regions.

Continuous centralisation of power in Colombo for 70 years since the first Parliament was elected in 1947, denied this opportunity to the Sinhala South, was what Minister Senaratne stressed upon.

The Sinhala South has failed to learn that lesson, despite the tragedies the South had to live with and is living with.

It’s the Sinhala psyche that allows political power to reside in Colombo. And it is Colombo that develops and nurtures Sinhala racist ideology to herd the Southern Sinhala voter into their ranks. It is on this Sinhala politics the mainstream political leaderships compete for votes.

That has not come to an end, despite the claim the two major political rivals forming a “Unity” Government brings a national consensus on power sharing.

(Continued on page 19)
First is the fact that out of the present 95 MPs in the SLFP led UPFA, 52 MPs don’t abide by the SLFP leadership of President Sirisena. It is therefore no “unity” between the two main Southern parties.

It is just a “one and a half” party alliance. Second is the fact, this “Unity” has not brought about any consensus on the ethnic issue and power sharing. They are toeing the same “Rajapaksa line” cementing further the Sinhala racist sentiments with daily trips to the Chief prelates, promising “war heroes” with every State patronage possible and making statements they feel would provide them with a larger Sinhala Buddhist vote bank, than what Rajapaksa could command.

South therefore needs a Sinhala “Thanthai Chelva” to campaign for a “Federal Union of Sri Lanka” that can for sure lift the rural poor into a decent and democratic life, with political power closer home.

I doubt Minister Senaratne could live up to that challenge despite his political understanding of what Sri Lanka needs for future development and inclusive living.

The misery of the South is that we lack political leaders who could live up to what they publicly say. But the fact remains, Sinhala South will have to leave aside the model of centralised power proved a failure during 70 years and move to the next option, that of power sharing.

-Daily Mirror - 28/04/2017

An extract from Kishali Pinto Jayawardene’s article
Constitutional reforms stagnating like garbage

It is a typical incongruity of these times that constitutional reforms promising protection of civil liberties are discussed in tight-lipped seriousness in Colombo even while the police seem unable to arrest the hate mongering leader of the Bodu Bala Sena, Galaboda Gnanasara despite two arrest warrants being issued by the courts.

Business establishments of the Muslim community are subjected to one arson attack after another in a carefully targeted strategy. Meanwhile the leadership of the unity alliance holds forth in stern pronouncements on hate speech, exhorting the police to do their job properly.

- The Sunday Times - 18/06/2017

The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered:

"Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present: the result being that he does not live in the present or the future: he lives as if he is never going to die, then dies having never really lived."
The people of Jaffna have put the government on notice. The government has been told to be prepared to lose Tamil votes if the North fails to experience real change sooner than later.

The warning comes as the government completed two years in office this year and prepares to join the country in celebrating the May 2009 defeat of the LTTE.

Traders, businessman and ordinary people in Jaffna told The Sunday Leader that they have not seen the change they much expected since January 2015. Among the expectations of the people of Jaffna were better living conditions, a better local economy, jobs for the youth and a reduction of prices of goods.

The occupation of land by the military is also an issue for the people of Jaffna. Northern based Tamil political parties warned that failure to address this and other key issues could result in the government having to face the consequences.

“This government made several promises before coming to power. They assured us jobs. But our youth have not been given jobs,” said Niresh, a young store keeper in Jaffna town. Niresh also said that the cost of living in Jaffna has gone up with the price of most goods higher than what was expected.

“The price of milk powder was ok soon after the election but now it has gone up. With the salary we get we struggle to meet our daily needs. Most people in Jaffna don’t earn enough to even have a proper meal,” he said.

Niresh says while the government says they are doing a lot for the people in the North, the ground reality is different. The outspoken youth warned that at the next election the people of Jaffna are unlikely to vote for the current government as the hopes they had for a change have been dashed.

Rasan said that the government has not even freed all the former LTTE cadres who were arrested after the war. He accused the government of only looking into their own wellbeing and not the people who voted them into power.

“They have not done much during the 100 days they were in power,” he added. He said the Tamils in the North have now come to a stage where they do not have anyone to turn to when in need.

“The minds of these people need to be put at ease. There is some development taking place in the North but there is no point in such development if the hearts and minds of the people have not been won.

He also said that more development the people in Jaffna need food and clothing. He said that several children in the North go to school without food. “There are some issues even I face which I cannot tell you. I need to earn for my family. I do that with difficulties,” he said.

Rasan said politicians will go to even a beggar just for a vote but will not look back after the election and if that same man needs food. He said without resolving the issues faced by the Tamils no government can be seen as doing good to its people.

Sivagnanam said that the government has not even completed the housing project to resettle the war displaced families. He said that no matter who is in power in Sri Lanka the people of Jaffna cannot expect anything different.

“They come with their hands together seeking our vote and after they win they lift their hands and go,” he said.

However David, a driver by profession, said that he has no issue with the government and feels they are doing things, though at a slow pace.

“We have a hospital to go to when we fall sick and we get free medicine. So I think we must

(Continued on page 21)
appreciate that. I don’t care how the medicine comes or where it comes from. All I care about is that we get the medical care we need,” he said.

The Tamils in the North are guided by the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the TNA warned the government to immediately address some of the key issues faced by the Tamils in the North, failing which they will back a change of government.

TNA and opposition leader R. Sampanthan said that while the government has done a lot, more remains to be done. “Hundreds of Tamils are still suffering. The government must understand this,” he said.

Sampanthan said that the TNA will have high level talks with the government and push for solutions for the Tamils issues. He also said that a new Constitution must be created through which a political solution is given to the Tamils.

The opposition leader said that at consecutive elections the Tamils have been calling for a political solution. He said that hundreds of Tamils are still without jobs and this must be looked into.

Sampanthan was speaking at a public event held in Vavuniya to coincide with the handing over of houses to the displaced families in the North.

The 150 homes were built by the Gnanam Foundation.

Meanwhile, last week the TNA had talks with the military on releasing private land held by the military. The meeting was headed by TNA leader R. Sampanthan.

TNA spokesman M.A. Sumanthiran said that the Defence Secretary, Army Chief and officials from the Navy and Air Force attended the meeting.

Sumanthiran said the TNA was informed at the meeting that the Army will follow any order on the land matter issued by the President or Defence Secretary.

The TNA was also informed that the Army is prepared to withdraw from any land not required for security reasons.

-The Sunday Leader - 23/04/2017

Hartal shuts down North and East

A hartal has shut down transport and other services in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces on 27th April.

Organizers of the protest demanded the government resolves issues raised by relatives of those missing during the armed conflict as well as long standing land issues faced by residents.

Many shops have said to be shut down and public transport services have come to a standstill.

The protestors said they were supported by several political parties including the Tamil National Alliance (TNA).

Demonstrators block A-9 Road

Relatives of victims of enforced disappearances engaged in protest demstations blocking the A-9 road in Kilinochchi and Vavuniya on 27th April.

A demonstration was held for the 67th day in front of the Kilinochchi Kanthaswamy kovil demanding to disclose the details of the victims of enforced disappearances.

As the government had failed to find a solution even through 67 days had passed since the beginning the protests, the protestors decided to obstruct A-9 road, it was said.

Police and army reinforcement were deployed at the location. Many of the protestors fainted due the hot weather prevailing at present and they had become weak due to participating in the prolonged campaigned. Meanwhile similar demonstration was held in Vavununiya too. Vavuniya protestors crippled transport the on the A-9 Road by obstructing the A-9 road uiin from of the Road Development Department at 8.30 am.

The blockade continued in spite of the Police holding talks with the protestors. However they called off the blockade when Vanni Parliamentarian Sivasakthy Ananthan persuaded them to call off the road blockade. But the hunger strike on a rotational basis continued.

Reported by Romesh Madushanka & Sithum Chathurange
-Daily Mirror - 28/04/2017
Due to the war that prevailed in this country for nearly three decades, many left the country and migrated or fled to other locations or countries. However, with the end of the war and now eight years on, those who either fled or left the country have begun returning home. The majority of those who fled the war torn areas, fled to India. However, last month alone over 100 of them had returned to Sri Lanka. According to statistics on the 27th of last month 46 such persons had returned to Sri Lanka from India. They had been living all these years in Trichy, India. Similarly, on April 28 a further 28 of them had returned home from India. After their return another 16 refugees who were living in Chennai had returned home as well. They too returned on April 28 morning. When asked as to why they had fled the country, they said at the time of the war, their lives and the lives of their children were in danger and they had fled the country in order to safeguard their children and themselves. The refugees who returned home have observed that peace has finally been established and they are confident that there will not be another war, which has made them comfortable and confident enough to make the decision to return home. They had also said that they had faith in the Sri Lankan government and hoped they would be able to rebuild their lives and live in peace in their motherland. They were hopeful of assistance from the Sri Lankan government in order to once again settle in their original lands and rebuild their lives that were shattered due to the war. They said although they were safe in India it is not their home and when they realised that peace had finally been established in their own country, they had decided to return home and resume their lives and live freely.

– Sunday Leader – 14/05/2017

Tuesday, 30 May 2017 marked one hundred days of continuous protest by families of the disappeared in Kilinochchi. Around a 1000 protesters from across the Northern and Eastern Provinces some of whom have been conducting their own protests and hunger strikes, blocked the A9 highway, demanding answers from the Sri Lankan Government, which is accused of mass abductions both during and after the war.

Amid fears of surveillance and harassment, the peaceful protest was organised and lead by mostly women, many of whom are Tamil mothers, wives, grandmothers and daughters of the disappeared. Protest leader Leelavathi Anadarajah, whose son surrendered to the Sri Lankan Military in 2009 and was never seen again, said that families of the disappeared demand, the release of the list of names of the forcibly disappeared and the names of those being held in secret camps, providing access to family members to visit their loved ones.

“The government has not paid attention to us at all,” said Leelavathi. “We started this protest with multi-religious prayer and now we are blocking a major highway. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe visited us months ago and said that most of the disappeared are dead. We do not wish to speak to the Prime Minister, and demand a meeting with President Maithripala Sirisena.”

According to the letter from the Secretary to the Governor of the Northern Province on 30 May 2017. President Sirisena informed the Governor of the Northern Province that, a committee will be appointed next week to inquire about this and the president wishes to meet the families but owing to the current flood situation, he will give an appointment within two weeks.

The families of the disappeared have rejected the proposal to meet yet another committee but agreed to meet the president. However they will continue to protest until the president meets and gives them adequate answers.

Amongst the majority of Tamil families that rallied, were also Sinhalese protesters whose relatives were abducted in the south of the country. Sandya Eknaligoda, wife of disappeared journalist and cartoonist, Prageeth Eknaligoda, said that she had been going to court and marching the streets in hope (Continued on page 23)
of justice for her husband for seven years.

"Today I’m here to join these women in the North who have been seeking the truth about their families for the past few years," said Ekneligoda. "The military have been working tirelessly to conduct search and rescue operations for disaster-affected people in the south. Yet they have been unable to find the loved ones of these families for the past years."

"Isn’t it the armed forces that abducted these people in the first place? The President has been very compassionate towards victims of this natural disaster.

According to the government, they have received over 65,000 complaints of disappearances after 1994. In 2016, the government passed a Bill in Parliament to establish a permanent Office of Missing Persons (OMP), however, President Sirisena, is yet to operationalise this office. This year, the UN granted Sri Lanka a 2 year extension to meet its obligation to transitional justice.

-The Sunday Leader - 04/06/2017

New anti-terrorism law undermines RTI

The Counter Terrorism Act policy framework approved by the Cabinet this week has reintroduced offences originally listed under “espionage” — whilst merely removing the word “espionage” from the document. As such, the draft makes it an offence to voluntarily engage in any illegal, unlawful or unauthorised act for the purpose of gathering any ‘confidential information’ — or directly gather confidential information — “for the purpose of supplying such information to a person who is conspiring, preparing, abetting, or attempting to commit terrorism or any terrorism related offence or any other offence contained in this Act.”

It is also an offence to provide to another person any confidential information, knowing such information will be used by such other person to conspire, abet, attempt or commit terrorism or a terrorism-related offence or any other offence contained in the Act.

All these provisions were included in the original 57-page policy framework that this newspaper first published in October 2016. The latest draft — which was rushed through the Cabinet on Tuesday in anticipation of a vote in Brussels on a motion to deprive Sri Lanka of the GSP+ on Thursday — is 73 pages long and has been fleshed out. The Sunday Times obtained a copy of the final version which was revised on April 23, 2017, and approved two days later by the Cabinet.

Confidential information has a broad definition under the CTA policy framework. It includes: "Any information not in the public domain, the dissemination of which is likely to have an adverse effect on national or public security."

Questions now arise on the position of the CTA against the Right to Information Act, also enacted by this Government, which denotes that public security is not a ground to restrict information. The RTI Act only permits information to be withheld on the grounds of "national security, defence of the State or territorial integrity". This means that the proposed CTA now contradicts the RTI Act. It would also prevail over the RTI Act because the draft CTA states that once enacted it will have priority over past laws.

A second draft of the CTA policy framework that was recently leaked to the media had removed the word “unity” from Part III which relates to Terrorism-Related Offences. This word has been reintroduced to the final draft under "Abetting terrorism, terrorists and Proscribed Terrorist Organisations", where it states: "By words either spoken or intended to be read or understood or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise, instigates the committing of acts of violence or ethnic, religious, racial or communal disharmony, or feelings of ill-will or hostility between different communities or other groups so as to affect the unity, territorial integrity or sovereignty of Sri Lanka or any other sovereign country”.

On right of access of a suspect to an attorney-at-law and the right to representation by an attorney-at-law, the draft continues to be tied to the re-drafted amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP). The Act to Amend the Code of Criminal Procedure (Special Provisions) Act, which was first published online by Groundviews, states that that “an attorney at law representing a person in police custody shall, from the time such person is taken into custody, be
The witch hunt against journalists depicted as enemies of the State continued unabated in Sri Lanka

"Poddala Jayantha was abducted by a gang in a white van on June 1, 2009 at about 4.30 pm in broad daylight near the Embuldeniya junction in Nugegoda

Well-known Sri Lankan Journalist-activist Poddala Jayantha was in the news last week when he sent a letter to the Director-General of Information, Dr. Ranga Kalansuriya, who is also the Secretary to the Cabinet Sub Committee on granting measures of relief to media persons who were subjected to various types of harassment and oppression during the period 2005 to 2015. Media reports said that copies of the letter had also been sent to the respective cabinet ministers serving in the cabinet sub-committee.

Upon seeing the media reports, I contacted Poddala Jayantha now living in the USA to verify the contents of the media reports and ascertain whether they were accurate. Jayantha affirmed that they were correct and confirmed that he had indeed sent the letter to the cabinet subcommittee. He was not very hopeful whether his missive would produce the desired results but was of the opinion that an attempt has to be made anyway.

Poddala Jayantha in his letter refers to the years 2005 to 2015 as a terrible period for journalists in Sri Lanka. Describing the nature of media suppression in the period between 2005 and 2015, the letter outlines a list of what happened then, "journalist killings, abductions, infliction of torture, threats, attacks on media institutions, committing arson, filing cases on frame ups, bringing pressure to bear on businesses of the media Institutions, threatening to cancel the frequency of the electronic media, purchasing media Institutions by force through outsiders, providing various inducements to journalists and media Institutions and silencing them and other criminalities not mentioned herein shall be reckoned as part and parcel of this media suppression," the letter states.

While welcoming the appointment of the sub-committee, Jayantha has raised the question, "Will compensation payment alone to aggrieved journalists suffice to wash the hands off it?" What Poddala Jayantha fears (a view shared by this columnist also) is that the Government would not probe the period in question and mete out justice to victimised media personnel but wash its hands off the issue by paying adequate compensation to victims and their families. "In the circumstances, just paying compensation to the victims of the crimes is not going to halt such crimes being committed in the future -- not by any means," emphasises Jayantha. What Poddala Jayantha requests from the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe Government is the appointment of a "Special presidential commission vested with full powers to conduct an extensive and exhaustive investigation" into the acts of commission and omission affecting journalists during those dark years.

Poddala Jayantha’s request or demand would no doubt strike a responsive chord in the hearts and minds of the scribe tribe in Sri Lanka. Besides, the request acquires much legitimacy and validity when a person of Poddala Jayantha’s stature makes it. Jayantha is a living embodiment of all what went wrong for Sri Lankan journalists under the Rajapaksa regime.

Poddala Jayantha was a home-grown journalist who stood up for freedom of expression and the rights of journalists as an active office-bearer of the Sri Lanka Working Journalists. Jayantha spoke the truth to those in power fearlessly and as a result he was horribly persecuted in the land of his birth. Poddala Jayantha was forced to flee Sri Lanka and seek refuge in the USA.

By Namini Wijedasa
- Sunday Times – 30/04/2017
The widespread belief in the politically-motivated killings of journalists in Sri Lanka is predicated on a deadly irony: the hidden hand has always been visible, but the fingerprints have gone missing.

The two most widely publicized killings relate to IPS UN Bureau Chief in Colombo, Richard de Zoysa, 30, in February 1990, and the Editor-in-Chief of The Sunday Leader Lasantha Wickrematunge, 51, in January 2009.

But both murders remain unsolved due primarily to political cover-ups, despite several leads pointing to the killers.

In an interview with IPS, Sonali Samarasinghe, Minister Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, confirmed that both high profile killings in Sri Lanka were meant to silence press criticism of political higher-ups.

Speaking strictly as a former journalist and widow of Lasantha Wickrematunge, she said “the authorities at the time wanted to silence Lasantha and cripple two newspapers, The Sunday Leader of which he was Editor-in-Chief and I was Consultant Editor—and The Morning Leader of which I was Editor in Chief.”

In Richard de Zoysa’s case, Samarasinghe said, he was the first Sri Lankan journalist to pay the ultimate price for his journalism.

Like Lasantha, Richard was beloved during his life, and like Lasantha, he has, since his death, become an icon in the media industry in Sri Lanka. Richard was a man of extraordinary talent and range who wrote haunting poetry and powerful plays, she noted.

There is no doubt in my mind that his killing was politically motivated as well, said Samarasinghe, a former Niemen Fellow at Harvard University, an Edward R. Murrow Fellow in Washington DC, and an International Journalist-in-Residence at the Graduate School of Journalism at the City University of New York.

IPS: Since Lasantha’s killing, has there been any credible investigation to track down his killer or killers? Why has there been no trial or conviction for 8 long years?

Samarasinghe: Before January 2015, there had been virtually no serious investigation into this crime. There seems to have been a deliberate cover-up and stonewalling of the case. Such emblematic cases are not properly investigated for several reasons; among them, to hide the truth, to perpetuate a fear psychosis in the people and to create chaos. These assassinations affect not only the families of the victims but society as a whole. A break down in the rule of law and a lack of freedom of information leads to social divisiveness and generates mistrust between groups and in the institutions of the State. They send messages of fear, despondency and submission – and slavish/divisive societies are easier to manipulate.

However, since the change in administration in 2015, a special Criminal Investigations Team was established and there have been concrete steps taken not only in Lasantha’s case but in the cases of other journalists who were beaten, threatened or who disappeared during the previous administration. Lasantha’s body was exhumed late last year as part of this new investigation. These are extremely gut-wrenching circumstances and for me very difficult to endure as his wife. However, for the sake of the greater good and for the purposes of a thorough independent investigation, we have to go through this.

The proper conclusion of these investigations is important in order to re-establish Good Governance and the Rule of Law in our country, and halt the cyclical recurrence of violence in various forms. This is why the present administration has said it is deeply committed to these democratic principles.

IPS: How safe is the political environment for journalists now — as compared with 1990 or 2009?

Samarasinghe: As a nation that had suffered a dark period under the yoke of terrorism and an accompanying culture of impunity, this administration has demonstrated in several concrete ways that it is actively conscious of the value of a nation built on the principles of democracy and the Rule of Law. The cornerstone of any democracy is freedom of information. Without this there can be no meaningful advancement of peace, development or human rights. Among others, the proper handling of Lasantha’s case will become the symbol of a restored and renewed democracy where once again, the people of our country will have faith in our judiciary, and in our system of Justice. This is a slow and steady process.

Clearly the current administration has taken several steps in the right direction. For instance after years of civil society activism the Right to Information Act was signed into law in August 2016 and came into force on February 4, 2017. The government unanimously enacted the Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crimes and Witnesses Act. A Permanent Office for Missing Persons (OMP) has been established. These are all structures and mechanisms that serve to rebuild trust in the state. I would say that today we have an administration that understands the value of an independent fourth estate and the serious perils of lapdog journalism.

- The Sunday Leader – 14/05/2017
Govt. continues its love affair with luxury vehicles with another Rs 329m

For a government that came to power promising to cut back on extravagances and high spending of the past regime, there seems to be no letup in the massive amounts of money it is splurging on the import of luxury vehicles for its members.

This week, for the third time in two months, the Govt sought Parliament approval for a sum of over Rs 329 million (Rs 329,831,000) to purchase vehicles for six Ministers, a Provincial Governor and for an official of the Prime Minister’s office.

This brings to a grand total, the amount Govt has sought as Supplementary Estimates (SE), since March this year, to buy vehicles at over Rs 1,200 million.

Government Ministers have in the past, defended the import of luxury vehicles for the use of senior ruling party members saying, Lawmakers need to travel long distances in their line of public duty, and good vehicles were needed for this purpose.

*Reported by Chandani Kirinde - Lobby Correspondent - The Sunday Times – 7/05/2017*

Parliament sent Rs.55mn on MPs last year

It has been revealed that Parliament has spent Rs.549.9 million to provide facilities to MPs last year.

As per the performance report a greater percentage of this have been spent for recurrent expenditure such as paying of salaries and other allowances to the MPs. Accordingly the total recurrent expenditure for 2016 has been Rs. 541.1 million while capital expenditure has been Rs.800,000.

Rs. 190 million has been generated through supplementary estimates to meet the expenditure made on behalf of MPs during 2016.

In addition, a sum of Rs.121.7 million has been spent for the sound system, Rs. 237 million for the CCTV system, Rs.8.7 million for the clock system and Rs. 14.3 million for the intercom system.

The total expenditure incurred by the Parliament in 2016 has been Rs.2.1 billion.

*Reported by Yohan Perera - Daily Mirror - 27/06/2017*

JVP to seek legal advice on Cabinet reshuffle

A proper interpretation is needed from legal experts to determine the validity of today’s Cabinet reshuffle as it is questionable whether it has gone beyond the provisions set out in the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) said today.

JVP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake told a media briefing that his party would seek legal advice on this matter.

He said according to the 19th Amendment, the Cabinet had to be limited to 48 with 45 deputy ministers but however, the number of Cabinet portfolios had exceeded 48.

“We will consult our lawyers to find out whether the limit is based on the number of ministers in the Cabinet or on the number of posts,” Mr Dissanayake said adding that a reshuffle would serve no purpose because what was needed was a policy change.

He said the President had told the new ministers that the reshuffle would generate new expectations but new expectations could be fulfilled only through a policy shift.

“If the reshuffle was done to fulfil the people’s expectations of getting rid of corrupt politicians, then former finance minister Ravi Karunanayake should have been removed while Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe who is responsible for covering up the bond issue, Agriculture Minister Duminda Dissanayake who is responsible for wasting millions of rupees on the ministry office, Arjuna Ranatunga who is alleged to be connected to deals in the Port and Ranjith Siyambalapitiya who is alleged to be connected to the controversial coal purchase deal should not be allowed to remain in the Cabinet,” Mr. Dissanayake said.

This reshuffle he said is aimed at satisfying some persons in the government and to make it intact till 2020.

*Reported by Yohan Perera - Daily Mirror - 23/05/2017*
The actual significance of May Day

Workers the world over celebrate May Day to commemorate the struggle carried out by the labour movement to improve their working conditions.

The first May Day rally was held in Chicago in 1886 where the police dispersed the percipients with the eruption of valance, when someone threw a bomb killing eight workers.

May 1st marks that incident in Chicago.

But in Sri Lanka, May Day is pursued by political parties to showcase their strength. An average worker in Sri Lanka would not know the significance of the May Day other than that twist given by politicians for their benefit. Even this year we have heard many political parties boasting that their particular rally would be the largest crowd-puller.

May Day in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, millions of rupees is spent by politicians to celebrate May Day, with thousands of buses transporting party supporters to these political rallies.

Politicians have 365 days to organize their political rallies. They must not pollute or devalue the real meaning of May Day for their political gain, at the expense of the poor workers.

By D. Weerathunga, Nugegoda - Daily Mirror - 28/05/2017

Seeking Assistance

Recently two of IHR staff members visited Arumuganathan Mohanadas who is today a helpless disabled man. 20 years ago at the age of 22 Arumuganathan Mohanadas had lost both his legs in a train accident while trying to help some friends. Both his legs and one arm were amputated. He is unable to earn a living and since he has no family, depends on his friends to help him. Even the attempt to fit jaipur legs has not been successful. He gets his father's pension which is only Rs.19000/-: This amount is barely enough to meet his medical needs alone. Apart from his disability he requires physiotherapy. He also suffers from eye pressure for which he needs expensive drugs.

At the moment he lives in a house rented out by his friends, but by the end of the year he has to move out. Therefore what he needs most at the moment is a permanent place to live. Hearing this tragic story of his life, we hope some kind and generous people or organizations would come forward to help him, in whatever small ways possible.

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